

## *Dolley Madison*

### *Program Transcript*

**Slate:** The words spoken by the actors in this program are based on the actual writings of Dolley Madison and her contemporaries.

**Narrator:** In July 1849, the entire United States government shut down for a funeral. It was said to be the largest Washington, DC had ever seen. President Zachary Taylor, his entire cabinet, members of the diplomatic corps, the Senate and House of Representatives, and thousands of ordinary citizens were honoring a person who had held no government office, had written no influential laws, nor won any military battles. Dolley Madison came to be known as this country's first First Lady. More than anyone else, she had created that unofficial office, and in the process changed the face of the Presidency.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** They called her Queen Dolley because she reigned supreme over Washington.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** She was a heroine at the center of heroic events. But there is the public Dolley Madison and then there is this extraordinarily difficult, even tragic private life that she's living out.

**Narrator:** Family meant everything to her, but her only child nearly ruined her. She helped establish Washington, DC, only to see it almost destroyed by an invading army. People described her as sunny and charming, but at her core was a will of iron.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** There is a secret in life better than anything a fortune teller can reveal. We all have a great hand in the forming of our own destiny.

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**Narrator:** In 1783, the year that America won its independence from Britain, a family traveled from rural Virginia to a new home. John Payne was bringing his wife and eight children to the country's largest and most cosmopolitan city, Philadelphia. Payne was a devout Quaker, and his sect had just called for its members to free their slaves. He had complied, though it meant giving up his livelihood. Now he was starting over, in this center of the Quaker religion.

**Narrator:** Years later, Lucia Cutts, Dolley's grand niece, would write a biography of her famous relative. In it, she described Dolley's family life under the watch of her stern father.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** Mr. Payne was very exact with his children and brought them up in that religion that has utility for its basis. Ornaments and the graceful female accomplishments were equally forbidden as savoring too much of the vanities. Dolley, like all children, was taught to obey her parents unquestionably.

**Narrator:** A cosmopolitan Philadelphia offered the young Quaker woman tantalizing glimpses of a different world.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** Dear Betsy. Here's what's in circulation. Thy old admirer Mr. W.S. and Susan Ward are – according to the common saying – to be made one. The bride to be is setting up house not far from here. The old Quakers, of course, very much do not approve of this parade. There are more matches afoot, but they're still so uncertain that I can't tell you their names yet. Oh, but Sally Bartram, she ran off and married a Roman Catholic!!! And Betsy Wister and Kitty Morris – they're Quakers too – eloped. So you see, dear Betsy, - love's no respecter of anything, and some will follow the choice of their hearts.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** She had beauty, loveliness of character, and perfect freedom from vanity. She soon had numerous suitors. Her powers of fascination were wonderful.

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**Quaker man (Neal Huff):** She has a rosy complexion, jet black hair and a sweet engaging smile. She could raise the mercury in the thermometer of the heart to fever heat.

**Quaker Woman (Dana Ivey):** She's often given offense by her caps and the cut of her gown and the shape of her shoes. I have lectured her at length about this; she smiles while I am talking – and then, falls asleep.

**Narrator:** In 1789, Dolley's life was thrown into turmoil. Her father's new business failed, and forced to declare bankruptcy, he was cast out of the Society of Friends.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** The Quakers didn't read you out of their society because you got in debt. It was how he didn't pay his debts back. There was a dishonesty there in some way. And it's that which was so shameful, and that which must have been so painful to the whole family.

**Narrator:** The humiliation broke Dolley's proud father. He took to his bed, turning his back to the world. Two of Dolley's brothers were also banished from Quaker society.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** The circumstances are mysterious. We know they're read out of the Society of Friends as well, and we know that it's covered up. So to me what it says is that they were doing something that they were not proud of. They've somehow shamed the family. There seems to be something that runs in the family of alcoholism and gambling.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** Her mother had to open a boardinghouse just to make a living. And there's a great deal of grief. And what that bred in Dolley was a desire to not just avoid confrontation, but to smooth things over. To please, to make everything all right. And this was a quality that would take her through her life.

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**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** Dolley was called to her father’s bedside, and told that he wished her to become the wife of John Todd, a young man of whom he had the highest opinion. Mr. Todd was a promising young lawyer of means, a man who had shown him great kindness in his trouble.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** I didn’t wish to marry – it was a hard struggle – but I couldn’t think of disobeying my father’s wishes. I gave up my girlhood and married Mr. Todd in 1790.

**Narrator:** Dolley Todd soon had two young sons. Now 25, she seemed on course to finally having a secure, if unremarkable life. Then, in August, 1793, Philadelphia was racked with an epidemic of yellow fever. Within a few days, Dolley’s father-in-law and mother-in-law both died. Soon afterwards, her husband and younger son were stricken. They died on the same day.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** I too took the fever and was very ill. My baby, just an infant, was taken from me.

**Narrator:** Dolley and her older son, Payne, survived. She had to fight for her husband’s property, and even for the custody of her son, who was considered part of her husband’s estate.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** It’s important to remember that women had no political rights or legal rights. Married women could not own property. They were the property of their husbands. So she really did have to think long and hard about remarrying. But Dolley also understood that having a husband in her life would be useful for her son.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** She was still young. It was only natural that she should have many admirers. Gentlemen would station themselves outside her house just to watch her pass – so much so that a Quaker friend out walking with her chided her, saying “Really Dolley,

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thou must hide thy face, there are so many men staring at thee.” Mrs. Todd would laugh heartily, and obediently put up both hands to her face.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** It was widely said around Philadelphia that she couldn’t come out of her house without about 10 people, men, all standing at the head of the street waving to her.

**Narrator:** Philadelphia was the temporary capital of the country, and James Madison was a Representative at Congress Hall, just around the corner from Dolley’s house. The 43-year-old bachelor took notice of the young widow out walking with her cousin. Madison was known as a monumental intellect. He was a seminal figure in the establishment of the United States Constitution, and a champion of the Bill of Rights. One of the country’s most prominent political leaders, he was also shy, sickly and short.

