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# A Brief History of Women's History by Carol Berkin



Don Pollard, *Carol Berkin*, April 9, 2016. Weekend with History: Hamilton, Jefferson, and the Early American Republic, New-York Historical Society.

But we were, above all, scholars. And we were disturbed to see that when we looked at history, we did not see faces that resembled us. We decided it was time to add those faces to the panorama that was America's past. With that,

a new social history was born. And, to our surprise, it turned out there were plenty of sources—they were just a bit buried.

There were distinct phases or stages in the history we scholars of women's history wrote in the 1980s and 1990s. And it turned out that working-class history, African American history, and later gay and lesbian history, followed the same pattern. The two most significant stages were a focus on victimization—that is, the ways in which the dominant

groups restricted the autonomy and individualism of our group. Next, we turned to uncovering the contributions, largely ignored or forgotten, made by members of these victimized groups. These phases often overlapped and they have not completely disappeared. What is perhaps remarkable is that these stages seemed to be an essential piece of every field of social history.

For those of us determined to restore women to the history of the colonial era and the early republic, our research began with etiquette and advice manuals, sermons, legal treatises, and other prescriptive literature that told women what their proper role in society was and instructed them on feminine virtues. Although these rules of behavior were often written in flowery and flattering language, their purpose was clear: to confine and constrain women's choices in life. Laws made them permanent economic dependents on fathers and husbands; custom and tradition narrowed their adult paths to marriage and motherhood; and religious teachings urged them to be obedient and submissive to men. They were victims, in short, of a system that favored

men and disadvantaged women. Yet we rejected the argument that these limitations made women little more than passive observers of that history. Like the slave laboring in the tobacco fields, like the apprentice working in the blacksmith shop, women of early America had what social historians call "agency." This meant that no matter how limited a person or a group's options were, they still made choices, they took actions, and those choices and actions help shape the history of their era. This concept of agency enabled us to drive home the point that even though the colonial housewife and the women of the early republic had few rights and few opportunities in public life, they too had settled the colonies, fought for independence, and engaged in acts of patriotism. In short, they had contributed to the emergence of the American republic.

As we combed the archives, we discovered that there were exceptional women who, by virtue of their brilliance or their bravery or their creativity, had made important contributions to our national history. Yet they remained, to borrow Willa Cather's bittersweet phrase,

When I started college in the 1960s, women bobbed occasionally on the ocean of American History—Pocahontas, Abigail Adams, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and, of course, Eleanor Roosevelt. Up they came to the water's surface—usually in a sidebar in the text book—and then, they vanished with little trace. Graduate school showed little improvement in the attention to our foremothers. When I asked about the possibility of doing a

dissertation on early American women, my advisor looked genuinely puzzled. "But there is nothing to say," he declared, "and no sources to say it." Yet by the 1970s, change was in the air. The new crop of Ph.D.'s included women, working-class men, Italians, Jews, and African Americans—groups rarely seen in doctoral cap and gown before then. We came of age in an era of reform; radical politics, feminism, union activism, the civil rights movement, and the antiwar movement informed our work.

## A Brief History of Women's History by Carol Berkin *continued*

“lost ladies.” We believed they deserved to be “found,” and thus biographies appeared of innovators like Eliza Lucas Pinckney, who introduced a new cash crop—indigo—into Southern agriculture; intellectuals like Judith Sargent Murray, whose *Gleaner Essays* helped spur the post-Revolutionary War emergence of female academies in every state; adventurers like Deborah Sampson Gannett, who donned male clothing, enlisted in the continental army, and fought bravely for three and half years, being wounded twice; and heroes like Dolley Madison, whose bravery not only saved the portrait of the nation's first president from a burning White House during the War of 1812, but whose political genius helped shape the social setting in which the politics of the young republic could be conducted. Their names and their deeds deserved a place in the history textbooks that young girls—and boys—would read.

As our work continued, we discovered how plentiful the sources were on women. Going from archive to archive, we were careful to leave each other notes that read, “There's a woman's diary stuck away in the file marked

‘Miscellaneous,’ or ‘There's a treasure trove of letters filed under ‘other documents.’” Yet, in a critical way these sources led us astray. It took us a while to realize that most of the literate women of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who left these diaries and letters were white and members of the privileged classes. We were reminded by women of color that the stories we were telling were not the stories of enslaved women, frontier wives, Native Americans, or servants. After all, Dolley Madison and Sukey, her slave, saw the world through very different lenses. We realized that we could not write the story of white elite women and call it the history of American women. There simply was no such person as “the” American woman; race, class, region, religion, and a host of other factors cross-cut and complicated gender. We soon learned to interpret our sources more subtly and to seek out new sources, using anthropology, sociology, and computer technology. Technology helped us analyze aggregate data like birth and death records, account books, ship manifests, and court records. Hundreds of court cases could be programed to reveal what crimes women were likely to be accused

There simply was no such person as “the” American woman; race, class, region, religion, and a host of other factors cross-cut and complicated gender.

of or commit, while wills and probate court records revealed female property holding and the ways in which women challenged the distribution of their husbands' wealth. We might never be able to write the biography of an individual enslaved woman, for she did not have the leisure or the skill to keep a diary or write letters that revealed her feelings and her ideas, but we were able to draw collective portraits of childbirth patterns among enslaved women, their work roles on Virginia tobacco plantations and in South Carolina rice paddies, and to examine the survival of African traditions through the naming of children. These collective portraits continued our mission of writing what one scholar aptly called “history from the bottom up.”

By the end of the twentieth century, a new generation of women's history scholars had

emerged and the field took new directions. These historians have chosen to focus primarily on cultural and ideological issues. They have asked a series of provocative questions about the relationship between race and gender, about sex and power, and about how both women and men learn their gendered roles. They are less interested in the lived experiences of women than in applying theories that explain the layers of meaning in those lives. They rely more heavily on feminist theory than on the kind of primary sources my generation found in archives and dusty attics. There are, however, many historians who still continue to search those archives for clues to women's daily lives. And there are many historians who still search for those lost ladies whose special contributions to our past deserve to be uncovered. The study of lived experiences continues side by side with the search for theoretical overviews.

Today, library shelves groan under the weight of books and journal articles on American women, proof that my dissertation advisor was wrong when he said there was nothing to say about women and no sources to use in saying it.

But it might be wise to remember that the battle to fully integrate women's experiences into the basic history curriculum offered to our sons and daughters, from elementary school to graduate classes, has not been won. Presidents, generals, male heroes and villains still dominate the reading lists of college courses and the pages of our textbooks.

The voices we hear in the primary sources most often examined in the classroom are often exclusively male. Teachers and students still need to ask, “Where are the women in this story you are telling us?” Girls as much as boys still need to see themselves as actors in our national past. The current emphasis on science and technology, the devaluing of the humanities, and the erosion of time in elementary and high school classes spent on history make our task harder. As the white knight said to Alice while they stood on the chess board, “You have to run twice as fast to stay in one place.” It seems the work of women's scholars and of those who hope to see women fully integrated into our national story, like so much of women's work, is “never done.”

# Saving Washington: Background Essay

## Module 1 Unofficial Politician: Dolley Madison in Early Washington

### WOMEN DURING THE REVOLUTION

The traditional story of America's origins focuses almost entirely on the Founding Fathers and the men who fought the battles, a well-known narrative that discounts the real contributions of women. Throughout the founding era, women's rights and roles were restricted by coverture, the ancient English common law that placed females under the control of fathers and husbands. It made them largely invisible in the law, and its wide shadow made them largely invisible in history. But women were present, and deeply involved in the political events around them.

During the Revolution, some women aligned with the British. For wealthy women, the reason may have been that they were invested in trade and knew that a war would disrupt the economy. Runaway slaves, including some who belonged to George Washington, were drawn to the



Johannes Adam Simon Oertel, *Pulling Down the Statue of King George III*, New York City, 1852–1853. Oil on canvas. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Samuel V. Hoffman, 1925.6.

British side by the promise of freedom. On the Patriot side, women found inventive ways to aid the drive toward independence. Even before the war broke out, women were boycotting British imports like tea and fabric, two products deeply ingrained in women's lives. When the statue of King George was pulled down in New York after the reading of the Declaration of Independence, women and children in Connecticut received the broken statue, melted the metal, and made bullets. And when a signal was hung in the Old North Church

to send Paul Revere on his famous ride, the secret information about enemy troop movements had probably come from Margaret Kemble Gage, the American-born wife of Britain's top general, Thomas Gage. He banished her to England.

As the war continued, women served as behind-the-scenes political agents, and a small number fought alongside male soldiers. Some followed their husbands and supported the war effort by cooking, mending, and caring for the wounded. The



John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. James Warren (Mercy Otis)*, ca. 1763. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bequest of Winslow Warren, 31.212.

### THE POST- REVOLUTION ROLE OF WOMEN

When the war ended, the lingering revolutionary spirit opened a window, allowing women to join the high-stakes conversation about America's future. A few were able to speak and

write openly about politics, which had not been acceptable previously. Mercy Otis Warren, who had published anti-British satire during the war, was the best known of these "female politicians." She wrote against the ratification of the Constitution, equating Federalism with "aristocratic tyranny," and later produced a three-volume history of the Revolution.

By the early 1800s, this window of opportunity had closed. Women were encouraged to resume traditional female roles, but with an important new twist. In order for

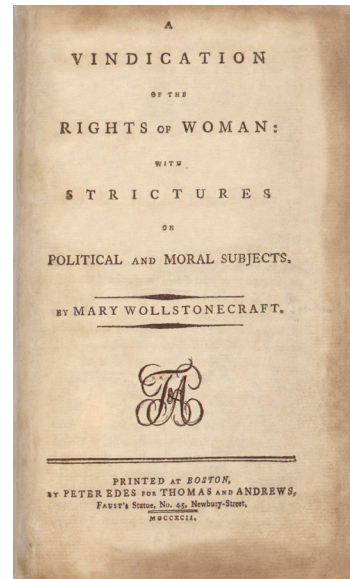
Revolutionary Army was only possible because of female labor performing these crucial survival duties. Other women remained at home and managed farms and businesses alone. Housewives continued to boycott British goods, turning their buying habits into powerful political tools. When protestors took to the streets, women stood with their fists and voices raised.

# Saving Washington: Background Essay *continued*

the republic to thrive, the nation needed a citizenry that understood and was committed to American ideals. Women were uniquely placed, and uniquely qualified, to reinforce these values in their husbands and children. Scholars call this idea republican womanhood. It gave many women a new sense of purpose and a personal connection to the country's future. Educational opportunities for women improved, to better prepare them for this role. Literacy rates increased among white, mostly Northern urban women who had the resources to pursue an education.

Regardless of race or class, women participated in political life. They remained engaged through reading and discussion. They took part in petition campaigns, to help war widows, for example. To support early anti-slavery efforts, they formed church groups, and joined boycotts of slave-produced crops like sugar and cotton. And they considered the role of women by reading revolutionary new works on the subject, like Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* and Judith Sargent Murray's essay, "On the Equality of the Sexes."

Even as coverture limited rights, the Enlightenment had changed



Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1794, title page. New-York Historical Society Library, Y1794 Woll Vin.

some attitudes about women. They were increasingly thought to have special strengths that men lacked, especially in relation to morality, religion, and social behavior. At a 1790 Independence Day celebration, one speaker cast these strengths in a new, more political, light: "The men possess the more ostensible powers of making and executing laws . . . [but] the women in every free country, have an absolute control of manners; and it is confessed, that in a republic, manners are of equal importance with laws."

The speaker, James Tilton, was addressing a group of former soldiers, and used "manners," as it was understood at the time. Historian Rosemarie Zagari notes that the word "connoted ideas of individual morality and personal character, suggesting a strong connection between private values and public behavior. . . . [It] implied something more profound than the way a person held his or her teacup."

Republican womanhood directed women's energies toward their husbands and children. But the belief that women were responsible for the nation's moral fiber applied more broadly as well. It meant new responsibilities and new openings for women, as Dolley Madison's life and work would show.

## DOLLEY MADISON

In 1801, James Madison was appointed secretary of state by the recently elected president, Thomas Jefferson. It was a harshly partisan time in the still-unfinished capital city. Little social life existed where congressmen might have relaxed together, or begun to get along. Most came to Washington only to work, leaving families at home as they crammed into uncomfort-



Joseph Wood, *Dolley (Payne) Todd Madison*, 1817. Oil on canvas. Virginia Historical Society, 1967.14.

able boarding houses. Political disagreements festered and grew. Some legislators refused to speak to others. A few resorted to physical blows, even duels.

When President Thomas Jefferson invited politicians to dinner at the White House (then called the President's Palace or President's House), he invited one side at a time, never both at once. In this way he avoided partisan conflict, and strengthened his own hand by preventing factions from working together. This approach made partisanship worse, and Dolley Madison took a different tack. She saw the importance of social

contact, and she entertained often and happily. A woman who never forgot a name, who dressed for elegance and effect, and who enjoyed sharing a pinch of snuff with her guests, Dolley never seemed to behave in an overtly political way. She was far more politically astute than people realized, but her skills would have been seen as indelicate and unwomanly. Dolley kept them well hidden behind a warm smile and a beautiful dress. But she understood politics, knew what the issues were, and who should talk to whom. Her parties were an opportunity for her to put this knowledge to work.

Battles might rage in Congress, but at the Madisons' gatherings—held in their home during the secretary of state years, and later in the White House—guests obeyed the rules of social life, which required good etiquette and good character. In this setting, with women present, men behaved as gentlemen and even enemies began to converse. These events offered politicians a regular, friendly environment in which to both socialize and work, to find points of agreement, and to bring the Constitution to life "on the ground."

# Saving Washington: Background Essay *continued*

## Module 2 Breaking the Rules: Women Reformers, 1800–1860

### GOOD FEELINGS

As the United States entered the 1820s, earlier anxiety over the republic’s survival chances began to calm. The Constitution had remained effective. Power transferred from one president to the next without violence. The country was at peace. One Boston newspaper called it the Era of Good Feelings. The label overlooked the existence of slavery, entrenched inequalities,

and the hard reality of many people’s lives, but it captured a certain optimism in and about America.

The United States was stable, but it was changing rapidly as the economy began to diversify. Throughout America’s colonial history, most families had lived on farms that required the labor of the entire family. Men did one kind of work, and women another, but both were essential because nearly everything the family needed was grown or produced on the farm. By 1800, the nation was moving away from this farm-based economy. Industrialism was in its early stages, but many goods were being manufactured in factories. The factory sys-

tem required centralized networks of financing and transportation, which led to the expansion of cities. The cities, and the employment opportunities they presented, gave rise to something America had not yet seen: a middle class. Men in this new economic stratum, which was largely Protestant and white, worked outside the home and generally earned enough to support a family. Typically, the middle-class wives of these working men remained at home.

All of these story lines profoundly affected women’s lives, and women in turn profoundly affected the narrative of nineteenth-century America.

### TRUE WOMANHOOD

With their husbands working outside the home, and without the farm-wife duties that filled the days of their mothers and grandmothers, the “proper role” of middle-class white women was redefined in the prescriptive literature written for them. New messages appeared in conduct books, ladies’ magazines, religious tracts, and similar publications. Sometimes written by men and sometimes by women, they carried the weight of authority, and defined how middle-class white women should



“Godey’s Paris Fashions Americanized,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, July 1848. Hand-colored engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, TX1.G58, vol. 37.

behave and look and occupy their time. In 1966, historian Barbara Welter surveyed a broad sampling of this literature for the years 1820–1860, and identified the virtues that characterized the newly idealized woman: purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity. Welter called it the cult of true womanhood. Other historians have used different terms—including the cult of domesticity, or simply domesticity—to define this pervasive new view of the exemplary woman.

The earlier ideal of republican womanhood, in which women were charged with the patriotic duty to maintain the ideals of the nation’s founding, seemed less critical when the U.S. was steady on its feet. Instead, “true women” focused on home, family, and religion, and they raised their sons to be successful in business. The idea of women’s sphere was not new, but it gained prominence and a starker outline. As the pace of American life quickened, the idea of a sanctuary from the jarring marketplace easily took root. Home was romanticized as a haven, and the woman of the house was romanticized as its caretaker and protector. Beneath the often sentimental language and imagery, women were portrayed as fundamentally different from, and inferior to, men. The legal principle of coverture, which limited the legal rights of married women, continued to cast its long shadow over cultural attitudes that affected all women’s lives.

It’s impossible to know how individual middle-class white women responded to the many directives that poured their way. Messages sent are not always messages welcomed or acted on. But many women were in



Francis Guy, *Tontine Coffee House*, New York City, ca. 1797. Oil on linen. New-York Historical Society, Purchase, The Louis Durr Fund, 1907.32.

## Saving Washington: Background Essay *continued*

no position even to try to meet these expectations: poor working women, old women, black women, Native American women, women whose husbands had died or abandoned them or become ill or lost a job, single women “taken in” by a brother, widows left with young children. In fact, the vast majority of women were excluded from the true womanhood message. It was aimed at women who lived in cities or towns, whose husbands worked in banks and offices. Despite these women’s rising numbers, most women at the time still lived on farms.

Nevertheless, the cult of true womanhood was appealing to American women, even those with no chance of living a private, domestic life. It may appear today to have been quite rigid in its expectations, but part of its power was its flexibility. Even a poor house wife or mill girl could find a way to bring a small touch of gentility into her life, and feel that she was participating.

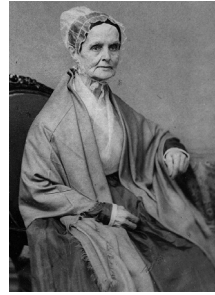
### REFORMERS

In the Second Great Awakening (1790s–1840s), itinerant preachers traveled the countryside and converted thousands, especially



Jarena Lee, 1849. *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee: giving an account of her call to preach the gospel*, frontispiece. Engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, C1LA784 A3 1849.

to the Baptist and Methodist denominations. Most of the people in the crowds were women, and most of the men were their husbands and sons. The intense religious experience reinforced women’s sense of their moral superiority, and strengthened their commitment to put it to good use. This “moral superiority” marked a complete turnaround from the ideology of the colonial period, when women were seen as morally shaky, requiring a firm male hand to stay on the right path. In the new thinking that developed during the Awakening, women were both more spiritual than men, and naturally more inclined to see and do the right thing. They were also seen as more emotional, and therefore more susceptible to grace. As a result, women were considered responsible for setting moral and ethical standards within their homes and communities. And out of this new sense of women’s strength and



Lucretia Mott, ca. 1860–1880. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 9750024.

obligation came their significant role in the great reform movements of the nineteenth century.

The Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, was a somewhat different case. Quakers were not deeply involved in the Second Great Awakening, but schisms within their faith produced some communities that were fully committed to social reform. Quaker doctrine granted women more power than their counterparts in many Protestant churches; they were elders and ministers, and involved in decision-making. Because of their organizational experience, and their religion’s focus on social good, Quaker women were both leaders and foot soldiers in a wide range of reform activities: temperance, pacifism, prison reform, Indian rights, co-education, abolition, and women’s rights.

Women’s earliest organized reform efforts were community-based and non-confrontational. Benevolent societies that began to form in the first decade of the nineteenth century drew on women’s accepted strengths, and were often connected to their churches. No one questioned the rightness of Christian women saving widows and orphans.

Written petitions were another respectable way for women to make their opinions known. They could be passed among friends and signed in the security and privacy of the home. Petition campaigns were a tried-and-true form of female activism for decades. But they were not directed only toward acceptably safe “women’s topics.” Women used petitions to oppose both the Indian removal plan and slavery.

Abolition was the issue that first brought black women and white women into the public sphere. It was a dangerous subject at a dangerous time, and women took new risks. A few spoke to “promiscuous” groups—men and women together—and to racially mixed groups. They were violating strict social rules about women’s proper place, and the results could be violent. The question of women’s role was

so threatening that it divided the abolition movement.

Throughout the century, in several different areas of reform, women developed important organizational skills and built on their perceived strengths. As they expanded their reach, they challenged stereotypes, sexual double standards, and male power within the family. When the 1848 convention in Seneca Falls demanded full citizenship rights for women, it drew on decades of activism and lessons learned, and aimed the spotlight directly on the central issue of women’s rights.

The resources in Module 2 are arranged chronologically, so they begin with benevolent societies and end with a sharpened focus on suffrage. But they do not represent a linear progression, as if one group of women began with benevolent societies and ended up wearing pants and fighting for the vote. The story of women reformers, and the history of reform movements, is far more complex. But the chronology represents an important reality: over time, women increasingly took public stands on the most compelling of the national conversations, and proved they could. They also continued to meet resistance.

# Materials in the Curriculum

The heart of each module is the collection of life stories and resources. With these materials, students can explore ideas in several ways and discover important subtleties and connections.

An additional piece—the timeline titled **Could and Should**—presents in short-quotation format the cultural and legal messages about and for women. It spans the period from 1765 to 1860, and is meant to be used with both modules.

Other materials in this curriculum are provided for teachers, although you may find them useful for students as well. These include:

- **A Brief History of Women's History**, by Carol Berkin
- **Saving Washington: Background Essay**
- **Glossary**
- **Suggested Reading**
- **Appendix A: Eliza Brock to Dolley Madison**
- **Appendix B: Declaration of Sentiments**

## Module 1 • Unofficial Politician: Dolley Madison in Early Washington



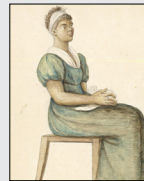
**Dolley Madison.** Celebrated during her life for her wartime bravery and personal appeal, today the wife of the nation's fourth president is recognized for her astute understanding of politics, and for her role in shaping a political culture in the capital city.



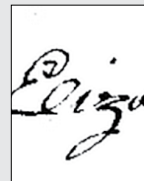
**James Madison.** The primary framer of the U.S. Constitution, Madison wrote many of the Federalist Papers, and drafted the Bill of Rights, a paradox for a Virginia slave owner. He broke with Federalists, served as Thomas Jefferson's secretary of state (1801–08) and was president (1809–17) during the War of 1812.



**Margaret Bayard Smith.** A Washington insider, she was an important writer of letters, articles, and private journals about life in the capital city, and the biographer of her friend Dolley Madison.



**Sukey.** Born to slavery on James Madison's Virginia plantation, she served Dolley for some forty years, and may have aided her enslaved daughter's attempted escape aboard the abolitionist-sponsored *Pearl*.



**Eliza Brock.** A young white servant during Philadelphia's yellow fever epidemic, she tended the dying John Todd, Dolley Madison's first father-in-law. Later married to a well-off farmer, she faced financial and personal turmoil as a widow, and wrote to Dolley asking for help in 1844.

**Resource 1: Coverture** (Text). This resource explores the text and context of the ancient legal principle that severely restricted women's political, financial, and personal rights.



**Resource 2: Political Battles** (Image). This 1796 political cartoon satirizes a caning episode between congressional opponents, as elected officials stood by, grinning foolishly.

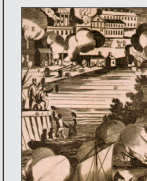
**Resource 3: Lessons Learned** (Text). Margaret Bayard Smith describes how Dolley Madison's social events drew large political crowds and smoothed animosities during the years when James was secretary of state and a candidate for the presidency.

**Resource 4: Parties and Politics** (Text). Now the president's wife, Dolley's brief letter to her sister recounts the previous night's party, and reveals how deeply she understood the role her social events played during a chaotic time.

**Resource 5: Fashion and Politics** (Text). This exploration of Dolley's sense of fashion shows both her taste for luxurious French fabric and her awareness of the political messages conveyed by her clothing choices.

**Resource 6: Saving Washington** (Text). Dolley's famous letter to her sister details the frightening hours before British troops invaded Washington during the War of 1812, and her rescue of the iconic portrait of George Washington.

**Resource 7: Paul Jennings's Account of the British Attack** (Text). This extract from the 1865 memoir of Paul Jennings, once the Madisons' slave, offers his recollection of the British seizure of Washington City more than fifty years earlier.



**Resource 8: Washington Burns** (Image). Taking the British perspective of the seizure of Washington, this engraving shows the city in defeat and flames.

**Resource 9: Write to Me** (Text). In 1844, Dolley Madison writes to her unreliable son, Payne Todd, about their crushing financial difficulties, and begs him to come and help her.

# Materials in the Curriculum *continued*

## Module 2 • Breaking the Rules: Women Reformers, 1800–1860



**Nancy Ward (Nanyehi).** A highly influential Cherokee leader, Ward was often present when the Cherokees negotiated with the U.S. government. As an elderly woman, she called on male tribal leaders to resist the Indian removal program.



**Jarena Lee.** A free black woman, born in New Jersey, Lee fought for and won the right to preach during the Second Great Awakening. She became the first authorized woman preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.



**Mary and Emily Edmonson.** Born into slavery, these sisters took part, as teenagers, in the ill-fated slave escape attempt aboard the *Pearl*. Later freed, they became abolitionists in the North.

**Lydia Maria Child.** A writer of popular domestic advice books, she became radicalized over slavery and joined forces with leading abolitionist



William Lloyd Garrison. Her political writing cost her many readers, but she continued to write both domestic books and antislavery texts.



**Amelia Bloomer.** A white resident of Seneca Falls, Bloomer attended part of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention and worked for temperance reform. She supported, but did not originate, the short-dress-over-pantaloon outfit that came to be known as bloomers.

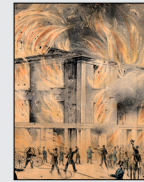
**Resource 10: Benevolent Societies** (Text). This excerpt explores the formation of women-founded orphan asylums in New York and Washington City. Charity work was seen as appropriate for women and enabled them to learn important skills, but different state laws meant different levels of freedom for the organizers.

**Resource 11: Catharine Beecher's Campaign Against Indian Removal** (Text). Beecher's circular urged women to sign petitions against the planned relocation of southeastern

Indians, applying an accepted vehicle for women's opinions -- the written petition -- to the kind of heated political debate where women's voices were not welcome. The Indian Removal Act passed anyway, but it had an unintended consequence in the battle against slavery. Some who had favored colonization for free blacks were convinced that moving large populations was unworkable, and became full-fledged abolitionists instead.

**Resource 12: Women, Quakers, and Reform** (Text). This important passage from Quaker doctrine held that "male and female are one in Christ." Supported by this egalitarian view, Quaker women were ministers, elders, and shared in decision-making. Because of these experiences, and because many Quaker communities saw social good as their mission, Quaker women became essential to temperance, abolition, women's rights, and other nineteenth-century reform efforts.

**Resource 13: Fire at Pennsylvania Hall** (Image). A fire destroyed Pennsylvania Hall, a meeting place for abolitionists, on May 17, 1838. It was set by a mob angry because white women, including Angelina Grimke Weld, had spo-



ken to mixed audiences of men and women, and because white women and black women had walked arm in arm through the crowd.



**Resource 14: Fashion Plates** (Image). This illustration appeared in *Godey's Lady's Book* in July 1848, the same month as the Seneca Falls convention. *Godey's* showcased the new fashions, appealed to women of all classes, and provided a visual message about the "ideal" woman.



**Resource 15: Women Abolitionists in London** (Image). The 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London was segregated by sex, with the male delegates able to speak and vote, and the females banished to the sidelines. Partly in response to their treatment, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott later organized the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls.

**Resource 16: New York State Married Women's Property Law** (Text). This

excerpt comes from the 1848 New York State law that granted married women the right to own property. It became a model for similar statutes in other states, and helped eliminate what was, for middle-class and wealthy women, one of the most onerous tenets of coverture.

**Resource 17: Reactions to Seneca Falls** (Text). These passages from newspapers in New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania were reproduced by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her co-authors in their *History of Woman Suffrage*. The critical tone of these clips surprised the women who had taken part in the 1848 convention, and led many to disavow their role in the event.



**Resource 18: Bloomers** (Image). Nathaniel Currier produced this lithograph of the bloomer costume, a short dress worn over "Turkish trousers." Dress reform was one of many changes sought by radicalized women in the mid-nineteenth century, but those who first wore the bloomer outfit in and near Seneca Falls soon gave it up, and focused their efforts on winning the right to vote.

## Could and Should: Laws and Rules Affecting Women, 1765–1860

All Americans are subject to the laws of the land. But we behave the way we do for other reasons, too: what we read or see in the media, what our friends or relatives or religious leaders say.

*Could and Should* is a selection of the laws and social messages that impacted women between the Revolution and the Civil War. The laws were passed by governments, or were part of inherited traditions. Social rules like these came from etiquette books, marriage manuals, church pronouncements, books about proper conduct, etc. They were meant mostly for white, well-off, married women. They did not reflect how real women actually behaved, but they did affect how society thought they *should* behave.

(Right) Rembrandt Peale, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1805. Oil on linen. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Thomas Jefferson Bryan, 1867.306.

(Far right) John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of Mrs. John Stevens (Judith Sargent, later Mrs. John Murray)*, 1770–72. Oil on canvas. Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, 2000.6.

1765

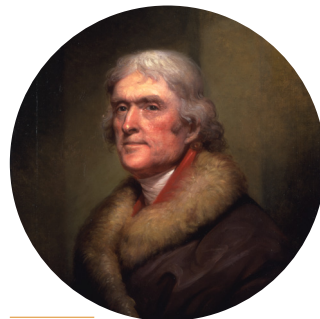
“By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and . . . her condition during her marriage is called her coverture.”

William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, adopted in American common law

1776

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, referring to white men only



1779

“Be it enacted by the [Virginia] General Assembly, that no persons shall, henceforth, be slaves within this commonwealth, except such

as were so on the first day of this present session of Assembly, and the descendants of the females of them.”

Thomas Jefferson, *A Bill Concerning Slaves*

1787

“The education of young ladies in this country should be conducted upon principles very different from what it is in Great Britain. . . . [O]ur ladies should be qualified to a certain degree, by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government.

Benjamin Rush, “Thoughts Upon Female Education”

1788

“Our good ladies, I trust, have been too wise to wrinkle their foreheads with politics. They are contented to soothe and calm the minds of their husbands returning ruffled from political debate. They have the good sense to value domestic happiness above all.”

Thomas Jefferson, letter to Anne Willing Bingham, a female politician

1789

The U.S. Constitution leaves voting rights to individual states. Most grant the vote to white men who meet property and residency requirements.

1790

“The men possess the more ostensible powers of making and executing laws . . . [but] the women in every free country, have an absolute control of manners; and it is confessed, that in a republic, manners are of equal importance with laws.”

James Tilton, M.D., “An Oration Pronounced on the 5th July, 1790,” *The Universal Asylum & Columbian Magazine*, 5 (Dec. 1790)



1794

“My sweet girl . . . you must learn ‘to reverence yourself,’ that is, your intellectual existence.”

Judith Sargent Murray, “Desultory Thoughts upon the Utility of Encouraging a Degree of Self-Complacency, Especially in Female Bosoms”

1796

New Jersey becomes the only state to grant suffrage to “all inhabitants” who meet property and residency requirements. Women’s right to vote is rescinded in 1808.

