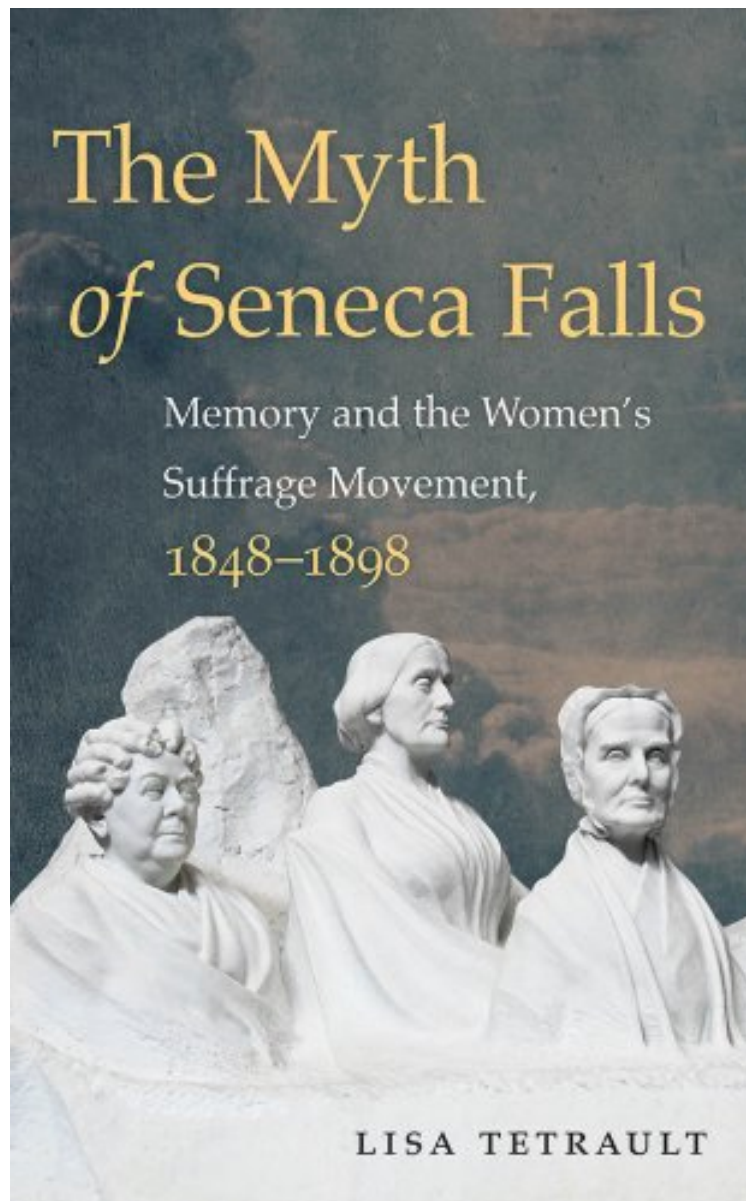


[Mobile pdf] The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898 (Gender and American Culture)

## The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898 (Gender and American Culture)

Lisa Tetrault

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Lisa Tetrault : The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898 (Gender and American Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898 (Gender and American

Culture):

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A new way of looking at the origins of the U.S. woman suffrage movement  
By Nathaniel Levin  
The publication of "The Myth of Seneca Falls" is a big event for those of us who like to live in the suffrage world. Professor Tetrault has come up with the first really effective counter-narrative to Eleanor Flexner's classic "Century of Struggle". Professor Tetrault argues convincingly that the famous Seneca Falls convention of 1848 was only part of a flow of many events with at least equal claims to our attention. She "foregrounds" the work of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony as writers of women's history. It was Stanton and Anthony who in later years promoted the supposed significance of Seneca Falls. They did so to place themselves at the center of a movement that was in fact widespread and chaotic, with contested and scattered leadership. With the tale of Seneca Falls, they won the fight for the minds of the public and movement activists. In time, this led to the preeminence of Anthony as a suffrage icon and some degree of centralization in leadership. Tetrault's account does not go on into the 20th century; in my view the partial centralization of the movement around the image of Anthony as revered pioneer had important benefits in later stages. Anthony's organization (the National American Woman Suffrage Association) served as a launching pad for the careers of Carrie Chapman Catt and Alice Paul, who played vital roles as the movement built to tremendous dynamism and strength during the 1910s. One of the many merits of Tetrault's book is its discussion of the tension between the active, independent grassroots of the suffrage movement and the efforts of some to achieve a dominant national leadership. Again stepping beyond Tetrault's narrative, one way the story of the 1910s can be told is that many local successes, plus increased coordination and control at the center, led to a balance between local activism and central control that allowed the movement to successfully take on the political establishment. Tetrault's portrait of Susan B. Anthony is also a strong point. As presented by Tetrault, Anthony is ambitious, forceful, sometimes ruthless, and an effective striver for power and influence. Anthony's success in her maneuvers not only won her fame, but also--as I have indicated above--benefited the movement by providing Anthony as its rallying point. Tetrault is right in noting that Anthony has not yet found her biographer, in spite of some prior attempts. Tetrault's version of Anthony is far more rounded and human than any other I have encountered. While I would still recommend "Century of Struggle" as the first book to read about the suffrage movement, anyone who has a serious interest in the subject will also have to read Professor Tetrault's book. It is clear now that much of the "plot" of Flexner's book was a creation of Stanton and Anthony, and that there is more work to be done in weaving still more narratives of the great battle for women's voting rights in the U.S.  
3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The Big Picture  
By carol j. saylor  
For those of us who live in the Seneca Falls area and had grandmothers and a great grandmothers who marched with "the ladies of the myth" this book is a good reminder for us to look "at the big picture" when talking about the Women's Suffrage Movement.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
By brenda  
This is a great history of the women's movement in America. So many things I did not know.

