

## **Prudence Crandall Teacher and Prophetic Witness, 1890**

Born to a Quaker family in Rhode Island in 1803, Prudence Crandall was educated in arithmetic, the sciences, and Latin at the New England Friend's Boarding School in Rhode Island. The Quakers, or "Friends," believed that women should be educated, and it was in the environment of the Friend's Boarding School that Prudence Crandall's passion for teaching was first awakened.

In 1831, Crandall started a girl's school in Canterbury, Connecticut, where she educated the daughters of the town's wealthy families. In 1833 she admitted to her school a young African American girl named Sarah Harris. Harris wanted an education so that she could in turn teach other African American children. The parents of the white children at Crandall's school were outraged and demanded Harris's expulsion, but Crandall refused and decided to open a new school for African American girls.

Despite repeated attempts by town members to close the school, and even threats to destroy it, Crandall persevered in her labors. She enlisted the help of William Lloyd Garrison, editor of *The Liberator*, the nation's major antislavery newspaper. Through his paper and advocacy, Garrison spread awareness of her cause all over the nation.

However, later in 1833, the state legislature passed the so-called "Black Law," which made it a crime to open a school that taught black children from any state other than Connecticut. Crandall, who had received pupils from other states, was arrested, jailed, and tried. She was eventually convicted, but a higher court reversed the decision. Far from subsiding, the harassment she endured grew worse, and, fearing for the safety of her students, she closed her school in 1834.

After her husband died in 1874, Crandall moved to Elk Falls, Kansas. In 1886 the Connecticut state legislature awarded her a pension. In a petition signed by more than a hundred citizens of that state, many expressed their regret and shame over her treatment. Mark Twain attempted to persuade the state to buy back her original home in Canterbury. Prudence Crandall died in 1890, and today she is recognized as the official State Heroine of Connecticut.