# Could and Should: Laws and Rules Affecting Women, 1765–1860 *continued*

**1800**

Most states abandon primogeniture and allow male and female children to inherit property equally, but due to coverture, women lose control of their assets when they marry.

**1808**

“[The wife,] by her pious, assiduous, and attractive deportment, constantly endeavors to render [her husband] more virtuous, more useful, more honourable, and more happy.”

*A Sermon: Preached March 13, 1808, for the Benefit of the Society Instituted in the City of New-York, For the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children*

**1809**

Connecticut law permits women to write wills.

**1812**

“My husband in his good nature and thoughtless way has been disposing of my property without consulting me. . . . in honor is it not mine?”

Harriet Livingston Fulton’s July 1812 letter to her cousin, fighting the rules of coverture

**1820s**

More and more states allow all free white men to vote, regardless of property ownership. By 1856, all states do.

**1828**

“[In New Orleans,] the strongest prejudice reigns against [quadroons, people with one black grandparent] on account of their black blood, and the white ladies maintain, or affect to maintain, the most violent aversion towards them. Marriage between the white and coloured population is forbidden by the law of the state.”

Karl Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Wienar Eisenach, *Travels Through North America*

**1830**

“In whatever situation of life a woman is placed from her cradle to her grave, a spirit of obedience and submission, pliability of temper, and humility of mind, are required from her.”

*The Young Lady’s Book*

**1837**

“The power of woman is in her dependence. . . . But when she assumes the place and tone of man as a public reformer . . . she yields the power which God has given her for protection, and her character becomes unnatural.”

*The Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts*

**1839**

Mississippi permits married women to own property, and most states follow, voiding a principle of coverture.

**1842**

“A really sensible woman feels her dependence. She does what she can, but she is conscious of inferiority, and therefore grateful for support.”

Mrs. John Sandford, *Woman, in her Social and Domestic Character*

**1843**

“Do not expect too much.”

“Rules for Conjugal and Domestic Happiness,” *Mother’s Assistant and Young Lady’s Friend*, III

**1845**

“A Wife! A Mother! How sacred and venerable these names!”

“Useful Industry in Women” and “The Duty of Women,” reprinted from the Boston *Transcript in Voice of Industry*, September 14, 1845, p. 4

**1846**

“True feminine genius is ever timid, doubtful, and clingingly dependent; a perpetual childhood.”

Sara Jane Clarke, “To an Unrecognized Poetess, June, 1846” (published 1850)

**1848**

“Sec. 2. The real and personal property, and the rents issues and profits thereof of any female now married shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband; but shall be her sole and separate property as if she were a single female except so far as the same may be liable for the debts of her husband heretofore contracted.”

April 7, 1848, New York State Married Women’s Property Act

**1848**

“Because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.”

July 20, 1848, The Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention

**1848**

“If he is abusive, never retort.”

*The Lady’s Token: or, The Gift of Friendship*

**1850**

“That her home shall be made a loving place of rest and joy and comfort for those who are dear to her, will be the first wish of every true woman’s heart.”

Helen Irving, “Literary Women,” *Ladies’ Wreath*, III



**1851**

“Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me!”

Sojourner Truth, Akron Women’s Convention

**1852**

“To deprive every unmarried woman, spinster, or widow, or every childless wife, of the power of exercising her warm sympathies for the good of others, is to deprive her of the greatest happiness of which she is capable.”

Mary C. Vaughn on why women should be reformers

(Above) Sojourner Truth, 1864. Carte de Visite. New-York Historical Society Library, PR.011.5.



Bass Otis, *Mrs. James Madison*, ca. 1817. Oil on canvas. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Thomas Jefferson Bryan, 1867.308.

**M**odule 1 focuses on Dolley Madison and the important role she played in the political life of the early republic. At the time, partisan divide ran so deep it sometimes ended in physical fights, even duels. Dolley Madison was not officially a politician, of course, but she

was a woman of great political savvy. And she used the power of her position and her personality to offer a new way for politicians, always male, to interact and bridge the disagreements and rivalries that separated them.

This module explores Dolley Madison's life from childhood to old age—her Quaker upbringing and later slave ownership, her first marriage and traumatic early loss, her friendships, her money problems, and her relationship with her troubled son. But the central focus is Dolley Madison as the astute political partner of James Madison during his terms as secretary of state and president. It offers a new way to look at the nation's early history, and at the part women played in bringing the Constitution to life on the ground, even as laws and attitudes restricted their freedom. And it provides a lens for looking more broadly at the lives of women in the early republic—not only elite white women like Dolley, but the women of different races and classes who interacted with her.

## Suggested Activities

- ★ Whenever you introduce a women's history component into your lessons, ask the students to consider both how this changes their understanding of the event and why it is important to have multiple perspectives.
- ★ Ask students to use **Resources 2, 3, 4, and 5** to make a case either for or against the following quote by James Tilton: "The men possess the more ostensible powers of making and executing laws . . . [but] the women, in every free country, have an absolute control of manners; and it is confessed, that in a republic, manners are of equal importance with laws."
- ★ Define coverture using **Resource 1**, and then examine the life stories of **Dolley Madison** and **Eliza Brock** to determine how this law affected their lives.
- ★ Ask students to use **Resources 3 and 4** along with the life stories of **Dolley Madison** and **Margaret Bayard Smith** to determine how, despite legal and cultural limitations, women were able to exert political influence in the early republic. What effect did they have on the shape of the new government?
- ★ Compare and contrast the life stories of **Dolley Madison**, **Eliza Brock**, and **Sukey**. What limitations did they all share as women in the early American period? In what ways did their racial and class differences affect their daily lives?
- ★ Compare and contrast Dolley Madison's and Paul Jennings's accounts of the evacuation of the White House and the fall of Washington (**Resources 6, 7, and 8**). Why do you think one of these accounts became history, while the other was essentially forgotten?
- ★ **James Madison** and **Margaret Bayard Smith** both had a passion for politics, but Margaret's gender prevented her from pursuing a public life. Ask students to compare how these two individuals pursued their passion within the confines of their gender roles.
- ★ As a class, reorganize the **Could and Should** passages into two columns: laws and rules. Discuss the difference between a law and a cultural expectation or rule. What are the consequences for breaking either? Then, ask the students to research and discuss the laws and cultural expectations that govern both women and men today. How much has changed?

- ★ Compare Dolley Madison's tenure as first lady with those of Hillary Clinton, Laura Bush, Michelle Obama, and Melania Trump. How has the role of first lady evolved? What has stayed the same? What do their actions and experiences reveal about expectations of women in the current U.S.?

## Discussion Questions

- ★ How did the early state governments tackle the question of women's legal status under the new Constitution of the United States of America?
- ★ What limitations did coverture place on women?
- ★ How did women in the early republic participate in politics?
- ★ What major challenge threatened the functionality of the new U.S. government?
- ★ What role did Dolley Madison and other leading Washington women play in stabilizing the new government?
- ★ What role did race and class play in determining a woman's social status and life choices?

## Dolley Madison 1768–1849



Bass Otis, *Mrs. James Madison*, ca. 1817. Oil on canvas. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Thomas Jefferson Bryan, 1867.308.

### Dolley Payne, Dolley Todd, Dolley Madison

**D**olley Payne grew up in a Quaker family on a Virginia farm. When she was 15, her father, a fervent convert to

his wife's faith, followed Quaker teaching and freed his slaves, then moved the family to Philadelphia. His new business failed, a “weakness” that prompted his

expulsion from Quaker Meeting, and his wife took in boarders to make ends meet. Perhaps pressured by her father, who died shortly after, Dolley, at 22, married Quaker lawyer John Todd, whom she had once rejected. Her 11-year-old sister, Anna, lived with them.

The Todds' first son, called Payne, was born in 1791, and a second son, William, followed in 1793. In the late summer of that year, yellow fever hit Philadelphia, and before cold weather ended the epidemic, Dolley lost four members of her family: her father-in-law, her mother-in-law, and then, on the same October day, her husband and three-month-old William. She wrote a half-finished sentence in a letter: “I am now so unwell that I can't . . .”

Added to her grief, Dolley faced an extremely difficult situation. She was a widow caring for her small son and her young sister. Men were considered responsible for their female relatives; it was one of the social side effects of coverture (see [Resource 1](#)). But all the men who might have cared for Dolley were gone. Her husband had left her some money in his will, but his brother, the estate's executor, withheld it until Dolley sued him later. In the immediate aftermath of the yellow fever epidemic, she had, according to her worried mother, only \$19, many debts, and the unpaid bill for her baby's funeral. Like many American women, Dolley faced extreme emotional loss and



James Sharples Sr., *Dolley Madison*, ca. 1796–1797. Pastel on paper. Independence National Historic Park, Philadelphia.

financial strain at the same time. Fifty years later, she would face them again.

**D**olley's mother went to live with a married daughter, and Dolley, Payne, and Anna moved back to the family home. Philadelphia was then the nation's temporary capital and most sophisticated city. Dolley, even in her despair, was a beautiful woman who caught the eye of many men, including Virginia Congressman James Madison. She almost surely wanted and needed to remarry. Supporting herself, Anna, and Payne as a single woman would have seemed next to impossible. But she seemed to genuinely care for the man she called “the great little Madison.”

## Dolley Madison 1768–1849 *continued*

Dolley and James Madison were married in September 1794, not quite a year after her first husband's death. For marrying so soon, outside the faith, Dolley, too, was expelled from Meeting. From then on, she attended Episcopal services with James, and later complained about her rigid Quaker upbringing. There is no evidence that, despite her childhood faith, she disapproved of the Madisons as slaveholders. Her father had owned slaves, after all, and his decision to free them had thrown the family into chaos. She may have been attracted to Madison *because* he was a Southerner, as she had been as a child, not in spite of it.

If slavery was not a point of contention between them, James Madison was still an odd match for Dolley. A shy, wealthy bachelor of 43, he was famous as the man who drafted the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Dolley was a widowed mother who charmed nearly everyone she met. But by all accounts, theirs was a good marriage, and a powerful political partnership. When James's adversary, John Adams, was elected president in 1796, they moved from Philadelphia to Montpelier, the Madisons' tobacco plantation. In 1801, they moved again, to the nation's unfinished new capital, Washington City. Thomas Jefferson had been elected president, and named James his secretary of state.

### Washington City

Because Jefferson was widowed, Dolley often cohosted events at the White House if women were present. This gave her



first-hand experience with the political questions that plagued Washington and generated much of the in-fighting. How big should the federal government be? How do we get the nation's work done? How do we avoid producing our own brand of tyranny? Republicans like James and President Jefferson tended to come from the slave-holding South and valued tradition. They conflicted sharply with Federalists like Alexander Hamilton and other Northerners who focused on cities and manufacturing. "Republican" and "Federalist" were not formal political parties, but they were distinct camps, and bitter disagreements made their working together nearly impossible.



(Far left) Joseph Wood, *Dolley (Payne) Todd Madison*, 1817. Oil on canvas. Virginia Historical Society, 1967.14.

(Left) William Russell Birch, *A view of the Capitol of Washington before it was burnt down by the British*, ca. 1800. Watercolor. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 2004661947.

George Washington and John Adams, during their administrations, had held big parties at the president's home. President Jefferson preferred small, all-male dinners to which he invited one political side or the other, never both. He may have wished to avoid bickering at his dinner table, but he also gained in personal power by preventing collaboration among officials.

By contrast, the Madisons frequently entertained crowds when James was secretary of state. Their home on F Street became the center of Washington's social life. When James Madison was elected president in 1808, Dolley brought big get-togethers back to the White House, but

they were not the sedate affairs of earlier years. Her social events were fun, noisy, and relaxed, and so crowded they were called "squeezes" (see **Resource 3**). Elegantly dressed for the occasion (see **Resource 5**), Dolley made introductions where needed and kept cordial conversations going, even between enemies. Her events were important because they were not simply parties. By providing an environment where officials could meet socially, regularly, across their divisions, she helped create an informal but essential political culture.

The crisis of James Madison's administration was the War of 1812. The British invaded Washington, and the Madisons escaped just hours before the White House was seized and

# Dolley Madison 1768–1849 *continued*



Baroness Anne-Marguerite-Henriette Hyde de Neuville, *Montpelier*, 1818, Watercolor, Musée Franco-Américain du Château de Blérancourt.

burned to the ground. Dolley's role in this event and what followed was widely covered. She was celebrated for her courage in rescuing the portrait of George Washington as well as crucial government papers, her determination to wait for James even at her own risk, and her dedication to rebuilding the city later. (See the life story of **James Madison**, **Resource 6**, **Resource 7**, and **Resource 8**.) Combined with her other admired qualities, Dolley Madison symbolized values Americans prided themselves on: down-

to-earth authenticity, bravery and toughness under pressure, resilience and a refusal to be beaten. For the rest of her life, she was seen as a national hero, known, oddly enough, as America's Queen.

## Retirement

After James's second term ended, the Madisons returned to Montpelier for what should have been easy years. But financial troubles

resulted from Payne's substantial gambling debts. Dolley and James paid them to protect Payne's reputation. After James died in 1836, Dolley faced this ongoing problem alone (see **Resource 9**). She sold James's papers to Congress for less than she had hoped, and sold some of Montpelier's 100 slaves—without their consent, in violation of James's will. Finally, in 1844, she sold Montpelier and returned to Washington. Dolley was still an American icon, perhaps the country's most beloved woman. President Zachary Taylor referred to her with a new term of honor: first lady. But her private financial struggles continued to the end of her life.

Dolley Madison was celebrated in her time for her beauty, style, and charisma, and for her bravery and quick-wittedness during the War of 1812. But her most significant contribution was more subtle and more consciously political. When she arrived on the scene, politics was a rough game: physical fights, shouting matches, stony silences, even duels. The United States had its Constitution and Bill of Rights, but it was not clear how actual people were to do the nation's work. The idea of bipartisan cooperation did not exist; there was not even a word for it. But Dolley Madison understood that warring factions needed a safe place to come together, and that social life, especially with women present, would require good behavior from all. In this setting, even enemies could have an informal conversation and quietly look for common ground.

Dolley Madison did not fundamentally alter Washington politics, which remained a rough game. But her social events, which she planned so carefully and understood so well, provided a model that stressed civility over the cold shoulder, and cooperation over coercion. It allowed adversaries to see each other as human beings.

## Discussion Questions

- ★ For how many years did Dolley Madison lead the Washington social scene? Why does the length of her tenure matter?
- ★ How did Dolley Madison reshape the political landscape of Washington? What effect did her efforts have on the young nation?
- ★ Dolley Madison was widowed twice in her life. How did the deaths of her husbands affect her legal and social standing?
- ★ What do we learn about Dolley Madison and her world from her experiences with slavery?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); James Madison's Montpelier: Home of James and Dolley Madison, [www.montpelier.org](http://www.montpelier.org) (accessed by M. Waters, July-August 2016); The Dolley Madison Digital Edition, Holly C. Shulman, ed., <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/> (accessed by M. Waters, July-September 2016).

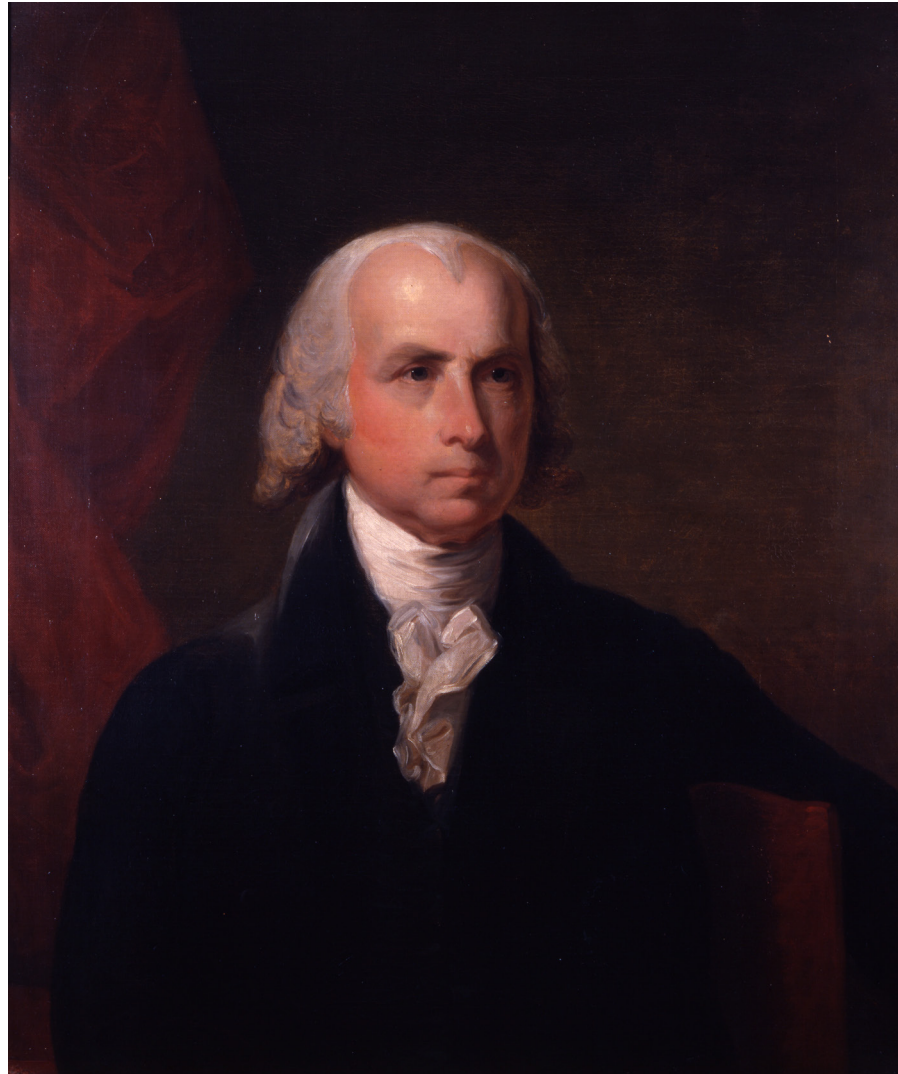
## James Madison 1751–1836

### Education and Revolution

James Madison was the oldest son of a wealthy slave-holding family in Virginia. Montpelier, the family's mansion, was built when James was a boy. He was educated by tutors and in private schools, and graduated from the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University, in 1771. He did not fight in the Revolution because he thought he was not physically strong enough. His political contributions, however, provided the nation with its monumental founding documents. At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, his Virginia Plan became the model for the U.S. Constitution. He then joined Alexander Hamilton and John Jay in writing the *Federalist Papers* to encourage ratification.

Throughout the 1780s, James Madison was a Federalist. He may have had misgivings about potential abuses, but he believed a strong federal government was needed to stabilize the country. Anti-Federalists disagreed. They feared that a strong central government could easily become British-style tyranny, and wanted most political power to rest with individual states. Pressure from anti-Federalists prompted the addition of the Bill of Rights, also written by James Madison, to guarantee individual liberties.

But the central government's power was not the only issue that divided these camps. Federalists dominated in



Asher Brown Durand, *James Madison*, 1835. Oil on canvas. New-York Historical Society, Gift of The New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts, 1858.10.

the urban North, where slavery was ending, farms were small, and the future seemed tied to manufacturing. Anti-Federalists were more likely to live in Southern states, their views shaped by tradition, slavery, plantation ownership, and vast fields of tobacco and cotton.

Despite his strong defense of the Constitution, James Madison had more in common with anti-Federalists. Once the nation was established, he sided especially with his Virginia neighbor, Thomas Jefferson, the leading anti-Federalist, over Alexander Hamilton, his old ally. In 1790, the three men arrived at a famous compromise. James agreed not to fight Hamilton's proposal for a central bank, which would strengthen the federal government; Hamilton agreed that the nation's capital would move south, out of New York City. President George Washington himself selected the site of Washington, D.C. The government relocated temporarily to Philadelphia while laborers, black and white, free and enslaved, built the capital city.

### Dolley and Washington City

Among his friends, James was known as a storyteller with a great sense of humor. But the public saw a small, socially awkward man who had never married and had been jilted twice. People joked about his manliness.

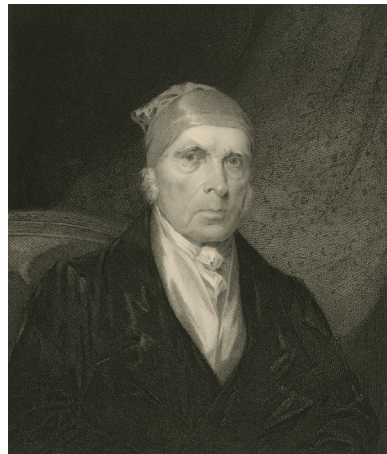
# James Madison 1751–1836 *continued*

In 1794, James asked Aaron Burr, a mutual friend, to introduce him to the recently widowed Dolley Todd. He even asked Catherine Coles, Dolley's cousin, to put in a good word. She told Dolley that Mr. Madison "thinks so much of you in the day that he has Lost his Tongue, at Night he Dreames of you. . . . [H]e has Consented to every thing that I have wrote about him with Sparkling Eyes." This was not the man the rest of the world knew. He and Dolley were married in October 1794. He raised Dolley's son Payne as his own.

In the bitter 1796 presidential election, John Adams won the most votes and Thomas Jefferson came in second. According to the rules of the time, they became president and vice president, despite their opposing views. With a Federalist in charge, James Madison declared himself tired of politics and retired with his new family to Montpelier. Jefferson was frequently close by at Monticello, and the two spoke often about their shared political philosophy, and called themselves Democratic-Republicans, or simply Republicans. When Jefferson was elected president in 1800, he named James Madison his secretary of state.

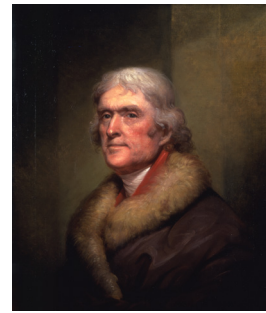
In 1808, when James Madison ran for president, ambition was frowned on, so candidates did not campaign openly. But Dolley's social events helped reinforce James's prominence, and kept Republicans

united behind him. When James took office, Britain was at war with France, seizing American sailors to serve on her warships, and arming Indians to fight against the U.S. With America's honor and independence apparently at stake, James asked Congress for a declaration of war in June 1812. Two years later, the British invaded Washington and torched much of the city. (See the life story of **Dolley Madison**, **Resources 6** and **8**.)



## Retirement

James Madison was roundly criticized for the war, but when it ended, even with no clear winner, Americans felt unified and patriotic, and warmly toward the president. He left office in 1817 and returned to Montpelier with Dolley and their enslaved servants, Paul Jennings and Sukey. James and Dolley organized his papers for sale, which he hoped would guarantee Dolley's



(Far left) Rembrandt Peale, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1805. Oil on linen. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Thomas Jefferson Bryan, 1867.306.

(Left) Baroness Anne-Marguerite-Henriette Hyde de Neuville, *Montpellier*, 1818. Watercolor, Musée Franco-Américain du Château de Blérancourt.



(Far left) J. B. Longacre (artist), T. B. Welch (engraver), *James Madison, Aged 82*, ca. 1833. Engraving, New-York Historical Society Library, PR 52.

(Left) Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *The White House ("President's House") Washington, DC, East Front Elevation*, 1807. Drawing on paper: watercolor, ink, and wash. Latrobe Architectural Drawing Archive, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 97505109.

income after his death. Otherwise, he took long walks, struggled to keep Montpelier solvent, and shielded Dolley from the seriousness of Payne's gambling debts. In the evenings, Ben Stewart, one of the slaves (and Sukey's son), would carry James's favorite chair to the garden so he could enjoy the night air. He had said he would free his slaves upon his death, and made this promise specifically to his personal servant, Paul Jennings (see **Resource 7**). But along with nearly all of his estate, James willed the slaves to Dolley, adding that "it is my desire that none of them should be sold without his or her consent." James Madison spent his last months bedridden and died in 1836.

## Discussion Questions

- ★ What challenges did James Madison face on his journey to the presidency?
- ★ How did Dolley Madison aid James Madison's career?
- ★ What concerns did James Madison have for Dolley at the time of his death? How did he address them?

**Sources:** William C. Allen, Office of the Architect of the Capitol, *History of Slave Laborers in the Construction of the United States Capitol*, June 1, 2005 (accessed by M. Waters, 10-7-2016); Donald R. Hickey, *Don't Give Up the Ship: Myths of the War of 1812* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Ralph Ketcham, *James Madison: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1990); The Papers of James Madison, Digital Edition, J. C. A. Stagg, ed., <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-10-2016).

## Margaret Bayard Smith 1778–1844

### Mrs. Smith Comes to Washington

In 1801, Margaret Bayard Smith and her husband, Samuel Harrison Smith, were invited to dinner at the White House, which was then called the President's Palace, a lofty name for a leaky new building with little furniture. Her husband was a journalist, brought to town by President Thomas Jefferson to start a Republican newspaper. Margaret had grown up in a family of prominent Philadelphia Federalists who called Jefferson vulgar and coarse. But upon meeting him, Margaret found him to be “dignified . . . gentlemanly . . . refined.” They became lifelong friends.

Among the guests that night were Dolley and James Madison. Margaret liked them immediately. Before long, Margaret and Dolley were trading books, exchanging gifts and political news. Their friendship would last all their lives. Margaret Bayard Smith was never in the limelight as Dolley was, but she was part of Washington's inner circle. The letters and articles she wrote have given historians much of what is known about politics and the capital city in the nation's early years.

### Public vs. Private

At the time of this dinner, important American attitudes had shifted, including ideas about women. In the colonial period, women were thought to be immoral,



Charles Bird King, *Margaret Bayard Smith*, ca. 1829. Oil on canvas. Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, Rhode Island, Gift of the artist.

emotional creatures who needed a man's guidance. After the Revolution, and the Enlightenment ideas that propelled it, women were seen as morally strong, and rational. They were in a position to make

men more virtuous and patriotic, and to raise their children to be good citizens.

Virtue and good citizenship mattered because the survival of the country was

not guaranteed. People worried that as time went on, the values that had inspired the nation's founding would be forgotten. Women could prevent this. They were seen as the key to America's future and stability. Writers like Susanna Rowson and Judith Sargent Murray demanded education both as their right and to make them better and more useful to their husbands, children, and country. The influential Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, joined them in promoting girls' education. Young ladies' academies grew up in every state to provide girls from well-off families with the knowledge they would need as patriotic wives and mothers. Historians now call this idea republican womanhood and date it to the period between the Revolution and around 1820.

For many women, republican womanhood provided a new sense of purpose and a proud role. For Margaret Bayard Smith, that role may have seemed too small. A writer of letters, poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, she wanted to write about politics the way men could, but it was considered improper. Women were not supposed to engage publicly in the critical issues that faced the government and the nation.

Margaret wrote for two decades before she published any of her work, and then she became one of the best-known women writers of her time. But she may have expected to publish one day, because she followed the rules, even in her early writing.

# Margaret Bayard Smith 1778–1844 *continued*

She avoided dealing directly with politics, and focused on acceptably female topics.

Margaret let details about politicians' homes, parties, and personalities tell a political story. In 1809, just after Thomas Jefferson left office, she described him as a doting grandfather with no interest in regaining power. The new president, James Madison, was "plain, friendly, communicative, & unceremonious." Dolley was welcoming, informal, "unassuming." Margaret was speaking to the anxiety of a new nation. Americans were not yet sure that the Constitution would hold or that elected officials would surrender power when their terms ended. She was reassuring them.

If Margaret's public writing obeyed conventions, her private journals were more candid, especially about the roles women were expected to play. Here she confessed that she loved society, but not *Washington* society, which was "barren of enjoyment." The ritual of visits and calling cards left her exhausted "by the entrance of persons I cared nothing about." Margaret was a wealthy woman with servants—she and her beloved husband refused to own slaves. But she felt constrained by the "business of a family—every day alike, every day the house has to be put in order, the food prepared & the clothing made or mended." She wanted time to think and read and write. She wanted to "plunge into . . . the daring enterprises of life." A man's sphere was unlimited, she wrote. "But I am a woman.

And society says, 'Thus far and no further [shall] thou come'—Why then has nature given me a mind so active and enquiring?"

## Profiling Dolley Madison

By 1834, Margaret was a well-known published writer. She was asked to profile Dolley Madison for the *National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*. Dolley offered to cooperate, but she was privately nervous. She did not want to seem egotistical—no woman of her time did. She also knew that her letters to her sisters showed her "unvarnished opinions," and she instructed her nieces not to give them to Mrs. Smith. Dolley wanted to be remembered as a good wife and helpmate to her husband, and especially as the rescuer of George Washington's portrait during the War of 1812. She gave Margaret the letter that proved it. (See **Resource 6**.) When the profile was published in 1836, Dolley was pleased. Margaret wrote to her sister, "all I say [about Dolley] is true—but I have not of course told the whole truth."

Margaret no doubt knew at least some of Dolley Madison's unvarnished opinions about Washington politics, but she also knew women needed to tread carefully, that their reputations mattered. This was true when Dolley was at the peak of her Washington influence, and even more true when the profile was published. By the 1830s, the "true woman" ideal was well-established, replacing the patriotic role of republican



T. Cartwright and George Beck, *George Town and Federal City*, 1801. Aquatint. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 2002695146.

womanhood. Women were expected to focus on home, family, and religion while men remained in charge. (See **Resource 14**.) Dolley was James Madison's intelligent political partner, clever in the ways of Washington. She was not a "true woman." As Dolley's

biographer, Margaret Bayard Smith faced the dilemma of writing truthfully and admiringly about her subject without offending current sensibilities. She and Dolley both knew that whatever the reality was, some things were better left unsaid.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What limitations did Margaret Bayard Smith face as a female writer?
- ★ How did Margaret Bayard Smith feel about the limitations she faced? How did she work around them?
- ★ What role did Margaret Bayard Smith play in shaping Dolley Madison's legacy?
- ★ What were the cultural expectations for women like Margaret Bayard Smith?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, "Margaret Bayard Smith's 1809 Journey to Monticello and Montpelier: The Politics of Performance in the Early Republic," *Early American Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2012), 30-68; Cassandra Good, "A Transcript of My Heart": The Unpublished Diaries of Margaret Bayard Smith," *Washington History*, Fall/Winter 2005, 67-82; Margaret Bayard Smith, "Mrs. Madison," *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*, Vol. III, 1836, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002007779425;view=1up;seq=44> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-23-2016); Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*, Gaillard Hunt, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015027775694;view=1up;seq=11> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-15-2016); Fredrika J. Teute, "In 'The Gloom of Evening': Margaret Bayard Smith's View in Black and White of Early Washington Society," *The Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 1996, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015027775694;view=1up;seq=11> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-20-2016).

## Sukey ca. 1795–after 1848

### Household Slave

Sukey was born into slavery on Montpelier, the Madison family's Virginia plantation. As children, she and Paul Jennings, also enslaved at Montpelier, became part of James and Dolley Madison's household staff in Washington.



Baroness Anne-Marguerite-Henriette Hyde de Neuville, *Martha Church, Cook in "Ordinary Costume,"* ca. 1807–1814. Watercolor, graphite, and brown ink on paper. New-York Historical Society, 1953.276.