The story of how the women's rights movement began at the Seneca Falls convention of 1848 is a cherished American myth. The standard account credits founders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott with defining and then leading the campaign for women's suffrage. In her provocative new history, Lisa Tetrault demonstrates that Stanton, Anthony, and their peers gradually created and popularized this origins story during the second half of the nineteenth century in response to internal movement dynamics as well as the racial politics of memory after the Civil War. The founding mythology that coalesced in their speeches and writings--most notably Stanton and Anthony's *History of Woman Suffrage*--provided younger activists with the vital resource of a usable past for the ongoing struggle, and it helped consolidate Stanton and Anthony's leadership against challenges from the grassroots and rival suffragists. As Tetrault shows, while this mythology has narrowed our understanding of the early efforts to champion women's rights, the myth of Seneca Falls itself became an influential factor in the suffrage movement. And along the way, its authors amassed the first archive of feminism and literally invented the modern discipline of women's history.  
2015 Mary Jurich Nickliss Prize, Organization of American Historians

Tetrault expertly unpacks the myth of Seneca Falls by examining the messy history of the leaders in the post-Civil War women's rights movement.--Choice  
All historians would benefit from reading Tetrault's study and giving thought to the construction of memory narratives--American Historical  
This book should be read by anyone interested in women's history as well as the history of memory-making.--Register of the Kentucky Historical Society  
This wonderful book draws on classics, political science, and sociology to fill a large gap in the history of the U.S. women's movement.--Journal of Interdisciplinary History  
Greatly expands on current feminist scholarship that interrogates the origin story of Seneca Falls and the inevitability of the triumph of women's suffrage.--Choice  
Useful for any historian looking for a detailed study of women's organizing after the Civil War as well as for scholars interested in the relationship between collective memory and social movements.--The Journal of American History  
This provocative work challenges the standard narrative of the history of the women's rights movement in the United States. Even more

important, however, it aids readers in understanding how collective historical memory is created and shaped. . . . Fascinating. . . . Recommended for scholars in women's history, constitutional history, and late 19th-century American history.--Library Journal

Tetrault examines how the history and memory of women's suffrage was created by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, as well as their legions of accomplices over time. She makes the convincing case that an archival approach to this 'construction' of a canonized memory will show us how an origins myth rooted in the narrative of Seneca Falls has hovered over the story and reputation of women's suffrage ever since Stanton and Anthony wrote their *History*. How and why Stanton and Anthony created their own myth of leadership as well as the progress narrative of their movement is a splendid case for how the politics of memory works in history.--David Blight, Yale University

A clear, well-written, and vivid account. Tetrault's arguments about the ways that any movement--in this case the woman suffrage movement--shapes its future course by re-imagining its past will provide substantive grist for discussion. Tetrault's characterization of the battle over memory in the woman suffrage movement will help readers to see the 'founding mothers' of American feminism in a complex and revealing light. Since, as she notes, they have tended to be memorialized in public school curricula and public history sites in the heroic light they themselves framed, this discussion will be revelatory."--Annelise Orleck, author of *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965*

From the *Inside Flap*

The story of how the women's rights movement began at the Seneca Falls convention of 1848 is a cherished American myth. The standard account credits founders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott with defining and then leading the campaign for women's suffrage. In her provocative new history, Lisa Tetrault demonstrates that Stanton, Anthony, and their peers gradually created and popularized this origins story during the second half of the nineteenth century in response to internal movement dynamics as well as the racial politics of memory after the Civil War.