

Lucy Stone was a staunch anti-slavery advocate and a lifelong champion of women's rights. Speaking without notes for hours to crowds of 2,000 to 3,000 people, Lucy was so famous as an orator that P.T. Barnum once asked to be her lecture agent. I wrote this poem in traditional ballad stanza form as a way to honor Lucy's penchant for oral storytelling. Her story is also personal to me, because she is my great, great grandmother's aunt. The table from the Stone family farm at Coy Hill is in the dining room of our extended family's "Camp" in the small town of East Brookfield, Massachusetts where my father grew up. In August of 2018, we attended the Lucy Stone Bicentennial Celebration in the West Brookfield town hall near the Congregational church where the minister first denied her vote. After saving up for nine years, Lucy attended Oberlin College in Ohio at a time when women rarely pursued a higher education. Forbidden to learn rhetoric in class, she formed her own secret women's debate club in a private home. She was the first woman from Massachusetts to graduate from college, and she was the first woman to keep her name when she married Henry Blackwell in 1855; from then on, women who chose to keep their name were called Lucy Stoners. She was the founder and editor of the *Woman's Journal*, a publication that chronicled women's progress for 60 years, and she helped to organize the first National Woman's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1850. But a rift with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony led to the near omission of Lucy's reform work in the pair's tome, *History of Woman's Suffrage*. The schism was over Lucy's refusal to stop campaigning for both women's rights and the passage of the 15th amendment. Stanton and Anthony believed they should focus solely on the fight for woman's suffrage and felt the amendment should not be supported because it only provided black men, not women, with the right to vote. Because of this omission, Lucy Stone's vast contributions to the women's rights movement have been marginalized for far too long. Nevertheless, her suffrage colleagues honored her tireless work for justice, calling her their "morning star."

—Linda King Brown

The Ballad of Lucy Stone

"Make the World Better" – Lucy's last words to her daughter, October 18, 1893

She raised her hand to vote that day
for Deacon Henshaw's soul.
His sin was letting a woman speak
for the betterment of us all.

For the slave who lived in fear of
of the white man's steely gaze
For the girls who spent their lonesome days
mending socks and bearing pain.

But the minister would not count her hand
so Lucy breathed in fire
Felt the pinch and pull of bonnet strings
and petticoat attire.

Her waist was cinched with whalebone clips
her skirts were heavy armor
And with the courage of a loyal friend
she raised her hand again.

And again and again and again and again
her spirit was unhooked.
She'd comb the woods for chestnuts now
to pawn them off for books.

College was not for girls, they said
but Lucy took the stage
The first one of her kind to speak
of the woman's right to rage.

She taught freed slaves to read and write
preached the cause of abolition
Crisscrossed the land with an iron plan
to change their minds and vision.

Pummeled with apples, hymnbooks, and beans
she weathered the angry mobs
'Til the town halls filled with foes and friends
and strangers from afar.

Her voice would lilt and intonate
like a flute or a flurry of angels
Disarming crowds of a thousand or more with
plain tales of hope and wonder.

Her bloomers were scorned and ridiculed
because a woman should not wear pants
But the people saw her spirit shift
the eyes of government.

Lucy found a man to be her friend
the kind that she could marry
But she kept her name and her home and her
hand in the air for all eternity.