**Henry S. (Brian Murray):** He’s an anchovy! He looks like a country schoolmaster, mourning over one of his pupils he’s just whipped to death.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** He was the opposite of charismatic. But in small groups he was known to be extremely charming and very funny and known for his dirty jokes. So I don’t think he was quite as sobersides as we may ordinarily imagine him to be.

**Carol Berkin, Historian:** He had never had enormous luck with the ladies. And Dolley is a babe. And that James ever got up the nerve to court her is one of history’s mysteries.

**Narrator:** Madison asked a common acquaintance, Aaron Burr, to arrange an introduction.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** Senator Aaron Burr says that the great little Madison has asked to be brought to see me this evening.

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**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** Mr. Madison was 17 years her senior and was thought to be a life-long bachelor, but it only took one meeting for her to conquer this reclusive bookworm.

**Catherine Coles (Julia Morrison):** Cousin, he told me that he thinks so much about you in the day that he's lost his tongue. At night he dreams of you and starts in his sleep, calling on you to relieve his flame, for he burns to such an excess as to be almost consumed. With sparkling eyes, he has given me full permission to tell you all this.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** James Madison was determined to have her. Shy he may have been. Short he may have been. Determined he was.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** Madison was a very, very famous man, and people pointed him out as he walked the streets of Philadelphia. Dolley was ambitious in her own way too. And she was delighted to get this kind of attention. She was instantly on the inside of the top tier of the political world, and that meant a lot to her.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** Rumors about us created quite a sensation in Philadelphia. It even reached the Presidential Mansion and I was summoned to tea with Mrs. Washington. "Dolley!" she said to me, "Is it true that you are engaged to James Madison?" I was taken aback and I stammered, "No... I think not, I..." "If this is so," she said, "Don't be afraid to confess it, be proud! He will make thee a good husband, all the better that he is an older man."

**Narrator:** Within four months of their first meeting, Dolley Payne Todd and James Madison were married at her sister's home in Virginia. On her wedding day, she wrote a letter to a friend.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** I've stolen away from the family to communicate with you – to tell you, in short, that I have given my hand to the man who of all others I most... admire. In this

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marriage I look forward to a soothing future, and my little Payne will have a generous and tender protector. Best love to you and yours. Dolley Payne Todd, now Mrs. Madison... alas.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** When the wedding was over, she went back and she signed it “Dolley Madison, alas.” Which has puzzled a great many people for a long time.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** She married him in 1794. She may not have learned to love him until 1795-1796-1797, who knows? She might have loved him when she married him. But she clearly developed with him a wonderful partnership and a real love.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** It’s a classic case of opposites attracting. She had a charisma that completed Madison in a way that probably no one else could have, with enormous consequences for this country.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** When Dolley married James Madison, she was read out of Quaker meeting, because she had married out of the sect. But I think she was probably pretty ready to get out of it anyway.

**Carl Anthony, Writer:** The transformation after she marries Madison is radical. Suddenly for the first time, you start seeing images of her shoulders and her neck and her bosom. She is not in any way shy from wearing the most fashionable fashions of that Philadelphia era, and showing her body off a little bit. There are a lot of people who commented on the fact that Dolley Madison kind of took those fashions as far as they could go sort of respectably.

**Quaker Woman (Dana Ivey):** Friend Dolley, I send you this gift of some handkerchiefs to shade your lovely bosom from the admiration and gaze of the vulgar.

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**Narrator:** In 1797, with his Republican party out of power, Madison retired from the House of Representatives. Dolley and James and her five-year-old son Payne moved to Madison's 5,000-acre Virginia plantation, called Montpelier.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** When Dolley married James in 1794, it was not a foregone conclusion that she would be a politician's wife. James Madison of course had been a very prominent politician. But it wasn't at all clear that he would continue in politics. James and Dolley went to Montpelier for a retirement. This of course would prove to be a false retirement. As John Adams said, political plants seem to grow best in the shade.

**Narrator:** Dolley slipped easily into life at Montpelier, which relied for its wealth on the labor of slaves.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** Dolley Madison was part of a generation who had a particular attitude towards slavery. James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and people like that, thought of slavery as a necessary evil. They knew it was wrong on some level. But they had a whole life built on it, and they just couldn't let it go.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** When Dolley Madison's father decided to emancipate his slaves in Virginia, it foreshadowed ruin in the Payne family. So from her personal experience, living with slaves supporting you was a far easier life than living in poverty as her father's daughter with no slaves.

**Narrator:** For four years, Dolley and James lived the comfortable life of wealthy planters at Montpelier. During their long lives, they would rarely be apart.

**John Stagg, Historian:** There only survive about 30-odd letters between Madison and Dolley across the whole span of their lifetime. And that's because once they were married they were very seldom apart, and they didn't have occasion to write letters. But at one point, Dolley

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developed a problem on one of her knees, and she went to Philadelphia for medical treatment. And so we do have a series of letters between them. They're playful, they're affectionate. Dolley talks about how she weeps for joy when she receives one of his letters.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** My dearest husband. I am getting well as fast as I can, knowing that my reward will be seeing again my beloved. But I had a nightmare last night - that you were in your room sick, and I was not there to nurse you. Write soon, so that I may chase away this terrible vision. Farewell until tomorrow, my best friend. Think of thy wife, who thinks and dreams of thee.

**James Madison (Jefferson Mays):** My dearest - Your letter fans my anxious wishes and hopes for your perfect recovery, but my happiness will not be complete till I have you with me. Everything around and within reminds me that you are absent. I can't give you any news about the horse races or of the theatre - I've been to neither, nor have I wanted to without you. Payne is well, and I am trying hard to keep him paying some sort of attention to his books. All my affection embraces you.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** In 1801, Thomas Jefferson was elected President, and Mr. Madison became Secretary of State. Mr. and Mrs. Madison traveled to Washington from their Virginia plantation. In those days railroads were unknown and stagecoaches ingeniously uncomfortable, and the journey took what to us would seem us to be an incredible many days.

**Narrator:** The building of Washington, D.C. had started from scratch nine years earlier. Now the nation's capital, the city was still very much unfinished.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** It was a city composed of houses with no streets and streets with no houses. And that was about it. It was the wilderness.

