

Lucretia Mott

(1793–1880)

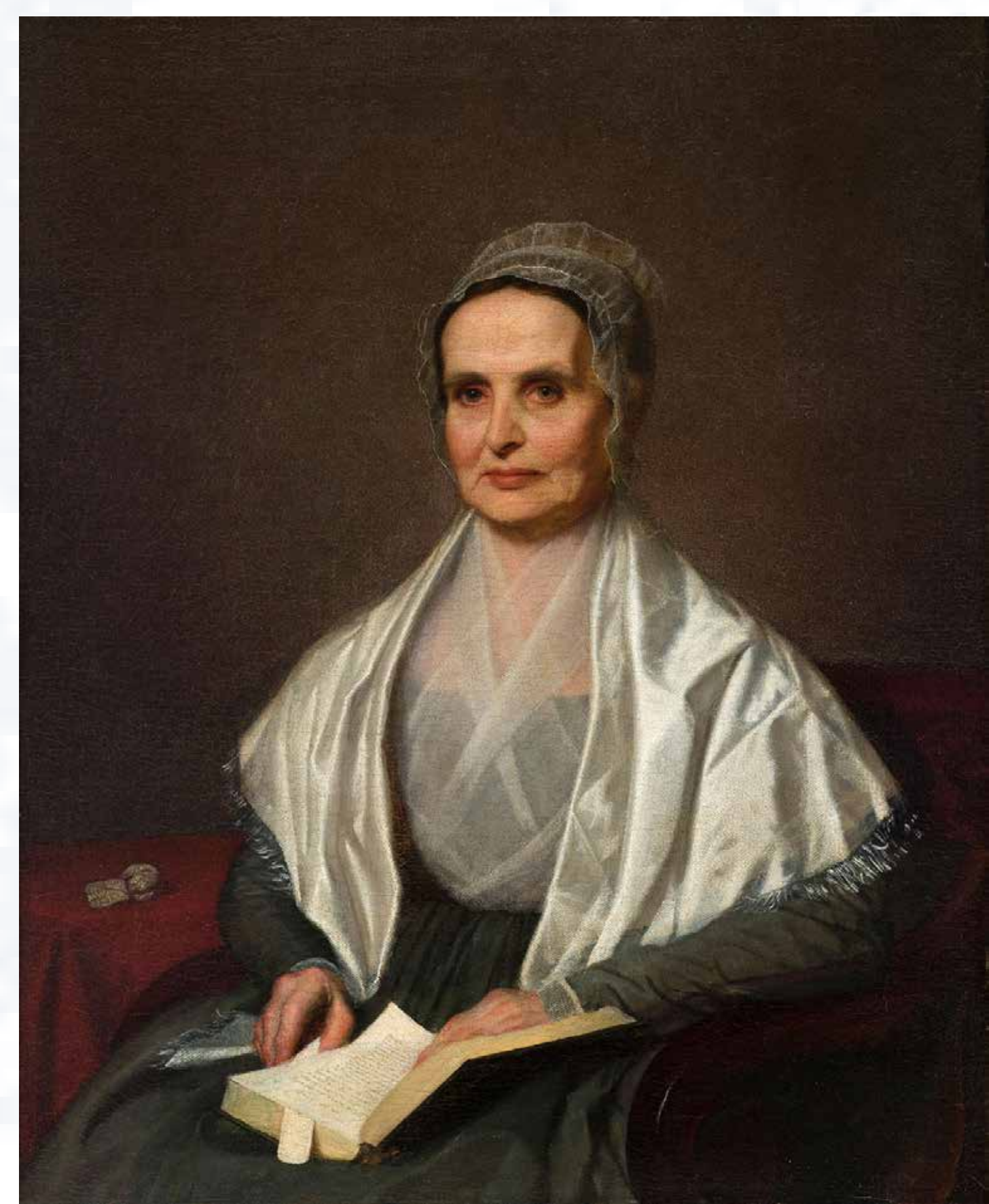


Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton initiated the first women’s rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York. Mott was revered as the moral voice of the women’s rights movement.

