4.083 – Dolley Madison Part Three

> "Mrs. Madison was a remarkably fine woman. She was beloved by every body in Washington, white and colored. Whenever soldiers marched by, during the war, she always sent out and invited them in to take wine and refreshments, giving them liberally of the best in the house…In the last days of her life, before Congress purchased her husband's papers, she was in a state of absolute poverty, and I think sometimes suffered for the necessities of life. While I was a servant to Mr. Webster, he often sent me to her with a market-basket full of provisions, and told me whenever I saw anything in the house that I thought she was in need of, to take it to her. I often did this, and occasionally gave her small sums from my own pocket, though I had years before bought my freedom of her." – Paul Jennings[1]

> "Through her sister's…family, she secured the Cutts mansion on the corner of Lafayette Square and H street…Here she spent the last twelve years of her life. No eminent man retired from service of the State ever had more public recognition and honor bestowed upon him by the government he had served than did this popular and ever-beloved woman. Here, on New Year's day and the Fourth of July, she held public receptions, the dignitaries of the nation, after paying their respects to the President, passing directly to the abode of the venerable widow of the Fourth President of the United States, to pay their respects to *her*. In her drawing-room political foes met on equal ground and…public and private animosities were forgotten or ignored." – Mary Simmerson Cunningham Logan[2]

> "When I knew her in after life, widowed, poor and without the prestige of station, I found her the same good-natured, kind-hearted, considerate, stately person that she had been in the heyday of her fortunes. Many of her minor habits, formed in early life, continued upon her in old age and poverty. Her manner was urbane, gracious, with an almost imperceptible touch of Quakerism." – William Preston[3]

After James Madison handed over the reins of the presidency to James Monroe in 1817, he and Dolley made their final arrangements to return to Montpelier for their retirement. This prospect would bring its share of challenges to both after decades spent immersed in the political and social life of the nation's capital, and in due time, Dolley and James found different answers to the question of what they would do with the remainder of their days. Before we get to that, though, I'd like to welcome you to the Presidencies of the United States! I am your host, Jerry Landry.

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[1] Jennings, "Reminiscences" 234
[2] Logan 597
[3] As quoted in Ellet 86

As I did with the first Dolley Madison episode, I asked some dear friends, this time from my podcasting life, to read the opening quotes for this episode. First up with the quote from Paul Jennings is Stacey from the History's Trainwrecks podcast. Stacey and I have done a few recordings together, most recently for the Benjamin Stoddert episode of the special series, and I always greatly enjoy the opportunity to chat with him. In his podcast, he examines various points in American history where it seemed like everything should go exactly as planned but, for some reason, they don't. A couple of recent subjects that listeners of this podcast may enjoy include Stacey's look at Theodore Roosevelt's failed run for a third term as president in 1912 and the rise and untimely demise of Huey Long, the Kingfish of Louisiana. You can find out more about Stacey's podcast at his website, historystrainwrecks, that's all one word, dot com. Next up, giving voice to Mary Logan is Bry from Pontifacts. I have had the privilege of being friends with Bry for years, and it's always a pleasure when we have an opportunity to collaborate. Bry joined me for a Seat at the Table episode as well, the one on Edmund Randolph. Bry, along with her co-host Fry, are examining the life and legacy of each of the Popes, starting with Saint Peter. You couldn't ask for a better, more knowledgeable guide through Papal history than Bry, and I've learned so much from listening in to their journey in the podcast to date. Beyond better understanding the role of the Roman Catholic Church in European and world history, there are also some quite interesting characters who have served as popes, some of whom were far from holy. You can find out more about Pontifacts if you haven't listened already by going to their website, pontifacts dot podbean dot com. Last but certainly not least, providing the voice of William Preston is Matt from the Ranking '76 podcast. I've had a fantastic time getting to know him and his co-host Eric since they started their podcast last year, and both Matt and Eric joined me to discuss the career and legacy of the scandalous Timothy Pickering. On Ranking 76, this dynamic duo examines the lives of the various characters who make up the history of the American West, be they honorable or villainous. They've already looked at some folks who will show up in our narrative including Tecumseh, Tenskwatawa, and David Crockett. Learn more about their

podcast by going to ranking 76, that's the number seventy-six, dot wordpress dot com. Stacey, Bry, and Matt, I cannot thank you enough for your friendship and your support! These three exemplify the best of what the podcasting community can be, and I'm so thankful for all of the wonderful folks that I've met from around the globe in this process – they make the work doubly rewarding.

I hope you enjoyed my interview with Hilarie Hicks of James Madison's Montpelier about Dolley Madison's tenure as First Lady, or Lady Presidentress as the role was at times referred to in that era. As we've still got a ways to go in the Madison presidency series, the interview was intended to give you a sneak preview of what is to come in this period of Dolley's life and career. Before we proceed with our narrative examining her post-First Lady years, we need to get caught up on where some key figures in Dolley's life were as of March 4th, 1817.