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**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** Washington was created out of a swamp, and was this muddy mess. There was a muddy little creek running down the middle of the city, grandly called The Tiber, and it was of course infested with mosquitoes. So it was a miserable little town.

**Narrator:** European diplomats, accustomed to majestic cities and glittering courts, were shocked.

**John B. (voice of Brian Murray):** Washington could be a beautiful city if it were ever built. But it is not, so I can't say much about it. There is, however, excellent partridge shooting in the swamp near the Capitol building.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** It would have been daunting, I think, for anyone to think, I've got to actually start living here. But for someone like Dolley, who had deep down an optimistic nature and an embrace of change and liveliness, I think it would have been very stimulating.

**Narrator:** For the next 16 years, Dolley Madison's fortunes and those of her adopted city would rise together. Washington was very different from what the world thought a capital should look like. The royal courts of Europe, with their opulence and formal rituals, had always been the embodiment of a ruler's legitimacy. But The United States was a republic, not a monarchy. Its leaders needed to create a new vocabulary of power that represented the nation's democratic ideals.

**Carol Berkin, Historian:** The greatest concern for George Washington and for Adams after him was, "well, I'm not a king. And I don't have a royal court. On the other hand, the dignity of the republic is sort of embodied in me. And so how do I introduce a kind of note of dignity and pomp without crossing the line into decadent European behavior?"

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**Carl Anthony, Writer:** They had no previous presidential protocol to go by, and so they just did what was quite natural, which was to sort of present a Yankee version of the British court system, the British social etiquette.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** And so we have these strange moments where George Washington is trying to decide how many pairs of matched horses will convey the proper amount of authority, and how many would be too monarchical? And I think he settled on three would be just right.

**Narrator:** George Washington had received guests from a raised dais, bowing slightly to visitors, never deigning to touch hands. Thomas Jefferson was appalled that the leader of a republic would behave like a king. Once elected president, he determined to send a message to the country and the world. Anthony Merry was the first official envoy of the British government to be sent to Washington. When he arrived at the Executive Mansion to present his credentials, Jefferson made a point of receiving him not in formal attire, but in bathrobe and slippers. Jefferson continued his lesson in democracy at a formal diplomatic dinner in Merry's honor.

**John Stagg, Historian:** Seeing the Merrys were supposed to be the guest of honor for the evening, the assumption was that Jefferson would offer his arm to Mrs. Merry, and he would escort her to the dining table. Instead, he offered his arm to Dolley Madison.

**Carol Berkin, Historian:** To leave a woman standing without an escort to go into dinner is such a slap in the face. And it must have been for Merry's wife, not just insulting, but so disconcerting, because nothing in her experience could have prepared her for this. It was unheard of in polite society. It was certainly unheard of in diplomatic society. It was unheard of in ordinary society!

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**Anthony Merry (John Curlless):** I was left to give my hand to Mrs. Merry and lead her to whatever seat at the table we could snare – a situation degrading to her personally and to the country we represent. It is intolerable!

**James Madison (Jefferson Mays):** I blush to even have to talk about this nauseous subject, but Mr. Merry, Minister of the Crown, is writing back to Great Britain about that affair of etiquette – the frivolous business of who leads who into dinner parties. The Spanish Minister is now telling me that he supports the British. I've no idea what will be the result of all this nonsense.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** The Merrys remain greatly offended. Now they're refusing to accept any more social invitations from the Administration. Mrs. Merry is always going out alone, riding on horseback. She hardly associates with anyone.

**Narrator:** Anthony Merry advised his government to take a hard line with the United States.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** There are some who even think that it was one of the reasons for the War of 1812. I think that's going a little overboard but that is, that is a theory.

**Carol Berkin, Historian:** Dolley knew this was something that should never happen again. And on her watch it was definitely not going to happen again.

**Narrator:** The wife of the Secretary of State now embarked on a campaign of back-channel diplomacy.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** Dolley Madison sets out on a charm offensive. She sets out to woo Mrs. Merry and becomes a friend of hers. I'm not sure she really likes Mrs. Merry, but she woos her and charms her.

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**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** Dolley brought a feminine vocabulary of politics to the table that stressed empathy and civility. She would actively appease. She would always reach out. All these things she brought with her into her future public life.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** My dear sister. I long for a letter to tell me that you have arrived safely in Boston after your journey. We go on as usual. We have two parties this week: at Duvals and Dearborns, tonight at Thorntons, tomorrow night here. Payne is at school. He has written to you, but his writing is so bad I've told him to write it again.

**Narrator:** Dolley had great hopes for her son, but he was proving to be anything but a scholar.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** Payne was a problem. He probably needed the guidance of a father, he probably needed boundaries set by his mother, but he got none of those things. James Madison seems to have been a very loving but rather detached stepfather. And Dolley Madison, well, this avoidance of confrontation that stood her in such good stead in her political world was probably fatal in raising a son.

**Narrator:** In her seven years in Washington, Dolley Madison had built up a broad social network of influential politicians and their wives. She now put this network to good use.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** There was nothing automatic about Madison's election in 1808 to succeed Thomas Jefferson. James Madison who was not a terribly charismatic figure was married to a woman who was hugely charismatic. And she played a critical behind-the-scenes role in bringing together, throughout the campaign season, people who not only supported her husband's candidacy, but those who might support it, as well as those who were pledged to other candidates. It was all done very deftly. In those days no candidate could openly campaign. So the campaign went on at parties and dinners and receptions.

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**Carl Anthony, Writer:** You suddenly see this new model sort of rising of the presidential couple, or the candidate and his wife. And that was created by Dolley Madison.

**Narrator:** By lobbying for her husband’s candidacy, Dolley was taking a great risk. In the early 19th Century, it was considered almost scandalous for a woman to publicly engage in politics.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** The newspapers attacked Dolley Madison personally, intimating that she and her young sister had been in essence prostituted out by Jefferson to foreign dignitaries.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** She was accused of having affairs with various members of Congress. And in the case of Madison, one of the attacks on him was that his wife was overly sexed, and had unsexed him because he had no children and she did have a son by her first marriage.