The enslaved handled cooking, cleaning, laundry, and other chores, just as George Washington's and Thomas Jefferson's slaves had done in their administrations. But Sukey does not appear in Dolley's letters until James was no longer president and they were all back at Montpelier. Mentioning her for the first time in a letter in 1818, Dolley wrote that Sukey had been stealing from every room in the house, and that Dolley had sent her away to one of the other Madison farms: "[I] find it terribly inconvenient to do without her, & suppose I shall take her again. . . . I must even let her steal from me, to keep from labor myself—more than my strength will permit."

### Personal Maid

Mrs. Madison did take Sukey back, and later called her "my most efficient House servant." Every person the Madisons enslaved in the mansion was a "house servant," but Sukey had a special role: she was Dolley's personal maid. Her precise tasks are not known, but she probably took care of Mrs. Mad-

ison's wardrobe, helped her dress and change several times a day, fixed her hair, inspected and repaired her clothes after each wearing, carefully washed the most delicate items, and put everything away for the next use. To Dolley Madison, her clothes meant fashion and power. To Sukey, they meant work. Theirs was an intimate relationship between two women whose condition and status could not have been more different. Sukey would have known details that few others did: that Mrs. Madison had painful rheumatism and trouble with her eyes, that she was sometimes lonely and depressed.

*Dolley Madison's Silk Satin Open Robe.* The National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.



### Mother

There is no record of what Sukey thought or felt. Unlike Paul Jennings, she did not learn to read and write. There are no images of her either. The watercolor painting included here portrays a different Black woman from the same period, a cook about Sukey's age. Most of what is known about Sukey comes from the letters of her owner, Dolley Madison, and from Paul Jennings, who once called her "sister Sukey." Historians now believe Sukey had at least five children: Rebecca in 1824, followed quickly by Ben, George, and William. The youngest, Ellen, was born in 1833. They used the surname Stewart, and when they were old enough, they became house servants to the Madisons.

Sukey continued to serve Mrs. Madison for many years, and she attended Mr. Madison in his final illness. After James died, when the widowed Dolley began to spend more time in Washington, Sukey went with her. She was there in 1844, when news arrived that her son William was dying. Her daughter Rebecca was sold that year. Ben, and possibly George, had been sold the year before.

And then, in late 1847, Mrs. Madison tried to sell Sukey's last child, 15-year-old Ellen, for \$400. She made arrangements with slave traders to send Ellen to the public well, where they could seize her. The traders bungled the operation, however, and Ellen ran away, hiding in a safe house

## Sukey ca. 1795–after 1848 *continued*

for the next six months. She may well have had help from Paul Jennings, who was then free. On April 15, 1848, Ellen was one of seventy runaways who boarded the schooner *Pearl* under cover of darkness and set sail down the Potomac River toward Philadelphia in a massive slave escape that Jennings helped plan. When Mrs. Madison heard the news the following morning, she flew into a rage and sold Sukey on the spot to a local Washington family. With this, Sukey vanished from the public record.

The *Pearl* was captured before it escaped Southern waters. Ellen Stewart was imprisoned with other runaways, and soon sold by Mrs. Madison for \$400. Dolley promised to send her son Payne some of the proceeds “to put his clothes in order.”

Abolitionists had long been critical of the Madisons, and Dolley especially, for continuing to own slaves. Two weeks before the attempted *Pearl* escape, the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* scoffed at news that Dolley was broke: “What may be thought of the idea that old Mrs. Madison is [so] reduced and destitute, that she must exchange the members of her family for potatoes, beans and pork, to keep life a-going, we do not know. It certainly sounds queer in our ears. It has been a very general impression that Mr. Madison left a fair, if not large property. . . .”

Following the story of the *Pearl’s* recaptured slaves closely, abolitionists

began a massive fund-raising effort on Ellen’s behalf. One newspaper wrote: “Let me ask the good women, mothers and sisters, to pity the poor child. . . . Her mother is overwhelmed with grief.” By July 1848, enough money had been raised to buy Ellen Stewart from a Baltimore slave pen for \$475. This figure included the original price paid to Mrs. Madison, and \$75 for the expenses incurred by the pen’s owners. Soon after, Sukey’s daughter was reported to be in Boston, living free.

For the story of two other teenage girls aboard the *Pearl*, see the life story of the **Edmonson Sisters**.

**Sources:** Significant details in this life story are based on Elizabeth Dowling Taylor’s *A Slave in the White House: Paul Jennings and the Madisons* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2012), and on research by historians at The Dolley Madison Digital Edition, Holly C. Shulman, ed., University of Virginia. Additional sources: Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and company, 2006); Mary Kay Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl: The Heroic Bid for Freedom on the Underground Railroad* (New York: William Morrow, 2007).

### Discussion Questions

- ★ As an enslaved female domestic, what were Sukey’s responsibilities in the Madison household?
- ★ What punishments did Sukey endure for displeasing Dolley Madison? What do these episodes reveal about the lives of enslaved women?
- ★ Why do historians have to rely on third-person accounts to learn about Sukey’s life?
- ★ Why is it important to do the work necessary to uncover the lives and experiences of women like Sukey?

## Eliza Brock ca. 1779–1850s

### Remembering

One day, when she was 65 years old, Eliza Brock wrote a letter. She put the date at the top—February 21, 1844—and addressed one of the most famous people in America. “Mrs. Madison,” she began, “Madam, its a long time ago in the Autumn of the memorable year of Seventeen hundred and Ninety Three I was at that time a poor Servant girl in the family of Moses Levy, a Lawyer.” The man who lived next door, she wrote, was a “gentleman a Lawyer also, by the name of Todd, the House was a Small one and Stood a little more out.” Mrs. Madison would have known immediately that Eliza was writing about her first husband’s father, also named John Todd.

When she received this letter, Dolley Madison was 75 years old, impoverished, and unwell. But few people outside her circle knew this. To the American public, she was still a beloved figure. Just the previous month, the House of Representatives had passed a resolution to give her a seat within the chamber, the first woman so honored. Newspapers all over the country carried the story, and Eliza Brock probably saw one. In her letter, she noted “Seeing your name lately mentioned.”

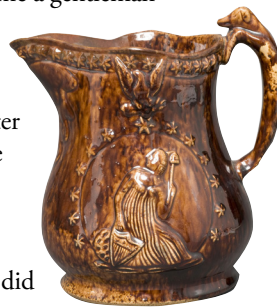
Eliza Brock did not refer to yellow fever, just the “memorable year,” 1793, which was information enough. The disease struck Philadelphia that summer, when Eliza, a white servant, was about 14. No

*Eliza Brock's Signature, Letter to Dolley Madison, February 21, 1844. Library of Congress, Dolley Madison Papers, Microfilm Reel 1-2.*

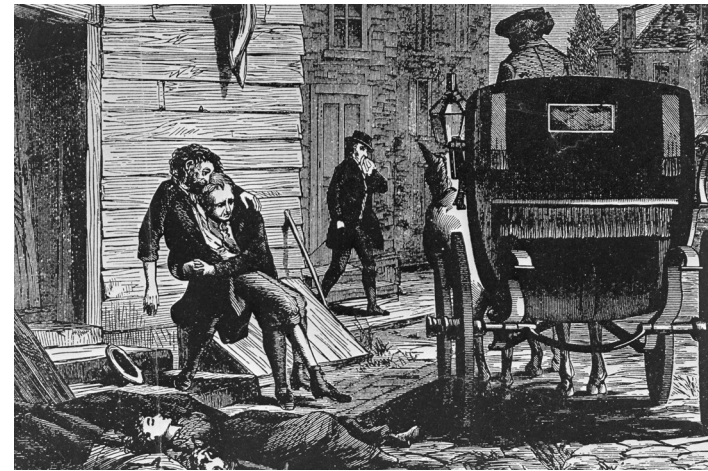
one knew then that mosquitos carried the virus. A prominent local doctor blamed rotting coffee on the docks. Because he said that black people were immune, many were left behind as whites fled the city.

“I was left alone by the family, except the black Servants three in number one a little black girl, She ran every where, one day when I was at the Pump . . . this little girl run out and told me a gentleman in that Small House wanted to see me, with my Pitcher of water in my hand as she Said he was very Sick and alone.

“I went in and did all I Could for the poor Man he asked me to fetch him some frute from the Store of a Coloured man kept at the time, I got it he was very gratefull I went over Several



Attributed to Thomas Haig's Pottery, *Pitcher*, 1812–ca.1893. Earthenware. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Jay A. and Emma Lewis, 2008, 2008-25-15.



*Man Helping Sick Person, 1793. Original Caption: Yellow Fever Epidemic in Philadelphia, 1793. Woodcut. Bettmann / Contributor.*

times and did all I Could, he often repeted to me, my Wife will reward you for this poor Man he did not Suffer long, he was just [recently] dead, when my father found his way into the pestilential City and took myself and a Brother who was an aprentice to a trade in the Same street wee had thirty miles to walk and got out with great difficulty I did not return to Phila for a number of years.”

Over the summer and fall, yellow fever killed 5,000 of the city’s 45,000 residents. Eliza and her brother were among the 17,000 who fled. She may not have known that shortly after Mr. Todd died, the fever claimed his wife. But the newspapers made it clear that Dolley Madison, the wife of a president, had, fifty years earlier, been the daughter-in-law of the dying man in the small house.

### Asking

Eliza wrote of her life after the epidemic. She lost her first husband, then married again, “well above my expectations.” Her second husband was Frederick Brock, a German immigrant. They owned a farm in rural Pennsylvania, where they lived well until her husband became ill. “[H]e died last november, I

had two Children a Son and a daughter my daughter died young my dear Son married and went to Phila—three years Since he died of the Small Pox he left a widow and two Small Children the widow lived one year after and she died, I have the two Children.”

Then, with obvious difficulty, Eliza made her request: “[M]y poor Husband once

## Eliza Brock ca. 1779–1850s *continued*

possessed a large fortune but alas he has left me in verry poor Circumstances, and Seeing your name lately mentioned the thought has struck me and never been out of my mind that if you knew there was such a person alive, and in want you would help them. . . . Madam I hope you will not think little of me for reminding you of this long buried Sorrow if you doubt my word or think me unkind take no notice of this excuse my bad writing I could not trust any one to write fore me and I am not in the habit of writing for myself. . . . yours most respectfully, Eliza Brock.”

How Dolley Madison felt as she read this letter, we can only guess, but there is no evidence that she responded. She may have been known as America’s Queen, but privately, she too was a widow in very poor circumstances. The day before Eliza wrote her letter, Dolley had written one herself, asking an unnamed person where she might borrow \$200.



William Russell Birch, *View in Third Street, from Spruce Street, Philadelphia, 1800*. Hand-colored engraving. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 2002718881.

### Eliza’s World

Like all American women, Eliza Brock lived under the rules and customs of coverture. (See **Resource 1**.) As a young girl, she was a domestic servant, nearly the only work available to her, while her brother apprenticed to a trade that would give him a livelihood. Later, as a wife, Eliza had no legal existence as a person separate from her husband. When Frederick began buying parcels of land in the 1820s, only his name appeared on the deeds. He owned their farm; she did not—until he died, and then she was responsible for any debts he left. By that time, she had also buried her son and daughter-in-law and taken in her grandchildren. Late in her life, Eliza

faced family responsibilities, loss, grief, and financial straits, just as Dolley Madison did.

Coverture had a very broad effect, well beyond the law. Because women were expected to stay out of the public sphere, most girls’ education was limited. Eliza had learned to read and write, but may have used those skills rarely, and lost confidence in them: “Excuse my bad writing. . . . I am not in the habit of writing for myself.” A widow for only three months when she wrote to Mrs. Madison, Eliza was probably on her own for the first time in her life, with no one she could trust to write such a private letter for her.

Men were considered the heads of families, and women were often left out of public documents. In 1828, Eliza’s local newspaper published a brief death notice: *Brock, Theresa, only dau. of Frederick Brock of Susqua. Co., at Brockville Aug. 20, 1828*. Eliza was the mother of this “only daughter,” but she was not mentioned.

Nor did Eliza Brock appear in U.S. Census records until 1850, the first year women, children, and slaves were listed. She was 73 that year. The census shows her living on her farm with her 13-year-old grandson, 11-year-old granddaughter, and a woman in her twenties who may have been paid help or a boarder. There were no men listed who might have worked the farm. In response to one of the census questions, Eliza set the value of her property at \$1,500. Among her close neighbors, she was neither the

richest nor the poorest. Somehow she had managed to hold on to the family farm.

For the transcript of Eliza Brock’s complete letter, see **Appendix A**.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What does Eliza Brock’s letter to Dolley Madison reveal about the lives of white working women in early America?
- ★ Why was Eliza Brock struggling after the death of her husband?
- ★ Why did Eliza Brock reach out to Dolley Madison in her time of need? What does this tell us about Dolley Madison’s reputation and public image?

**Sources:** Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, and Haffelfinger, 1873), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t39z9ww3b;view=1up;seq=9> (accessed by M. Waters, 1-30-17); Eliza Brock to Dolley Payne Todd Madison, 21 February 1844, in *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition*, Holly C. Shulman, ed. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2004, <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/DPM2001> (accessed by M. Waters, 12-15-2016); Property records, Register and Recorder’s Office, Susquehanna County, PA; “The Yellow Fever Epidemic in Philadelphia, 1793,” *Contagion: Historical Views of Diseases and Epidemics*, Harvard University Library Open Collections Program, <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/contagion/yellowfever.html> (accessed by M. Waters, 8-15-2016).

Resource 1:

## Coverture

Coverture was a legal principle imported to the American colonies as part of English common law. Like other common laws, it was based on court decisions and customs that developed slowly over time, and were unwritten for centuries. In the 1760s, William Blackstone collected and published them for the first time in his four-volume *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. A judge and legal scholar, Blackstone did not create the law of coverture, but when he committed it to paper, he made it real and concrete in a way it had not been before.

The word “coverture” came from the French term for “covered.” A married woman, according to the law, was included in (or covered by) her husband’s legal identity; she did not exist legally apart from him. Married women could not make a will or own property. They had no rights to wages they earned, and lost control of anything they owned before marriage. If a husband chose to send his child away as an apprentice, his wife had no say in the matter. Unmarried women, including widows, had more legal rights, but they were seen as sad

figures, and had few opportunities. Most young women married, and most widows remarried.

Ironically, William Blackstone committed coverture to the written record during the Enlightenment, just as philosophers developed the revolutionary concept of natural rights—universal rights that do not have to be granted by a governing body. Enlightenment ideas inspired the rebellion brewing in the colonies. Abigail Adams saw an opportunity in the language of natural rights, and wrote to her husband, John Adams, in March 1776: “In the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could.” She was not writing generally about women’s rights, or specifically about the right to vote. She was asking for relief from coverture. John responded, “I cannot but laugh.”

After the Revolution, the United States adopted the common

## The Language of Coverture

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is . . . under the protection and influence of her husband, her baron, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture. Upon this principle, of an union of person in husband and wife, depend almost all the legal rights, duties, and disabilities, that either of them acquire by the marriage. . . . [E]ven the disabilities which the wife lies under, are for the most part intended for her protection and benefit. So great a favourite is the female sex of the laws of England.

Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Book the First: Chapter the Fifteenth: Of Husband and Wife. 4 vols. Oxford: Printed at the Clarendon Press, 1765–1769.

C. Schessele, *Mrs. John Adams (Abigail Smith)*, ca. 1775. Engraving, New-York Historical Society Library, PR 52.



law system that the colonies had then lived under for more than a century. The U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights used much of the common law language, and specifically incorporated bedrock legal principles, like the right to trial by jury. Individual states also adopted English common law, often by passing “reception statutes.” Virginia’s 1776 law was typical: “The common law of England, insofar as it is not repugnant to the principles of the Bill of Rights and Constitution of this Commonwealth, shall continue in full force within the same, and be the rule of decision, except as altered by the General Assembly.”

With this or similar language, some of the ancient laws were filtered out—those that related to the king, for example. Others were soon changed or dropped by elected legislatures. But coverture, which dated to the middle ages, was allowed to stand. Impractical as it was in the new nation, it was not “repugnant” because none of the founding documents addressed the rights of women.

Casting a shadow well beyond married women’s legal rights, coverture created attitudes that



Unknown artist, *Sir William Blackstone*, ca. 1755. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery, London, Primary Collection, 388.

seemed like hard truths: women were dependent, delicate, and dim-witted, while men were steady, tough, and rational. The cleverest women and the gentlest men were all painted with this broad brush. The law affected unmarried women as well, who were considered “covered” by their fathers before marriage. Most girls received little or no education, and most women lacked the preparation and confidence to hold a job or pursue a profession. Poor women, white or black, also lacked skills, but they had

to work anyway. Their husbands, however, controlled their wages. (Attitudes that developed from coverture were reinforced, and sometimes challenged, by religious teaching. For more, see the life story of *Jarena Lee* and *Resource 12*.)

Coverture affected the lives of all American women. It has been diminished over time, but vestiges of it remain even today. Only a constitutional amendment would abolish coverture entirely.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ Under coverture, what is the legal status of a married woman?
- ★ Sir William Blackstone, when considering the coverture laws, states that the “disabilities” that women suffer under coverture are in fact to their benefit. What are these “disabilities”? What do you think of his assessment?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, “Coverture – The Word You Probably Don’t Know but Should,” National Women’s History Museum, <https://www.nwhm.org/blog/coverture-the-word-you-probably-don%E2%80%99t-know-but-should/> (accessed by M. Waters, 10-15-2016); Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

## Political Battles

In 1796, John Adams ran for president against Thomas Jefferson. Adams was a Federalist, a believer in a strong central government. Jefferson saw Federalists as aristocratic, power-hungry Northerners. Adams won by a slim margin, and Jefferson, the runner-up, became vice president. But the two men could barely stand each other, and Jefferson escaped the city often for his beloved Virginia estate, Monticello. James Madison, once a Federalist himself, but now allied with Jefferson, lived nearby. The two formed a strong bond, spent hours talking politics, and gave a name to their anti-Federalist position. They called themselves Democratic-Republicans, or simply Republicans.

Political arguments had simmered when the revered George Washington was president, but with Adams in office, they boiled over. During a debate on February 15, 1798, in the House of Representatives, Roger Griswold, a Yale-educated Federalist, insulted Mathew Lyon, an Irish-born Republican. Lyon responded by

spitting tobacco juice at Griswold. Then, Griswold hit Lyon with a cane, and Lyon picked up fireplace tongs to strike back. Shortly after the fight, this satirical cartoon appeared across the country, capturing the fight and ridiculing congressmen as foolish bystanders.

The Lyon-Griswold fight was not caused simply by differences of opinion, or group rivalry. It was part of a larger pattern of masculine violence in the new government. The country was so new and untested that a man's reputation and character were his main qualifications for office. An attack on his politics and his ideas was an attack on his honor, so deep and personal that it generated aggressive responses like spitting, insults, caning, even duels.

Later in the year, Matthew Lyon wrote and published a letter critical of President Adams. He was tried and jailed under the new Alien and Sedition Acts, which the Adams administration used to punish those who spoke out against the government.



*Congressional Pugilists, 1798. Etching on wove paper. New-York Historical Society Library, PR 10.*

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What does this cartoon reveal about the state of politics in 1798? How does it compare with the behavior in Congress today?
- ★ How does the artist feel about the congressmen portrayed in this piece? How do you know?
- ★ What is the problem with having a government marked by bitter rivalries and fighting?

**Sources:** "Mathew Lyon (1749–1822)," Federal Judicial Center, [http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf/page/tu\\_sedbio\\_lyon.html](http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf/page/tu_sedbio_lyon.html) (accessed by M. Waters, 9-7-2016); "Representative Roger Griswold of Connecticut Attacked Mathew Lyon of Vermont on the House Floor," History, Art & Archives: United States House of Representatives, <http://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1700s/Representative-Roger-Griswold-of-Connecticut-attacked-Mathew-Lyon-of-Vermont-on-the-House-Floor/> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-20-2016); "Roger Griswold (1762–1812)," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=G000488> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-20-2016).

Resource 3:

## Lessons Learned



Gilbert Stuart, *Dolley Madison*, 1804. Oil on canvas. White House Historical Association / White House Collection, Gift of the Walter H. and Phyllis J. Shorestein Foundation in memory of Phyllis J. Shorestein, 1994, 994.1737.1.

society. And in this setting, Dolley learned to apply her significant skills to the harsh partisanship of early Washington. Her early parties were her training ground.

Dolley Madison succeeded in part because she did not violate the strict unwritten rules about what women should and should not be. She was beautiful, dressed

fashionably, behaved as the perfect hostess, and greeted everyone with “mildness.” (Today, we might say she was “nice to everyone.”) In cases where she did break or bend the rules—dressing a bit too extravagantly, or offering a pinch of snuff to her male guests—she won over people who were, as Mrs. Smith wrote, “almost at daggers drawn.” Sometimes the target of the “cruel warfare” was James himself, and sometimes it was Dolley. James’s opponents said she was too seductive and lacked “delicacy.” They brought up the death of her first husband, John Todd, and accused her of abandoning him, leaving him to die alone. How could a woman like this, they pondered, possibly love her country?

And yet Mrs. Madison filled her house with guests and moved through the crowd smiling. It was probably no accident that Mrs. Smith used the word “disarmed” to describe the effect Dolley had, even on her husband’s enemies. She was acknowledging her friend’s characteristic strengths, and her essential role in what both Madisons hoped would be James’s election to the presidency.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ How did Dolley Madison use her sphere of influence to affect the political landscape?
- ★ What personal characteristics aided Dolley Madison in her endeavors?
- ★ Are Dolley Madison’s efforts important to the story of American history? Why or why not?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); Margaret Bayard Smith, “Mrs. Madison,” *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*, Vol. III, 1836, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002007779425;view=1up;seq=44> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-23-2016).

## Frank and Cordial Manners

[Second only to the home of President Thomas Jefferson himself,] the house of the secretary of state was the resort of most company. The frank and cordial manners of its mistress, gave a peculiar charm to the frequent parties there assembled. All foreigners who visited the seat of government; strangers from the different states of the union; the heads of departments; the diplomatic corps; senators, representatives, citizens, mingled with an ease and freedom, a sociability and gayety, to be met with in no other society. Even party spirit, virulent and embittered as it then was, by her gentleness was disarmed. . . .

[Later,] when the term of Mr. Jefferson’s presidency drew near its close, the spirit of political intrigue which had lain dormant, was again roused into activity. A new president was to be chosen, and there were several competitors for the people’s favor. Each had partisans, zealous and untiring. . . . Amid this cruel warfare of conflicting parties, so calculated to excite angry feelings, Mrs. Madison . . . met these political assailants with a mildness, which disarmed their hostility of its individual rancor, and sometimes even converted political enemies into personal friends, and still oftener succeeded in neutralizing the bitterness of opposition. . . . [Mr. Madison] continued his social intercourse with persons of all opinions; the chiefs of different parties met at his house with perfect good humor; and the frank and polite attentions of Mrs. Madison were paid, without distinction, to all who joined her social circle.

Margaret Bayard Smith, “Mrs. Madison,” *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*, Vol. III, 1836. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002007779425;view=1up;seq=44> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-23-2016).

Resource 4:

## Parties and Politics

The president is expected to host congressmen in his home. George Washington and John Adams, or their wives, had hosted large social events. But Thomas Jefferson entertained much less, partly because his wife had died some years earlier, and partly because he wanted to maintain personal control and prevent lawmakers from collaborating. So he preferred to give small dinner parties for a few men, either Federalist or Republican, but never both at once.

The Madisons took a different approach when James was president. In addition to formal dinners for forty people or more, Dolley hosted regular Wednesday night parties in the Drawing Room. She published invitations in the newspapers, so all sorts of people appeared: male and female, Federalists and Republicans, elected officials and carriage drivers. Dressed to impress (see Resource 5), Dolley presided over events packed so tightly they were called “squeezes.”

Regardless of their politics, people came to the squeezes because so much of the unofficial business of government happened there. Dolley understood this, and reinforced it. As Margaret Bayard Smith wrote:



Charles A. Burnett, Photo by Philip Beaurline, *Dolley Madison's Snuffbox*, ca. 1800. Silver. Montpelier, a National Trust Historic Site, Bequest of Marion duPont Scott, NT85.2.45.

“Every visitor left her with the pleasing impression of being an especial favorite, of having been the object of peculiar attention. She never forgot a name she had once heard, nor a face she had once seen, nor the personal circumstances connected with every individual of her acquaintance.” And frequently, she shared the tobacco from her snuffbox, which Mrs. Smith said was a “perfect security from hostility.”

In a letter to her sister, Anna, Dolley reported on a gathering at the White House as the War of 1812 approached. She was well aware of the political significance of her events.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What do you learn about Dolley Madison from this letter?
- ★ Why did the Federalists decide to end their boycott of the Madison family's parties?
- ★ What does this episode reveal about Dolley Madison's political influence?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); The Dolley Madison Digital Edition, Holly C. Shulman, ed., <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-28-2016).

### Dolley's Letter to Anna

. . . The Vice P. lies dangerously ill—Electioneering for his office goes on beyond all description. The World seems running Mad, what with one thing & another—The Fed[eralists], as I told you, were all affronted with M[adison], refused to dine or come but they have changed their tack—last night & the night before, our rooms were crowded with republicans & such a rallying of our party has alarm'd them into a return. They came in a large party last night also & are continually calling—Even D. R. Will < . . . > who is a fine fellow, came last night. The old & the young Muster'd—The War business goes on slowly—but I fear twill be sure. . . .

Dolley Payne Todd Madison to her sister, Anna Payne Cutts, [ca. 27 March 1812], in *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition*, ed. Holly C. Shulman. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2004. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/DPM0318> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-7-16).

### NOTES

*The Vice P.* = Vice President George Clinton, who died April 20, 1812.

*D. R. Will* = David Rogerson Williams of South Carolina, a Republican member of the House of Representatives.

< . . . > = missing or unreadable text.

Resource 5:

## Fashion and Politics

Dolley Madison's imposing figure, and her flare for clothing, made her a style icon. She loved French fashion, which also coincided with her politics: Democratic Republicans were pro-France, while Federalists were more aligned with England. With its high "Empire" waist, the gown at right, one of her five surviving dresses, was distinctively French. Corsets were temporarily out of style, so it was comfortable as well. But the Empire cut also mirrored the clothing of ancient Greece, and reinforced the connection Americans proudly felt to the Greek republic. Dolley understood this symbolism. For her, a dress was never just a dress.

If Dolley knew someone heading to Paris, she provided a shopping list. In this one, she ordered a few small-size items, possibly for her sister, Anna. She also added price limits, a step she may have neglected a few years later, when she spent a staggering \$2,000. She sometimes hid these expenses from James, who was driven toward debt by Dolley's sprees. But her wardrobe was extensive because of her many responsibilities as a political wife.

Dolley made clothing choices carefully. For James's inauguration

in 1809, she wore a white linen dress and purple velvet bonnet, a plain look to keep attention focused on her husband. Plainness was not her aim when she dressed for her Wednesday night squeezes (see **Resource 4**). One dress was rose-colored satin, with a long white velvet train lined in lavender silk and edged with lace. She added a belt, necklace, and bracelet (all gold), and a white velvet turban decorated with white ostrich feather tips and embroidered with gold thread.

Dolley's fashion often suggested European courts, and some people were horrified by her displays. But she did not dress as royalty actually dressed, more the way Americans thought they dressed. And her friendly behavior seemed very American, down-to-earth. The combined message—European style and New World informality—subtly signaled that the United States would take its place among the world's great powers, but it would do so on its own terms.

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); Margaret Bayard Smith, letter to Miss Susan B. Smith, March 1809, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society, portrayed by the family letters of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith from the collection of her grandson J. Henley Smith* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015027775694;view=1up;seq=11> (accessed by M. Waters, 8-17-2016).



*Dolley Madison's Silk Satin Open Robe.*  
The National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What does this shopping list reveal about Dolley Madison's wardrobe?
- ★ Why did the clothing of the president's wife matter? Does it still matter today? Why or why not?
- ★ Why did Dolley Madison choose to dress very plainly for her husband's inauguration when she was known for dressing extravagantly for their weekly parties?

### Memorandum to Mr. Zantzinger for Purchases

2 Looking Glasses, long, and large as can be bought for \$100.00  
 100 yds the best carpeting that can be had for \$1 pr yd— 100.00  
 1 piece Black Levantine, 1 piece cheap white satin  
 1 piece queens grey florence silk, 20 yds Blond Lace 3 inches wide—  
 1 small Box assorted Feathers, do. Flowers, do. Ribbons—  
 2 pieces of fine cambric a 2 or three Dolls pr. yd.  
 2 pieces pocket Kerchiefs Cambric, at 75 Cents or one Doll pr. kerchief  
 10 yds fine Lace at 4 or 5 Dolls pr. yd—1 dito at 2 dols, narrow/  
 2 doz: pr. white & one doz pr. black silk stockings large size—  
 2 doz pr. white Kid gloves long, & large— 4 doz short do assorted colours  
 1 Doz pr. shoes with heels—one doz pr. without—  
 —1 piece white crape— — a print, of the bust, of N. Bonaparte, large as life, taken by an élève of David; it may be found in the shops of the Marchands des gravures < . . . > the price some months since was, 20 francs. —4 Orange, or bright yellow Marino Shawls not exceeding 12 or 15 Dollars—one large white shawl \$20 or 25 with a rich border—Two Spring bonnets—Two dito for Winter—Two of them for a large Head—one of each for a smaller head. all, for the morning one douzn fanciful but very cheap snuff boxes

Dolley Payne Todd Madison's Memorandum to Mr. Zantzinger for Purchases, [1801–1807], in *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition*, ed. Holly C. Shulman. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2004. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/DPM3372> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-7-16)

Notes

*yds.* = yards

*levantine* = a silk fabric, woven for extra texture

*do.*, *dito* = ditto (the same as the previous item)

*dols and doll* = dollars

*pr. yd* = per yard

*pr.* = pair, or per

*doz, douzn* = dozen

*élève* = student (in French)

*David* = French artist Jacques-Louis David

*francs* = French currency

*marino* = a high-quality wool

< . . . > = missing or unreadable text

Resource 6:

# Saving Washington



Attributed to Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington*, 1796. Oil on canvas. White House Historical Association / White House Collection.

Over two days in 1814, Dolley Madison wrote a letter to her sister, describing the

impending British attack during the War of 1812. Twenty years later, Margaret Bayard Smith asked to see Dolley's letters for

## Dolley Madison's Extract

Tuesday Augt. 23d. 1814.

Dear Sister.

—My husband left me yesterday morng. to join Gen. Winder. He enquired anxiously whether I had courage, or firmness to remain in the President's house until his return, on the morrow, or succeeding day, and on my assurance that I had no fear but for him and the success of our army, he left me, beseeching me to take care of myself, and of the cabinet papers, public and private. I have since recd. two despatches from him, written with a pencil; the last is alarming, because he desires I should be ready at a moment's warning to enter my carriage and leave the city; that the enemy seemed stronger than had been reported and that it might happen that they would reach the city, with intention to destroy it. X X X

X X X I am accordingly ready; I have pressed as many cabinet papers into trunks as to fill one carriage; our private property must be sacrificed, as it is impossible to procure wagons for its transportation. I am determined not to go myself until I see Mr. Madison safe, and he can accompany me, as I hear of much hostility towards him, X X X disaffection stalks around us.

X X X X X My friends and acquaintances are all gone; Even Col. C— with his hundred men, who were stationed as a guard in the enclosure.

X X French John (a faithful domestic,) with his usual activity and resolution, offers to spike the cannon at the gate, and to lay a train of powder which would blow up the British, should they enter the house. To the last proposition I positively object, without being able, however, to make him understand why all advantages in war may not be taken.

Wednesday morng., twelve O'clock. Since sunrise I have been turning my spy glass in every direction and watching with unwearied anxiety, hoping to discern the approach of my dear husband and his friends; but, alas, I can descry only groups of military wandering in all directions, as if there was a lack of arms, or of spirit to fight for their own firesides!

Three O'clock. Will you believe it, my Sister? We have had a battle or skirmish near Bladensburg, and I am still here within sound of the cannon! Mr. Madison comes not; may God protect him! Two messengers covered with dust, come to bid me fly; but I wait for him. X X X At this late hour a wagon has been procured, I have had it filled with the plate and most valuable portable articles belonging to the house; whether it will reach its destination; the Bank of Maryland, or fall into the hands of British soldiery, events must determine.

Our kind friend, Mr. Carroll, has come to hasten my departure, and is in a very bad humor with me because I insist on waiting until the large picture of Gen. Washington is secured, and it requires to be unscrewed from the wall. This process was found too tedious for these perilous moments; I have ordered the frame to be broken, and the canvass taken out it is done, and the precious portrait placed in the hands of two gentlemen of New York, for safe keeping. And now, dear sister, I must leave this house, or the retreating army will make me a prisoner in it, by filling up the road I am directed to take. When I shall again write you, or where I shall be tomorrow, I cannot tell!!

Dolley Payne Todd Madison to Lucy Payne Washington Todd, 23 August 1814, in *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition*, ed. Holly C. Shulman. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2004. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/DPM0469> (accessed by M. Waters, 8-8-2016).

Note

X's = Dolley Madison's use of ellipses.

Resource 6:

## Saving Washington *continued*

her *National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans* profile of Mrs. Madison. Dolley eventually produced what she called an extract of this letter.

Historians do not question Dolley's version of these alarming two days, although some details do not match other eyewitness accounts. People often remember traumatic events differently. Historians do, however, wonder about Dolley's account of the letter itself. She offered conflicting stories about the original letter's location and condition. The letter's tone seems more composed than rushed or panicky. It may be that Dolley wrote, or rewrote, this "extract" in 1836, but it became the accepted version. When Mrs. Smith included the entire letter in her profile, Americans celebrated Dolley's wifely devotion and her patriotic bravery. More than ten years later, Dolley again defended her view of these events after "our kind friend, Mr. Carroll," took credit for saving the large picture of General Washington.

The painting is a 5' x 8' copy of Gilbert Stuart's famous Lansdowne portrait of George Washington, and is widely

believed to have been executed by Stuart himself. In 1817, it was returned to the rebuilt White House, where it still hangs.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ French John wanted to blow up the British attackers after the president's staff and family had evacuated the White House. Why did Dolley Madison disagree?
- ★ Why would Dolley Madison make such a point of saving George Washington's portrait? What other items did she save?
- ★ Why did this episode become legendary?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); "Who Said Dolley Was a Heroine?" Editorial Notes, The Dolley Madison Digital Edition, Holly C. Shulman, ed., <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/editorialnote.xqy?note=all#n6> (accessed by M. Waters, 9-23-2016); Dolley Madison to Robert G. L. De Peyster, 11 February 1848, *Encyclopedia Virginia*, [http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Letter\\_from\\_Dolley\\_Madison\\_to\\_Robert\\_G\\_L\\_De\\_Peyster\\_February\\_11\\_1848](http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Letter_from_Dolley_Madison_to_Robert_G_L_De_Peyster_February_11_1848) (accessed by M. Waters, 9-24-2016); David Mattern, "The Famous Letter: Dolley Madison Has the Last Word," *White House History*, Fall 1998. Washington, DC: White House Historical Association, 38-43.



Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *The White House ("President's House") Washington, DC, East Front Elevation*, 1807. Drawing on paper: watercolor, ink, and wash. Latrobe Architectural Drawing Archive, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 97505109.



Joseph Wood, *Dolley (Payne) Todd Madison*, 1817. Oil on canvas. Virginia Historical Society, 1967.14.

Resource 7:

## Paul Jennings's Account of the British Attack

## Paul Jennings's Reminiscence



E. C. Perry Photograph Co., *Paul Jennings*, undated. Photograph. Estate of Sylvia Jennings Alexander.

In 1799, Paul Jennings was born to slavery on the Madison plantation, Montpelier. He moved into the White House when James Madison became president in 1809. After James's second term, the household returned to Montpelier, and Paul became the former president's personal servant.

James Madison promised to free his slaves when he died, and made this promise to Paul Jennings specifically. But instead, he willed them all to Dolley, fearing she would be destitute otherwise. In 1847, Dolley sold Jennings to Pollard Webb, an insurance agent. Senator Daniel Webster then purchased him and allowed him to buy his freedom by working at the rate of \$8 per month. The complex arrangement may have been designed to free Jennings without costing Dolley, whose finances were dire. Jennings always said he had bought his freedom from Dolley Madison, and he stayed in touch with her later.

He even gave her small amounts of money when he could, and spoke highly of her. She evidently did not know that he helped plan the failed 1848 slave escape aboard the *Pearl*. (See the life stories of **Sukey** and **The Edmonson Sisters**.)

Paul Jennings had learned to read and write. In 1865, he published the first White House memoir, *A Colored Man's Reminiscences of James Madison*. These passages deal with the alarming hours just before the British attacked Washington in August 1814, when he was 15. (See the life story of **Dolley Madison**, **Resource 6**, and **Resource 8**.)

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What makes this account of life in the White House both unique and historically significant?
- ★ According to Paul Jennings, who saved the portrait of George Washington during the evacuation of the White House?
- ★ Why are there conflicting accounts of this event?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); Paul Jennings, *A Colored Man's Reminiscences of James Madison*, Annotations, <http://context.montpelier.org/document/448> (accessed by M. Waters, 10-18-2016); Elizabeth Dowling Taylor, *A Slave in the White House: Paul Jennings and the Madisons* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012).

Mrs. Madison ordered dinner to be ready at 3, as usual; I set the table myself, and brought up the ale, cider, and wine, and placed them in the coolers, as all the Cabinet and several military gentlemen and strangers were expected. While waiting, at just about 3, as Sukey, the house-servant, was lolling out of a chamber window, James Smith, a free colored man who had accompanied Mr. Madison to Bladensburg, galloped up to the house, waving his hat, and cried out, 'Clear out, clear out! General Armstrong has ordered a retreat!' All then was confusion. Mrs. Madison ordered her carriage, and passing through the dining-room, caught up what silver she could crowd into her old-fashioned reticule, and then jumped into the chariot with her servant girl Sukey, and Daniel Carroll, who took charge of them; Jo. Bolin drove them over to Georgetown Heights; the British were expected in a few minutes . . . [but] they did not arrive for some hours. . . .

It has often been stated in print, that when Mrs. Madison escaped from the White House, she cut out from the frame the large portrait of Washington (now in one of the parlors there), and carried it off. This is totally false. She had no time for doing it. It would have required a ladder to get it down. All she carried off was the silver in her reticule, as the British were thought to be but a few squares off, and were expected every moment. John Susé (a Frenchman, then door-keeper, and still living) and Magraw, the President's gardener, took it down and sent it off on a wagon, with some large silver urns and such other valuables as could be hastily got hold of. When the British did arrive, they ate up the very dinner, and drank the wines, &c., that I had prepared for the President's party.

Paul Jennings, *A Colored Man's Reminiscences of James Madison*. Brooklyn: George C. Beadle, 1865. Electronic Edition, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jennings/jennings.html> (accessed by M. Waters, 12-6-2016).

### Notes

*reticule* = a small handbag

*John Susé* = Jean-Pierre Sioussat, the chief steward (doorkeeper) and chef in the Madison White House.

# Washington Burns

The British marched into Washington as the sun set on August 24, 1814. After setting fire to the Capitol building, they proceeded to the White House and helped themselves to the food and drink Paul Jennings had set out earlier. The admiral in charge, Sir George Cockburn, took a portrait of Dolley Madison from the wall and promised to “exhibit her in London.” Then the White House was torched, followed by the Treasury and other government buildings. This engraving was published just weeks later in Britain, where the long war with France was the major focus. The press and the public crowded over the destruction of their former colony’s capital city.

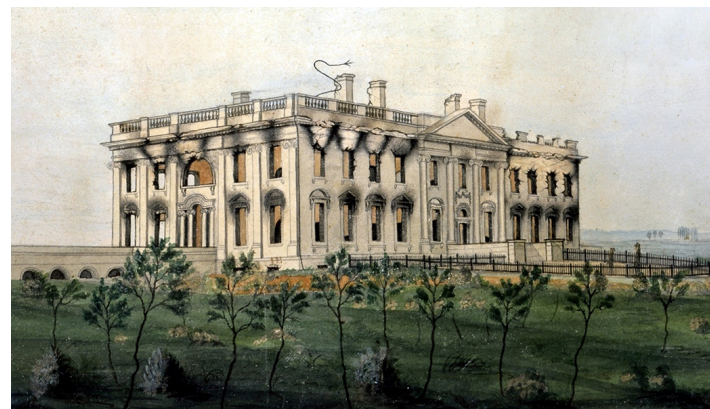
In December 1814, the Treaty of Ghent ended the War of 1812 with no clear victor. But Americans still felt like winners. They had defeated the British in the Battle of New Orleans, which was fought after the treaty was signed but before the news arrived in the U.S. The story of Dolley Madison fiercely waiting for her husband and rescuing the iconic George Washington portrait was told, retold, and embellished. It became part of the mythology of the war, and of Dolley.

But Washington was in ruins. Should the government relocate to a different city, and if so, which one? Would abandoning the city send the wrong message about American strength and determination? Should Washington be rebuilt? Congress debated for nearly five months, then voted to stay and rebuild. Dolley and James Madison moved into the city’s largest existing house, which Dolley decorated as best she could with borrowed, inexpensive, or second-hand furniture. They later moved to a brick townhouse, where they lived for the rest of James’s term. They never lived in the White House again, but the renovated building was ready for James’s successor, President James Monroe.

## Discussion Questions

- ★ What was the significance of this event for the British? For the Americans?
- ★ Why would Congress choose to rebuild Washington, rather than start a new capital elsewhere? Do you agree with this decision? Why or why not?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); Donald R. Hickey, *Don't Give Up the Ship!: Myths of the War of 1812* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006).



(Above) West Smithfield, Published by G. Thompson, *The Taking of the City of Washington in America*, 1814. Wood engraving. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 96510111.

(Left) George Munger, *The President's House*, 1814–1815. Watercolor on paper. White House Historical Association / White House Collection.

Resource 9:

## Write to Me

James and Dolley Madison had no children, but they raised Dolley's son, Payne Todd, as their own. Payne was a troubled young man, an alcoholic and a gambler, and he caused agony for his parents in the last decades of their lives, when he was constantly in debt. In 1829, Payne was put in debtors' prison to work off \$200 to \$300 in debts. Dolley wrote to her sister, Anna: "Every feeling of my soul is wounded. Yet we shall do something." James and Dolley did "do something," again and again, even when Montpelier faced mounting financial problems of its own. Dolley's brother, John Payne, estimated that James spent a total of \$40,000 on Payne's gambling and living expenses over the years.



Mathew B. Brady, *Dolley Madison, three-quarter length portrait of a woman, facing front, seated*, 1848. Half-plate daguerreotype. White House Historical Association / White House Collection.

During his retirement, James organized his papers with Dolley's tireless editorial and secretarial help. In his will, he stipulated that these historic documents from his long career should be sold. He hoped the seven volumes would bring in \$100,000, and that Dolley would be financially secure for life. The year after James died, the first three volumes were purchased by Congress for only \$30,000. The money was used immediately to pay bills and Payne's debts. In 1844, when Dolley wrote this letter, she was hoping Payne would do as he had offered: help her sell additional volumes of James's papers. Her contact was Senator William Cabell Rives ("Mr. R.").

In the meantime, she was "without funds," and she owed a payment to her friend, John Jacob Astor, who had lent her money. She could barely bring herself to mention Payne's ongoing gambling debts: "I will say little more." Even the great honor of a seat in Congress seemed unimportant.

Dolley Madison was endlessly forgiving of Payne. Together, they had survived when yellow fever took four members of their family, a powerful bond between any mother and son. (See the life stories of **Dolley Madison** and **Eliza Brock**.) But as an adult, Payne never gave his mother the support she needed. He vanished frequently for long periods of



Attributed to Joseph Wood, *John Payne Todd*, ca. 1817. Watercolor on ivory. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Mary Madison McGuire, 1936 (36.73).

time, reappearing only to ask for money. A few months after this letter, her finances no better, Dolley Madison was forced to sell Montpelier.

In 1848, the Library of Congress purchased the remaining four volumes of James' papers for \$25,000. Congress sent Dolley a check for \$5,000, but put the remainder in a trust fund, to keep the money out of Payne's hands.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What does this letter reveal about Dolley Madison's life after the death of her husband?
- ★ Why do you think Dolley Madison wanted or needed Payne's help?
- ★ What does Dolley Madison's letter teach us about the status of women in the new republic?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); The Dolley Madison Digital Edition, Holly C. Shulman, ed., <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/>.

## Dolley Madison's Letter to Payne

Washington Jany. 22d. 44

If you love me, my dear son, write to me—tell me when you will come to offer the papers to Congress, and to do something with the 4th volume—we are without funds and those we owe are impatient—the time has arrived now when if lost or neglected will never return to us! Mr. R with whom only I have conversed, assured me that if he could do any thing in it—we should chuse—but he had made himself so unpopular—that no open efforts of his would do any good to my interest and therefore some influential member of the lower house should be chosen and employed. Oh, my son! I am too unhappy not to have you with me, and not to have even your opinion and directions, what to do myself or what individuals to engage and at what time! Do not let this often repeated request offend or hurt you my son—but I will say little more—as it is not good for me to write.

You have no doubt seen in the papers a Resolution of Congress inviting me to a seat—and my answer—It is nothing in my eyes or my heart, nor would compliments even higher, unless you and myself were on safe ground with our creditors.

Astor's interest is due the 19th of February—can you obtain it for me? Miss Legare's best respects to you.

Ever your affectionate mother  
D. P. Madison.

[Envelope]  
J. P. Todd  
Montpelier  
Orange Cy  
Va.

Dolley Payne Todd Madison to John Payne Todd, 22 January 1844, in *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition*, ed. Holly C. Shulman. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2004. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/DPM1353> (accessed by M. Waters, 12-7-2016).

Note  
*chuse* = choose



**M**odule 2 focuses on the experiences of American women reformers from 1800 to 1860, a period that stretched from the early republic to the outbreak of the Civil War. The story begins at the turn of the nineteenth century, with female-run benevolent societies that provided care to society's neediest people without threatening accepted gender roles. It continues into the tumultuous antebellum years, when women increasingly joined and sometimes led movements to fundamentally change American society.

This module examines the lives and work of reformers who challenged a number of different social issues: church hierarchy, Native American rights, temperance, abolition, and women's rights. In the process, these women often violated what scholars today call the cult of true womanhood, an ideology that celebrated the submissive woman at home, out of the public eye, focused on family and religion. The conflicting but intertwined narratives—of restriction and reform—are presented in a set of life stories and resources as well as the timeline entitled *Could and Should*. They offer students a chance to explore the role women played during a particularly crucial period of American history.

## Suggested Activities

- ★ Whenever you introduce a women's history component into your lessons, ask the students to consider both how this changes their understanding of the event and why it is important to have multiple perspectives.
- ★ Lead a discussion comparing how **Nancy Ward** and Catharine Beecher (**Resource 11**) each tried to martial resistance to the policy of Indian removal. What are the similarities and differences in their reasoning and approach? Why were they both unsuccessful?
- ★ Compare and contrast the women's clothing depicted in the life story of **Amelia Jenks Bloomer**, **Resource 14**, and **Resource 18**. Lead a class discussion on the symbolic meaning of each style. Ask the students to conduct research on the meaning and debate that surrounds specific articles of clothing today. (To explore the politics of fashion in the early republic, use the life stories of **Dolley Madison**, **Margaret Bayard Smith**, and **Resource 5**.)
- ★ Ask the students to use **Resources 10**, **12**, and **15**, and other materials they choose, to build an argument for why the women's movement gained momentum through the mid-nineteenth century.
- ★ Compare the New York State Married Women's Property Law (**Resource 16**) with the description of coverture in **Resource 1**. Why were property laws a major milestone in the fight for women's rights?
- ★ The backlash and violence faced by women reformers is often overlooked in history books. Use the life story of **Lydia Maria Child** and **Resources 13** and **17** as starting points for a research project about the extremes women faced, and the range of ways they responded.
- ★ Use the life stories of **Jarena Lee** and **Mary and Emily Edmonson** to introduce the concept of intersectionality. How were their lives shaped by two different systems of oppression: race and gender?
- ★ Ask students to select one life story and one or two resources, and identify how the women in these materials began their reform efforts, and how their goals or tactics may have changed over time. How did they remain committed to their causes?

## Discussion Questions

- ★ How did the role of American women evolve as the U.S. government stabilized and the economy grew?
- ★ How did race and class differences affect the experiences of women during the antebellum period?
- ★ Why was there resistance to women speaking in public and participating in political movements?
- ★ In the nineteenth century, how did fashion represent the rules women were supposed to follow? Does it still?
- ★ How did the Second Great Awakening contribute to the rise of the women's rights movement?

- ★ What causes were considered appropriate for women reformers and why?
- ★ What were the consequences for a woman who broke the rules of behavior? How did the consequences differ for women of different races and social classes?
- ★ How did the actions of women shape the overall course of U.S. society and government during the decades before the Civil War?
- ★ What issues do students care about today? What rules or unfair situations would they like to change? What could they do to make things better? Would some actions involve risk? How are their concerns and choices different from those of nineteenth-century female reformers?

## Unit Wrap-Up Activity

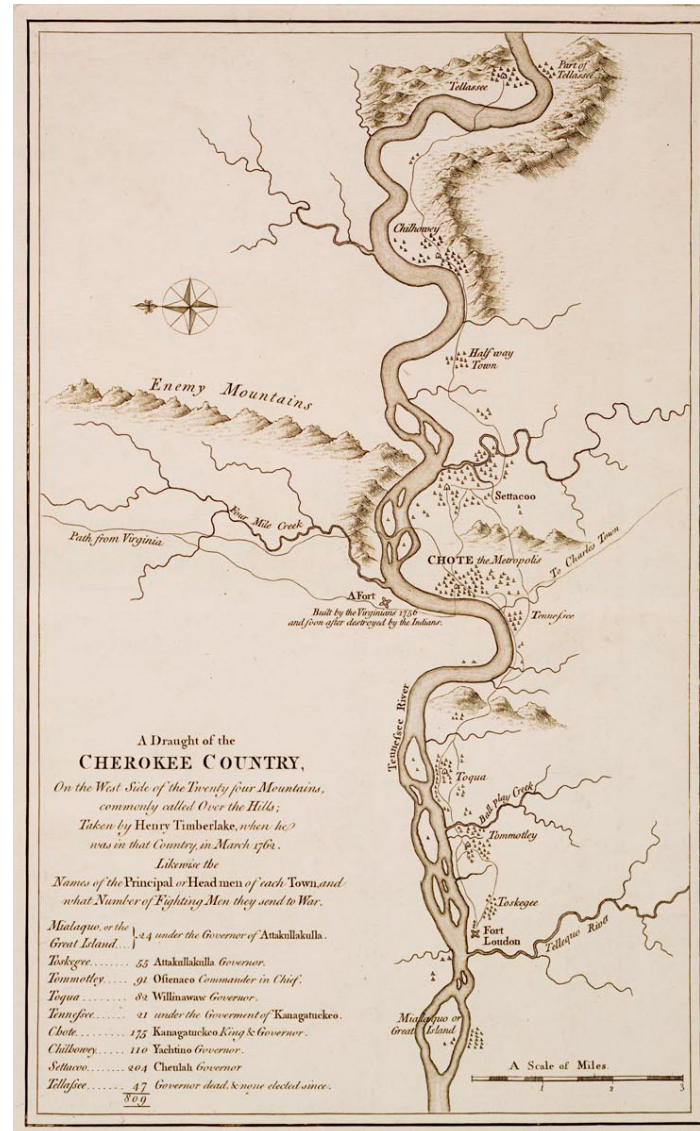
Introduce the structure of the Declaration of Sentiments (**Appendix B**), which includes both grievances ("sentiments") and demands ("resolutions"). Ask students to select one or two sentiments and one or two resolutions, and find precedents for them in the curriculum materials in Module 1 and Module 2. For example, "He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead" is the coverture law (**Resource 1**), and links directly to the life stories, especially **Eliza Brock's**. Lead a class discussion about how women's experiences informed the Declaration of Sentiments, and why suffrage became the focus of women's efforts for the next seven decades.

## Nancy Ward (Nanyehi) 1738–1822

**N**anyehi was born in Chota, the “mother town” of the Cherokees, which was located in what is now eastern Tennessee. She was closely related to important Cherokee leaders, and she became one herself.

By the age of 17, Nanyehi was married and the mother of two children. That year, 1755, the Cherokees raided the Creek Indians. Nanyehi fought alongside her husband, and when he was killed, she raised his rifle and led the warriors herself to a victory that expanded Cherokee lands in northwest Georgia. For her courage and leadership, she was named a Beloved Woman, or War Woman. It was the only title of honor a Cherokee woman could receive, and was usually given to women who had supported war parties in traditionally female ways, such as preparing food for the warriors, or had fought as warriors themselves. She was called the Beloved Woman of Chota, and known as Nancy Ward after she married English trader Bryant Ward in the late 1750s.

Cherokee society was matrilineal: kinship passed through the mother’s line. This gave women important power, which was reinforced by the traditional division of labor: women were farmers, and men were hunters. The gender roles were clear and separate, but both were considered essential and therefore in balance. It was different from the white



Henry Timberlake, *A Draught of the Cherokee Country*, 1765. Ink on paper. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 5549.

European view of a sex hierarchy, with men at the top and women regarded as inferior.

As trade and conflict between Indians and whites increased through the 1700s, Cherokee men’s roles became more important because trade and war were part of their domain. Beloved Women, however, continued to have and to use their considerable political influence. Nancy Ward was the only female among the voting members of the Cherokee General Council, and was the leader of the Women’s Council. Like Beloved Women of other villages, she was responsible for decisions about justice and vengeance. In 1776, Cherokees took prisoners after raiding a white settlement. Nancy Ward permitted the torture and death of a young boy, but she reportedly saved a captured white woman about to be burned at the stake. She also freed Patriot prisoners taken during the American Revolution, even though the Cherokees allied with the British during the war.

**B**eloved Women served as negotiators in important meetings with whites. When the Cherokees met with U.S. officials, Nancy Ward was often present, to the surprise of the assembled white men. In 1781, she addressed the U.S. treaty commissioners after settlers attacked Cherokee towns. She believed that peace would come only if Indians and whites saw themselves as one people, and she thought only the women on the two sides could make this happen. “Let your women’s sons be

## Nancy Ward (Nanyehi) 1738–1822 *continued*

ours; our sons be yours,” she said to the commissioners. “Let your women hear our words.” Because she argued for peace, and for getting along with white people, some Cherokees at the time considered her a traitor, and still do today. Her cousin, Dragging Canoe, was and is a hero to many because he advocated armed resistance.

In the years after the Revolution, America’s white population grew quickly, and more and more settlers moved into Cherokee territory, which occupied much of the American Southeast. It was prime land, ideal for growing cotton. George Washington’s administration tried to prevent states from seizing the land illegally, but the seizures continued. So did skirmishes between Cherokees and settlers, and the signing of treaties that whites routinely ignored.

Americans began to expect that one day the Cherokees would be gone from the Southeast entirely. It seemed only a matter of time. During the Louisiana Purchase, Thomas Jefferson suggested that the local native population might exchange their territory for land farther west. That swap did not happen, but the idea took root in American thinking, and the Cherokees felt constant pressure from land-hungry whites. The issue divided the Cherokee people. Most were against selling land and relocating, but some moved west on their own, many to Arkansas, eager to live beyond the reach of white

encroachment. Others sold land to the state governments or individual settlers.

In 1816, Cherokee leaders in an area known as the “lower towns” signed a treaty that gave away a large portion of land in Alabama in exchange for land in Arkansas. The Cherokee National Council viewed the action as treason, and moved to arrest the signers. Against this backdrop, on May 2, 1817, the Cherokee Women’s Council urged the National Council to hold on to what remained of Cherokee land. Nancy Ward, nearly 80 years old, made her last-known speech, but was too unwell to deliver it in person. She sent her son, Five Killer, with her written plea, which was signed by twelve other women, including her daughter and granddaughter: “Our beloved children and head men of the Cherokee Nation, we address you warriors in council. We have raised all of you on the land which we now have. . . . We know that our country has once been extensive, but by repeated sales has become circumscribed to a small track. . . . Your mothers, your sisters ask and beg of you not to part with any more of our land.”

But the land sales continued. In 1819, the U.S. government purchased a large portion of the Cherokee Nation that included Chota. Nancy Ward died three years later, before the election of Andrew Jackson all but guaranteed the removal of the Cherokees from their land, and before the forced march of her people in the Trail of Tears, 1838–39.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ How did Cherokee gender roles differ from European gender roles?
- ★ What were the responsibilities of a Cherokee Beloved Woman? How did Nancy Ward earn this title?
- ★ What role did Nancy Ward envision for women in the peace talks between the Cherokee and the American government?
- ★ How did Nancy Ward feel about the sale of Cherokee land to state governments? What action did she take?

**Sources:** Virginia Moore Carney, *Eastern Band Cherokee Women: Cultural Persistence in Their Letters and Speeches* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2005); “A Brief History of the Trail of Tears,” Cherokee Nation Cultural Resource Center, <http://www.cherokee.org/AboutTheNation/History/TrailofTears/ABriefHistoryoftheTrailofTears.aspx> (accessed by M. Waters, 10-18-2016); Guide, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions archives, 1810–1961, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/-/hou01467> (accessed by M. Waters, 10-18-2016); Theda Purdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Theda Purdue, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, rev. ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016).

## Jarena Lee 1783–1849

### Forbidden to Speak

Jarena Lee's parents were a free black couple in Cape May, New Jersey. Like many poor people of all races, when their daughter was seven, they hired her out as a domestic servant to a white family living sixty miles away. Jarena taught herself to read and write, and she was



Jarena Lee, 1849. *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee: giving an account of her call to preach the gospel*, frontispiece. Engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, CT.L4784 A3 1849.

deeply spiritual, even as a child. Years later, she still regretted that her parents had not provided her with religious teaching, the area where she devoted her life. At around

age 20, Jarena moved to Philadelphia and searched for a church that suited her. She felt out of place until she arrived at a black church and heard the preaching of Richard Allen. She was baptized in 1807 at age 24.

Soon after, Jarena felt called to preach, and asked Reverend Allen for permission. He said that she could respond from the congregation, but only men could preach. Most Protestant churches had a similar policy based on the Bible: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak.” Later, when she published her spiritual autobiography, she reflected on this disappointing moment: “If the man may preach, because the Savior died for him, why not the woman? seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole Savior, instead of a half one?”

For the time being, Jarena put aside her thoughts of preaching. In 1811, newly married, she moved with her husband to New Jersey. By 1817, her husband and four of their six children had died. She returned to Philadelphia and Reverend Allen, who had just founded the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. The rules against women preaching had not changed, but Jarena had a profound religious experience and began to preach without permission. She was so powerful that Reverend Allen relented. Jarena became the first authorized female preacher in the A.M.E church. She began to travel many miles a day, often on foot, to preach to assembled crowds.



Hugh Bridport, *Camp Meeting*, ca. 1829. Lithograph. New-York Historical Society Library, PR 68.

### The Second Great Awakening

Jarena Lee was part of a broad spiritual movement that stretched from the 1790s to the 1840s. Later called the Second Great Awakening, it peaked in the 1820s, as Jarena began her missionary work. Historians have identified other “great awakenings” in American history. They were periods of intense religious fervor within Protestant churches, of revival meetings, often on a huge scale, and of conversions by the thousands. The Second Great Awakening was important

because it linked religion, moral reform, and the lives of women just as the nation was contending with deep inequalities in American life. Throughout the country, most of the people at religious revivals, and most of the converts, were women. Most of the men were their husbands and sons.

People flocked especially to the newer Protestant sects. The Methodists and Baptists were the most popular, and competed for new converts. Jarena Lee reported on one trip to southern New York State, where she preached and held

## Jarena Lee 1783–1849 *continued*

prayer meetings over several days. “We had the victory,” she wrote, “as there were twenty-one persons joined from that revival.” The Baptists, working the same ground, had won only five.

### Changing Minds

The Second Great Awakening, like the American Revolution, was a popular rebellion against dogma and the rule of the elite. One of its central ideas was that common people—including the poor, the uneducated, black people, and women—could find salvation. And God could choose any one of them to preach. These were optimistic, democratic ideas about human nature and religion, and they helped Jarena Lee become a preacher. But they also reinforced women’s belief that they were morally superior, and needed to put that morality to good use. Many applied their energies to reform movements favoring temperance, abolition, and women’s rights.

One study found about a hundred female preachers during the Second Great Awakening. Most were white, but Jarena Lee—and Sojourner Truth—were African American women who traveled and preached. Regardless of race or gender, itinerant preachers drew eager, sometimes enormous, crowds. Jarena Lee would preach to any group of listeners, but she sought out African Americans, and usually spoke to a few dozen people at most. She

preached wherever she could: in homes, schools, open fields. Most people, she reported, were kind. They gave her rides, places to sleep, meals, a little cash, and she needed it all. Male preachers received a small salary, but the women were unpaid.

**E**arly in her career, Jarena Lee fought for her right to preach. Neither she nor other female preachers set out to unseat male ministers, or fundamentally change their churches. In that sense, they were not reformers. But reform is a slow, subtle process that gradually changes the way people think. Those who heard Jarena Lee witnessed something that had been forbidden, and yet they were won over. She wrote of one revival in a small town in western New York State, where she preached and gained many converts, and “they all marveled at a woman taking such a deep subject.”

**Sources:** Catherine A. Brekus, “Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America.” The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2009, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/98759.pdf> (accessed by M. Waters, 11-18-2016); Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of her Call to Preach the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Printed and Published for the Author, 1849).