Payne Todd continued his studies at St. Mary's College in Baltimore in the early days of his stepfather's presidency, and during this time, he was influenced by Betsy Bonaparte who often welcomed Payne to her home. As described by Payne's biographer Philip Bigler, "Betsy insisted that the boy be treated with all of the respect and veneration due that of a European prince, even though these aristocratic pretensions ran counter to the American republic's disdain for hereditary titles and inherited entitlements. For the receptive Payne Todd, it was easy for him to imagine that he, too, should be revered as the sole stepson of the President of the United States…His growing sense of entitlement and conceit were not supported by merit or reality."[4] In 1812, Payne ended his studies at St. Mary's and moved into the President's House in Washington. Though President Madison desired for his stepson to follow his example and continue his education at the College of New Jersey in Princeton, Payne had no ambition to pursue more schooling or a career. Instead, as described by Bigler, "…Payne's behavior was becoming increasingly irresponsible. He was drinking excessively and his reckless gambling was becoming problematic, but the narcissistic Payne well understood that his doting parents would overlook

[4] Bigler 92

his repeated trespasses."[5] Dolley tried to play matchmaker for Payne, but with little success despite Payne's obvious interest in the ladies. He had no desire to settle down at this point.[6]

In an attempt to kick start Payne into thinking about his future, President Madison appointed Payne as the personal attaché to Albert Gallatin who was being sent to Europe as part of a peace commission to hopefully resolve the War of 1812 diplomatically. Bigler notes that "Payne's excellent French language skills could be invaluable to the American delegation…" However, also with this appointment came a military rank as a third lieutenant, and "This entitled Payne to wear a military uniform and gave him additional cachet while further contributing to his already bloated ego."[7] On May 9th, 1813, the peace commission set off for Europe, bound for St. Petersburg.[8] As the work was initially at a standstill with the British refusing the Russian offer to mediate in the conflict, Payne and the rest of the delegation found themselves with much time on their hands. For Payne, this meant partying with the Russian nobility. Again, from Bigler, "Rather than trying to escape from the shadow of his famous parents, he relished the attention and opportunities his birthright provided. Payne was charmed, flattered, and seduced by Russia's regal society and was treated by the court effectively as President Madison's regent, an American royal…Payne relished the attention and enjoyed the drinking and dancing. He loved to flirt with beautiful girls and reportedly entertained and caroused with all types of women, including many of questionable virtue."[9]

At some point, Payne abandoned the peace commission and made his way to Paris where he not only continued to party but spent lavishly "to purchase large amounts of art, sculpture and other luxuries," the cost of which James Madison would have to cover out of his own pocket.[10] Payne finally

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[5] Bigler 96
[6] Bigler 97-98
[7] Bigler 104
[8] Bigler 105
[9] Bigler 106
[10] Bigler 106-108

made his way to Ghent when the negotiations between the American and British diplomats began there, but any thoughts that he might be useful to the commission were soon abandoned. His time would be spent "drinking, gambling, and playing cards often with Henry Clay."[11] When the commission finished its work and set off to return home, Payne remained for a while longer in Europe before finally "show[ing] up unannounced one day at Montpelier" in the summer of 1815.[12] Payne would be given the role of private secretary for his stepfather, the President, but in fact, he would again spend little time attending to his work and instead indulged in his partying and gambling lifestyle in Washington through the end of Madison's final term.[13] That gets us caught up on Payne, but what about Dolley's remaining siblings?

Her sister Lucy's husband, George Steptoe Washington, had passed away shortly before Madison became president in 1809, and, as noted by Allgor, as "[a] rich and pretty widow with impeccable political connections, Lucy found herself besieged with beaux…" Rather than be on her own in Virginia, Lucy moved with her three sons into the President's House in Washington.[14] It was here that Lucy met Supreme Court Associate Justice Thomas Todd of Kentucky. Todd, an appointee of Jefferson's to the court, was considered a good prospect by Dolley, who described him as "a Man of the most estimable character, best principles, & high talents".[15] Thus, on March 29th, 1812, Thomas Todd and Lucy Payne Washington were wed at the President's House – the first wedding held at the site that we know of today as the White House.[16] When the Court was in session, Lucy would travel with Justice Todd and visit with the Madisons. Otherwise, she would be in charge of the household in Frankfort, KY which included her three sons and Todd's five children from his previous marriage.[17] Once the Madisons left Washington, DC for good, however, it would prove to be more difficult for the two sisters to come together, and there

[11] Bigler 116
[12] Bigler 117
[13] Bigler 117-118
[14] Allgor 206
[15] Allgor 207
[16] Allgor 207; Bigler 97
[17] Allgor 207

was one stretch of seven years where the two did not see one another. That, however, is down the line in Dolley's narrative.[18]

A more frequent visitor, both to the President's House and Montpelier, was Dolley's sister Anna Cutts. Anna and her growing family would come to visit the Madisons in Washington, DC while her husband served in the US House of Representatives until he lost his bid for reelection in 1812.[19] At points during the War of 1812, Anna and Lucy would even help their sister with her duties as hostess at the President's House while they were in town when their husbands came on official business.[20] As the Madisons were making their exit from the nation's capital, however, the Cutts family was moving in as Richard Cutts secured a position of second comptroller of the Treasury in the incoming Monroe administration, which meant that Anna was closer to the couple with whom she has lived for so many years and could go for extended visits in the summers to Montpelier. However, she too would have times where, being the wife of a government official kept her busy as a hostess in Washington in addition to her duties as a mother, and Dolley in retirement and isolation at Montpelier would criticize her along with Lucy for not being as attentive to her as she would have liked. This too, however, is getting ahead of ourselves.[21]