**John Randolph (Michael Cumpsty):** I could make the hair on Congressmen stand as erect as the quills on a porcupine with evidence of the sexual insatiability of a certain republican woman – leader of the flock. In high places, love and smoke cannot long be hidden.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** Most other women would have been so infuriated by this that they would never have spoken to a Federalist again. “How dare they say this about me,” and so forth. But instead, Dolley told a friend, “oh, whenever people say things like that to you, the thing to do is just smile. They’re only trying to affect your sensibility.”

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** You wonder what sort of cost she paid, if any, psychologically, internally for this performance, because she was putting on a performance, clearly. After one particularly vicious diatribe, Dolley’s response was, ‘it was as good as a play.’ Which when you stop to think about it is the perfect putdown.

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**Narrator:** In 1809, James Madison was sworn in as President of the United States. His opponent, Charles Pinckney, said in defeat, “I might have had a better chance had I faced Mr. Madison alone. I was beaten by Mr. and Mrs. Madison.”

**Dolley (Eve Best):** My beloved Phoebe. You must pardon the appearance of neglect with regards to your charming letter. When tranquility once again resumes its reign in my life, I promise to write volumes. I’m glad you take no more snuff – but I must. Adieu, sweet one.

**Narrator:** The Madison presidency began with an inaugural ball – the first ever held in Washington. From the start, Dolley resolved to establish a new style for the new administration.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** By the time James Madison becomes president, you have had this Federalist government with its royal protocols, and then this democratic radical republicanism on the part of Jefferson. And what the Madisons do is to say, ‘we don’t want either. This is a new administration, it’s a new day in Washington.’ And because everything has to be created there are opportunities there. You start with nothing except your imagination.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** She dressed in a beautiful fine fabric which is in the Quaker tradition, a beautiful velvet, but it was of a simple color, a buff color that they called it, some kind of off white. And she wore the most American of jewelry, pearls.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** Pearls were a major statement. A British aristocrat, male or female, encrusted himself in diamonds. And Dolley Madison wore pearls rather than diamonds.

**Carl Anthony, Writer:** Dolley Madison, and I think she did this very consciously, kind of cooked up a formula that ultimately became the formula for a genuinely successful First Lady

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in her time and I think even to this day. And that is this very fine balance between, if you will, queen and commoner.

**Narrator:** This inaugural ball would be very different from the formal occasions of previous administrations.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** Dolley wanted to include a true cross-section of her countrymen. And it was said that although 400 people were invited, in fact anyone who could afford the \$4 price of a ticket could attend.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** And for some gentlemen this was a bit of a shock, to be sipping cider next to a humble farmer or whomever. But for Dolley, it was important to show that all were welcome, that this was a country where everyone was equal.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** And Dolley had a ball. And I think everyone who went there probably had a ball except for James Madison, who told Margaret Bayard Smith he'd rather be at home.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** The power of adaptation was the life-giving principle in my aunt's nature, but it was sorely tested in a very new society.

**Narrator:** The political atmosphere in Washington was poisonous. In 1809, with the country barely 20 years old, members of Congress had not yet figured out how to make the government function. Foreign relations, taxation, states' rights – all were matters of bitter dispute. Madison had been a key figure in creating the blueprint for the American system of government. As president, he passionately wanted to make it work.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** There's a great deal of anxiety in this period about the republican experiment, whether it's going to fall apart or not. This was a terribly violent era

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in the early republic. This is the era where men fought and murdered each other over ideologies. They shot each other, they beat each other with canes. And not on the streets or in the boardinghouses, but on the floors of Congress.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** Duels happened every day. There's a dueling ground right here in Bladensburg, where members of Congress would call each other out. These were men who were at each other's throats, literally.

**Narrator:** Everything in Washington seemed to exacerbate political divisions. Jefferson had had dinners in which he deliberately kept the two parties apart, inviting Republicans one night and Federalists the next. Even the living arrangements intensified the partisanship, with Federalists staying in one boarding house and Republicans in another.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** For politics to happen you need the social sphere. That's the place where people can work out things, they can compromise, they can talk, they can make deals. In Washington city there was no place for the unofficial sphere.

**Carol Berkin, Historian:** There are no public spaces for interaction. There aren't hotel lobbies. There aren't bars. I mean, there are not places where people could come together socially as opposed to in an argument over politics.

**Narrator:** Dolley realized that the Executive Mansion could be used for this political purpose. During previous administrations, the building was simply the president's private residence. She would transform it into a place where politicians could come together informally – a politically neutral space with music, food and civility. She began by decorating and furnishing its austere public rooms. To execute the work, Dolley chose the architect of the U.S. Capitol building – Benjamin Henry Latrobe. She knew her choice of decoration would be seen as a political statement. The president's house had to be elegant enough to indicate the power of

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the office, but it also had to reassure the most pure-minded of democrats that this was an executive mansion fit for a republic.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** One of the great gifts that Dolley brought to James Madison was this understanding, unconscious, intuitive, of the importance of symbols. And she understood she was creating a symbol for America.

**Narrator:** Dolley required that the furnishings be American-made. The chairs and sofas incorporated Grecian and Roman motifs. The meaning was clear: Americans were the heirs of democracy's creators. Dolley insisted that Gilbert Stuart's portrait of the country's founder have a prominent place in the public rooms. But Benjamin Latrobe had a definite idea where it should go.

**Benjamin Latrobe (Denis O'Hare):** I'm sorry to have counteracted any wish of yours as to General Washington's picture. The dining room is properly the picture room, and I therefore intended him to occupy either the place at the west end of the room between the windows, or at the east end.

**Narrator:** Dolley had her own sense of style, and chose brightly colored furnishings, which did not sit well with her more conservative architect.

**Benjamin Latrobe (Denis O'Hare):** The curtains! Oh, the terrible velvet curtains! They will blind everyone with their brilliance. The effect will ruin me!

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** Thomas Jefferson's idea of decorating the White House was to bring his own furniture from Monticello. I'm sure it was elegant. I'm sure it was beautiful. But it didn't provide for future generations. When the Madisons entered the White House, they say, we're building a permanent structure for the presidency. We're building for the future. This is firm, this is solid, this is for America.

