



Guelma Anthony McLean

(1818 - 1873)

Guelma Penn Anthony was Daniel and Lucy Read Anthony's oldest child. Daniel named their firstborn for the wife of the late seventeenth-century Quaker leader William Penn. Guelma Anthony was born in Adams, Massachusetts, a year after her parents were married, at a time when Daniel was earning the family's living by farming and by operating a small general store in the house he built.

Guelma attended Deborah Moulson's female seminary from 1836 to 1838. Before she married, she worked as a teacher. In September, 1839, she married Aaron M. McLean (1812--1896), the grandson of John McLean, Daniel Anthony's business partner. The entire Anthony family was extremely fond of Aaron, and he was, throughout his life regarded as one of the Anthonys, as if he been born their brother. Because Aaron was raised in the Presbyterian faith, the Quakers withdrew Guelma's membership "marrying out of meeting." This event saddened Daniel and all the Anthonys but did not deter Guelma from marrying Aaron.

Susan and Guelma were always very close and enjoyed spending time together. Guelma's marriage to Aaron, the young couple lived in Battenville, New York, for a number of years before permanently relocating to Rochester, New York, in the late 1850s or early 1860s. While Susan was teaching in Canajoharie, New York, she often spent her vacations visiting Guelma and her family in Battenville. Guelma and Aaron gave birth to four children. A son died in infancy and another son and daughter died following brief, unexpected illnesses upon reaching adulthood, Ann Eliza McLean in 1864 and Thomas King McLean in 1870. In the months of grief following Thomas's death, Guelma became ill and did not recover. Her illness, diagnosed as tuberculosis, steadily progressed, and she died in November 1873. Guelma and Aaron's daughter Margaret McLean (Baker) was their only child to survive to lead a healthy, full adult life.

Guelma dedicated herself to her family. Although there is no record that she participated in the women's rights movement or other social reforms, she was in complete sympathy with Susan's activism. In November, 1872, though very ill, she left her sickbed and walked with her sisters Susan, Hannah Anthony Mosher, and Mary Anthony to the voter registration site to register to vote. Four days later, she again walked to the polls to cast her ballot. At the conclusion of Susan's trial for voting, the United States v. Susan B. Anthony, Susan spent the rest of that summer and fall of 1873 at Guelma's bedside, taking complete charge of her nursing care. By all accounts, she was a superb nurse and was determined to make her beloved sister's final days as comfortable as possible.