*“Truth for authority,
not authority for truth.”*
Lucretia Mott

Nantucket Roots

Lucretia Coffin Mott’s world view was formed by her Quaker childhood on Nantucket. Most Quakers shared a commitment to pacifism and the abolition of slavery. Quaker marriages often reflected equality between husband and wife. Mott later noted that Nantucket women managed complex business affairs when men were off at sea. She developed a belief that abilities and rights were universal—granted equally to women, men, and the racially diverse crews on Nantucket’s whaling ships.



A prolific reformer, Mott was a founder of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. Her portrait hangs in the college president’s office today. FRIENDS HISTORICAL LIBRARY OF SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

Raising Consciousness

Mott attended the Nine Partners Quaker Boarding School in New York where she met her future husband James. Both later taught there. She was angered to learn that, even in that setting, male teachers earned more than women.



Lucretia and husband James Mott shared common beliefs including the equality of women. Boycotting products made with slave labor, James abandoned his business as a cotton broker. The Mott’s nearly lost their home as he made the transition to the wool business. FRIENDS HISTORICAL LIBRARY OF SWARTHMORE COLLEGE



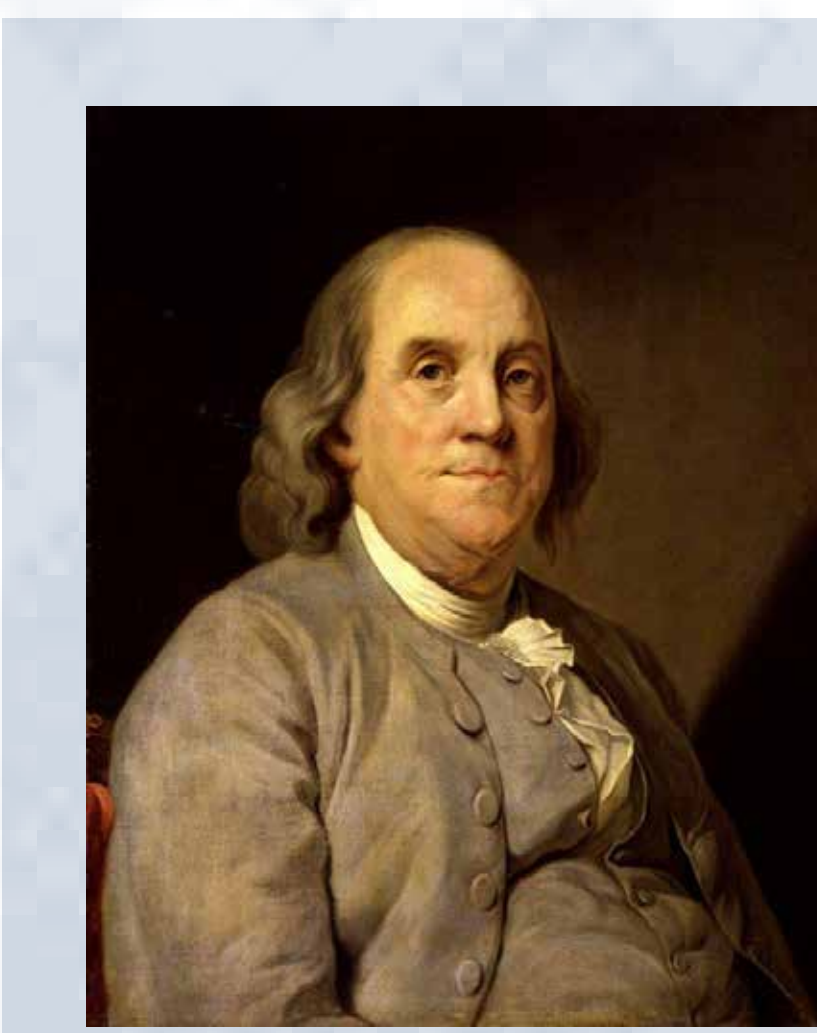
Early Quakers thought that oil paintings reflected vanity and wasted resources that might be put to better use. When inexpensive silhouettes became popular, many Quakers posed for them including James and Lucretia Mott. FRIENDS HISTORICAL LIBRARY OF SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

Abolitionism and Women’s Rights

To achieve abolition and women’s rights, Lucretia Mott favored moral suasion over political action at first. Her friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton helped convince Mott of the importance of voting rights for women. After the Civil War, Mott was dismayed that the suffrage movement divided over support for the 15th amendment that guaranteed the vote to black men but not women. She advised accepting the amendment, while also working for the passage of a national women’s suffrage amendment.

