

House of Ideas

In her restored home, a suffragist's memory lives on

TODAY, AN UNASSUMING house sits on a quiet street in rural Fayetteville, N.Y.; over a century ago, the house was a fortress of freedom for the enslaved, provided a platform for the disenfranchised and was the personal dwelling of a feminist foremother. By the end of this year, if enough funds are raised, the Matilda Joslyn Gage Home will be restored to its original grandeur, opening its doors to the public for the first time.

JIM BOURG/REUTERS



A station on the Underground Railroad in pre-Civil War years, the house remained a center for progressive action when women's rights activist, writer and editor Gage lived there. Along with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she co-founded the National Woman Suffrage Association and edited three volumes of *The History of Woman Suffrage* (1881–1887). It is said that in a meeting at the Gage home, Anthony scratched her name in the upstairs library window, where it can still be found today.

The Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation has raised \$700,000 but needs an additional \$300,000 to complete the \$1 million project. "We're at an exciting

but critical moment," Gage Foundation executive director Sally Roesch Wagner says. "This is a house of ideas—a house where we'll talk about how those ideas continue on today."

The Gage Foundation has been formally asked by the National Park Service to nominate the house as a National Historic Landmark. Only 5 percent of the current 2,500 NHL designations are related to women.

Gage died in 1898, having never legally cast a vote. Two decades later, her dream was realized when her daughters, along with other women, were allowed to cast theirs.

You can contribute at www.matildajoslyngage.org/contribute.htm.

—CYNDI WAITE