This brings us to the younger brother of the three Payne sisters – John Coles Payne. As noted in episode 4.02, Madison while serving as Secretary of State had gotten John a position as secretary to the US diplomat in Tripoli. However, when Madison assumed the presidency, Dolley had not heard from John for at least two years. When she finally received a letter from her brother, it fell on Dolley's shoulders to share the tragic news of the loss of their sister Mary, Lucy's husband, and their mother.[22] In February 1811, Dolley was able to secure a new position for John as secretary to the incoming US Minister to

[18] Allgor 350
[19] Allgor 205-206
[20] Allgor 290
[21] Allgor 350-351
[22] Allgor 208-209

France Joel Barlow. However, there was a problem with this. As described by Dolley's biographer Catherine Allgor, "Since John was already abroad, it made sense for him to meet the Barlows in Paris, but it transpired that, because of his debts, John risked arrest if he showed his face in that city." Thus, James and Dolley made plans for John to travel back to the US in order to figure out a way to pay his debts, then he could travel with the Barlows to Paris. John, however, didn't show up. After four months of waiting, the Barlows had to leave in order for Joel to assume his post. It wouldn't be until June of that year that John arrived without any prior notice in New York.[23] Like his nephew would ultimately find himself, John C Payne was unemployed and in debt, and he would depend on his sisters for support. Thus, he would be shuffled about from one sister to the other. As noted by Allgor, "To everyone's dismay, John made a habit of disappearing while en route from sister to sister…and weeks went by when no one knew where he was." Naturally, this caused the sisters much distress.[24] Finally, though, John started to settle down in his ways and married Clara Wilcox. They settled on a plantation in Louisa County, Virginia and had their first child. Ultimately, though, the couple struggled financially and thus moved to a farm close to Montpelier so that they could be close to John's famous sister and brother-in-law and lean on them for support. As Dolley prepared for retirement in 1817, she had not one but two unreliable men in her life who required her financial support.[25]

As for the Madisons, as we shall learn more about at the end of the narrative series on James's presidency, they were wrapping up their time in Washington, DC on rather of a high note. As described by Allgor, "When Dolley and James departed Washington for Montpelier and retirement, they did so triumphantly, and it seemed the whole country was sad to see them go."[26] In addition to all of the usual planning that it took in those days to wrap up personal business and move a household, the Madisons attended numerous balls and functions held in their honor for nearly a month after James left office.

[23] Allgor 209
[24] Allgor 209-211
[25] Mattern and Shulman, eds 221
[26] Allgor 339

Thus, it wasn't until early April that the couple along with Payne Todd departed from Washington, DC on a steamboat and then, at Aquia Creek, switched over to a carriage which brought them back to Montpelier.[27] As described by the editors of a collection of Dolley's letters, David Mattern and Holly Shulman, "The Montpelier to which the Madisons returned in 1817 was a large estate of over two thousand acres with an imposing house described by one British visitor as bearing 'a great resemblance to an English nobleman's mansion.'"[28] At this point, James was 66 years old while Dolley was 49. Though the average lifespan was not as long as it is in the present day, 2022 as of this recording, Dolley was still in what would be considered an active age.[29] Though the Madisons would have their fair share of guests at Montpelier, both in terms of family and friends as well as folks who just wanted to meet the famous couple, as described by Allgor, "…when the Madisons were not overwhelmed with guests, life was slow and quiet, even isolated…she [i.e. Dolley] felt the dullness of country living more keenly than did James. She was a woman of the world, used to moving within the highest circles of the nation, and she had enjoyed the gratification of praise and approbation as people admired her, explicitly as an exemplary woman, and implicitly as a power in her right. And Washington had always been *her* town. All that changed as she settled down in the Virginia countryside…Themes of isolation, loneliness, and constraint ran through Dolley's letters during the almost twenty years of retirement with James at Montpelier. She tended toward the melodramatic in voicing her complaints…As exhausting as the troops of company could be, the winter became the hardest time for Dolley, as it was 'not the season for visiting.'"[30]

Another theme present in these years for the Madisons was in trying to get a handle on their finances. As described by Virginia Moore in her book on the couple, "Madison was rich in land and slaves but not in money, having been unable to save a nickel from his $25,000-a-year presidential salary; having indeed, like Washington and Jefferson, spent more in his high office than he earned. Bad weather and

[27] Bigler 120; Allgor 339-340, 345, 348
[28] Mattern and Shulman, eds 217
[29] Allgor 348
[30] Allgor 349

overseers' mismanagement had for years reduced crops, and the blockades reduced prices; and there was Payne's European debt. Madison promised himself to recoup."[31] At this point, as described by Mattern and Shulman, "The [Montpelier] estate was a working plantation made up of four farms, with a village of slave cabins situated on each farm. Tobacco and wheat were grown as cash crops; corn and pork were staples of the diet. Beef cattle and sheep were also raised."[32] We'll talk more about their finances in James Madison's post-presidency episode, but for now, we need to talk about Payne Todd.