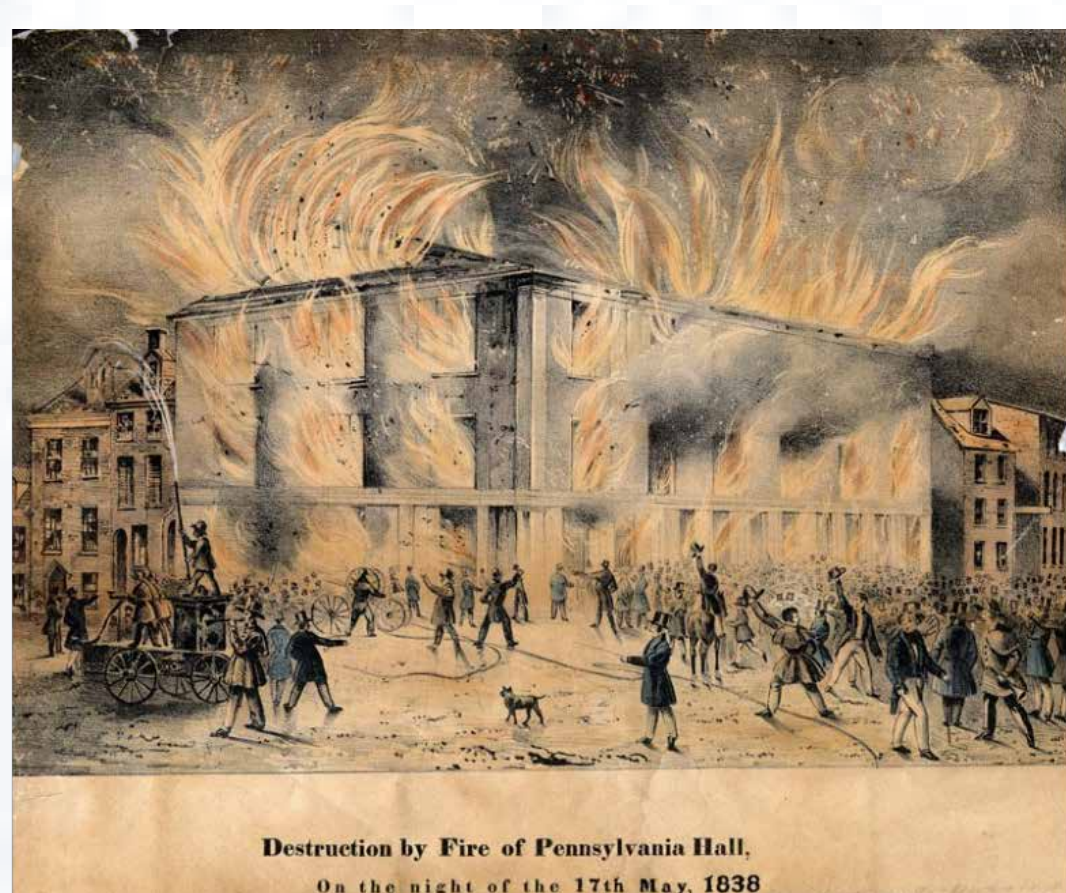
Courage and Convictions

Mott was a renowned speaker, a controversial role for nineteenth century women. Serene and dignified in public she risked personal safety for her causes. After appearing at a women’s rights convention she was confronted by an angry mob. She told her police escort to protect another woman. When asked who would