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**Narrator:** The Executive Mansion quickly became the center of Washington’s social life. Every Wednesday, Dolley threw open the doors for a party. These events were so popular and crowded that people called them “squeezes.”

**Catherine Coles (Julia Morrison):** Mrs. Madison passes from one guest to another and from room to room, greeting everyone. All are taken with her wish to please and her willingness to be pleased.

**Narrator:** Up to this time, social events hosted by heads of state had always been highly formal affairs. The idea of a president entertaining legislators and even some members of the public in informal gatherings was something new.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** The fact of the matter is, it has always been true that much of the business of government in this city transpires after 5:00. It doesn’t take place in official offices, it takes place in the drawing room or around the dinner table. That began with Dolley Madison.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** Dolley Madison provided a place for people to meet and greet, who did not like each other, or did not even want to meet each other.

**Carol Berkin, Historian:** It’s no guarantee that if you had dinner with someone and a glass of port wine afterwards that you will not hurl a spittoon at them the next day on the floor of Congress. But it probably diminishes the chances sufficiently that it was worth the dinner.

**Carl Anthony, Writer:** What was going on underneath all of that was promoting her husband’s political agenda. If there were members of the Federalist Party who had earlier that day in Congress said antagonistic things about her husband, she would sort of guide them through the rooms, and somehow end up in a poorly lit corner, and there would be President Madison.

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And it would be damn near impossible for those guys to then sort of ungallantly and rudely say, “no, Mrs. Madison, I’m going to have some of your famous ice cream, but I’m leaving.” You know, they were there, and she had sort of gotten them. I mean, that was brilliant.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** Henry Clay said to her at one point, “everybody loves Mrs. Madison.” That’s the atmosphere that she created. And she said to him, “well, that’s because Mrs. Madison loves everybody.” Now, I’ve read her mail; that’s not true. But she certainly put on a good show of it.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** She brought everybody in the room together, and they learned to work together in bipartisan ways. Ways that it turns out, though no one could have known it, were absolutely necessary for building a democracy and a nation state.

**Narrator:** Soon Americans were calling the Executive Mansion by a new name – the White House. Dolley Madison had made it a national home. In the succeeding years Dolley would become the public face of her husband’s administration. Her doings were reported in newspapers across the growing country. Women copied her wardrobe. Her feathered turbans were the talk of the town. And when she served ice cream at her squeezes, it became a national sensation. Dolley wrote to influential women all over the country asking for recipes to use at White House dinners. This seemingly innocuous act had a political purpose, creating allies for her husband’s administration.

**Carl Anthony, Writer:** Dolley Madison saw her position as the President’s wife as a full time job. She was, in fact, a public entity.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** Dolley Madison, I think, has a larger claim than anyone else to having invented this unsalaried and ill-defined position that we all now take for granted, that of the first lady. Certainly nobody knew what a first lady was. The term didn’t come into use really until Dolley Madison’s time.

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**Holly Shulman, Historian:** Martha Washington was always George Washington’s helper, but she didn’t really like being out in the limelight. Abigail Adams didn’t see the importance of it and she didn’t want to do it. So her letters may be far more interesting than Dolley’s in terms of politics and public policy and political philosophy, but in fact it was Dolley who had an impact in that sense, not Abigail.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** She had very much a sense of what a public face for a woman should be. She could come to the fore, she could come to the front, she could be public, she could be out there, because she was still graceful and feminine.

**Narrator:** In 1812, Dolley Madison’s political skills would be put to the test. The country was split over the biggest crisis of the day. For 10 years, a major war had been raging between Great Britain and France. The president wanted the United States to remain neutral, and continue trading with France. Enraged, the British retaliated by attacking American ships and kidnapping American sailors. Madison realized peace was no longer possible. On June 18, 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain. Half the country supported the war, and half violently opposed it.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** The farmers hated it because they couldn’t export their goods. The merchants hated it because they couldn’t import their goods. And the shippers hated it because they were put out of business.

**Narrator:** New England politicians were even threatening to secede from the Union. Adams and Jefferson had sought to imprison their critics. But Madison was ideologically opposed to expanding the power of the presidency, even in wartime. His supporters as well as his enemies took his principled stand as a sign of weakness. The war was going badly, and everyone blamed Madison.

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**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** One day a lady drove up to the President's House, loosened her long beautiful hair, and standing up in her carriage, shouted that she'd be happy to let someone cut it off and use it to hang the President.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** They called the president little Jemmy; Jemmy short for James. And their implication was that he just didn't have the capacity to lead the country, this little guy, he didn't have the qualities for leadership.

**John Randolph (Michael Cumpsty):** Our President is weak, feeble and pusillanimous – he is a corrupt, bribe-taking, whore-mongering coward.

**Anthony Pitch (Writer):** America was totally unprepared for war. America had about 20 ships and Britain had a thousand. Britain ruled the waves. Some people thought it would be all over in a matter of weeks.

**Narrator:** But Britain, distracted by its war with France, could not yet turn its full attention to America. Far from being over quickly, the War of 1812 would drag on for more than two years.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** Earlier in July I wrote to you, my dearest Payne. I hope you've received this letter. I wrote to you again but not a word from you has reached me. You ought to realize how impatient I am to hear from you. I assume from your silence that you're busy on important business in Europe. Farewell and may Heaven bless and protect you.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** Dolley Madison had an internal life which was very different from her public life. This is a woman who could often be very anxious and very unhappy, but kept it from the public. There is a monster in her closet, and that is a sense of the failure of the men in her family. She was often very anxious and very unhappy but kept it from the public.

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In some ways perhaps she was like the child of an alcoholic who always wants to make things good, who always wants to heal things.

**Narrator:** Dolley’s son Payne was now 21, and showed no enthusiasm for pursuing his studies or finding a profession. Hoping to interest his stepson in government, James Madison sent Payne to Europe as part of a diplomatic mission.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** In Europe, of course, he’s treated as the prince of America; that’s the only way they can understand the President’s son. And indulged at every opportunity. And this is disastrous.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** He went with Albert Gallatin to Ghent, but then he disappeared. And she thought, oh he must be coming home because he’s so homesick. He wasn’t coming home, he was going to Paris. Having a wonderful time.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** James and Dolley were exasperatingly forgiving. They adopted a sort of philosophy that “still waters run deep,” that “straws float above,” I believe is the phrase, “and pearls below.” Even though Payne gave no indication of pearls below.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** Master Todd has decided to remain in Paris. He feels his knowledge of French is not perfect, and he has taken a maîtresse de langue to give him polish – a woman who teaches that language to gentlemen. I’m told she’s beautiful and young.