In 1818, it was decided that Payne needed his own estate in order to get his start as a planter, and thus, James and Dolley Madison arranged for him to purchase 104 acres of land near Montpelier. This estate was, ironically enough, already named Toddsberth, so it seemed a perfect fit for the young Todd to start making his way in the world in his mid-twenties.[33] However, as noted by Bigler, "Payne did not have either the temperament or inclination to become a traditional Virginia planter." As many other aimless folks have done over the ages, Payne turned to a get-rich-quick scheme as his solution to get success with as little effort on his part as possible. He decided to start up a silk worm operation at Toddsberth. Despite investing in a farm manager and workers from France that he paid to travel to Virginia, ultimately "the hot, muggy Virginia climate…proved to be ill-suited for such an enterprise and soon all of the worms died." Payne then abandoned his Toddsberth estate and took up traveling up and down the eastern seaboard on a drinking and gambling spree while his debts continued to mount.[34] Dolley and James constantly worried about him. Though in 1820, he briefly got their hopes up as he expressed an interest in one of the young women that Dolley had tried to pair him with in her matchmaking, Payne quickly grew tired of spending time with her and her family at their rural estate in Pennsylvania and resumed his travels,[35] at times disappearing for weeks with no word to his fretting

[31] Moore 374
[32] Mattern and Shulman, eds 217; Allgor 360-361
[33] Bigler 122-123
[34] Bigler 123
[35] Bigler 135-137

mother and stepfather. At one point, Dolley wrote "that Payne 'comes not – nor do I hear from him, which covers me with sadness in the midst of pleasantness.'"[36]

When not trying to track down her son, Dolley was quite busy with helping to manage the plantation. By the time James and Dolley returned to Montpelier in 1817, his mother Nelly Conway Madison was 86 years old. There was no way she could continue to function as the mistress of the household, and she even said at one point to Dolley that "You are *my* Mother now, and take care of me in my old age." The Madisons would call on Nelly in her half of the house every day,[37] but the duties of administering the household now fell firmly on Dolley's shoulders. As described by Allgor, "…Dolley arranged for three daily meals for more than one hundred people working in as many as five locations, including the house. Merely monitoring and apportioning the 'stores,' the food and other raw materials, was a constant job. And unlike their menfolk, the mistresses of southern plantations often performed some of the same kind of labor as the slaves, whether it was overseeing a special dish in the kitchen or making clothes for both the slaves and the family."[38] Her responsibilities increased when visitors came, and from the spring to the fall, visitors were a common sight at Montpelier.[39] Though anyone from presidents to up and coming politicians to academics to activists could be found at the Madisons' table on a regular basis, one visitor in particular in 1824 created a tremendous buzz in the local community with his visit unlike any that had ever been experienced in Orange County.[40]

That year, General Marie Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier Lafayette, better known to history as the Marquis de Lafayette, was making a tour of the United States, and he wanted to visit with his old friend, James Madison. Thus, he and the retinue of family and friends traveling with him made their way

[36] Allgor 351; Mattern and Shulman, eds. 219
[37] Ketcham 619-620
[38] Allgor 361
[39] Mattern and Shulman, eds 223
[40] Allgor 364

to Montpelier.[41] We'll cover more of this visit from Madison's point of view in his post-presidency episode, but for Dolley's part, as she described in a letter to John G Jackson on November 27th, this first introduction to the famed French hero of the American Revolution was impressive. She noted to Jackson that "I was charmed with his society - & never witnessed so much enthusism [sp] as his appearance occasioned here and at our court house, where hundreds of both sexes collected together, to hail & welcome him…"[42] Lafayette and his party, however, had more than socializing on their mind. They talked to James and Dolley about slavery and abolition.[43] They were not the only people bringing up the subject to the retired former President and First Lady.

We haven't made his acquaintance just yet in the narrative, but we will very soon. Edward Coles would replace his brother Isaac as President Madison's private secretary after Isaac's assault of a Congressman at the US Capitol as discussed in episode 4.08,[44] and as we will learn would become quite close to both Madisons. As a cousin of Dolley's, their familial link would keep them in close contact even after he left James's service, and on his frequent visits to Virginia, Coles would stay at Montpelier.[45] Unlike the multitude of Virginia slaveowners who professed an abhorrence to slavery but did nothing to emancipate the people that they enslaved, Coles in 1819 moved with the people that he enslaved to Illinois and informed them en route that they were now free. Though the path ahead was not easy for them as Illinois was not as supportive and affirming of the free black community as Coles had expected, Coles did what he could to support them in their new lives and to advance the cause of emancipation.[46] During his visits to Virginia, Coles urged the Madisons to make arrangements to emancipate the individuals enslaved at Montpelier, asserting that this would be a powerful statement in support of the

[41] Allgor 364; Duncan Hero 391
[42] Bigler 142-144; 27 Nov 1824, D Madison to Jackson, as quoted in Allgor 364 and printed in Mattern and Shulman, eds 257
[43] Allgor 365; Bigler 143-144
[44] Landry, Presidencies
[45] Guasco 158
[46] Guasco 4-5

end of slavery and would be a positive action to ensure a great legacy for Madison. Not doing so, Coles warned, "would be a blot and stigma on your otherwise spotless escutcheon."[47] There was a major problem with this idea, however – the Madisons were in financial trouble.

Between 1819 and 1825, Montpelier had suffered numerous bad harvests, and in order to make ends meet, James had been forced to mortgage half of his 5,000 acres and ultimately sold three of his outlying farms. Madison was not alone in this period of financial downturn – it was, indeed, a common theme among Virginia planters at the time.[48] Though many of his contemporaries turned to selling the people they enslaved, Madison at first resisted this, instead working "to diversify by growing wheat as well as operating a grist mill business".[49] However, he could not get ahead, especially considering the fact that he and Dolley were increasingly being called upon to settle Payne Todd's debts.[50] On February 23rd, 1827, Madison wrote to Edward Coles about how "Payne owed $1,000 to a creditor in Philadelphia; $700 to another individual in New York; $1,300 in Georgetown; and another $600 to an unnamed source." Madison confided to his former private secretary that "[Payne's] career must soon be fatal to everything dear to him in life; and you will know how to press on him the misery he is inflicting on his parents."[51] James sent him money without Dolley's knowledge.[52] Dolley also sent him money.[53] In total, it seems that James Madison provided Payne Todd with around $40,000 in their contemporary money,[54] which is, according to our friends at the Historical Currency Converter, around $1.45 million in 2015 US Dollars.[55] Even this did not get him on a firm footing, and in 1828, Payne Todd ended up in debtors prison in

[47] Guasco 158-159
[48] Chambers 137; Mattern and Shulman, eds. 219; Bigler 157
[49] Mattern and Shulman, eds 219; Bigler 157
[50] Bigler 157-158
[51] 23 Feb 1827, J Madison to E Coles, as quoted in Bigler 157-158, 167
[52] Mattern and Shulman, eds 220
[53] Bigler 159
[54] Mattern and Shulman, eds 220
[55] Historical Currency Converter

Philadelphia. As Dolley wrote at the time, “My pride – my sensibility, & every feeling of my Soul is wounded.”[56]

Loss after loss hit the Madisons as the 1820s gave way to the 1830s. Nelly Conway Madison passed away at the ripe old age of 98 in early 1829.[57] As described by James Madison’s biographer Ralph Ketcham, “Until the very end, she remained alert and able to read without glasses, visited every day in her rooms by her son and daughter-in-law, and always a pleasure and a marvel to the many guests who stopped for a few minutes to talk.”[58] The couple experienced a brief respite from their worries in the winter of 1829-1830 as James had been elected as a delegate to the Virginia constitutional convention, and thus, he and Dolley traveled to Richmond to stay with a cousin of Dolley’s and her husband while the convention was in session. As described by Mattern and Shulman, “…Dolley profited from the occasion by renewing old friendships and forging new ones. The sojourn was liberating, especially after the close confinement of the past years…” However, they would return to Montpelier, and their rural existence would continue, albeit with new complications. Starting in 1830, “James endured the first of a series of rheumatic attacks…and intermittent ‘bilious fevers’ over the next few years left him weak and confined to his bed for months at a time.”[59] Just as he had done for her, Dolley would remain at James’s bedside during his bouts of ill health, and she wrote to a friend in 1832 that “I never leave him, more than a few minuts [sp] at a time, and have not left the enclosure around our house for the last eight months.”[60] As an added insult to injury, Dolley suffered from eye troubles which at times kept her from reading and writing letters to her family and friends.[61] One can only imagine the emotional strain that this placed on someone who depended on those familial and societal connections. There was, sadly, more grief to come for Dolley.

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[56] Bigler 160-161
[57] Ketcham 666; Bigler 160
[58] Ketcham 666; Mattern and Shulman, eds 223
[59] Mattern and Shulman, eds 223
[60] Mattern and Shulman, eds 223; Allgor 357
[61] Allgor 357

First, in 1830, despite his parents' help in extricating him from his first run-in with the authorities, Payne yet again ended up in debtors' prison in Philadelphia.[62] As noted by Bigler, "Payne's economic misfortunes were actually quite prevalent in antebellum America, but debtors' prisons were far more common in the nation's cities than in the rural south. Most large plantation holders were similarly in debt, but without a national hard currency, it was difficult to accurately gauge the actual extent and scope of their indebtedness…But Payne Todd's business debts and grandiose schemes were far easier to track. His creditors were not deceived by the Byzantine bookkeeping practices of the plantation south and were unsympathetic to his economic difficulties or pitiful excuses."[63] This time, Anthony Morris came to his rescue, and Payne actually heeded his parents' entreaties this time and returned to Montpelier for a while. Again, from Bigler, "Everyone was stunned by the stark deterioration in his physical appearance. At 38-years of age, his profligate lifestyle had taken a toll."[64]

Meanwhile, Dolley's younger sister Anna, the one who had lived with her for decades and who she saw as her 'sister-daughter', had started over the years suffering from "an unspecified 'nervous condition'" which Dolley fretted over from afar. She called on friends closer to Anna to watch over her on her behalf. In late 1830, Anna, now aged 51, experienced what was described as "a 'dropsy of the heart'", and her recovery was a slow one.[65] Sadly, on August 4th, 1832, the same day that Dolley sent her sister a letter in which she wished "that good spirits and a quiet mind will soon restore you to us," Anna passed away.[66] As difficult as these developments were for her, Dolley's foundation would be shaken to the core with the steady decline in health of her beloved husband.

