

Brooklyn Stanley - Tolland Middle School

Prudence Crandall

There are and were many women from Connecticut who made major impacts on our life today, but Prudence Crandall may have made one of the biggest. Prudence Crandall, born in Rhode Island in 1803 came to Connecticut when she was just 10. As a young Quaker she was well educated and studied subjects that were commonly reserved for men and boys. When she grew up she used that knowledge to found the Canterbury Female Seminary school in 1831, here in Connecticut.

The school was a boarding school for wealthy white women until 1832 when she admitted a black student. In doing so, many townsfolk were furious and parents withdrew their girls from the school. But, Crandall held her ground, and she reopened the school as one just for black girls, the first one in U.S. history. In doing this, people were more outraged than ever. Still, Crandall refused to close her school. Wealthy black women from all over the U.S. came for an education. Local whites from Canterbury tortured the black women whenever they left the school. New laws were made to try to thwart her efforts of equal rights and education. Because of this law Crandall was arrested. Still Crandall didn't close her school. But one day an angry mob attacked, tearing the school bit by bit until the whole thing collapsed. For fear of her students getting hurt Prudence finally closed her school.

Although it's certainly true for Crandall, bravery and standing up for outright inequality is not something most people would do. As I read about Prudence, I had to reflect on what a

privilege I have to know, learn with and from, and attend school with a diverse group of students who are African, Latino, Indian, or Asian, as well as every religion of the world. Though we are nearly 200 years from when Prudence started her school, there is still work to be done to make all students feel valued. I know I can stand up to any injustice or unfair treatment of my classmates and friends. Because of Prudence, it doesn't require breaking a law or half courage she had - it's just the right thing to do.