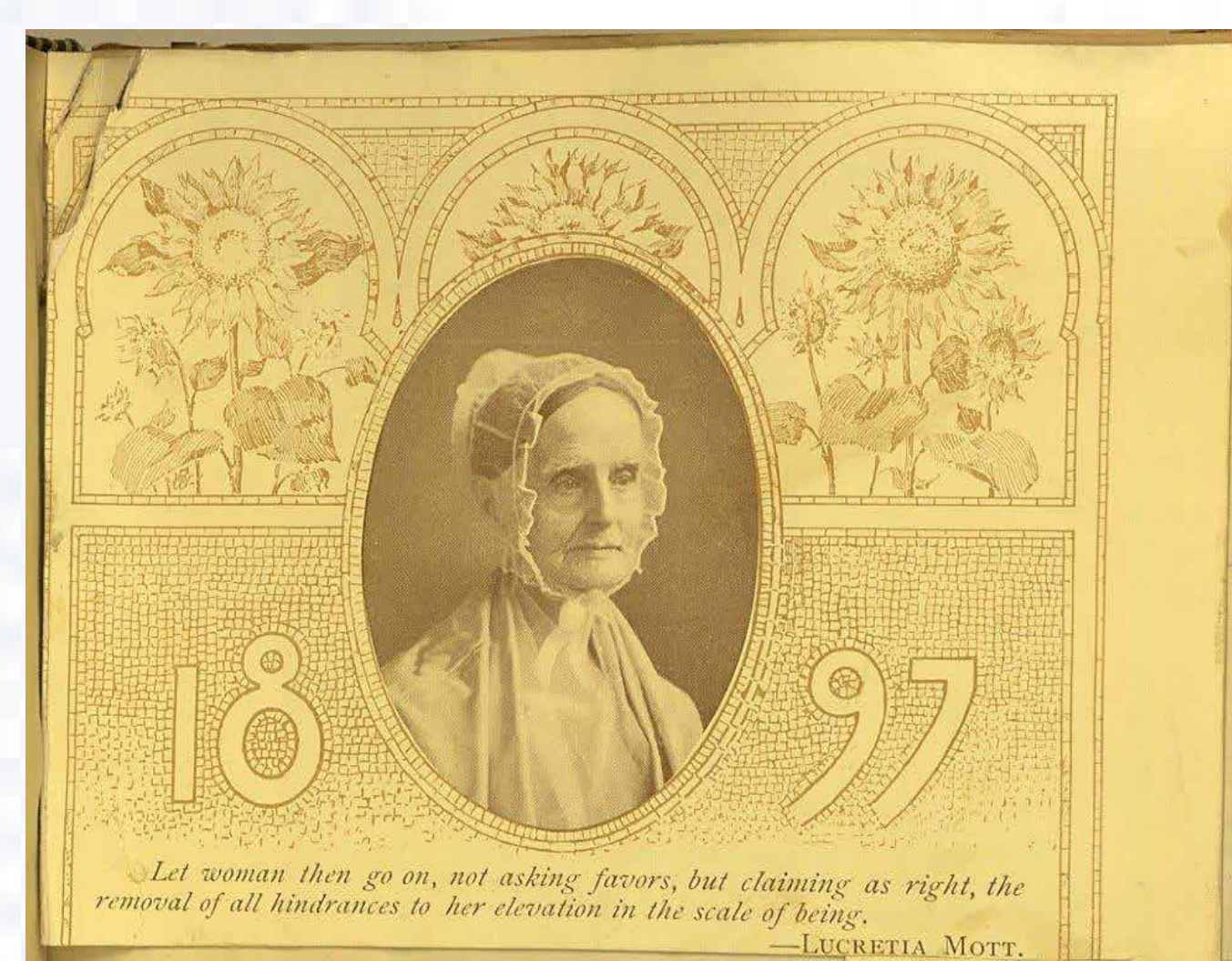
All in the Family

Lucretia Mott was a cousin of Benjamin Franklin. Like him she was born in Massachusetts but settled in Pennsylvania. Her sister Martha Coffin Pelham Wright was an ardent suffragist.



Lucretia Mott was active in programs at Pennsylvania Hall, built by Philadelphia abolitionists. It was destroyed by a mob in 1838. THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA

protect Mott, she pointed to “one of the roughest of the mob” and said “he will.” Startled, the man calmed down and led her to safety.



In later life Lucretia Mott had iconic status among women’s rights activists but protested that she refused to be “lionized.” This image appeared in a National Women’s Suffrage publication in 1897. MILLER NWSA SCRAPBOOKS 1897- 1901 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS