

Dolley Madison

1768–1849



WHY SHE MADE HISTORY Dolley Madison was the wife of President James Madison. She is known for her elegance and grace as the official hostess of the White House.



As you read the biography below, think about how Dolley Madison's charms and manners helped her become the "unofficial" first lady of the Jefferson administration.



National Archives

Dolley Payne Madison was born in 1768 to a **Quaker** family in Virginia. She married a lawyer and Quaker named John Todd in 1790. The couple had two children, but John and their youngest son both died from yellow fever in 1793. The following year, Dolley married James Madison. She was expelled from the Society of Friends because James Madison was not a **Quaker**.

In 1801 Thomas Jefferson appointed James Madison secretary of state. Dolley Madison often helped President Jefferson with state functions, such as entertaining guests. Both Jefferson and Vice President Aaron Burr were widowers, and Dolley Madison took on the role as unofficial first lady for the Jefferson administration.

Dolley was known for her charm, tact, and elegance. She was very outgoing and loved parties and social events. When James Madison became president in 1809, Dolley Madison continued her role as Washington's hostess. The Madisons entertained in their home and held weekly **salons**. She insisted on formal **etiquette** and kept her guests comfortable.

During the War of 1812, British troops invaded Washington, D.C., and attacked the White House. Dolley Madison was able to save many valuable

VOCABULARY

Quaker member of the Society of Friends, a Protestant religious sect

salon society meeting

etiquette manners

belongings, including the White House silver and important official papers, from being destroyed by the British invaders.

After James Madison's two terms as president, he and Dolley retired to their plantation in Virginia. When James Madison died in 1836, Dolley moved back to Washington, D.C. She died in 1849.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What was Dolley Madison known for and what was her 'job'?
2. What is a Quaker?
3. How did her youngest son, John, die?
4. ^{Why} Was Dolley expelled from the Society of Friends?
5. Who was Dolley's husband and what job did he have?
6. Why was Dolley Madison the unofficial first lady for the Jefferson administration?
7. Describe Dolly's personality.
8. She help weekly salons, what did salon mean back then?
9. She insisted on formal etiquette, what does that mean?
10. What happened that made Dolley have to save valuable belongings from the White House?
11. List 2 things she saved.
12. When did Dolley and James retire and where did they go?

Activity

Imagine that you are helping Dolley Madison entertain during an event at the White House. On a separate piece of paper, create a simple invitation to this social event. Include the name or title of the event, the date and time, and a description of why might be expected at the party.