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What challenges did Jarena Lee face in pursuing her passions? How did she overcome them?
- ★ What made the Second Great Awakening a radical social movement?
- ★ How was Jarena Lee treated differently from male itinerant preachers?
- ★ Why is Jarena Lee’s story important?

## The Edmonson Sisters

Mary (1832–1853), Emily (1835–1895)

### Running Away

On the night of April 15, 1848, three Edmonson siblings, all enslaved, walked through Washington, D.C., toward the schooner *Pearl*. Emily was 13, Mary was 15, and Samuel a few years older. They were fleeing toward freedom. Seventy fugitives were silently aboard the ship that night, including three more Edmonson brothers, as it sailed in darkness down the Potomac River, bound for Philadelphia. The escape had been planned by two white abolitionists, William Chaplin and Gerrit Smith, and two free black men in Washington, including Paul Jennings, who had been enslaved for most of his life by James and Dolley Madison.

The next morning, slave owners discovered their slaves were missing. Apparently informed about the *Pearl*, a search party gave chase in a steamboat. Despite its head start, the *Pearl* had encountered fierce winds as it entered Chesapeake Bay, and dropped anchor for several hours while still in Southern waters. This allowed the steamboat to catch up and capture the fugitives. A month later, the six Edmonsons were in the hold of another ship, the *Union*, headed south to the slave market in New Orleans. A very high price—\$1,200 each—was set for Mary and Emily because they were young, beautiful, and light-skinned. There was a brisk market for “fancy girls,” a euphemism for sex slaves.



Mary and Emily Edmonson, ca. 1850–1860. Photomechanical print. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 91789694.

### Freedom

The *Pearl* was the largest slave escape ever attempted in the United States, and the story was widely covered. The girls’ father, Paul Edmonson, a free black, worked tirelessly with Chaplin and others to raise the money to buy their freedom. Those who knew them called the sisters pious and moral, “exemplary . . . irreproachable.” The prospect of what awaited Emily and Mary horrified white abolitionists and churchgoers.

Many enslaved women were sexually exploited, but their personal stories were not often known in the North. Mary and Emily became potent symbols of the special evils of slavery for young women because their situation was so dramatic and public, and because of their youth, appearance, and conduct. Henry Ward Beecher, in one barnstorming speech on their behalf, called sexual slavery a “worse fate” than slavery. It may have seemed so to the white parishioners. Coins were dropped into collection baskets, and although many, many coins were needed, the sisters were freed in November 1848, seven months after they boarded the *Pearl*.

### Fighting for Abolition

But the Edmonsons were much more than symbols. Still teenagers when they were freed, Mary and Emily moved to New York State, attended school, and joined the antislavery effort. They met leading

Life Story

# The Edmonson Sisters

Mary (1832–1853), Emily (1835–1895) *continued*



Ezra Greenleaf Weld, *Fugitive Slave Law Convention, Cazenovia, New York*, 1850. Daguerreotype. Courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum.

abolitionists, including the wealthy Gerrit Smith, who had probably funded the ill-fated *Pearl*. The sisters worked desperately with their father and others to free their still-enslaved siblings. They attended antislavery meetings, told their story, and were often asked to sing; they had beautiful, inspiring voices.

In August 1850, Congress was preparing to pass the Fugitive Slave Law, which would require the return of runaways who fled to the North. Outraged abolitionists met to protest in Cazenovia, New York. They were further incensed when William Chaplin

was arrested in Maryland on his way to Cazenovia; he was helping a slave escape.

In a photo taken at the Cazenovia meeting, Frederick Douglass sits at a table on the speakers' platform. Gerrit Smith stands behind him, flanked by the two Edmonson sisters. At the time, many abolitionists believed that women should not speak in public. A black woman speaking was almost unheard of. But one of the Edmonsons—probably Mary, the taller sister—stepped forward to address the crowd. William Chaplin had helped to organize the *Pearl* escape, spearheaded the intense fundraising effort on the sisters' behalf, and personally handed over the purchase money to the girls' owner. Mary spoke firmly, with poise, about his arrest and imprisonment. One audience member described her as a “young and noble-hearted girl,” using “words of simple and touching eloquence.”

Mary and Emily enrolled in an integrated upstate New York college. Harriet Beecher Stowe befriended them, wrote about them, and offered to pay their tuition to Oberlin College in Ohio. Shortly after arriving at Oberlin, Mary died of tuberculosis at age 20. Emily, grief-stricken, returned to her family in Washington, where she taught in Myrtilla Miner's school for black women and continued her abolitionist work. Her life was hardly free of risk. In 1854, Miner wrote in a letter: “Emily and I lived here alone, unprotected except by God, the rowdies occasionally stoning the house at evening and we nightly retired in the

expectation that the house would be fired before morning. Emily and I have been seen practicing shooting with a pistol.”

Emily married Larkin Johnson in 1860 and bore four children. She enjoyed a close lifelong friendship with Frederick Douglass, and died the same year he did, 1895.

## Discussion Questions

- ★ Why did the case of the Edmonson sisters capture national attention?
- ★ What did the Edmonson sisters do after they were set free? What made their actions radical?
- ★ What do Emily Edmonson's experiences as a teacher at a school for black women tell us about the day to day realities of free black women in the 1850s?

**Sources:** John H. Paynter, A. M. [the great-nephew of Mary and Emily Edmonson], “The Fugitives of the *Pearl*,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Carter G. Woodson, ed., Vol. 1, No. 3, June 1916, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/13642/13642-h/13642-h.htm> (accessed by M. Waters 9-17-2016); Mary Kay Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl: The Heroic Bid for Freedom on the Underground Railroad* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

## Lydia Maria Child 1802–1880

### Early Success

Two icons appear in the story of nineteenth-century American women. One is the idealized middle-class wife tending to her home, family, and religion. The other is the reformer, energetically working to address social ills. Lydia Maria Child represented both, and the clash between them.

Born in Massachusetts in 1802, Lydia Maria Francis went by her middle name, and pronounced it Ma-RYE-a. Her older brother, Convers, was aware of Maria's intellectual gifts, and introduced her to important literary works. In her early 20s, Maria lived with Convers, then a Unitarian minister, and converted to Unitarianism. Through her brother, she met many of the top writers and thinkers of the day. She was only 22 when she wrote her first novel, and her second appeared the following year. At 24, she began writing and publishing America's first periodical for children, *Juvenile Miscellany*.

Maria was well on her way to an unusual career as a well-known American writer, but the work that made her famous was still to come. In the 1820s, the United States suffered its first major economic depression, and Maria worried about how families would get by, especially poor and average families who could not afford servants. In 1829, she published *The Frugal Housewife: Dedicated to Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy*. Mostly a book of recipes, Maria



Lydia Maria Child, 1883. *Letters of Lydia Maria Child*, frontispiece. Engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, PS1293.Z8 1888.

included other advice for young housewives: “If you are about to furnish a house, do not spend all your money. . . . Begin humbly.”

### Raising Her Voice

Maria was newly married herself when she published *The Frugal Housewife*. Her husband, David Child, was a well-educated, well-traveled lawyer, eight years older than Maria. As her brother had broadened her literary taste, David brought reform-minded politics into her life. He introduced her to the work of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who argued for immediate emancipation on the grounds that slavery was morally wrong and against all Christian principles. Maria was entirely won over to the moral argument against slavery, and her life changed forever.

In 1833, after she had written two more books on domestic subjects, Lydia Maria Child published *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*. One of the first Americans to speak out against slavery, she pushed hard against prevailing attitudes. She wrote, for example, that “the intellectual inferiority of the negroes is a common, though most absurd apology, for personal prejudice.” The colonization plan, she said, was both wrong and impractical: “While one hundred and fifty free blacks have been sent to Africa in a year, two hundred slaves have been born in a day. To keep the evil just where

## Lydia Maria Child 1802–1880 *continued*

it is, seventy thousand a year must be transported.” The cost, she said, would bankrupt the treasury of the world.

### Paying a Price

But Maria’s primary argument in the *Appeal* was this: All slaves must be freed immediately, and their owners should not be paid. The abolition movement was young when Maria wrote her *Appeal*. It was her attempt to end slavery through “moral suasion,” convincing slave owners that slavery was morally wrong. But her argument was beyond what most Americans were thinking, and she came to be seen as an extremist who should not give advice to mothers. Maria’s audience, especially in the South, turned against her. *The Juvenile Miscellany* closed down after parents cancelled subscriptions, and her book sales dropped. David Child was not a reliable breadwinner, so the loss of her income created hardship for the couple. Their marriage struggled.

Maria continued to write domestic books, and she wrote the poem that, set to music, is now a holiday staple: “Over the River and Through the Woods.” In the mid-1840s, she published *Letters from New York*, which improved her standing with readers: “Home—that blessed word,” she wrote, “which opens to the human heart the most perfect glimpse of Heaven.” But Maria’s passion was abolition. In 1841, she became

the editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*. The American Anti-Slavery Society, which published the paper, was in disarray following a mass defection over the role of women (see **Resource 15**). Maria left the post after two years. Dismayed by the infighting, she was reluctant to join other reform groups and did not become involved in women’s rights until after the Civil War.

In 1850, after more than thirty printings, *The Frugal Housewife*—then titled *The American Frugal Housewife*—went out of print, partly because it was dated, and partly because the author was viewed as a radical troublemaker. Maria and David moved to Wayland, Massachusetts, where they sheltered runaways trying to escape the Fugitive Slave Law, and where she wrote several more works against slavery. At her funeral, Wendell Phillips spoke for many abolitionists who had known her: “We felt that neither fame, nor gain, nor danger, nor calumny had any weight with her.”

**Sources:** *A Lydia Maria Child Reader*, Carolyn L. Karcher, ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Joan Goodwin, “Lydia Maria Child,” *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography*, <http://uudb.org/articles/lydiamariachild.html> (accessed by M. Waters, 11-18-2016).

### Discussion Questions

- ★ How did Lydia Maria Child establish herself as a successful writer?
- ★ What act earned Lydia Maria Child’s the reputation of a dangerous radical?
- ★ What does Lydia Maria Child’s experience tell us about the challenges faced by women who were outspoken about their beliefs?

# Amelia Jenks Bloomer 1818–1894

## Moving to Seneca Falls

**A**melia Jenks was born in Homer, New York. In her late teens, she became a governess for a wealthy family in Seneca Falls, then a booming manufacturing center on the Erie Canal. Like any trade route, the canal spread new ideas along its path, and brought a fair share of mavericks and entrepreneurs to the area. Seneca Falls was fertile ground for the reformist spirit.

In 1840, Amelia married Dexter Bloomer, who had just purchased, with a friend, the *Seneca County Courier*. They omitted the word “obey” from their vows, a clue to Amelia’s early thinking about women’s rights. Dexter encouraged her to write articles for the *Courier* and other reform-minded papers, which she did anonymously. She later described her young self as a “shrinking, bashful woman.”

## The Temperance Cause

Amelia’s interest in temperance began before she married Dexter Bloomer, who gave up alcohol after their wedding. They were part of a growing movement that had formed in the 1820s, as American alcohol consumption reached an all-time high. In temperance circles, drinking was viewed as immoral, un-Christian, and destructive of family life. Temperance reform was seen as a moral issue, well within women’s sphere, but it was also an opportunity to grapple



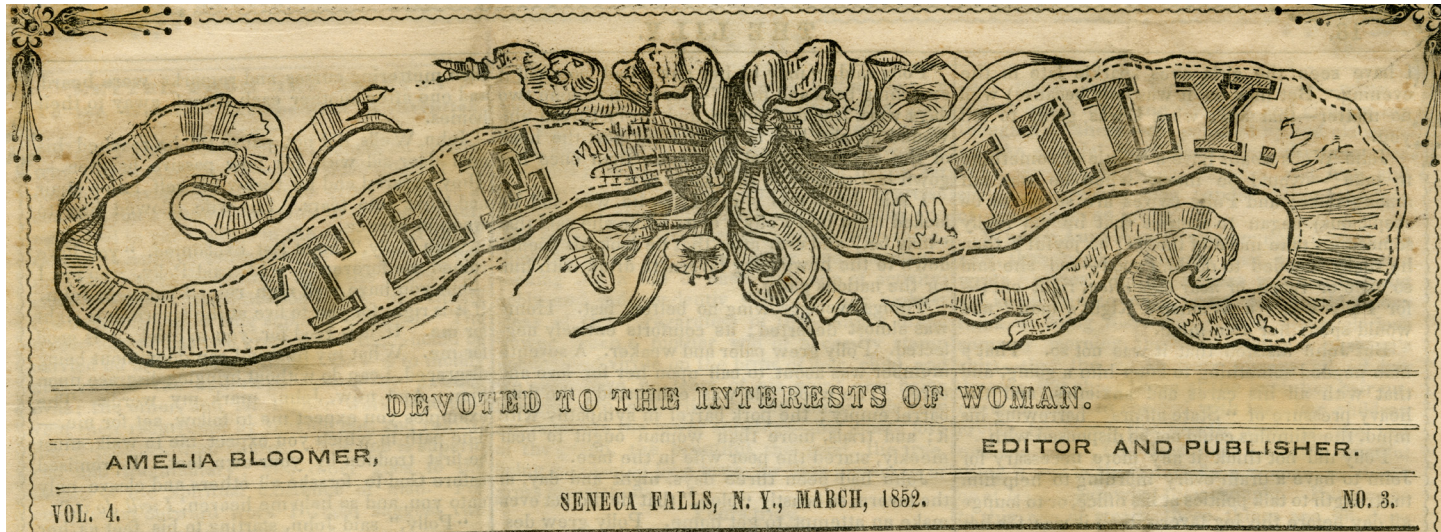
*Amelia Jenks Bloomer, 1850s. Daguerreotype. Property of the Seneca Falls Historical Society.*

with a problem that deeply affected the lives of many women. When wives were abused or abandoned by drunken husbands, under the rules of coverture they had no recourse other than charity. For Amelia Bloomer, Susan B. Anthony, and many other women, temperance activity was a stepping stone in their later commitment to women’s rights.

**B**ut the women of these reform movements were not all cut from the same cloth. For Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who moved to Seneca Falls in 1847, Amelia Bloomer was too conservative, too closely tied to her Episcopal church. Bloomer attended only part of the 1848 women’s rights convention, did not sign the Declaration of Sentiments, and, Stanton complained, “stood aloof and laughed at us.”

Dexter Bloomer said Amelia had not, at the time of the convention, given much thought to women’s rights. Temperance remained her great cause. In August 1848, she started *The Lily*, a temperance journal that was also the country’s first newspaper by and for women. It was borne of her frustration with women’s second-class status in the male-dominated temperance movement. Bloomer edited the paper and wrote most of the articles, but in November 1849, she began publishing pieces by her fiery neighbor, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Some people saw Stanton’s influence behind the paper’s widening interest in women’s rights.

# Amelia Jenks Bloomer 1818–1894 *continued*



## Discussion Questions

- ★ What cause drew Amelia Jenks Bloomer into the reform scene? How did this affect her activism?
- ★ How did Amelia Jenks Bloomer spread the word about her cause?
- ★ What does Amelia Jenks Bloomer's relationship to Elizabeth Cady Stanton reveal about the early women's rights movement?

Amelia Bloomer, *The Lily*, March 1852. Newspaper. New-York Historical Society Library, HV5285 L5 v.4, no.3.

## Dress Reform and Women's Rights

Bloomer may be better known for dress reform than for temperance. In the pages of *The Lily*, she promoted the astonishing new outfit that she, Stanton, and others were wearing, a short dress over wide pants called pantaloons. People associated the style with her, and it became known as the Bloomer outfit (see [Resource 18](#)). She did support dress reform and women's rights, but she believed that temperance was more important. Elizabeth Cady Stanton found this troubling. "You must take Mrs. Bloomer's suggestions with great caution," she wrote to Susan B. Anthony, "for she has not the spirit of a true reformer."

Women's reform movements, like all groups committed to a cause, were composed of intense, passionate people who did not always blend well. Amelia Bloomer was a fiercely dedicated, religious woman who, her husband admitted, "took life too seriously."

Mrs. Stanton was a big personality, confident and witty. The two worked together on causes that mattered deeply to



N. Currier (firm), *The Bloomer Costume*, 1851. Lithograph. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 90711963.

them, but not without disagreements and rivalry. In 1880, some thirty years after both women had lived in Seneca Falls, the *Seneca Falls Reveille* published a reminiscence that credited Mrs. Stanton with turning *The Lily* into "the organ of the women's rights party." Amelia Bloomer wrote to the *Reveille* to complain of "malicious misrepresentation. . . . That it ever became her 'organ,' or in any way subject to her control, is untrue."

Amelia and Dexter Bloomer moved to Ohio in 1853, and two years later to Iowa, where they adopted two sons. With no printing facilities available, Amelia sold *The Lily*, which failed without her leadership. She remained committed to temperance and to women's rights, and served as the president of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Society.

**Sources:** "Amelia Bloomer – Publisher and Advocate for Woman's Rights." Copied from the Historical Files maintained by the National Park Service. The Social Welfare History Project, <http://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/biography/bloomer-amelia/> (accessed by M. Waters, 11-1-2016); Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009); Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman's Rights Convention* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

Resource 10:

## Benevolent Societies

Women were fundamental to the reform spirit that shook America from the 1820s to the Civil War. But the first steps in their efforts came earlier, after the American Revolution, when women began to come together in groups and form benevolent societies. Often they worked through their churches and had religious goals, like running Sunday schools. Other societies focused more broadly on charity for people in need.



Isabella Graham, 1843. *The Power of Faith*, frontispiece. Engraving, New-York Historical Society Library, C.T.G739 A2 1843.

In 1806 in New York, Scottish immigrant Isabella Graham and her daughter, Joanna Bethune, joined Elizabeth Schuyler

Hamilton, widow of Alexander Hamilton, and founded the New York Orphan Asylum. Graham and Bethune had gained experience by forming a relief organization for poor widows with children almost ten years earlier. Another orphanage, this one in the nation's capital, was founded in 1815

by Dolley Madison, Margaret Bayard Smith, and Marcia Burns Van Ness. The Washington Female Orphan Asylum not only provided for orphaned girls, it reinforced the city's proud determination to rebuild after the British attack in 1814 (see Resource 8).



Gilbert Stuart, *Mrs. Marcia Van Ness*, 1805. Oil on canvas. Edgewater Classical American Homes Preservation Trust.

In both New York and Washington, the orphanages were run by women, with all-female boards of directors, but they

operated under different state and local laws. In New York, the board was able to secure a state charter that allowed it to own and manage the facility. But in its early years, the Washington asylum had no charter, because the married women on the board could not legally own property. It was on shaky financial ground until Congress installed an all-male board in 1828.

The founders of these orphanages were mothers themselves, and knew how to care for children. But opening and maintaining the asylums required that they raise

money, promote their plan, navigate legal requirements, and operate an institution, as is clear from this passage of Joanna Bethune's biography of her mother. These critical skills were more often associated with the world of men, but no one disapproved, because caring for children was well within women's moral sphere. So in these orphanages, and in benevolent societies around the country, women learned how to put their ideas to work, and later they applied these lessons to larger, more political, and more dangerous causes.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What new opportunities were available to women who participated in benevolent societies?
- ★ Why was it socially acceptable for women to take a leadership role in a benevolent society when they were barred from so much else?

**Sources:** Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); *The Early Years*, <http://www.graham-windham.org/about-us/history/the-early-years/> (accessed by M. Waters, 10-25-2016); "Orphan Asylum Society," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, rev. ed., Kenneth T. Jackson, ed. (New Haven and New York: Yale University Press and the New-York Historical Society, 2010).

### Learning the Skills

On the 15th of March, 1806, the female subscribers to proposals for providing an Asylum for Orphan Children met at the City Hotel; Mrs. Graham was called to the chair, a Society organized, and a board of direction chosen. Mrs. [Sarah] Hoffman was elected the first Directress of the Orphan Asylum Society. Mrs. Graham . . . , or one of her family, taught the orphans daily, until the funds of the Institution were sufficient to provide a teacher and superintendent. . . .

And truly God has made good his promise towards this benevolent Institution. . . . Having for fourteen months occupied a hired house for an Asylum, the ladies entertained the bold idea of building an Asylum on account of the Society. They had then about three hundred and fifty dollars as the commencement of a fund for the building; they purchased four lots of ground in the village of Greenwich, on a healthful, elevated site, possessing a fine prospect. The corner-stone was laid on the 7th of July, 1807. They erected a building fifty feet square. . . . In that house Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Hoffman spent much of their time; there they trained for Eternity the children of those whose widowed dying mothers they had cheered with the hope that when they should be taken away, God would fulfill his gracious promise and preserve their fatherless children alive.

Joanna Graham Bethune, *The Power of Faith: Exemplified in the Life and Writings of the Late Mrs. Isabella Graham, of New-York*. New York: J. Seymour, 1816.

Resource 11:

## Catharine Beecher's Campaign Against Indian Removal



(Left) Attributed to W & F Langenheim, *Catharine Beecher*, 1848. Daguerreotype. Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, A102-438-1z.  
(Right) Augustus Washington, *Lydia Sigourney*, 1852. Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut.

After the Revolution, and especially in the boom times after the War of 1812, white settlers and individual states claimed Cherokee lands that occupied much of what is now the southeastern United States. In 1828, Georgia passed laws that challenged Cherokee sovereignty within the state. After Andrew Jackson was inaugurated in March 1829, he supported Georgia's claims, not surprisingly since he was elected largely because he favored Indian removal.

Eight months later, Jeremiah Evarts, a missionary who worked among the Cherokees, encouraged a massive petition campaign against the

impending Indian Removal Act. On December 1, 1829, educator Catharine Beecher wrote this circular, which was published unsigned on Christmas Day. Beecher—older sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe—and Lydia Sigourney, her colleague at the Hartford Female Seminary in Connecticut, organized the petition effort, drawing on their many contacts in education and benevolent societies. Petitions were an acceptable medium for women's opinions, but in Beecher and Sigourney's campaign, women worked collectively, nationwide, on a heated political issue. They were venturing into areas where they were expected to remain silent.

Despite these efforts, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act on

May 28, 1830. The Trail of Tears—the forced march of the Cherokees to Oklahoma Territory—began in 1838. The failure of the women's petition effort, and the reports of Cherokee deaths and suffering, led many to see parallels to the plan to end slavery by sending freed slaves to Africa. Some in the antislavery movement abandoned colonization as unworkable and unjust, and became full-fledged abolitionists. But Catharine Beecher was not among them. She continued to favor colonization, and saw abolitionists like Angelina Grimke Weld as dangerous radicals.

**Sources:** Catharine Beecher, *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, Addressed to Miss A. D. Grimke* (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1837), <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/abesceba2t.html> (accessed by M. Waters, 10-26-2016); Theda Purdue, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, rev. ed., (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016).

### Discussion Questions

- ★ What does this circular reveal about the political engagement of women in the 1820s?
- ★ What could women do to express their disapproval of a government policy? How effective was this tactic?
- ★ Why was petitioning considered an appropriate way for women to express their opinions?

### Circular Addressed to Benevolent Ladies of the United States

Ever since the existence of this nation, our general government . . . [has] acknowledged . . . [the Indian] people, as free and independent nations, and has protected them in the quiet possession of their lands. . . .

But the lands of this people are claimed to be embraced within the limits of some of our Southern States, and as they are fertile and valuable, they are demanded by the whites as their own possessions, and efforts are making to dispossess the Indians of their native soil. And such is the singular state of concurring circumstances, that it has become almost a certainty, that these people are to have their lands torn from them, and to be driven into western wilds and to final annihilation, unless the feelings of a humane and Christian nation shall be aroused to prevent the unhallowed sacrifice. . . .

Have not then the females of this country some duties devolving upon them in relation to this helpless race? . . . It may be, that female petitioners can lawfully be heard, even by the highest rulers of our land. . . .

This communication was written and sent abroad solely by the female hand. Let every woman who peruses it . . . endeavor by every suitable expedient to interest the feelings of her friends, relatives and acquaintances, in behalf of this people, that are ready to perish. A few weeks must decide this interesting and important question, and after that time, sympathy and regret will all be in vain.

[Catharine Beecher], "Circular Addressed to Benevolent Ladies of the U. States," December 1, 1929. Theda Purdue, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents*, rev. ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2016. The complete text is at <http://www.wcu.edu/library/DigitalCollections/CherokeePhoenix/Vol2/no39/pg2col3bpg3col2b.htm>.

Resource 12:

## Quakers, Women, and Reform



Lucretia Mott, ca. 1860–1880. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 9750024.

the start, they played a much greater role than women in mainstream Protestant sects. They wrote and spoke, served on committees, and were involved in decision-making. In New York State and Pennsylvania in the 1830s, there were slightly *more* women Quaker ministers than men. **Lydia Maria**

the leading antislavery orators of her day, was attacked by a mob at Pennsylvania Hall (see **Resource 13**).

**I**n 1848, the first women's rights convention was organized in Seneca Falls by five women: **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**, Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright (Lucretia's sister), Jane Hunt, and Mary Ann M'Clintock. With the exception of Stanton, all were Quakers or, in Wright's case, a former Quaker who had been expelled for marrying outside the faith. Susan B. Anthony did not attend the meeting in Seneca Falls, but she was a Quaker who became Stanton's great partner in the long fight for women's suffrage.

**O**n a spiritual quest in England in 1647, George Fox encountered people who believed that women have no souls, "no more than a goose." He challenged the idea by quoting Scripture. Five years later, he founded the Society of Friends, also known as the Quakers. The new faith held that God was present in every human soul, regardless of race or sex, and it quickly spread to the American colonies. Its egalitarian attitude toward women created both leaders and workers for the great reform movements of the nineteenth century.

Women were not men's full equals in Quaker communities, but from

**Child**, who lived among Quakers for a period of time, noted that Quaker women were independent because they shared "equally with men in the management of all the business of the society."

Independent Quaker women were indispensable to the abolition movement, but not without opposition. Lucretia Mott spoke at the 1833 convention that founded the American Anti-Slavery Society. But when women were not permitted to join—a position that would evolve and splinter the group by the late 1830s—she and others formed the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. Angelina Grimke Weld, a convert to Quakerism and one of

### Discussion Questions

- ★ Why did the Quakers allow women more rights than general American society?
- ★ Why do the actions of a small religious sect matter to the larger story of women's rights?

**Sources:** Christopher Densmore, "Radical Quaker Women and the Early Women's Rights Movement," *Quakers & Slavery*, [http://trilogy.brynmawr.edu/speccoll/quakersandslavery/commentary/themes/radical\\_quaker\\_women.php](http://trilogy.brynmawr.edu/speccoll/quakersandslavery/commentary/themes/radical_quaker_women.php) (accessed by M. Waters, 11-28-2016); Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Women's Rights Convention* (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 2004).

### Women in Quaker Doctrine

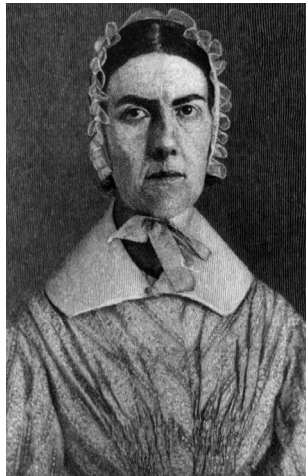
As we dare not encourage any ministry but that which we believe to spring from the influence of the Holy Spirit, so neither dare we attempt to restrain this influence to persons of any condition in life, or to the male sex alone; but, as male and female are one in Christ, we allow such of the female sex as we believe to be endued with a right qualification for the ministry, to exercise their gifts for the general edification of the church.

[Joseph Gurney Bevan?], *Summary of the History, Doctrine, and Discipline of Friends: Written at the Desire of the Meeting for Sufferings*, London: 1790.

# Fire at Pennsylvania Hall

The Grimke sisters, Angelina (1805–1879) and Sarah (1792–1873), grew up on a South Carolina slave plantation, moved to Philadelphia as young adults, and became prominent abolitionists. Their personal experience with slavery made them unique voices in Northern abolitionist circles. Both sisters wrote and spoke against slavery, but Angelina was known as one of the most compelling orators in the abolition movement. For many Americans, a woman speaking in public to a “promiscuous” audience—one that included men and women—broke the rules about women’s proper role. A group of ministers wrote that it violated God’s order and was “unnatural.” But the sisters, convinced they were doing God’s work, defended women’s right to speak against slavery, and continued to do so themselves.

On Monday, May 14, 1838, a four-day abolitionist convention opened in Philadelphia. It was the first event in Pennsylvania Hall, which had been built by abolitionists because their unpopular cause made it difficult to rent meeting space. That night, with abolitionists and



Angelina Emily Grimké, undated. Wood engraving. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., 2003653379.

former slaves in attendance at her sister Anna’s home, Angelina married fellow abolitionist Theodore Weld.

Angelina was due to speak to the convention on Wednesday, May 16. By then, a noisy anti-abolitionist mob had gathered outside the building. Several times as she addressed the audience, shouts interrupted her, and rocks were hurled through the windows. This mob of Northern whites was incensed about abolition itself and because black abolitionists were present at the meeting. Insults and stones flew again



(Above) John Caspar Wild, *Destruction by Fire of Pennsylvania Hall*, 1838. Lithograph. Library Company of Philadelphia. \*W94 [P9057.27].

(Left) American Anti-Slavery Society, *Am I Not a Woman & a Sister*, 1838. Copper. New-York Historical Society, 2006.21.1.

when black women and white women left the building arm in arm. On Thursday, after the mayor cancelled the convention to restore quiet, the crowd broke into the empty building and torched it. Firefighters allowed the structure to burn to the ground as they hosed down nearby buildings instead.

Angelina Grimke Weld continued to write against slavery. In 1836, when Congress resolved not to read any more antislavery

petitions, she and Sarah placed their names at the top of a petition against this decision. But after the fire at Pennsylvania Hall, Angelina Grimke Weld never spoke against slavery in public again.



**Sources:** Carol Berkin, “Angelina and Sarah Grimke: Abolitionist Sisters,” *History Now: The Journal of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/slavery-and-anti-slavery/essays/angelina-and-sarah-grimke-abolitionist-sisters> (accessed by M. Waters, 10-27-2016); Gerda Lerner, *The Grimke Sisters from South Carolina*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

## Discussion Questions

- ★ What message did the mob send by burning down Pennsylvania Hall?
- ★ Was this protest effective? Why or why not?
- ★ How did this event affect Angelina Grimke Weld’s career?

## Fashion Plates

How do people know how they should behave? For nineteenth-century women, there were laws that governed what they could and could not do, and strong social conventions about what was proper (see **Could and Should**). In the 1830s, the first ladies' magazines appeared, and the most popular, *Godey's Lady's Book*, delivered the message about appearance and behavior in a new form: color illustrations known as fashion plates.



W. B. Chambers, *Sarah Josepha Hale*, 1850. *Godey's Lady's Book*, 1850, frontispiece. New-York Historical Society Library, AP2.G58, vol. 41.

When Sarah Josepha Hale became *Godey's* editor in 1837, she wanted to drop the plates, which she thought promoted extravagance. But they showcased the latest dress styles, colors, and fabrics, readers loved them, and they remained. Because of the technology then available, the plates were printed as single sheets, then hand-colored individually by an all-female staff numbering 150. Then, they were bound into the magazine, page by page. The plates were original artwork, and they drove the magazine's sales for decades.

Fashion plates were designed to show off clothing. The settings and the people wearing the clothes were less detailed, but they subtly conveyed important meaning about "ideal" women. Consistently, the women were white, pretty, slim, and usually dark-haired and young. They were shown quietly at home, engaged in a peaceful domestic moment: doing needlework, or greeting friends. Children were often present, but rarely men. The homes were elegant and expensive.

*Godey's* was widely read, even by mill workers, but ladies' magazines were written for and marketed to middle-class white



women. They were a popular form of the prescriptive literature that reinforced the idea of "true womanhood," one of the terms historians used to describe the idealized woman of the mid-nineteenth century.

Fashion plates were especially powerful because they were visual. They set a standard for the "true woman" that few real women could meet, though many tried.

But when female reformers argued for abolition or temperance or women's rights, or decided to wear the bloomer outfit, they not only ventured uninvited into public political arenas, they flew directly in the face of what it then meant to be a woman.

The fashion plate above appeared in July 1848, the same month the Women's Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls.

"Godey's Paris Fashions Americanized," *Godey's Lady's Book*, July 1848. Hand-colored engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, TX1.G58, vol. 37.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ Based on this image, what are the characteristics of the ideal woman of the 1830s?
- ★ How does this image differ from the day-to-day reality of most of the women who would have seen it?
- ★ How does this image compare with images in women's magazines today?

Sources: Isabelle Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, Part 1 (Summer 1966).

## 1840 London Anti-Slavery Convention

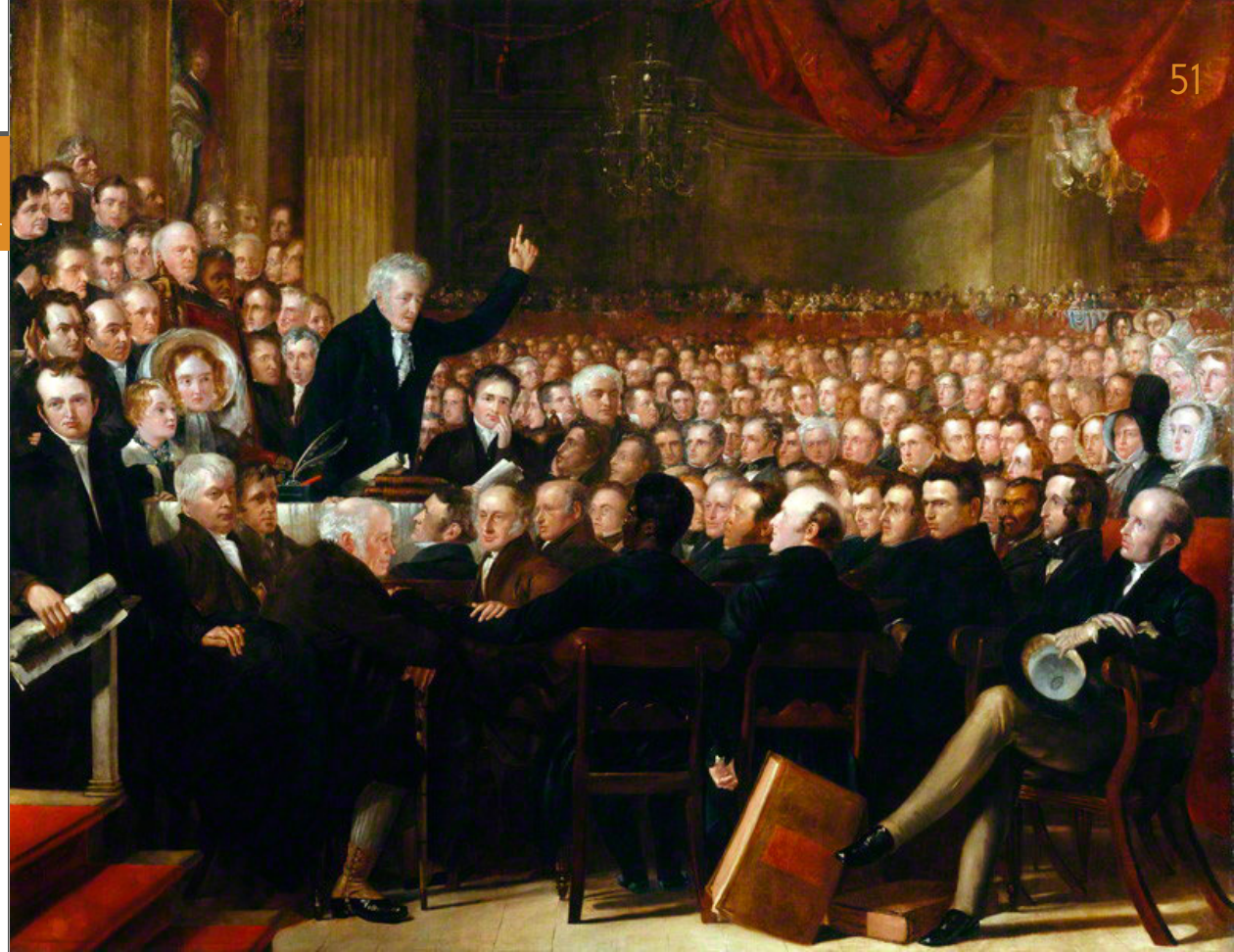
In the 1830s, many women acted on their religious conviction and moral outrage, and responded to William Lloyd Garrison's invitation to become involved in the American Anti-Slavery Society. They attended meetings and wrote petitions in support of the cause. Arthur Tappan and other conservative members of the society objected. Operating from different Christian principles, they believed it was against God and nature for women to engage in politics in public.

The issue of women in the movement came to a head in 1840, when an unprecedented World Anti-Slavery Convention was scheduled in London. At Tappan's request, the organizers made it clear that the meeting was for gentlemen only. But a number of American and British women delegates, including Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, appeared on the first day to take their seats as official delegates. Hours of contentious debate followed. In the end, only male delegates, seated on the main floor, were allowed to speak or vote. As the published report of the convention noted: "The upper end and one side of the room were appropriated to ladies, of whom a considerable

number were present, including several female abolitionists from the United States." The women could watch and listen from the spectators' gallery, but they could not take part.

Haydon's painting was produced the following year to celebrate this important landmark in the international effort to end slavery. It correctly shows a crowded main floor for the opening session at Freemasons' Hall, and a few women facing in from the sides. But it implies a more staid event than it probably was. The male delegates were passionate abolitionists—one of them said later they were "men of sharp angles." The women and their allies were just as sharp-angled and passionate, and they were also furious at being sidelined. Garrison was one of a small group of men who showed their dissent by joining the women in the gallery.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott met outside the hall after the meeting's first day. Mrs. Stanton recalled later that as the two "walked home, arm in arm, commenting on the incidents of the day, we resolved to hold a convention as soon as we returned home, and form



Benjamin Robert Haydon, *The Anti-Slavery Society Convention, 1840, 1841*. Oil on canvas. Primary Collection, National Portrait Gallery, London, Given by British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1880, NPG 599.

a society to advocate the rights of women." Eight years later, in Seneca Falls, New York, they did.

**Sources:** Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997); *Proceedings of the General Anti-Slavery Convention . . . Held in London from Friday, June 12th, to Tuesday, June 23rd, 1840* (London: British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Convention, 1840), <https://archive.org/stream/oates71027137#page/n4/mode/1up> (accessed by M. Waters 1-14-2017); Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More: Reminiscences 1815–1897* (New York: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898), <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/stanton/years/years.html#V> (accessed by M. Waters 10-27-2016); special thanks to Susan A. Snell, Archivist and Records Manager, The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ Why did some male abolitionists object to the participation of women?
- ★ How did the organizers of the World Anti-Slavery Convention handle the unwanted presence of female delegates?
- ★ If you were an American woman who had travelled to London to participate in the conference, how would this treatment make you feel? What could you do?

Resource 16:

## New York State Married Women's Property Law

According to the doctrine of coverture, wives were legally “covered” by their husbands. Single women and widows had more rights, but married women could not make a contract, own property, or decide how family money was spent. Legally, they did not exist. (See **Resource 1.**)

Things began to change in the nineteenth century, when state laws gradually gave married women more rights. As of 1809, Connecticut women could write a will. In the mid-1830s, Polish immigrant Ernestine Rose fought for a New York State law, coordinating a campaign with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Pauline Wright. Mississippi passed the nation's first married women's property law in 1839. The New York efforts paid off in April 1848, when the state enacted a law that became a model for other states.

These laws were not written out of a sense of fairness to women. They came about because men's lives were changing. In most states after the Revolution, only white, male property owners could vote. But increasingly after 1800, states passed new laws that abolished the



*Ernestine Rose, 1881.*  
Schlesinger Library  
on the History of  
Women in America,  
Radcliffe Institute  
for Advanced Study,  
Harvard University.

property requirements. By 1840, nearly all white men could vote. At the same time the economy was changing, with more periods of boom and bust. Even poor men wanted a way to protect their assets, and one way to do that was to put them in their wives' names. This, and agitation from women, drove the writing of married women's property laws. Three months after the passage of New York's law, the first women's rights convention, organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, took place in Seneca Falls. Stanton later wrote: “I think all women who attended the convention felt better for the statement of their wrongs, believing that the first step [New York's new property law] had been taken to right them.”

“Real property” refers to land and buildings. “Personal property” describes other tangible items—clothing, furniture, books,

vehicles. For middle class or wealthy married women, both categories could be sizable, and New York's 1848 law protected their rights to these possessions. But the state's poorer women were more likely to work than to own a house or grand furnishings, and for them, the 1848 law offered little protection. Their husbands still legally controlled their wages until an 1860 New York law specified that “the earnings of any married woman, from her trade, business, labor or services, shall be her sole and separate property, and may be used or invested by her in her own name.” And regardless of family wealth, in the rare cases where couples divorced, fathers were granted custody of the children.

### Discussion Questions

- ★ Why is this a landmark moment in the history of women's rights?
- ★ What new opportunities were now available to a woman who owned property?

**Sources:** Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997); Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

## An Act for the Effectual Protection of the Property of Married Women

Passed April 7, 1848.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly do enact as follows:

Sec. 1. The real and personal property of any female who may hereafter marry, and which she shall own at the time of marriage, and the rents issues and profits thereof shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband, nor be liable for his debts, and shall continue her sole and separate property, as if she were a single female.

Sec. 2. The real and personal property, and the rents issues and profits thereof of any female now married shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband; but shall be her sole and separate property as if she were a single female except so far as the same may be liable for the debts of her husband heretofore contracted.

Sec. 3. It shall be lawful for any married female to receive, by gift, grant devise or bequest, from any person other than her husband and hold to her sole and separate use, as if she were a single female, real and personal property, and the rents, issues and profits thereof, and the same shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband, nor be liable for his debts.

Sec. 4. All contracts made between persons in contemplation of marriage shall remain in full force after such marriage takes place.

1848 New York Laws 307, ch. 200.

Married Women's Property Laws, the Law Library of Congress. [https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/property\\_law.html](https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/property_law.html) (accessed by M. Waters, 10-28-2016).

Resource 17:

## Reactions to Seneca Falls

The first Women's Rights Convention was held on July 19–20, 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. The Declaration of Sentiments (see **Appendix B**) was a list of grievances modeled on the Declaration of Independence. It was signed by sixty-eight women and, in a separate list, thirty-two men. The resolutions, including the call for suffrage, were endorsed by those present, but not signed.

In her autobiography, *Eighty Years And More*, Stanton wrote: “No words could express our astonishment on finding, a few days afterward, that what seemed to us so timely, so rational, and so sacred, should be a subject for sarcasm and ridicule. . . .” Perhaps she wasn't quite so astonished as she remembered. Before the convention, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth's husband, Henry Stanton, had both warned that the suffrage resolution would be seen as ridiculous. At the convention, it passed only after persuasive arguments by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frederick Douglass.

As follow-up conventions were held elsewhere, newspapers covered the growing story. Stanton continued in her autobiography:



Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her daughter, Harriot, 1856, Daguerreotype, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., 97500106.

“The anti-slavery papers stood by us manfully . . . but so pronounced was the popular voice against us . . . that most of the ladies who had attended the convention and signed the declaration, one by one, withdrew their names and influence and joined our persecutors. Our friends gave us the cold shoulder and felt themselves disgraced by the whole proceeding.”

### Discussion Questions

- ★ The *Mechanics' Advocate* and the *Lowell Courier* both objected to the convention on similar grounds. What was their main objection? Do you think their objection was reasonable? Why?
- ★ Why did “the ladies of Philadelphia” object to the convention? Was their objection reasonable? Why?
- ★ How did the women who participated in the Seneca Falls Convention feel about the backlash? How would you feel in their position?

In 1881, when Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage published the first volume of the *History of Woman Suffrage*, they included several of the pro and con articles, undated, in an appendix. This resource is a selection of those in the “sarcasm and ridicule” category.

**Sources:** Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years And More: Reminiscences 1815–1897* (New York: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898); Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 1, 1848–1861, rev. ed.

### From the Newspapers

This is all wrong. . . . Society would have to be radically remodeled in order to accommodate itself to so great a change.

–*Mechanics' Advocate*, Albany, New York

The women folks have just held a Convention up in New York State, and passed a sort of “bill of rights”. . . . They should have resolved at the same time, that it was obligatory . . . upon the “lords” . . . to wash dishes, scour up, be put to the tub, handle the broom, darn stockings, patch breeches, scold the servants, dress in the latest fashion, wear trinkets, look beautiful, and be as fascinating as those blessed morsels of humanity whom God gave to preserve that rough animal man, in something like a reasonable civilization.

–*Lowell* (Massachusetts) *Courier*

A woman is nobody. A wife is everything. A pretty girl is equal to ten thousand men, and a mother is, next to God, all powerful. The ladies of Philadelphia, therefore, under the influence of the most serious “sober second thoughts,” are resolved to maintain their rights as Wives, Belles, Virgins, and Mothers, and not as Women.

–*Philadelphia Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 1, 1848–1861, rev. ed. (Rochester, NY: 1889).

# Bloomers

In the spring of 1851, Elizabeth Smith Miller, daughter of abolitionist Gerrit Smith, was working in her garden in Geneva, New York. She wore a typical dress, with a wide skirt that reached the ground. After several hours, she became “thoroughly disgusted” with the “heavy, untidy, and exasperating old garment.” With a pair of scissors, she came up with a new one: a shortened, below-the-knee dress worn over wide pants known as Turkish trousers. She wore the new outfit when she visited her Seneca Falls cousin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Stanton was won over, as were fellow Seneca Falls resident Amelia Bloomer and a visitor to town, Susan B. Anthony. Bloomer’s name became linked to the outfit when she wrote articles about it in *The Lily*, the newspaper she published for women. With this national publicity, and with the sewing patterns also printed in *The Lily*, many women around the country adopted the new dress within months of Miller’s garden moment. Nathaniel Currier printed a lithograph of “The Bloomer Costume,” and sheet music appeared for “The New Costume Polka.”

Despite the attention, few women in any one location actually wore bloomers, and those who did were ridiculed. The laughter was often directed at the trousers, and husbands bore the brunt of “who wears the pants” jokes. The women associated with the new costume were also associated with the 1848 convention or its goals. So the bloomer ensemble was linked—negatively in many people’s minds—with the call for women’s equality. Believing it had become a distraction from the greater cause, Stanton stopped wearing the bloomer outfit in 1854. Elizabeth Smith Miller, Susan B. Anthony, and Amelia Bloomer soon followed suit.

The women who embraced the bloomer outfit liked the freedom, the comfort, and the fact that the skirts stayed clean. But their eagerness for this innovation was part of a larger story. The reform movements of the 1840s and 1850s radicalized many middle-class white women. They challenged everything—spiritualism, marriage, free love, capitalism, political rights, and the symbolism and limitations of women’s clothing. After the Civil War, women’s rights activists saw the power of constitutional

amendments that, with a stroke of the pen, freed slaves and gave black men the vote. They decided to focus all their attention on women’s suffrage, and put other reform efforts aside.

## Discussion Questions

- ★ What made the bloomer costume appealing to women?
- ★ Why did women’s clothing become a political issue?
- ★ Men whose wives wore the bloomer costume were subjected to ridicule. What does that reveal about gender roles in the 1850s?

**Sources:** Lori D. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009); Judith Wellman, *The Road to Seneca Falls: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the First Woman’s Rights Convention* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).



N. Currier (firm), *The Bloomer Costume*, 1851, Lithograph, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., 90711963.

# Glossary

**American Colonization Society.**  
 Founded in 1816 to encourage free blacks to emigrate to Africa. James Madison was one of the founding members. The society established a colony in West Africa in 1822 that later became Liberia. Beginning in the 1830s, it was denounced by most abolitionists, who believed its primary goal was to rid the country of free blacks, not to end slavery.

**benevolent.**  
 Compassionate, charitable. “Benevolent societies” were organizations, primarily women’s organizations, with a mission to help the poor, widows, orphans, and other needy groups.

**ca.**  
 The abbreviation for circa, meaning roughly or approximately. The term is used in dates, as in ca. 1795, to indicate that the precise year is not known.

**cult of domesticity.**  
 The term preferred by some historians over the “cult of true womanhood.”

**cult of true womanhood.**  
 Historian Barbara Welter’s 1966 term for the nineteenth-century belief system that set piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity as the highest female values.

**domesticity.**  
 A focus on the home and family.

**early republic.**  
 A term used by historians to refer to the period of U.S. history between 1789 and 1815, when the War of 1812 ended. Sometimes the 1820s is used as the end-date. The decades after the early republic are called the antebellum years, ending with the outbreak of the Civil War.

**intersectionality.**  
 A scholarly term for the interconnectedness of categories like gender, class, and race, which creates overlapping patterns of discrimination.

**matrilineal.**  
 Applies to kinship systems in which people trace their ancestry through their mothers rather than their fathers. See *patrilineal*.

**moral suasion.**  
 The attempt to convince with a moral argument; equal to moral persuasion. William Lloyd Garrison and Lydia Maria Child used this tactic in early arguments against slavery.

**patrilineal.**  
 Applies to kinship systems in which people trace their ancestry through their fathers, and fathers’ surnames are passed on. See *matrilineal*.

**primogeniture.**  
 In law or custom, the exclusive right of the oldest son to inherit his parents’ estate.

**piety.**  
 The quality of being religious, devout.

**purity.**  
 Cleanliness. In the nineteenth century, it referred to moral or sexual cleanliness.

**republican womanhood.**  
 A scholarly term for the standard set for American women after the Revolution, in which they were considered morally superior, and therefore responsible for maintaining American citizenship values in their husbands and children.

**Second Great Awakening.**  
 A period of Protestant revivalism that spread across the U.S. between the 1790s and the 1840s, and reinforced commitment to reform activities.

**submissiveness.**  
 Willingness to submit to another’s will or authority.

**Washington City.**  
 The early name for Washington, D.C. In 1791, the newly designated federal district was named the Territory of Columbia, and the city itself was referred to as Washington City, or the Federal City. The word “District” replaced “Territory” when the capital was incorporated in 1871.

# Suggested Reading

## Websites

### The Center for Women's History, New-York Historical Society.

Opened in 2017, the Center is the nation's first permanent public exhibition and educational center dedicated to women's history. [www.nyhistory.org/womens-history](http://www.nyhistory.org/womens-history).

**The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale Law School.** *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Book the First: Chapter the Fifteenth: "Of Husband and Wife." Sir William Blackstone's text on coverture. [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/blackstone\\_bk1ch15.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/blackstone_bk1ch15.asp).

**The Dolley Madison Digital Edition**, edited by Holly C. Shulman. A subscription website containing Dolley Madison's known correspondence, both sent and received. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/>.

**The George Washington Portrait.** <http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/artwork/dolley-madison-comes-to-the-rescue/>. For a photo of the portrait during its 2004 reframing, showing its large scale: <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/photos/reframing-of-gilbert-stuarts-george-washington-portrait>.

**James Madison Papers: Early Access.** A free collection of over 9,000 documents pertaining to James Madison, 1806–1836. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/default.xqy?keys=FOEA-print-02&mode=TOC>.

**James Madison's Montpelier.** In private hands for several decades after Dolley Madison sold the estate in 1844, Montpelier is now owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and is operated and administered by the Montpelier Foundation. <https://www.montpelier.org/>.

**Library of Congress, American Memory, Women's History Collections.** <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/ListSome.php?category=Women%27s%20History>.

**National Women's History Museum.** The planned museum is not yet built, but the website offers historical biographies and other resources. <https://www.nwhm.org/>.

**White House Historical Association.** Articles and primary sources about Dolley Madison and James Madison can be found at <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/search?q=Dolley+Madison> and <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/search?q=James+Madison>.

**Women's Rights National Historical Park**, Seneca Falls, New York. <https://www.nps.gov/wori/index.htm>.

## Books

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## Appendix A: Eliza Brock to Dolley Madison

forest Lake  
february the 21 1844

Mrs. Madison

Madam, its a long time ago in the Autumn of the memorable year of Seventeen hundred and Ninety Three I was at that time a poor Servant girl in the family of Moses Levy, a Lawyer nealy half way between third and forth streets in Chestnut Street, the House stood—Opposite lived Mr. Tench Francis and next door lived at that time a gentleman a Lawyer also, by the name of Todd, the House was a Small one and Stood a little more out.

I was left alone by the family, except the black Servants three in number one a little black girl, She ran every where, one day when I was at the Pump before the door of Mr Farancis, this little girl run out and told me a gentleman in that Small House wanted to see me, with my Pitcher of water in my hand as she Said he was verry Sick and alone I went in and did all I Could for the poor Man he asked me to fetch him some frute from the Store of a Coloured man kept at that time, I got it he was very gratefull I went over Several times and did all I Could, he offen repeted to me, my Wife will reward you for this poor Man he did not Suffer long, he was just dead, when my father found his way into the pestilential City and took myself and a Brother who was an aprentice to a trade in the Same street wee had thirty miles to walk and got out with great diffiulty I did not return to Phila for a number of years after I was married to my second Husband I I married well much above my expectations and have always lived well and free from want untill the last two years my poor husband was sick many

years he died last november, I had two Children a Son and a daughter my daughter died young my dear Son married and went to Phila—five years since he had an honorable Situation in one of the Banks of that City three years Since he died of the Small Pox he left a widow and two Small Children the widow lived one year after and she died, I have the two Children, my poor Husband once possessed a large fortune but alas he has left me in verry poor Circumstances, and Seeing your name lately mentioned the thought has struck me and never been out of my mind that if you knew there was such a person alive, and in want you would help them, I lived in Phila ten years and Twenty here where I live now, I am in my Sixty Sixth year—for my caracter and standing in Society I Can refer you to many respectable persons here and in the City of Phila.

Madam I hope you will not think little of me for reminding you of this long burried Sorrow if you doubt my word or think me unkind take no notice of this excuse my bad writing I could not trust any one to write fore me and I am not in the habit of writing for myself.

yours most respectfully  
Eliza Brock

Susequehanna County on  
Forest Lake Susequehanna Co  
Pennsylvania

Eliza Brock to Dolley Payne Todd Madison, 21 February 1844, in *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition*, Holly C. Shulman, ed. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2004. <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/dmde/DPM2001> (accessed by M. Waters, 12-15-2016).

## Appendix B: The Declaration of Sentiments

The Declaration of Sentiments, sometimes called the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments, was drafted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, modeled on the Declaration of Independence, and signed by sixty-eight women and thirty-two men attending the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, July 19–20, 1848. The resolutions, including the demand for suffrage, were then presented and accepted in a vote, but not separately signed. (The original document is missing. For the effort to recover it, see <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/find-the-sentiments>.)

### The Declaration of Sentiments

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of Government becomes

destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in

direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In

the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes of divorce; in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given; as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women—the law, in all cases, going upon the false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration.

He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction, which he considers

## Appendix B: The Declaration of Sentiments *continued*

most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education—all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in Church as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment, by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation,—in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

In entering upon the great work before us, we anticipate no small amount of misconception, misrepresentation, and ridicule; but we shall use every instrumentality within our power to effect our object. We shall employ agents, circulate tracts, petition the State and national Legislatures, and endeavor to enlist the pulpit and the press in our behalf. We hope this Convention will be followed by a series of Conventions, embracing every part of the country.

Firmly relying upon the final triumph of the Right and the True, we do this day affix our signatures to this declaration.

Lucretia Mott  
Harriet Cady Eaton  
Margaret Pryor  
Elizabeth Cady Stanton  
Eunice Newton Foote  
Mary Ann M'Clintock  
Margaret Schooley  
Martha C. Wright  
Jane C. Hunt  
Amy Post  
Catharine F. Stebbins  
Mary Ann Frink  
Lydia Mount  
Delia Mathews  
Catharine C. Paine  
Elizabeth W. M'Clintock  
Malvina Seymour

Phebe Mosher  
Catharine Shaw  
Deborah Scott  
Sarah Hallowell  
Mary M'Clintock  
Mary Gilbert  
Sophrone Taylor  
Cynthia Davis  
Hannah Plant  
Lucy Jones  
Sarah Whitney  
Mary H. Hallowell  
Elizabeth Conklin  
Sally Pitcher  
Mary Conklin  
Susan Quinn  
Mary S. Mirror

Phebe King  
Julia Ann Drake  
Charlotte Woodward  
Martha Underhill  
Dorothy Mathews  
Eunice Barker  
Sarah R. Woods  
Lydia Gild  
Sarah Hoffman  
Elizabeth Leslie  
Martha Ridley  
Rachel D. Bonnel  
Betsey Tewksbury  
Rhoda Palmer  
Margaret Jenkins  
Cynthia Fuller  
Mary Martin

P. A. Culvert  
Susan R. Doty  
Rebecca Race  
Sarah A. Mosher  
Mary E. Vail  
Lucy Spalding  
Lavinia Latham  
Sarah Smith  
Eliza Martin  
Maria E. Wilbur  
Elizabeth D. Smith  
Caroline Barker  
Ann Porter  
Experience Gibbs  
Antoinette E. Segur  
Hannah J. Latham  
Sarah Sisson

The following are the names of the gentlemen present in favor of the movement:

Richard P. Hunt  
Samuel D. Tillman  
Justin Williams  
Elisha Foote  
Frederick Douglass  
Henry Seymour  
Henry W. Seymour  
David Spalding  
William G. Barker  
Elias J. Doty  
John Jones

William S. Dell  
James Mott  
William Burroughs  
Robert Smallbridge  
Jacob Matthews  
Charles L. Hoskins  
Thomas M'Clintock  
Saron Phillips  
Jacob Chamberlain  
Jonathan Metcalf  
Nathan J. Milliken

S. E. Woodworth  
Edward F. Underhill  
George W. Pryor  
Joel Bunker  
Isaac Van Tassel  
Thomas Dell  
E. W. Capron  
Stephen Shear  
Henry Hatley  
Azaliah Schooley

## Appendix B: The Declaration of Sentiments *continued*

### The Resolutions

... The resolutions were read and taken up separately. ...

Whereas, The great precept of nature is conceded to be, “that man shall pursue his own true and substantial happiness.” Blackstone, in his Commentaries, remarks, that this law of Nature being coeval with mankind, and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times; no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this, and such of them as are valid, derive all their force, and all their validity, and all their authority, mediately and immediately, from this original; Therefore,

*Resolved*, That such laws as conflict, in any way, with the true and substantial happiness of woman, are contrary to the great precept of nature and of no validity, for this is “superior in obligation to any other.”

*Resolved*, That all laws which prevent woman from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of man, are contrary to

the great precept of nature, and therefore of no force or authority.

*Resolved*, That woman is man’s equal—was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such.

*Resolved*, That the women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, nor their ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want.

*Resolved*, That inasmuch as man, while claiming for himself intellectual superiority, does accord to woman moral superiority, it is pre-eminently his duty to encourage her to speak, and teach, as she has an opportunity, in all religious assemblies.

*Resolved*, That the same amount of virtue, delicacy, and refinement of behavior, that is required of woman in the social state, should also be required of man, and the same transgressions should be visited with equal severity on both man and woman.

*Resolved*, That the objection of indelicacy and impropriety, which is so often brought against woman when she addresses a public audience, comes with a very ill grace from those who encourage, by their attendance, her appearance on the stage, in the concert, or in feats of the circus.

*Resolved*, That woman has too long rested satisfied in the circumscribed limits which corrupt customs and a perverted application of the Scriptures have marked out for her, and that it is time she should move in the enlarged sphere which her great Creator has assigned her.

*Resolved*, That it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise.

*Resolved*, That the equality of human rights results necessarily from the fact of the identity of the race in capabilities and responsibilities.

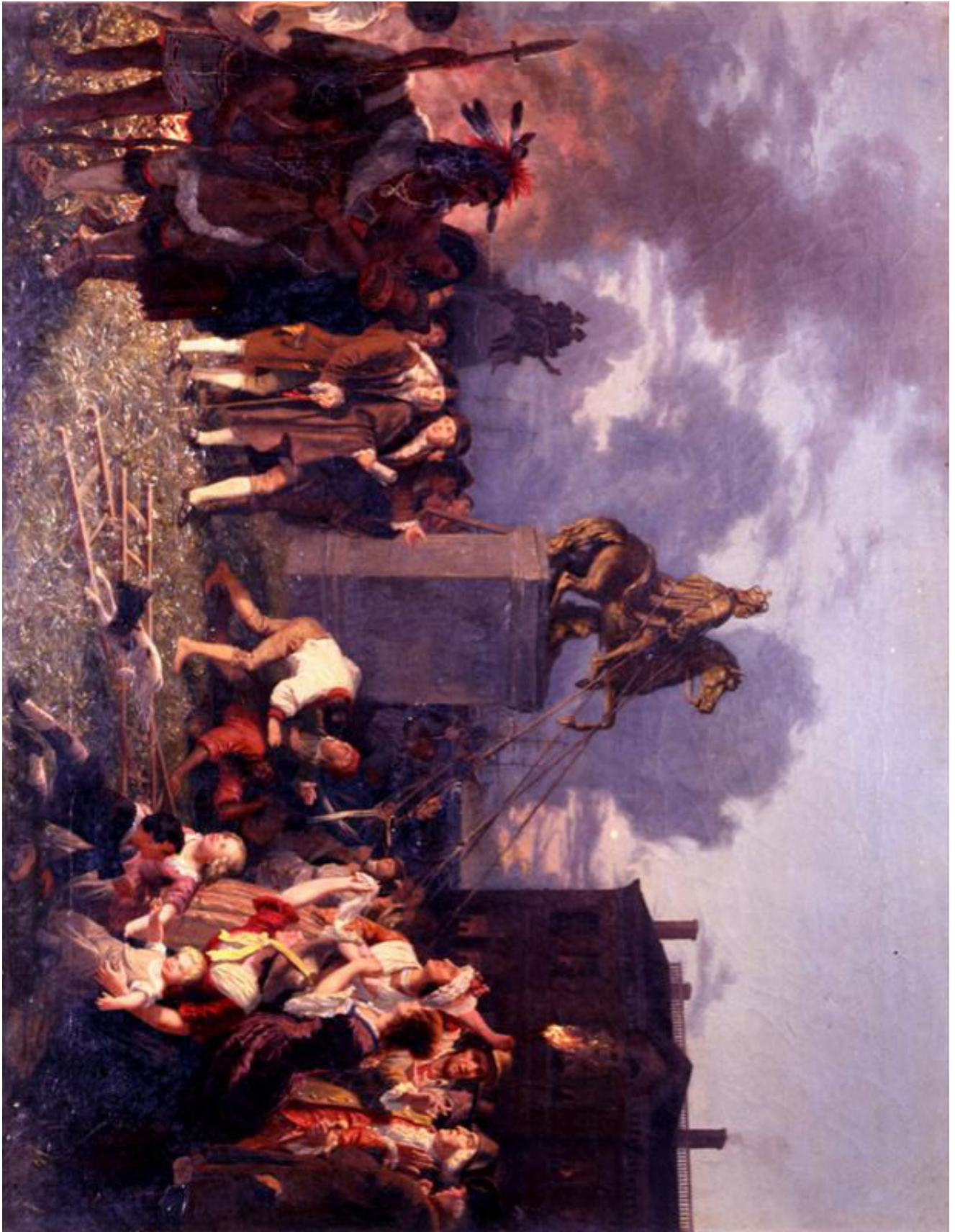
*Resolved, therefore*, That, being invested by the Creator with the same capabilities, and the same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is demonstrably the right and duty of woman,

equally with man, to promote every righteous cause, by every righteous means; and especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking, by any instrumentalities proper to be used, and in any assemblies proper to be held; and this being a self-evident truth, growing out of the divinely implanted principles of human nature, any custom or authority adverse to it, whether modern or wearing the hoary sanction of antiquity, is to be regarded as a self-evident falsehood, and at war with the interests of mankind. . . .

... [At the last session,] Lucretia Mott offered and spoke to the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women, for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions and commerce.

*Report of the Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Seneca Falls, N.Y., July 19th and 20th, 1848.* (Rochester, NY: John Dick at the North Star Office, 1848). Women’s Rights National Historical Park, <https://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery.htm?id=C5F5A21C-155D-451F-67E9D17421B0E587>.



Johannes Adam Simon Oertel, *Pulling Down the Statue of King George III*, New York City, 1852–1853. Oil on canvas. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Samuel V. Hoffman, 1925.6.



John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. James Warren (Mercy Otis)*, ca. 1763. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bequest of Winslow Warren, 31.212.

A  
VINDICATION  
OF THE  
RIGHTS OF WOMAN:  
WITH  
STRICTURES  
ON  
POLITICAL AND MORAL SUBJECTS.

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BY MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.

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MDCXCII.



Joseph Wood, *Dolley (Payne) Todd Madison*, 1817. Oil on canvas. Virginia Historical Society, 1967.14.



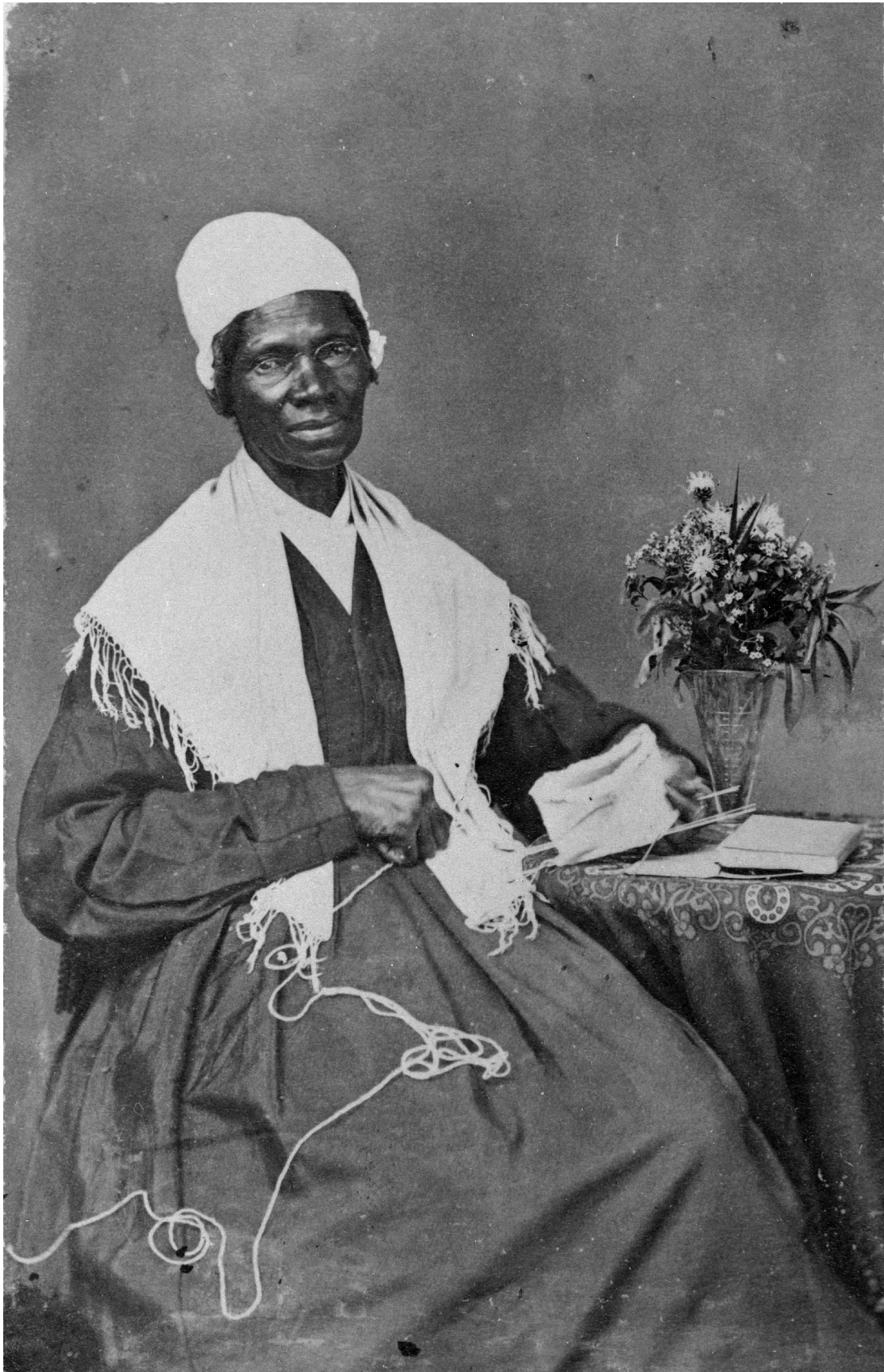
Francis Guy, *Tontine Coffee House*, New York City, ca. 1797. Oil on linen. New-York Historical Society, Purchase, The Louis Durr Fund, 1907.32.



John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of Mrs. John Stevens (Judith Sargent, later Mrs. John Murray)*, 1770–72. Oil on canvas. Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, 2000.6.

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MAKING HISTORY MATTER

Saving Washington: The New Republic and Early Reformers, 1790–1860



*Sojourner Truth*, 1864. Carte de Visite. New-York Historical Society Library, PR.011.5.



Bass Otis, *Mrs. James Madison*, ca. 1817. Oil on canvas. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Thomas Jefferson Bryan, 1867.308.



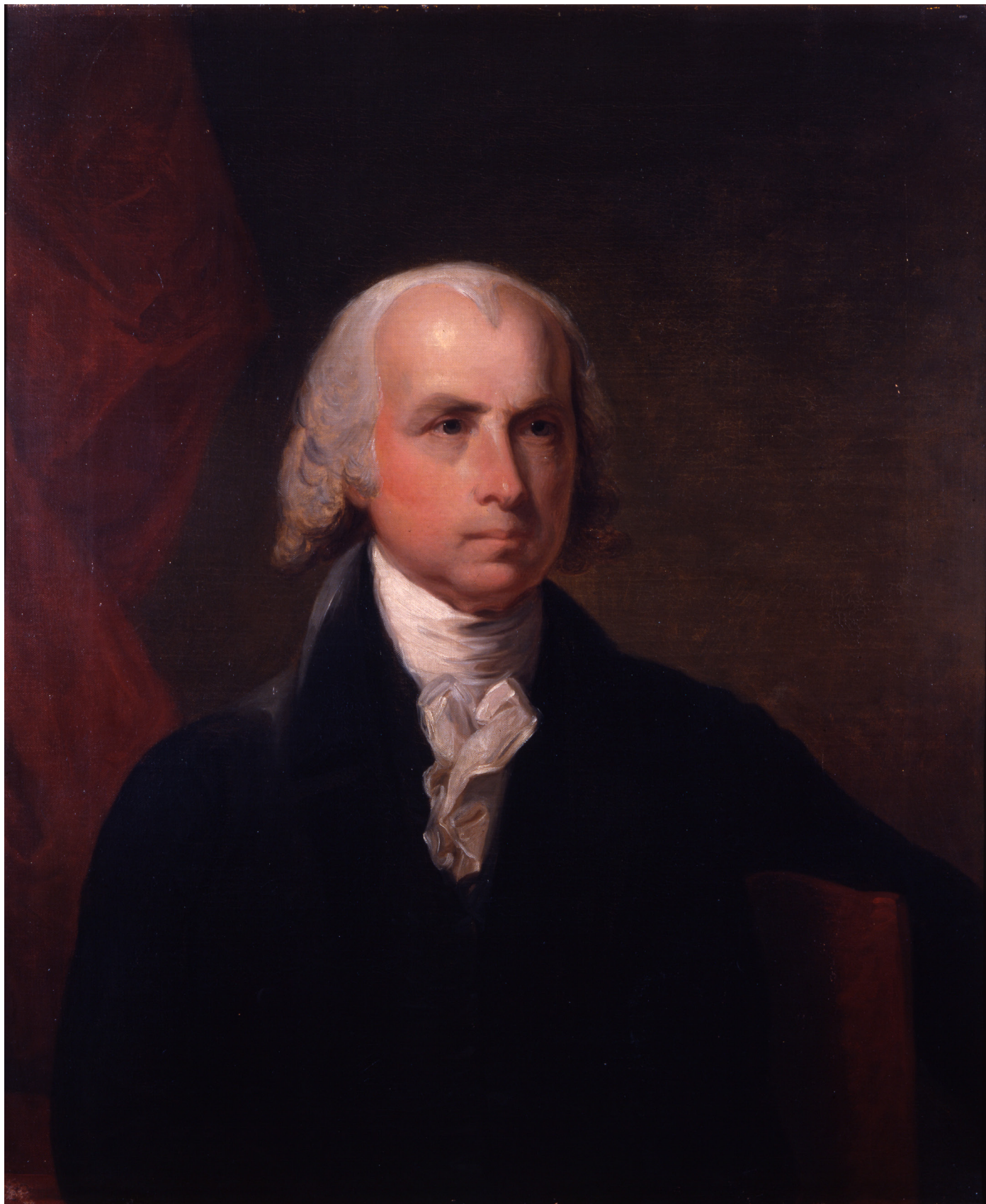
James Sharples Sr., *Dolley Madison*, ca. 1796–1797. Pastel on paper. Independence National Historic Park, Philadelphia.



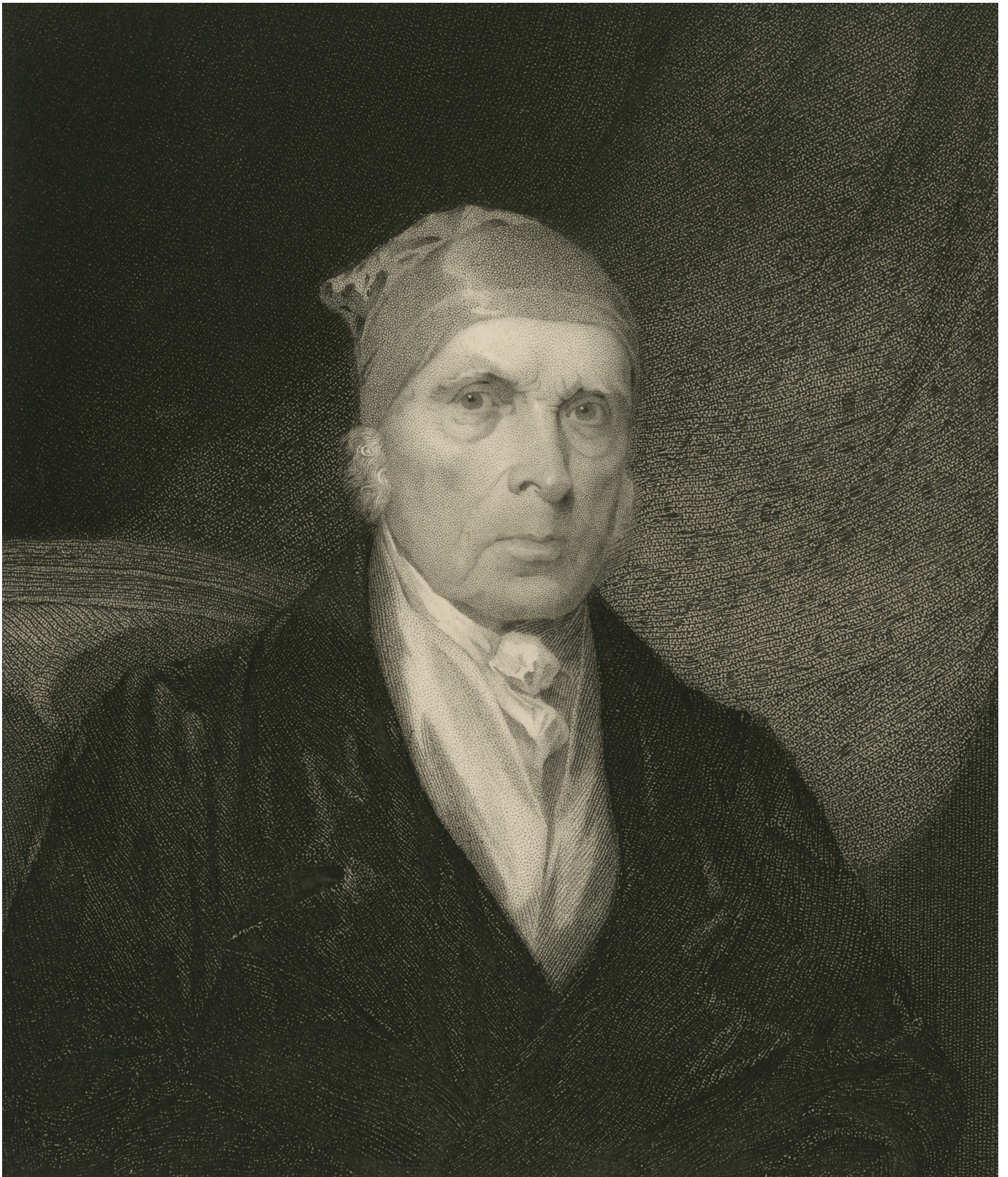
William Russell Birch, *A view of the Capitol of Washington before it was burnt down by the British*, ca. 1800. Watercolor. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 2004661947.



Baroness Anne-Marguerite-Henriette Hyde de Neuville, *Montpellier*, 1818, Watercolor, Musée Franco-Américain du Château de Blérancourt.



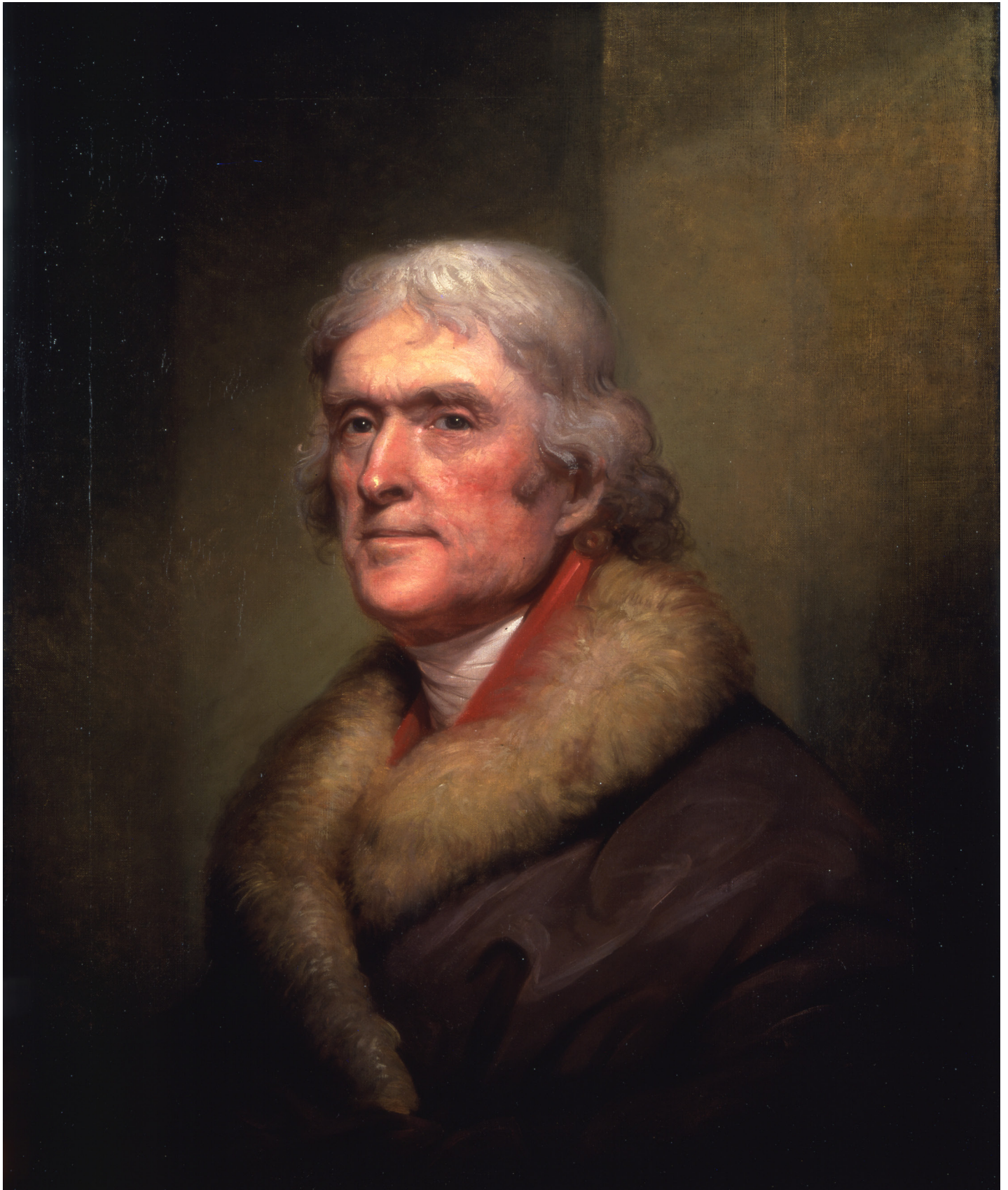
Asher Brown Durand, *James Madison*, 1835. Oil on canvas. New-York Historical Society, Gift of The New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts, 1858.10.



J. B. Longacre (artist), T. B. Welch (engraver), *James Madison, Aged 82*, ca. 1833. Engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, PR 52.



Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *The White House ("President's House") Washington, DC, East Front Elevation*, 1807. Drawing on paper: watercolor, ink, and wash. Latrobe Architectural Drawing Archive, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 97505109.



Rembrandt Peale, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1805. Oil on linen. New-York Historical Society, Gift of Thomas Jefferson Bryan, 1867.306.



Charles Bird King, *Margaret Bayard Smith*, ca. 1829. Oil on canvas.  
Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, Rhode Island, Gift of the artist.



T. Cartwright and George Beck, *George Town and Federal City*, 1801. Aquatint. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 2002695146.



Baroness Anne-Marguerite-Henriette Hyde de Neuville, *Martha Church, Cook in "Ordinary Costume,"* ca. 1807–1814. Watercolor, graphite, and brown ink on paper. New-York Historical Society, 1953.276.

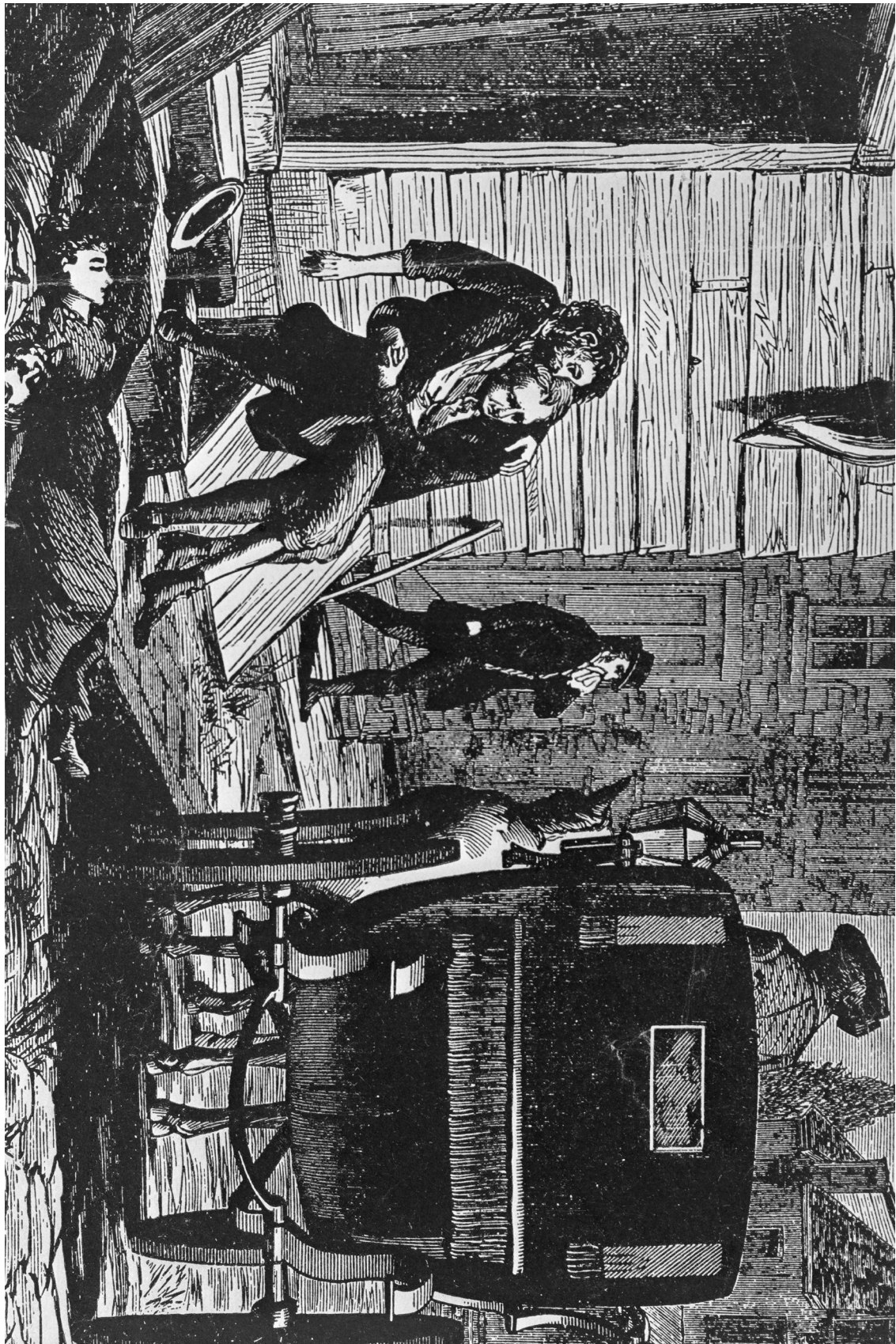


*Dolley Madison's Silk Satin Open Robe.* The National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Eliza Brock



Attributed to Thomas Haig's Pottery, *Pitcher*, 1812–ca.1893. Earthenware. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Jay A. and Emma Lewis, 2008, 2008-25-15.



*Man Helping Sick Person, 1793.* Original Caption: *Yellow Fever Epidemic in Philadelphia, 1793.* Woodcut. Bettmann / Contributor.



William Russell Birch, *View in Third Street, from Spruce Street, Philadelphia, 1800*. Hand-colored engraving. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 2002718881.

## The Language of Coverture

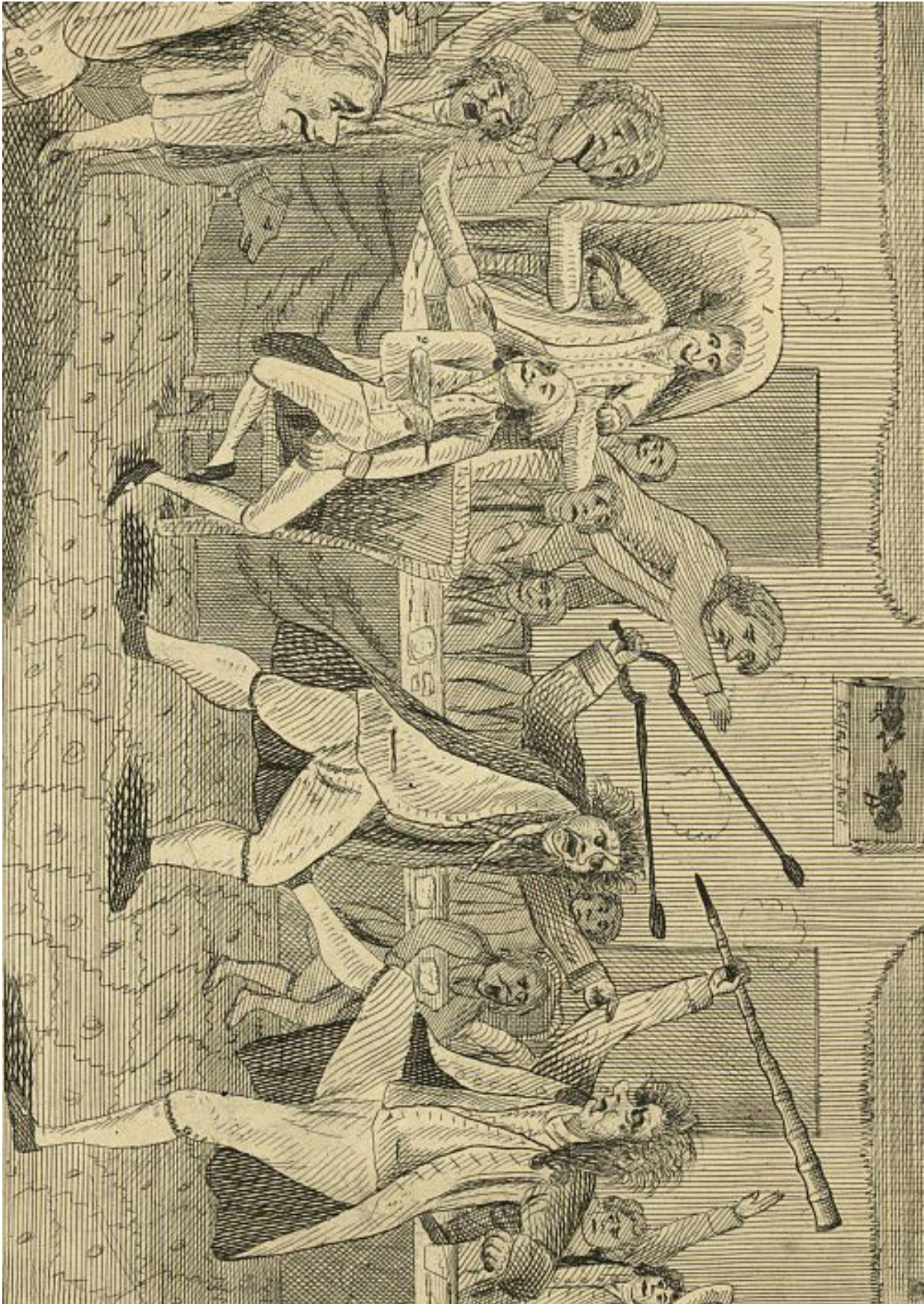
By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is . . . under the protection and influence of her husband, her baron, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her coverture. Upon this principle, of an union of person in husband and wife, depend almost all the legal rights, duties, and disabilities, that either of them acquire by the marriage. . . . [E]ven the disabilities which the wife lies under, are for the most part intended for her protection and benefit. So great a favourite is the female sex of the laws of England.



C. Schessele, *Mrs. John Adams (Abigail Smith)*, ca. 1775. Engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, PR 52.



Unknown artist, *Sir William Blackstone*, ca. 1755. Oil on canvas.  
National Portrait Gallery, London, Primary Collection, 388.



*Congressional Pugilists*, 1798. Etching on wove paper. New-York Historical Society Library, PR 10.



Gilbert Stuart, *Dolley Madison*, 1804. Oil on canvas. White House Historical Association / White House Collection, Gift of the Walter H. and Phyllis J. Shorestein Foundation in memory of Phyllis J. Shorestein, 1994, 994.1737.1.

## Frank and Cordial Manners

[Second only to the home of President Thomas Jefferson himself,] the house of the secretary of state was the resort of most company. The frank and cordial manners of its mistress, gave a peculiar charm to the frequent parties there assembled. All foreigners who visited the seat of government; strangers from the different states of the union; the heads of departments; the diplomatic corps; senators, representatives, citizens, mingled with an ease and freedom, a sociability and gayety, to be met with in no other society. Even party spirit, virulent and embittered as it then was, by her gentleness was disarmed. . . .

[Later,] when the term of Mr. Jefferson's presidency drew near its close, the spirit of political intrigue which had lain dormant, was again roused into activity. A new president was to be chosen, and there were several competitors for the people's favor. Each had partisans, zealous and untiring. . . . Amid this cruel warfare of conflicting parties, so calculated to excite angry feelings, Mrs. Madison . . . met these political assailants with a mildness, which disarmed their hostility of its individual rancor, and sometimes even converted political enemies into personal friends, and still oftener succeeded in neutralizing the bitterness of opposition. . . . [Mr. Madison] continued his social intercourse with persons of all opinions; the chiefs of different parties met at his house with perfect good humor; and the frank and polite attentions of Mrs. Madison were paid, without distinction, to all who joined her social circle.



Charles A. Burnett, Photo by Philip Beaurline,  
*Dolley Madison's Snuffbox*, ca. 1800. Silver. Montpelier, a National Trust Historic  
Site, Bequest of Marion duPont Scott, NT85.2.45.

## Dolley's Letter to Anna

. . . The Vice P. lies dangerously ill—Eletioneering for his office goes on beyond all description. The World seems running Mad, what with one thing & another—The Fed[eralists], as I told you, ware all affronted with M[adison], refused to dine or come but they have changed their tack—last night & the night before, our rooms were crouded with republicans & such a ralying of our party has alarm'd them into a return. They came in a large party last night also & are continuelly calling—Even D. R. Will < . . . > who is a fine fellow, came last night. The old & the young Muster'd—The War business goes on slowly—but I fear twill be sure. . . .

### NOTES

*The Vice P.* = Vice President George Clinton, who died April 20, 1812.

*D. R. Will* = David Rogerson Williams of South Carolina, a Republican member of the House of Representatives.

< . . . > = missing or unreadable text.

## Memorandum to Mr. Zantzinger for Purchases

2 Looking Glasses, long, and large as can be bought for \$100.00  
100 yds the best carpeting that can be had for \$1 pr yd— 100.00  
1 piece Black Levantine, 1 piece cheap white satin  
1 piece queens grey florence silk, 20 yds Blond Lace 3 inches wide—  
1 small Box assorted Feathers, do. Flowers, do. Ribbons—  
2 pieces of fine cambric a 2 or three Dolls pr. yd.  
2 pieces pocket Kerchiefs Cambric, at 75 Cents or one Doll pr. kerchief  
10 yds fine Lace at 4 or 5 Dolls pr. yd—1 dito at 2 dols, narrow/  
2 doz: pr. white & one doz pr. black silk stockings large size—  
2 doz pr. white Kid gloves long, & large— 4 doz short do assorted colours  
1 Doz pr. shoes with heels—one doz pr. without—  
—1 piece white crape— — a print, of the bust, of N. Bonaparte, large  
as life, taken by an élève of David; it may be found in the shops  
of the Marchands des gravures < . . . > the price some months since  
was, 20 francs. —4 Orange, or bright yellow Marino Shawls  
not exceeding 12 or 15 Dollars—one large white shawl \$20 or 25  
with a rich border—Two Spring bonnets—Two dito for  
Winter—Two of them for a large Head—one  
of each for a smaller head. all, for the morning  
one douzn fanciful but very cheap snuff boxes

### Notes

*yds.* = yards

*levantine* = a silk fabric, woven for extra texture

*do., dito* = ditto (the same as the previous item)

*dols and doll* = dollars

*pr. yd* = per yard

*pr.* = pair, or per

*doz, douzn* = dozen

*élève* = student (in French)

*David* = French artist Jacques-Louis David

*francs* = French currency

*marino* = a high-quality wool

< . . . > = missing or unreadable text



Attributed to Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington*, 1796. Oil on canvas. White House Historical Association / White House Collection.

## Dolley Madison's Extract

Tuesday Augt. 23d. 1814.

Dear Sister.

—My husband left me yesterday mornng. to join Gen. Winder. He enquired anxiously whether I had courage, or firmness to remain in the President's house until his return, on the morrow, or succeeding day, and on my assurance that I had no fear but for him and the success of our army, he left me, beseeching me to take care of myself, and of the cabinet papers, public and private. I have since recd. two despatches from him, written with a pencil; the last is alarming, because he desires I should be ready at a moment's warning to enter my carriage and leave the city; that the enemy seemed stronger than had been reported and that it might happen that they would reach the city, with intention to destroy it. X X X

X X X I am accordingly ready; I have pressed as many cabinet papers into trunks as to fill one carriage; our private property must be sacrificed, as it is impossible to procure wagons for its transportation. I am determined not to go myself until I see Mr. Madison safe, and he can accompany me, as I hear of much hostility towards him, X X X disaffection stalks around us.

X X X X X My friends and acquaintances are all gone; Even Col. C— with his hundred men, who were stationed as a guard in the enclosure.

X X French John (a faithful domestic,) with his usual activity and resolution, offers to spike the cannon at the gate, and to lay a train of powder which would blow up the British, should they enter the house. To the last proposition I positively object, without being able, however, to make him understand why all advantages in war may not be taken.

Note

X's = Dolley Madison's use of ellipses.

Wednesday mornng., twelve O'clock. Since sunrise I have been turning my spy glass in every direction and watching with unwearied anxiety, hoping to discern the approach of my dear husband and his friends; but, alas, I can descry only groups of military wandering in all directions, as if there was a lack of arms, or of spirit to fight for their own firesides!

Three O'clock. Will you believe it, my Sister? We have had a battle or skirmish near Bladensburg, and I am still here within sound of the cannon! Mr. Madison comes not; may God protect him! Two messengers covered with dust, come to bid me fly; but I wait for him. X X X At this late hour a wagon has been procured, I have had it filled with the plate and most valuable portable articles belonging to the house; whether it will reach its destination; the Bank of Maryland, or fall into the hands of British soldiery, events must determine.

Our kind friend, Mr. Carroll, has come to hasten my departure, and is in a very bad humor with me because I insist on waiting until the large picture of Gen. Washington is secured, and it requires to be unscrewed from the wall. This process was found too tedious for these perilous moments; I have ordered the frame to be broken, and the canvass taken out it is done, and the precious portrait placed in the hands of two gentlemen of New York, for safe keeping. And now, dear sister, I must leave this house, or the retreating army will make me a prisoner in it, by filling up the road I am directed to take. When I shall again write you, or where I shall be tomorrow, I cannot tell!!



E. C. Perry Photograph Co., *Paul Jennings*, undated. Photograph. Estate of Sylvia Jennings Alexander.

## Paul Jennings's Reminiscence

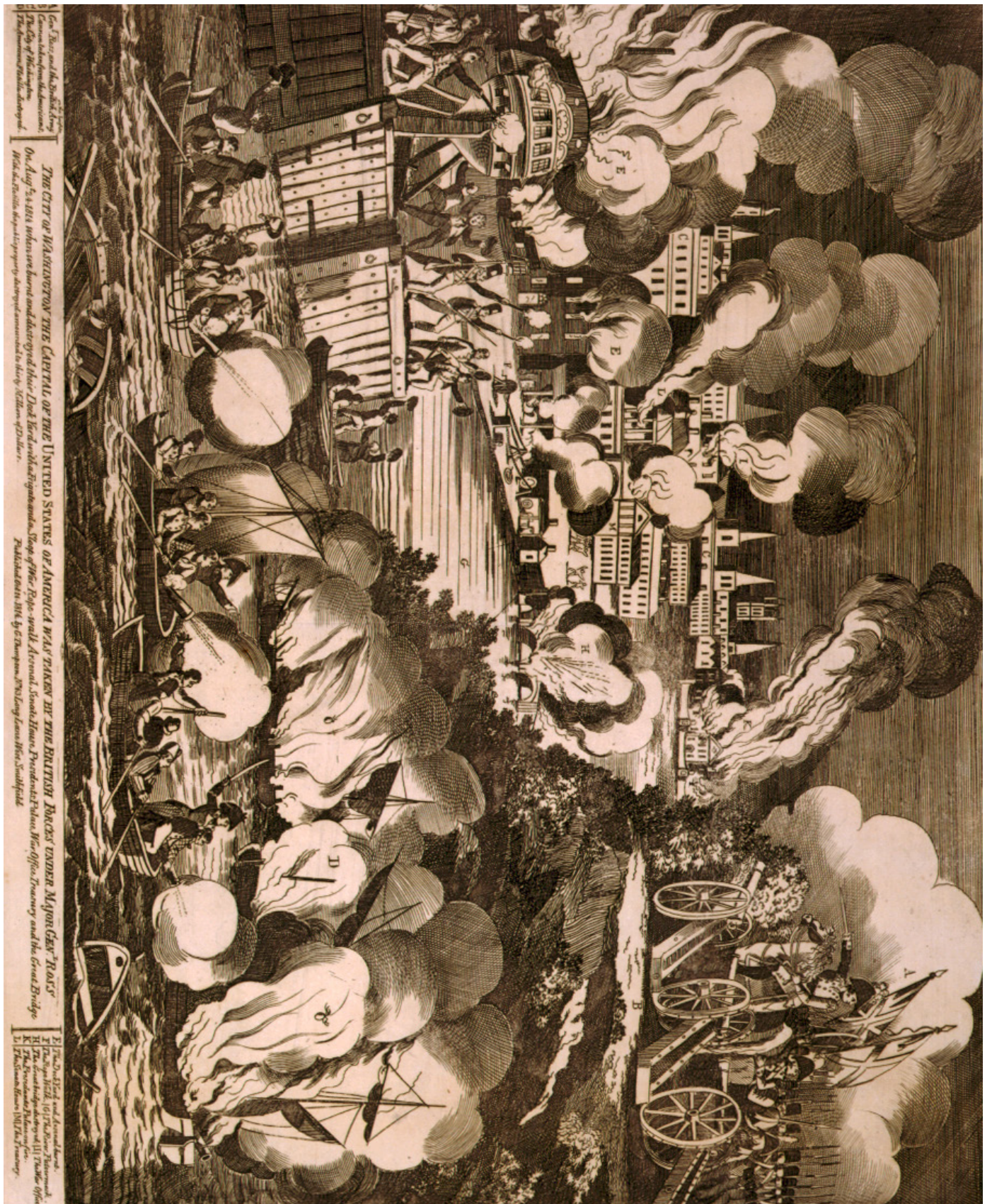
**M**rs. Madison ordered dinner to be ready at 3, as usual; I set the table myself, and brought up the ale, cider, and wine, and placed them in the coolers, as all the Cabinet and several military gentlemen and strangers were expected. While waiting, at just about 3, as Sukey, the house-servant, was lolling out of a chamber window, James Smith, a free colored man who had accompanied Mr. Madison to Bladensburg, galloped up to the house, waving his hat, and cried out, 'Clear out, clear out! General Armstrong has ordered a retreat!' All then was confusion. Mrs. Madison ordered her carriage, and passing through the dining-room, caught up what silver she could crowd into her old-fashioned reticule, and then jumped into the chariot with her servant girl Sukey, and Daniel Carroll, who took charge of them; Jo. Bolin drove them over to Georgetown Heights; the British were expected in a few minutes . . . [but] they did not arrive for some hours. . . .

It has often been stated in print, that when Mrs. Madison escaped from the White House, she cut out from the frame the large portrait of Washington (now in one of the parlors there), and carried it off. This is totally false. She had no time for doing it. It would have required a ladder to get it down. All she carried off was the silver in her reticule, as the British were thought to be but a few squares off, and were expected every moment. John Susé (a Frenchman, then door-keeper, and still living) and Magraw, the President's gardener, took it down and sent it off on a wagon, with some large silver urns and such other valuables as could be hastily got hold of. When the British did arrive, they ate up the very dinner, and drank the wines, &c., that I had prepared for the President's party.

### Notes

*reticule* = a small handbag

*John Susé* = Jean-Pierre Sioussat, the chief steward (doorkeeper) and chef in the Madison White House.



West Smithfield, Published by G. Thompson, *The Taking of the City of Washington in America*, 1814. Wood engraving. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 96510111.



George Munger, *The President's House*, 1814–1815. Watercolor on paper. White House Historical Association / White House Collection.



Mathew B. Brady, *Dolley Madison, three-quarter length portrait of a woman, facing front, seated*, 1848. Half-plate daguerreotype. White House Historical Association / White House Collection.



Attributed to Joseph Wood, *John Payne Todd*, ca. 1817. Watercolor on ivory. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Miss Mary Madison McGuire, 1936 (36.73).

## Dolley Madison's Letter to Payne

Washington Jany. 22d. 44

If you love me, my dear son, write to me—tell me when you will come to offer the papers to Congress, and to do something with the 4th volume—we are without funds and those we owe are impatient—the time has arrived now when if lost or neglected will never return to us! Mr. R with whom only I have conversed, assured me that if he could do any thing in it—we should chuse—but he had made himself so unpopular—that no open efforts of his would do any good to my interest and therefore some influential member of the lower house should be chosen and employed. Oh, my son! I am too unhappy not to have you with me, and not to have even your opinion and directions, what to do myself or what individuals to engage and at what time! Do not let this often repeated request offend or hurt you my son—but I will say little more—as it is not good for me to write.

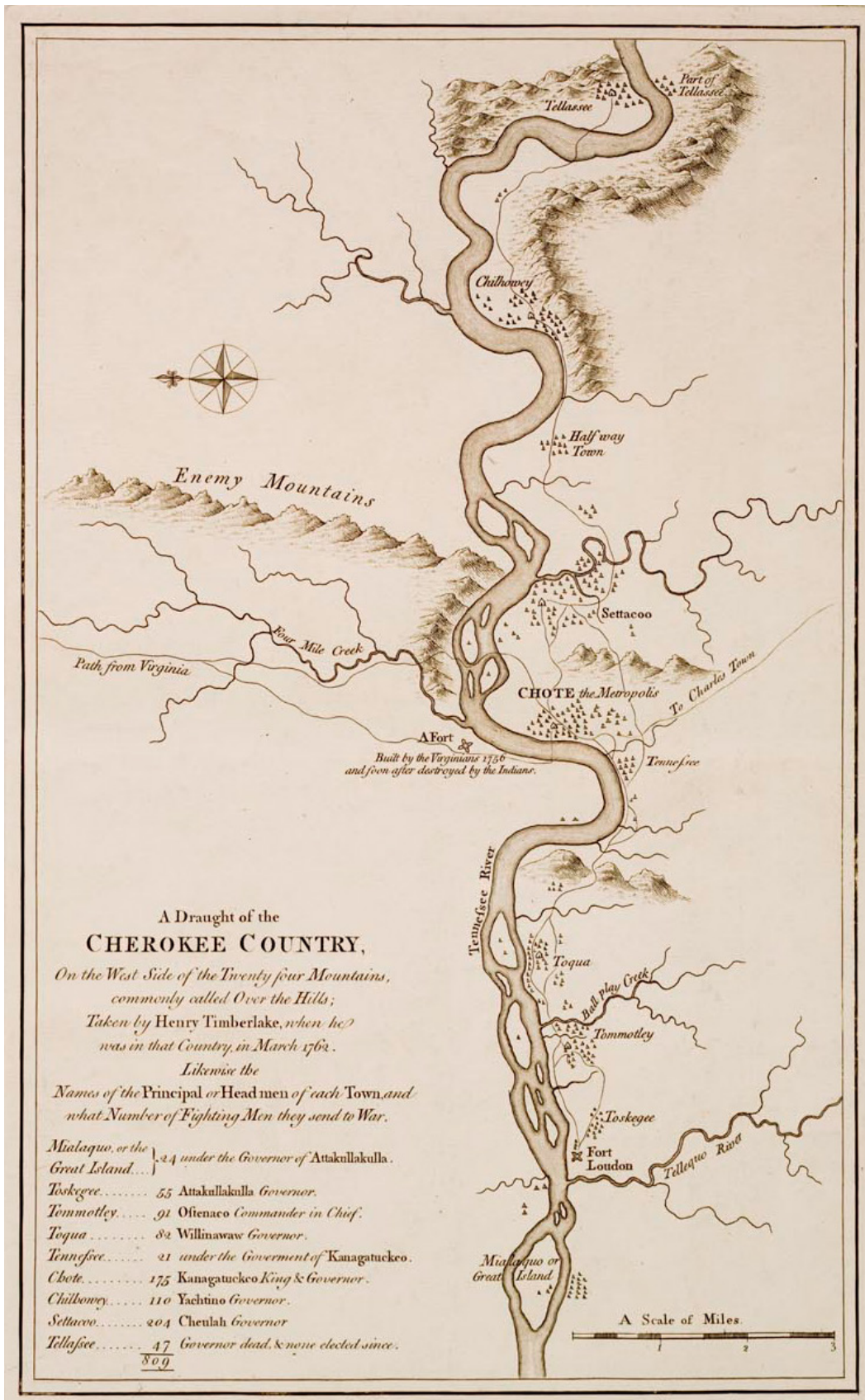
You have no doubt seen in the papers a Resolution of Congress inviting me to a seat—and my answer—It is nothing in my eyes or my heart, nor would compliments even higher, unless you and myself were on safe ground with our creditors.

Astor's interest is due the 19th of February—can you obtain it for me? Miss Legaré's best respects to you.

Ever your affectionate mother  
D. P. Madison.

[Envelope]  
J. P. Todd  
Montpelier  
Orange Cy  
Va.

Note  
*chuse* = choose



Henry Timberlake, *A Draught of the Cherokee Country*, 1765. Ink on paper. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 5549.



Jarena Lee, 1849. *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee: giving an account of her call to preach the gospel*, frontispiece. Engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, CTL4784 A3 1849.



Hugh Bridport, *Camp Meeting*, ca. 1829. Lithograph. New-York Historical Society Library, PR 68.



*Mary and Emily Edmonson*, ca. 1850–1860. Photomechanical print. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 91789694.



Ezra Greenleaf Weld, *Fugitive Slave Law Convention, Cazenovia, New York, 1850*. Daguerreotype. Courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum.



*Lydia Maria Child*, 1883. *Letters of Lydia Maria Child*, frontispiece. Engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, PS1293.Z8 1888.



*Amelia Jenks Bloomer*, 1850s. Daguerreotype. Property of the Seneca Falls Historical Society.

THE LIBERATOR

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF WOMAN.

AMELIA BLOOMER,  
VOL. 4.

SENECA FALLS, N. Y., MARCH, 1852.

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

NO. 3.

Amelia Bloomer, *The Liberator*, March 1852. Newspaper.  
New-York Historical Society Library, HV5285 L5 v.4, no.3.



Isabella Graham, 1843. *The Power of Faith*, frontispiece. Engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, C1.G739 A2 1843.



Gilbert Stuart, *Mrs. Marcia Van Ness*, 1805. Oil on canvas. Edgewater Classical American Homes Preservation Trust.

## Learning the Skills

**O**n the 15th of March, 1806, the female subscribers to proposals for providing an Asylum for Orphan Children met at the City Hotel; Mrs. Graham was called to the chair, a Society organized, and a board of direction chosen. Mrs. [Sarah] Hoffman was elected the first Directress of the Orphan Asylum Society. Mrs. Graham . . . , or one of her family, taught the orphans daily, until the funds of the Institution were sufficient to provide a teacher and superintendent. . . .

And truly God has made good his promise towards this benevolent Institution. . . . Having for fourteen months occupied a hired house for an Asylum, the ladies entertained the bold idea of building an Asylum on account of the Society. They had then about three hundred and fifty dollars as the commencement of a fund for the building; they purchased four lots of ground in the village of Greenwich, on a healthful, elevated site, possessing a fine prospect. The corner-stone was laid on the 7th of July, 1807. They erected a building fifty feet square. . . . In that house Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Hoffman spent much of their time; there they trained for Eternity the children of those whose widowed dying mothers they had cheered with the hope that when they should be taken away, God would fulfill his gracious promise and preserve their fatherless children alive.



Attributed to W & F Langenheim, *Catharine Beecher*, 1848. Daguerreotype. Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, A102-438-1z.



Augustus Washington, *Lydia Sigourney*, 1852. Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut.

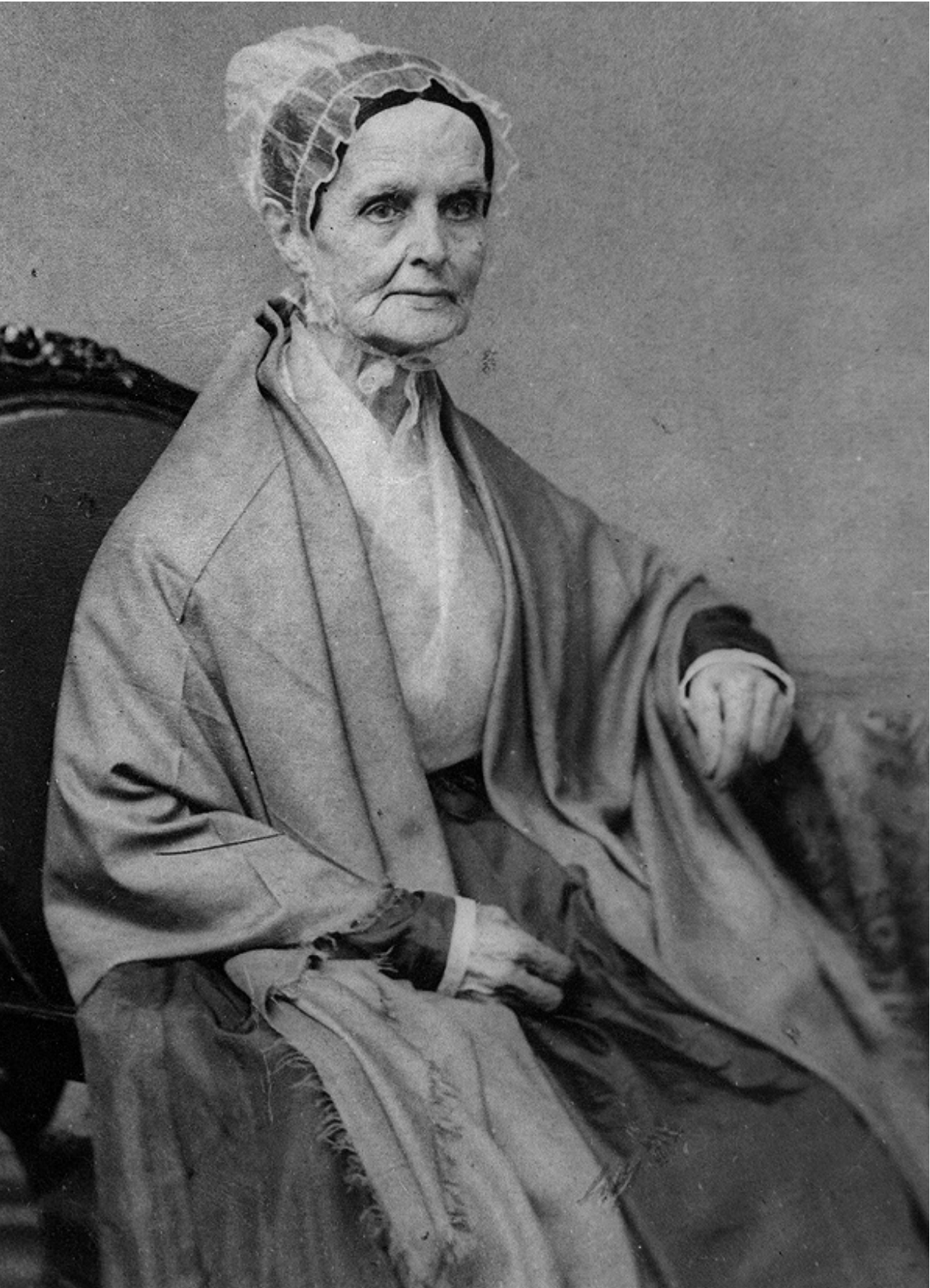
## Circular Addressed to Benevolent Ladies of the United States

Ever since the existence of this nation, our general government . . . [has] acknowledged . . . [the Indian] people, as free and independent nations, and has protected them in the quiet possession of their lands. . . .

But the lands of this people are claimed to be embraced within the limits of some of our Southern States, and as they are fertile and valuable, they are demanded by the whites as their own possessions, and efforts are making to dispossess the Indians of their native soil. And such is the singular state of concurring circumstances, that it has become almost a certainty, that these people are to have their lands torn from them, and to be driven into western wilds and to final annihilation, unless the feelings of a humane and Christian nation shall be aroused to prevent the unhallowed sacrifice. . . .

Have not then the females of this country some duties devolving upon them in relation to this helpless race? . . . It may be, that female petitioners can lawfully be heard, even by the highest rulers of our land. . . .

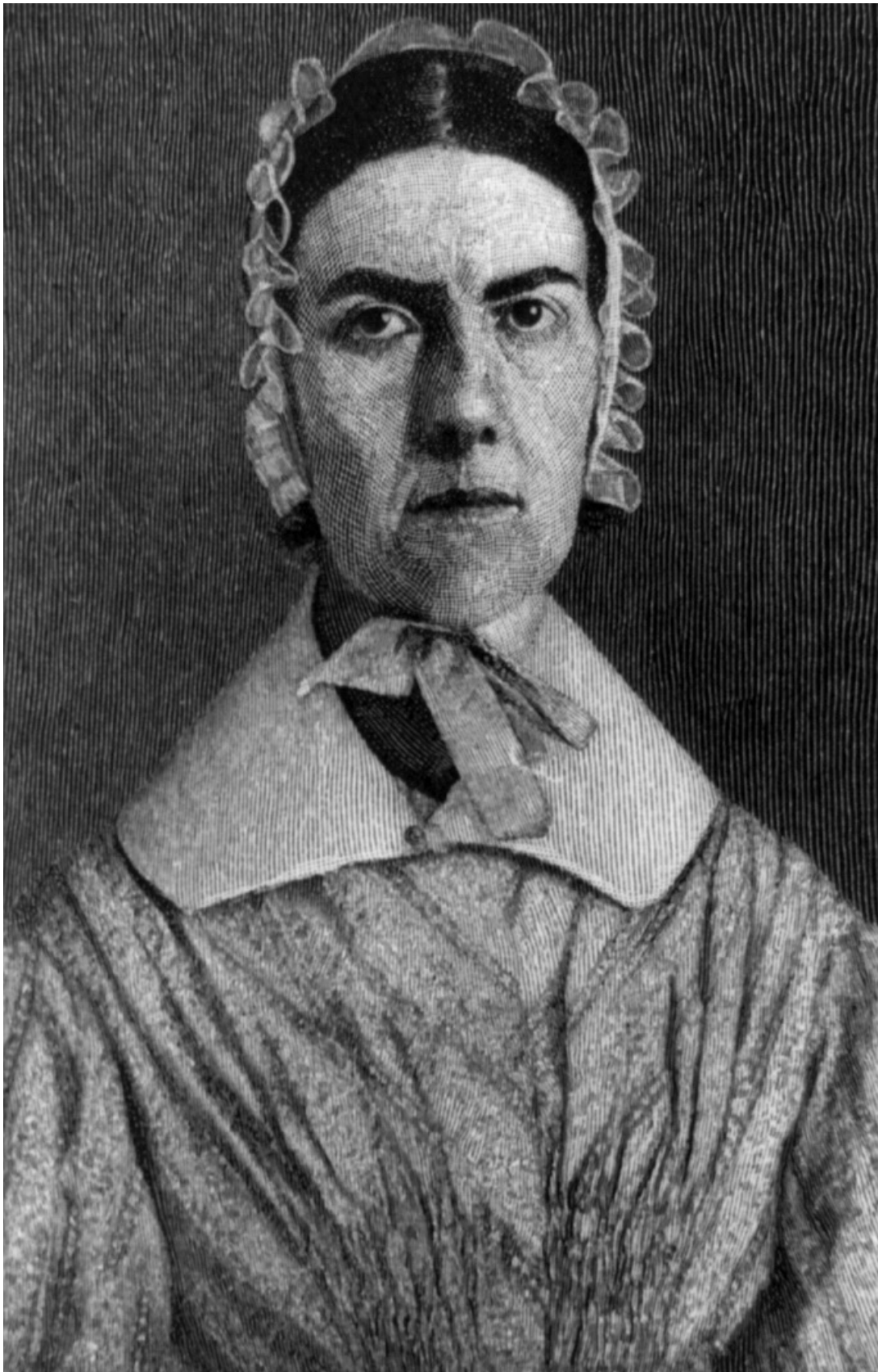
This communication was written and sent abroad solely by the female hand. Let every woman who peruses it . . . endeavor by every suitable expedient to interest the feelings of her friends, relatives and acquaintances, in behalf of this people, that are ready to perish. A few weeks must decide this interesting and important question, and after that time, sympathy and regret will all be in vain.



*Lucretia Mott*, ca. 1860–1880. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., 9750024.

## Women in Quaker Doctrine

As we dare not encourage any ministry but that which we believe to spring from the influence of the Holy Spirit, so neither dare we attempt to restrain this influence to persons of any condition in life, or to the male sex alone; but, as male and female are one in Christ, we allow such of the female sex as we believe to be endued with a right qualification for the ministry, to exercise their gifts for the general edification of the church.



*Angelina Emily Grimké*, undated. Wood engraving. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., 2003653379.



American Anti-Slavery Society, *Am I Not a Woman & a Sister*, 1838. Copper. New-York Historical Society, 2006.21.1.



John Caspar Wild, *Destruction by Fire of Pennsylvania Hall*, 1838. Lithograph. Library Company of Philadelphia, \*W94 [P9057.27].



W. B. Chambers, *Sarah Josepha Hale*, 1850. *Godey's Lady's Book*, 1850, frontispiece. New-York Historical Society Library, AP2.G58, vol. 41.



"Godey's Paris Fashions Americanized," *Godey's Lady's Book*, July 1848. Hand-colored engraving. New-York Historical Society Library, TX1.G58, vol. 37.



Benjamin Robert Haydon, *The Anti-Slavery Society Convention, 1840, 1841*. Oil on canvas. Primary Collection, National Portrait Gallery, London, Given by British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1880, NPG 599.



*Ernestine Rose*, 1881. Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.

# **An Act for the Effectual Protection of the Property of Married Women**

Passed April 7, 1848.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly do enact as follows:

Sec. 1. The real and personal property of any female who may hereafter marry, and which she shall own at the time of marriage, and the rents issues and profits thereof shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband, nor be liable for his debts, and shall continue her sole and separate property, as if she were a single female.

Sec. 2. The real and personal property, and the rents issues and profits thereof of any female now married shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband; but shall be her sole and separate property as if she were a single female except so far as the same may be liable for the debts of her husband heretofore contracted.

Sec. 3. It shall be lawful for any married female to receive, by gift, grant devise or bequest, from any person other than her husband and hold to her sole and separate use, as if she were a single female, real and personal property, and the rents, issues and profits thereof, and the same shall not be subject to the disposal of her husband, nor be liable for his debts.

Sec. 4. All contracts made between persons in contemplation of marriage shall remain in full force after such marriage takes place.

1848 New York Laws 307, ch. 200.



*Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her daughter, Harriot, 1856, Daguerreotype, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., 97500106.*

## From the Newspapers

This is all wrong. . . . Society would have to be radically remodeled in order to accommodate itself to so great a change.

–*Mechanics' Advocate*, Albany, New York

The women folks have just held a Convention up in New York State, and passed a sort of “bill of rights”. . . . They should have resolved at the same time, that it was obligatory . . . upon the “lords” . . . to wash dishes, scour up, be put to the tub, handle the broom, darn stockings, patch breeches, scold the servants, dress in the latest fashion, wear trinkets, look beautiful, and be as fascinating as those blessed morsels of humanity whom God gave to preserve that rough animal man, in something like a reasonable civilization.

–*Lowell* (Massachusetts) *Courier*

A woman is nobody. A wife is everything. A pretty girl is equal to ten thousand men, and a mother is, next to God, all powerful. The ladies of Philadelphia, therefore, under the influence of the most serious “sober second thoughts,” are resolved to maintain their rights as Wives, Belles, Virgins, and Mothers, and not as Women.

–*Philadelphia Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*



N. Currier (firm), *The Bloomer Costume*, 1851, Lithograph, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., 90711963.