**John Stagg, Historian:** All the men in her family had failed in one way or another. Her father failed. All her brothers failed. Failure plus alcoholism. And Dolley I think sees the same pattern that’s going to be repeated with her son, because the son, she had great hopes for him, and if there was one thing he did consistently in his life it was let his mother down.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** My poor boy – forgive his eccentricities. He has a good heart.

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**Narrator:** In 1814, with the French in retreat, Britain turned its military might against the United States.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** The British sent word that unless I leave Washington, my house will be burned over my head, and I will be taken hostage and paraded through the streets of London. We're making efforts at defense. I may be a Quaker, but I've always supported the principle of fighting when attacked. And I keep my old Tunisian saber within reach at all times.

**Narrator:** On August 24, 1814, 4,000 British troops sailed up the Patuxent River, heading for Washington. Congress and most of the citizens had fled in terror. President Madison was with the army at Bladensburg, waiting to confront the British forces. Dolley Madison refused to leave until her husband returned from the front. She remained in the White House, alone with a few slaves.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** Since sunrise I've been turning my spy glass in every direction, watching in the agony of fear that my dear husband has been taken prisoner.

**Narrator:** With Dolley was a 15-year-old slave named Paul Jennings. Many years later, he would write a memoir of his life with the Madisons.

**Paul Jennings (Jacinto Riddick):** Mrs. Madison ordered dinner for when the President's party was supposed to return. I brought up the ale, cider and wine and placed them in the coolers; then I set the table.

**Narrator:** Suddenly, they heard the sound of an approaching horseman.

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**Paul Jennings (Jacinto Riddick):** James Smith came galloping up to the house waving his hat, crying out “Clear out, clear out, the army is in full retreat!!” All was confusion – people running in every direction. The British were expected in a few minutes.

**Narrator:** The American soldiers had been defeated at Bladensburg and were running for their lives. Washington was now completely undefended. Dolley directed Paul Jennings and the other slaves to save the public documents, along with the presidential silver and the red velvet curtains.

**Anthony Pitch (Writer):** She knows that an enemy army is about to capture the city. And she is now focused on saving Gilbert Stuart’s portrait of George Washington that hung on the west wall of the large dining room in the president’s home.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** She knew that the very first and indeed the ultimate war trophy that the British army would take away from the White House would be the portrait of Washington. They’d take it with them and they’d march it through the streets of London as the ultimate trophy of their victory. And so she was going to prevent that from happening at almost any cost.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** I insisted on waiting until the large picture of General Washington was unscrewed from the wall. But it took too long, so I ordered the frame to be broken and the canvas rolled up. It is done. And now I must leave this house. Where I shall be tomorrow, I cannot tell!

**Anthony Pitch (Writer):** Only when she was absolutely certain that this painting had been carried away to safety in a wagon did she decide to leave in her carriage.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** This is part of what makes her so interesting. She has in some way what we like to think of at least as a very modern, almost sixth sense about the

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psychological value of national symbols. Stop and think – in 1814 this country didn't have a lot of history. It didn't have a lot of unifying symbols. It had George Washington. And even more, it had the mythology of George Washington. Rescuing that portrait was an act of patriotism and defiance which if she had done nothing else would have immortalized Dolley Madison.

**Narrator:** The advancing British troops burned the Capitol building, and then moved on to the Executive Mansion. There they discovered the table handsomely laid out for Madison's guests. The soldiers toasted Dolley, devoured her dinner, and then they got to work. There was no shortage of kindling: writing tables, ornamented beds, gilded sofas, and Latrobe's hand-painted chairs with red velvet cushions.

**Paul Jennings (Jacinto Riddick):** I heard a tremendous explosion, and rushing out I saw that the public buildings, the navy yard, the rope walks, were all on fire.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** A panic filled the defenseless city as soon as the populace saw the flames rise from the Presidential abode. It was rumored that the whole city was to be destroyed by fire or sword.

**Narration:** Suddenly a huge storm struck the city. The two-hour-long deluge extinguished the flames.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** My great aunt returned to find her home in ruins, smoke still rising from the heaps of blackened timbers. The streets were deserted. With a sickened heart, she drove to my mother's house to await the return of her husband.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** Such destruction – such confusion. I can't tell you what I feel. I wish we could sink our enemies to a bottomless pit!

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**Narrator:** The British left Washington and moved the battle to other American cities. The war dragged on, with neither side able to claim victory. The capital was in ruins, and now there was serious talk of abandoning Washington forever.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** It was this miserable little city and now it was a burned-out miserable little city. And so having to start over again seemed something easy to denigrate, and so why do it? Move to Philadelphia, we have buildings.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** The city of Philadelphia was offering them good old Independence Hall, and they'd go back to the comforts of a civilized capital. It was very tempting. And the first vote in Congress was very heavily in favor of moving out. But Dolley had really done more to create this city than anybody else, and she was not going to see Congress walk out of this place.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** Dolley Madison understood that Washington was an important symbol, and she felt strongly that to go back to Philadelphia, tail between legs, was in some ways a concession to the British.

**Narrator:** The Madisons moved into a building called the Octagon House, around the corner from the burned-out Executive Mansion. Dolley immediately began to give parties.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** And the whole message of these dinner parties was don't abandon Washington. She got in her carriage and she rode all over Washington, leaving her calling cards everywhere.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** And it's Dolley Madison as much as anyone else who in her inimitable way, largely behind the scenes, makes it very clear to members of Congress that she has no intention of abandoning Washington. And she takes tangible measures to make clear to everyone that she believes in the future of Washington.

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**Narrator:** Dolley championed the establishment of an orphan asylum for girls left behind by the war. She was the first First Lady to adopt a charitable cause.

**Cokie Roberts, Writer:** And she was the first directress. And in fact she gave I think \$20 and a cow, and offered to cut patterns for the clothes for the girls.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** It was the symbolism of the gesture. She's telling Congress that Washington has a future. And the fact is, by a very narrow vote, nine votes, Congress decides to stay put in Washington, to return to this ravaged city and to rebuild.

**Narrator:** On February 14, 1815, Washington got the news that a treaty with Great Britain had finally been signed.

**Paul Jennings (Jacinto Riddick):** Mrs. Sally Coles, a cousin of Mrs. Madison, came to the head of the stairs crying out "Peace, Peace!" And told Mr. Freeman to serve out the wine to the servants and others, and I played the President's march on my violin. Mr. Madison was also pleased, but he didn't show it. Mrs. Madison threw open the door for a huge party. Such a joyful time was never seen in Washington.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** The War of 1812 is in effect the second war of American independence. And a draw, which is basically what we got, was as good as a win. Never again would Great Britain menace the existence of the United States.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** The War of 1812 signified that we were going to last as a nation, we were here to stay.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** Madison actually gives us an alternative model of wartime leadership for which he really ought to be remembered. He didn't abuse executive power. No

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one went to jail because they differed with the president, or because they criticized the president's conduct of the war. And so the fact is the War of 1812 provided the ultimate test about a free government, and what was this democratic experiment that we had been fighting to defend? No one defined that experiment better than James Madison by what he didn't do as president.

**Henry S. (Brian Murray):** The war has made Americans more American. We feel and act as a nation. I now have some hope for the permanency of the United States.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** Madison's popularity proceeded to soar. And for the next two years it was just a love fest in Washington. And much of this could be traced, in many ways, to Dolley. To that display of courage and her already established talent for leadership.

**Narrator:** In 1817, after eight years in the White House, the Madisons retired from public life and returned to Montpelier. For the next 20 years, they once again lived the quiet life of Virginia planters. Madison was in increasingly frail health. He and Dolley devoted much of their time to editing his papers. Madison was counting on earning badly needed income by their publication.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** He's not a wealthy man. In public, they have a beautiful house, they have a hundred slaves, they have the luxury and the grandeur and the beauty of Montpelier, but in fact he doesn't have the money that he appears to have.

**Narrator:** The Madisons entertained a steady stream of visitors, but Dolley's heart remained back in the city and the social world she did so much to establish.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** Here I sit alone – a poor dull creature – and I must live as well as I can separated from others. Cousin, you will soon be going to all the parties. Write as often as you can, giving me details of what's happening with all the various characters in Washington. I

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confess I don't miss all the battles – political and social – but from my quiet retreat I'm still anxious to hear the news from both fronts. Oh, and please send me paper patterns of the latest fashion of the sleeve, and also describe for me the width of a dress and its waist and how bonnets are being worn in the city.

**Narrator:** Dolley's son Payne was back in America, but spent most of his time in New York and Philadelphia.

**Henry S (Brian Murray):** Ah yes, the son... He is to Montpelier what the serpent was to the Garden of Eden.

**Beth Taylor, Researcher:** He was very definitely Dolley's blind spot. She loved him to death, she wanted more from him that was never forthcoming. And as the years went by, it only got worse.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** He adopted the strategy of asking his mother for money and not telling his stepfather, and doing the same, asking his stepfather for money, not telling his mother.

**James Madison (Jefferson Mays):** Three months and we haven't heard from you. You show absolutely no regard for our feelings. I can't even begin to tell you how distressed your mother is. She is even threatening to go to Philadelphia to discover the cause of your mysterious absence.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** We know from James Madison's letters that he shielded her. He only tells her some of what's going on. He shields her from the gravest truths about her son.

**John Stagg, Historian:** Dolley herself by this time had sort of given up any hopes that the son, would make anything of himself. At the end, she was just reduced to that he would find a

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nice girl, marry, settle down and do something respectable. But he couldn't even manage that. He never married at all.

**Richard Norton Smith, Writer:** She never stopped loving him, she never stopped paying for him. And indeed it was his profligacy that condemned her and James Madison to a penurious old age.

**Paul Jennings (Jacinto Riddick):** I was with Mr. Madison all the time then. He couldn't walk, but his mind was bright and he had lots of visitors and he talked with them – his voice as strong as I ever heard in his best days.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** Towards the end of Madison's life he became almost completely bedridden. He was crippled by rheumatism. And Dolley sat at his bedside, practically 10, 12 hours a day. She rarely left him for more than 15 or 20 minutes at a time.

**Paul Jennings (Jacinto Riddick):** One day, I was with him when Sukey brought him his breakfast as usual. He was having trouble swallowing. His niece was with him and she asked, "What's the matter, Uncle James?" "Why, nothing more than a change of mind, my dear," he answered. Then his head dropped instantly, and he stopped breathing as quietly as the snuff of a candle goes out. 85 years old. Mrs. Madison gave way to the grief and dejected spirit that could not be restrained.

**Beth Taylor, Researcher:** Dolley was beside herself. At the time of the procession two days later out to the family burial site, she was up in her room, unable to attend. I mean, these life partners had been together for 40 some years. And when the end came, it was a great hardship for Dolley to bear.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** And now began her pecuniary embarrassment. For years she had been living without any idea of how much money she was spending. And now the crops at

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Montpelier had failed, the Negroes' food and clothing and the plantation expenses had to be paid for, and there was no income from any other source. Her son, still fond of his pleasures, borrowed money at high interest from the money lenders, and this only increased her difficulties.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** Dolley Madison is the proverbial well-taken-care-of widow who's never written a check. Her son continues to drain her. And so in the early 1840s, she's being called to court on debts. She's being called to court because she is responsible for debts that she cannot pay.

**Narrator:** Dolley traveled to Washington to visit her sister, leaving her son in charge of her affairs. Through incompetence and outright thievery, Payne Todd made her already desperate money problems even worse. But she refused to give up on him.

**Dolley (Eve Best):** My dearest son. It's been too long since I was cheered by a line from you. What are you doing that prevents you from communicating with your Mother? I have just heard that you sold some of the furniture that I needed. I only wish you had consulted me.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** Dolley Madison begins selling off pieces of Montpelier. 600 acres here, 50 acres there, the mill there. And the slaves are watching this. There's less and less for them to cultivate. And Dolley Madison finally becomes unable to sustain Montpelier. And everyone knows she's going to have to sell it. And what is that going to mean for the slaves?

**Sarah (Danai Gurira):** My mistress: I don't like to send you bad news, but the condition of all of us, your servants, is very bad and we do not know whether you are acquainted with it. The sheriff has taken all of us, and says he will sell us at next court, unless something is done before to prevent it. We are afraid we shall be bought by what are called Negro buyers, and sent away from our husbands and wives. If we are obliged to be sold, perhaps you could get neighbors to buy us that have husbands and wives, so as to save us from some misery that is

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sure to fall upon us. We are very sure you are sorry about the state of things and we do not like to trouble you with it, but think, my dear mistress, what our sorrow must be. The sale is two weeks from next Monday. Your dutiful servant, Sarah.

**Narrator:** In his will, Madison had stipulated that his slaves could not be sold without their consent. But Dolley was virtually bankrupt. The slaves were seized by the bailiff to pay off her debts. She did ensure that they would be sold to neighbors, so that families would not be split apart. Finally, she was forced to sell the last of Montpelier. She sold Paul Jennings, Madison's faithful manservant, to a friend.

**Beth Taylor, Researcher:** Paul Jennings at one point expected his freedom. He thought that he would be freed in James Madison's will; that did not happen. He thought he would be freed by Dolley Madison, and in a will in 1841, she said as much; "the only slave so treated." She wrote, "I give to my mulatto man Paul his freedom." But that was not her last will. There were at least three others, and she never mentioned slaves again.

**Narrator:** Jennings eventually bought his freedom from his new master. As a free man, he would continue to visit Dolley Madison to the end of her life.

**Paul Jennings (Jacinto Riddick):** Now she lived in a state of absolute poverty. I thought sometimes that she didn't even have enough to eat. I visited her often, bringing a market basket full of provisions, and I looked around the house to see whatever else she needed. She made me buy my freedom, and now it was me that gave her money from my own pocket.

**Narrator:** In an exceptional move, Congress offered to alleviate Dolley's poverty by buying some of Madison's papers. They put the money in a trust controlled by her friends, to keep it out of her son's hands. Payne was furious and threatened to sue. Dolley's half century of indulgence finally gave way.

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**Dolley (Eve Best):** I am much distressed by your threats. You must abandon the idea immediately. Your mother would have no desire to go on living after her son deprived her of her friends. I have nothing more to convey to you.

**Narrator:** All but one of Dolley’s seven brothers and sisters were dead, as were most of her contemporaries. She seemed destined to live out the rest of her days in impoverished obscurity. But the life of Dolley Madison had one last act. In 1844, she finally moved back to Washington. The capital, now grown to 50,000 inhabitants, had changed dramatically. There had been six administrations since Madison’s time. The national government was now in turmoil, split apart by the most intractable issue of the early republic – the institution of slavery. The comfortable life of southern gentry – Dolley’s world – would soon disappear in a bloody civil war.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** She said that coming back to Washington was like a dream – as if she had been asleep for 20 years and had woken up surrounded by strangers. The city was indeed very different from when she was mistress of the White House.

**Narrator:** Dolley moved into a modest house on Lafayette Square. She immediately began calling on old friends and charming new ones.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** She doesn’t know how to manage a plantation, but she does know how to run a salon. And she does know how to be a grande dame in Washington, D.C. Dolley is living only a few doors down from the White House. Mrs. Polk becomes a very close friend of Dolley’s. So she’s very much in the midst of things.

**Catherine Allgor, Historian:** And this is where she enters what I think of as her iconic era. She becomes a symbol of an earlier time, the time of the founding, and people wanted to be part of that symbol.

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**Narrator:** Dolley Madison, born in the era of horse-drawn carriages, had survived into a time of railroads and the newest sensation, photography. When president James Polk commissioned a group photograph in front of the White House, there she was, a blur standing beside him.

**Holly Shulman, Historian:** It's wonderful that we have photographs of Dolley Madison. We don't of James. It shows the world of difference between the 1830s and the 1840s. If you look at them carefully you will see that Dolley is always wearing the same black dress, and the same blouse underneath it, and usually the same hat with the same pin and the same earrings. I suspect that was her best outfit, and it's what she wore in public because she doesn't have a lot of money. But you also see a woman who's not at the height of fashion. And I suspect that she's very conscious, not only that she doesn't have the latest in style, but that by dressing in a certain way, she comes to represent, perhaps, the founding era. The Constitution, an era of republican virtue.

**Tom Fleming, Writer:** Here was a woman who had drunk tea with George and Martha Washington, and she could reminisce and remember things that everybody said all the way back to those early days. She mesmerized every party she went to.

**Narrator:** Dolley was invited to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone of the Washington Monument. When the first telegraph line in the world was erected between Washington and Baltimore, she was asked to be the first private citizen to send a message. She was even awarded an honorary seat in Congress – the only private citizen to receive such a privilege.

**Grand Niece (Mireille Enos):** During her last year, she seemed very busy with the past. She had me read old letters to her to revive happy memories. She was 81 and she suffered from many physical problems, but her mind was not in the least impaired. Sometimes, however, when she was confused and annoyed by conflicting advice from her friends, she would sigh for the help of her long departed husband, and cry aloud, "Oh, for my counselor!" When her last

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sleep came upon her, she lingered for two days, apparently without suffering. Several times she murmured, “my poor boy!” Then she gently relapsed into that long rest which is peace.

**Narrator:** Dolley Madison died in July of 1849, at the age of 81. Her son Payne died just two years later. The entire country mourned the passing of the woman who had done so much to create the style and meaning of the nation’s capital. “She is the only permanent power in Washington,” declared Daniel Webster. “All others are transient.” She had wanted to be buried at Montpelier. But instead she was put into a temporary vault in Washington for 10 years. Every time money was raised to bury her properly, it had to go to paying off Payne’s debts. Finally, Dolley was buried in the family plot at Montpelier, near the man she once called “the great little Madison.”

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