



## **Lucy Read Anthony**

**(1793-1880)**

The mother of Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Read was born in Adams, Massachusetts. Her parents, Daniel and Susannah Richardson Read, had seven children and she was their second child. Like Daniel Anthony and his family, the Reads were farmers, living one mile outside of the village of Adams. Richardson Read raised her children as Baptists. Her husband Daniel Read, though also reared as a Baptist, adamantly adhered to the Universalist faith, another Protestant denomination.

Lucy Read and the Quaker Daniel Anthony fell in love during the years when she was a student in his school. Although Lucy readily agreed to marry Daniel in 1817, she was less sure about marrying into the Society of Friends. She could have converted to Quakerism but chose not to and even claimed that she was “not good enough” to be a Quaker. Although it is not clear exactly what she meant, she adored singing and dancing, two pastimes forbidden to Quakers. She knew that marrying Daniel meant that she would have to give up both activities, whether she decided to become a Quaker or not. During their engagement, she insisted that she attend one final dancing party before their wedding. Daniel agreed, and on a July evening, Lucy danced until four in the morning with one young man after another as Daniel watched from the sidelines.

All descriptions of Lucy agree that she was a shy, reserved woman who kept her feelings to herself. Susan B. Anthony described her as a loving, caring mother but also one who communicated little. She was said to have been extremely embarrassed by each of her pregnancies. Even as she approached the time of birth, she refused to acknowledge or discuss her condition except with her mother. She gave birth to eight children, six of whom lived to lead productive, healthy adult lives. One child was stillborn and another, Eliza Tefft Anthony, died of scarlet fever at age two. Susan and her sisters Guelma, Hannah, and Mary all worried about their mother’s overwhelming workload—managing the household for their own large family and for the many boarders who worked in Daniel Anthony’s mill. Her daughters eagerly assisted her with the endless cooking, cleaning, baking, sewing, and laundry. Despite her never-ending household duties, Lucy always made time to care for sick neighbors and the poor in their community.

With Daniel and her youngest daughter Mary, Lucy attended the Rochester woman’s rights convention in August 1848, two weeks after the historic Seneca Falls Convention. She also signed the Rochester convention’s Declaration of Sentiments. She always supported her husband’s temperance and abolitionist activism as well as Susan’s reform work, even though it was extremely unusual for a mother in the nineteenth century to approve a daughter’s life choice that did not include marriage.

More than a year after Daniel Anthony’s death, Lucy sold the Rochester farm that she had bought with Daniel in 1845. As much as it pained her to abandon a home so full of memories, she realized that she and Mary could not manage the farm on their own. During this time, Susan wrote a letter to Mary in which she expressed some of her deepest feelings about their mother and her role in their lives.





The rest of us have our work to engross us, but mother now lives in her children, and I often feel as if we did too little to lighten her heart and cheer her path. Never was there a mother who came nearer to knowing nothing save her own household, her husband and children. If we sometimes give her occasion to feel that we prized father more than her, it was she who taught us ever to hold him thus above all others. Our high respect and deep love for him, our perfect trust in him, we owe to mother's precepts and vastly more to her example. We shall live in remembrance of her wise counsel, tender watching, self-sacrifice and devotion not second to that we now cherish for the memory of our father-nay, it will even transcend that in measure, as a mother's constant and ever-present love and care for her children are beyond those of a father. (Harper 1899, 1:232)

Lucy wanted to move closer to the center of Rochester but did not purchase a home immediately, choosing to stay awhile with her oldest daughter Guelma and her son-in-law Aaron McLean in Rochester. In 1866, she bought a large brick house on Madison Street in Rochester, large enough for the entire McLean family and her daughter Mary Anthony to live with her.

In the months after Guelma's death in 1873 and as Hannah's tuberculosis progressed, Lucy, now 80 years of age, withdrew from reality and was no longer aware of the losses occurring within her family (Anthony 1954, 325). Mary and Susan remained as devoted to her as ever. During the final months of her mother's life, Susan did not undertake any extensive travel but remained close at hand to help nurse her mother. Lucy Read Anthony died in 1880 at the age of 86.

#### Location

Lot 93: Guelma Anthony McLean

Lucy R. Anthony

Mary Anthony

Lots 111-112: Helen Warren Brown

Lot 109: Margaret Woodbury Strong

#### Area Markers

Lot 103: Lutes / Fox Monument

Lot 135: G.S. Copeland

