

## Ring Bells for Equality Day!

As part of its 2020 activities to commemorate the Centennial of Women's Suffrage, the Smithfield Community Association (SCA) in Peterboro NY will ring the bell in the tower of the Smithfield Community Center (SCC) nineteen times to celebrate the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which stated that ... *the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged...on account of sex*. The Peterboro United Methodist Church bell, across the Pleasant Valley Road, will join the SCC bell ringing. The Peterboro organizations invite groups and individuals in the county to join the bell ringing at 6:19 p.m. on Wednesday, August 26, 2020.

Elizabeth Cady (Stanton), who spent her summers in Peterboro with her cousins, social reformers Ann and Gerrit Smith, included women's suffrage in the *Declaration of Sentiments* presented at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention in 1848. Efforts led by Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in the next half century did not accomplish a national suffrage law for women. It was on May 21, 1919, that the U.S. House of Representatives passed Amendment XIX followed by the Senate's passing on June 4, 1919. New York State was the sixth state to ratify the amendment - doing so on June 16, 1919. On August 18, 1920, Tennessee approved the amendment providing the thirty-six states needed for ratification. (The last state to ratify the amendment was Mississippi in 1984!)

In 1971 and 1973 New York Congresswoman Bella Abzug introduced a resolution to designate August 26 as Women's Equality Day. On August 16, 1973, Congress approved the resolution and specified that "the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation in commemoration of that day in 1920 on which the women in America were first guaranteed the right to vote."

Jacob Donovan-Colin will climb stairs and a ladder to reach the SCC clock tower to ring the bell nineteen times beginning at 6:19 p.m. on Equality Day 2020. Donovan, Vice-President of the Smithfield Community Association, also winds the clock in the tower. Donna Dorrance Burdick, Smithfield/Peterboro Historian, states that "when the original clockworks in the tower of the Peterboro Elementary School, made by Cazenovia clockmaker Justice Marshall, stopped working in 1935, the residents of Peterboro went over to Cazenovia and asked to buy the boxed Marshall clock that was stored there. The village sold it for \$100. One wheel was missing. A man who lived on Cody Road near Peterboro and who, in his day, was a wizard at town clocks, had a new wheel made, assembled the clock, installed it, and the clock worked perfectly."

The Smithfield Community Association, owner and manager of the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark, received a grant from Humanities NY for 2020 Suffrage Centennial programs. Although the initiative to encourage one hundred female teens to pre-register and to march as suffragists in the Fourth of July parade was announced at Gerrit Smith's annual birthday party March 7, 2020, COVID19 cancelled the rest of the teen voter programs, as well as other presentations. *Black Suffragists, Frederick Douglass in Peterboro*, and the *United States Colored Troops* have been rescheduled to Emancipation Day Saturday, August 7, 2021. *The Abolition Movement Launched the Women's Right Movement* will be presented during the National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum Induction Weekend October 22-24, 2021. The *Bloomer Tea* with Leah Fought PhD, and with Melissa Grube, aka Elizabeth Cady Stanton, has been postponed to September 24, 2022.

The buildings of the Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark (GSENLH) in Peterboro are shuttered for 2020 due to COVID 19. The grounds and exterior exhibits on three acres of the Estate are open from dawn to dusk for people who respect property and social distancing. For more information on GSENLH or to join the Equality Day bell ringing, contact [info@gerritsmith.org](mailto:info@gerritsmith.org) or 315-280-8828. Send a photo to be shared during the ringing. It is not necessary to send participation information, but appreciated and valued.



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Elizabeth Cady Stanton with sons Daniel and Henry. Another son was named Gerrit in honor of her cousin Gerrit Smith of Peterboro with whom she spent summers learning of reform. The

photo was taken in 1848, the year of the Women's Rights Convention at which Stanton advocated for women's right to vote. It would be 72 years before women in the USA could legally vote.