Though James Madison continued to visit with the multitude of politicians, historians, activists, and presidents who came to visit him, his condition was clearly on a steady decline, and his rallies to better

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[62] Bigler 174
[63] Bigler 175
[64] Bigler 175-176
[65] Allgor 375
[66] Allgor 375-376

health became fewer and far between as the years went on.[67] As Dolley's niece Annie wrote, by 1836, Dolley "[was] incessantly engaged as Uncle's deputy morning, noon, & night,"[68] and warned visitors to carry more of the weight of the conversation "to keep Madison from overexerting himself in trying to speak."[69] On June 28th, though the household engaged in its usual routine that morning, it quickly became clear that it was not a usual day for the former President. In a short amount of time, James Madison took his last breath, and Dolley Payne Todd Madison was a widow once more.[70]

As noted by Bigler, "Dolley was so aggrieved that she was unable to attend the committal services" which buried her husband's remains in the family cemetery.[71] Dolley confided to her close confidants that she had "no power over my confused and oppressed mind" and that "I had not the power to tell you how highly I valued your kind sympathy, and how much I needed it! Indeed, I have been as one in a troubled dream since my irreparable loss of him, for whom my affection was perfect, as was his character and conduct thro' life."[72] Dolley took on the task of answering the voluminous amount of sympathy letters that came to her, but, as noted by Allgor, "answering the mountain of letters proved a daunting task, made even more so by the onset of illness which 'reduced' Dolley, and the continuing 'rheumatism' (probably arthritis) in her right arm and hand."[73] Her niece Annie and brother John helped her in the task of responding to her correspondence as she tried to get herself back to a state where she could consider her future. Financially, James had done all that he could to put her in a good place. Montpelier and the enslaved people that were key to its operations were now hers, but James pegged her financial security on the publication of his papers which he, along with Dolley and her brother John, had worked for years to gather together and organize. Again, from Allgor, "Confident that the papers

[67] Mattern and Shulman, eds 224; Allgor 376; Ketcham 667-668
[68] Allgor 376
[69] Ketcham 669
[70] Ketcham 669-670; Allgor 376
[71] Bigler 179
[72] Allgor 377
[73] Allgor 377-378; Mattern and Shulman, eds 317-318

would generate a significant income, James not only willed the proceeds to Dolley, he also tied several bequests – to the University of Virginia, the American Colonization Society, and family members, among others – to those proceeds."[74] This would prove to be a miscalculation.

Dolley opted, rather than waiting for arrangements to be made for publication, to go ahead and pay the bequests that were tied to the Madison papers out of her own pocket. This had the immediate impact of leaving Dolley with little cash on hand for herself.[75] No matter, though – she like James was confident that a deal could be reached rather quickly, and thus, she leaned on her family for help in making arrangements. As her brother John had already been involved in the work of organizing the papers, Dolley asked him "to work at Montpelier supervising a number of secretaries engaged in making fair copies of James's manuscripts for publication".[76] She turned to another family member to act as her agent in engaging with publishers in Philadelphia and New York. Sadly, her choice of family members for this task was predictably unreliable. That's right, dear listener, she chose to send her son, Payne Todd, back to the cities where he had partied and squandered a fortune on a pivotal mission to secure her financial well-being.[77]

As described by Bigler, "After James Madison's death, there was no one left to deter or restrain Payne Todd's impulses or actions. His mother continued to overlook his many faults and readily excused all of his poor conduct and impaired judgment…Within weeks of his stepfather's death, sensing an easy profit, Payne was in New York City actively lobbying and meeting with potential buyers and book publishers."[78] Now, as Bigler noted, "Madison purposefully left no money to Payne Todd. He did bequeath to his troublesome stepson, though, a case of medals from Washington Irving as well as a 'walking staff made from a timber of the frigate Constitution.' Payne's paltry inheritance seemed to be an

[74] Allgor 378; Mattern and Shulman, eds 317
[75] Mattern and Shulman, eds 317; Allgor 378
[76] Mattern and Shulman, eds 318; Allgor 379
[77] Mattern and Shulman, eds 318; Bigler 184; Allgor 379
[78] Bigler 184

insulting and vindictive act, but Madison believed that in life he had already financially provided for Payne, and that his stepson had squandered all future financial entitlements."[79] Though I haven't seen this written anywhere as we likely have no way of confirming this, one can imagine that Payne convinced his mother to assign him this task so that he could either get some financial kickback for himself on the front end or ultimately convince his mother to use the funds obtained from this important historical publication for his own ends. Have your grain of salts at the ready, dear listener, but one can also imagine, especially if the former is the case, that may also help to explain why no one seemed interested in the proposal. Despite Madison's prominence in American history at the time and continued good standing and favorability in 1836, as noted by Bigler, "[f]ew showed any interest in the project and most were quickly alienated by Payne's aggressive, arrogant, and unethical behavior."[80] As described by Allgor, "He [i.e. Payne] left a trail of hard feelings, as well as debts, in his wake…It did not help matters that Payne disappeared at crucial points in the process."[81] Ultimately, by the early fall, the situation was that "[t]hose who had made offers…were small businesses with little or no record of successful publications. The only large firm that had made an offer, Harper and Brothers of New York, had done so on terms – half the risk, half the profits – unsuitable for Mrs. Madison's financial situation."[82] They would have to change tact if Dolley Madison's financial future was to be secured.

Friends started suggesting the idea of approaching Congress to buy the first three manuscript volumes on the nation's behalf as part of preserving American history. By early January 1837, Dolley gave her consent to this plan, and in March 1837, Congress "passed a bill purchasing these three volumes of James Madison's manuscripts for $30,000." This would ultimately allow her to recoup her losses from having paid out James's bequests on the front end as well as any outstanding ones, but it was a much smaller sum than anyone had intended for the publication rights and would leave Dolley with little to

[79] Bigler 180
[80] Bigler 184; Mattern and Shulman, eds 318
[81] Allgor 379
[82] Mattern and Shulman, eds 318

sustain herself moving forward.[83] With that business settled and Dolley's health starting to improve, she was finally able to turn her thoughts to what the next chapter of her life looked like.[84]

The situation at Montpelier at that point was not good, for either Dolley Madison or those enslaved on the plantation. As part of his efforts to get his finances in order prior to his death, James had agreed to "the sale of roughly 25 percent of the Montpelier slaves in 1834-35."[85] As described by Bigler, this estate that had been in the Madison family for three generations was now "neglected and falling slowly and steadily into disrepair".[86] It would take two things that Dolley Madison did not possess in order to bring it around: funds and a desire.[87] As noted by Allgor, "With James gone, it was almost inevitable that Dolley would not stay in the countryside."[88] Life at Montpelier had been James's dream, not Dolley's. She missed her time as the belle of the ball in Washington. Those had been her happier years, and she now had nothing tying her to Orange County, Virginia. Thus, in November 1837, she took up residence in the house still owned by her late sister's husband, Richard Cutts, and her niece by her brother John, Annie Payne, moved in with her to serve as a companion and increasingly as a caretaker. Dolley was back in DC.[89]

Her new life was on paper a rebirth of what she had enjoyed with her late husband – she'd be present in Washington during the social season in the winter and spring, then would return to Orange County for the summer. As described by Allgor, "Everyone wanted to visit, and from the moment of her arrival, she [i.e. Dolley] embarked on a social merry-go-round. No Washington event could take place without her; she attended inaugurations and other White House parties. Her engagements proved so numerous that she bought a congressional directory, using it as a ledger sheet in order to keep track of

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[83] Mattern and Shulman, eds 319; Bigler 185; Allgor 379
[84] Mattern and Shulman, eds 319
[85] Chambers 138
[86] Bigler 186
[87] Bigler 186; Mattern and Shulman, eds 319-320; Allgor 380
[88] Allgor 380
[89] Allgor 380; Mattern and Shulman, eds 320; Taylor 139

her visiting 'debts'."[90] Behind this façade of living the glorious life of hobnobbing with the political and social elite, however, was a painful reality. Dolley was in a precarious economic situation, and she again entrusted her financial security to the one person least likely to secure it – her son Payne.[91]

Payne Todd returned to Orange County and took over the management of operations at Montpelier. As you can imagine, dear listener, this went as poorly as we would imagine.[92] Rather than focusing his attention on matters at Montpelier, Payne concentrated on making improvements at his estate, Toddsberth, and used people enslaved at Montpelier "to begin the construction of his own house as well as to start operations on a new marble quarry located on the premises [of his estate]." Not only did this exacerbate the decline in operations at Montpelier, it did little to enhance the worth of Toddsberth, which was still assessed in the late 1830s at only $84.22 in value.[93] Dolley was complicit in his efforts at self-aggrandizement to the detriment of Montpelier as she deeded over a 50-acre grant to Payne to add to Toddsberth in 1838.[94] As noted by Bigler, "Payne encouraged Dolley to begin transferring much of the [Montpelier] plantation's valuable furniture, heirlooms, books, artwork, and artifacts to Toddsberth. It was yet another one of his cunning schemes to thwart nervous creditors, and he knew that once he was in possession of these items, he could surreptitiously sell them for a considerable profit as authentic Madison souvenirs and relics."[95]

Meanwhile, back in Washington, Dolley did not have the funds to purchase new clothes so, as noted by Allgor, she "adapted old ones and wore them over and over again, which only enhanced her emblematic status." The trends of fashion had changed since her tenure as First Lady, but Dolley did what she could to make the old seem new again, even using "her white satin turban…[to conceal] the

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[90] Allgor 380
[91] Allgor 380-381; Bigler 187
[92] Allgor 381; Bigler 187
[93] Bigler 187
[94] Bigler 195
[95] Bigler 196

thinning of her hair…[along with] the false black curls peeking out from the cap."[96] Despite her financial constraints, Dolley would still hold lavish receptions at her home on Lafayette Square, described by one person in attendance as follows: "She [i.e. Dolley] served wine and cake to each caller, and spent a fortune in entertaining."[97] For domestic servants, she brought with her the enslaved Paul Jennings to serve as her butler and coachman and retained her enslaved personal maid Sukey, often aided by "one or more of her children, though the young ones seemed to get on Dolley's nerves."[98] Until the situation at Montpelier could improve to support her financially, Dolley had some ideas about how to get funds that she could use in the meantime.

First and foremost, there was the plan originally devised by her late husband to use the publication of his papers for a source of income. Though Dolley had sold one lot of his papers to Congress, she still had more in her possession. Again, she turned to publishing houses hoping to get anyone interested. In the late 1830s, she did reach a deal with Harper and Brothers, but years went by with no progress. It grew painfully clear that this plan was not going to bring any additional income anytime soon, and thus, Dolley had to turn to other prospects for getting access to liquid cash, even if that meant selling off some of her property.[99]

Though James Madison had worked with Edward Coles years prior to his demise on a plan to emancipate those enslaved at Montpelier,[100] he had not done so in his will. However, he had added a provision "that no slaves were to be sold without their consent, except for misbehavior."[101] Shortly after James's death, Coles personally saw that Dolley had no intention of living up to that provision for, while visiting her to offer his consolations, Coles witnessed his cousin selling "a[n enslaved] woman and 2

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[96] Allgor 380
[97] Taylor 146
[98] Taylor 139
[99] Mattern and Shulman, eds 322
[100] Guasco 158-159, 181
[101] Allgor 378

children to her Nephew Ambrose Madison". This was, of course, done against the enslaved woman's will.[102] Dolley would not just sell off people, however. She would increasingly sell off pieces of the estate's land which, as noted by Allgor, "[left] an ever-smaller parcel of land from which to support an enslaved community that only increased in size through birth. And, of course, with each passing year, more and more elderly enslaved women and men could no longer work, detracting from production and constituting a serious liability."[103] Everything that Dolley did with regards to Montpelier made the estate ever more unsustainable and endangered the future of the enslaved population.

It should be noted that Dolley expressed limits to who she would sell enslaved people to, refusing an offer from Senator George Waggaman of Louisiana to purchase the entire population of enslaved individuals at Montpelier. Dolley expressed her regrets to Waggaman and explained that "I had not at any period intended to part with more than half about fifty, owing to their reluctance to leave this place or its neighborhood." She also told Payne, in approval of his "decision not to employ as overseers two men who had a reputation for violence," that "No whipper of Negroes sh[oul]d ever have our people…to [tyrannize] over."[104] This did not mean, however, that Dolley empathized with those she enslaved. She was focused on their value to her, and she likely drew on what she had learned from James about managing a plantation that there was little to be gained from a labor standpoint by harsh treatment of the enslaved population and it was a certainty that she could not maintain Montpelier without those she enslaved. As the years went on, however, the possibility of retaining Montpelier increasingly became a pipe dream.

After a trip to New York City to visit Harper and Brothers to see about the delayed volume of James Madison's papers in the spring of 1842 and finding that it was still in progress but not anywhere close to publication, Dolley returned to Washington, DC to determine her options. President John Tyler brought

[102] Guasco 182; Allgor 381-382
[103] Allgor 382
[104] Allgor 382-383; Taylor 147

up the idea of selling the remaining Madison papers to Congress. Though Dolley was amenable to the idea, she had seen just how long it had taken to lobby them to purchase the first batch, and the widow Madison needed a swifter short-term solution.[105] Thus, Dolley rented out her house on Lafayette Square for extra money and moved back to Montpelier in September in order to settle business affairs there and do what she could on the ground to improve plantation operations.[106] In 1842, she turned to her friend John Jacob Astor for financial assistance through a new mortgage, but as we saw with Jefferson and as we'll see with other examples, this short-term financial support would ultimately only prove to add to the long-term problems. In 1843, she sold off more of the estate to Henry Moncure, but again, this did not alleviate the larger issues. Dolley ultimately grew tired of trying to make ends meet in Orange County and returned to Washington.[107] Finally, in 1844, she agreed to what would have been unthinkable by James Madison – Henry Moncure offered to purchase the entire estate, and Dolley agreed to the sale.[108] Payne Todd would retain Toddsberth as well as various enslaved individuals originally from Montpelier that Dolley had deeded to him over the years, some of whom Payne then leased out to Moncure to work at Montpelier once more, but after three generations, Montpelier passed out of the Madison family.[109] As noted by Allgor, "The details of the sale are unknown, but Dolley's financial trials continued, so apparently the transaction provided little monetary relief."[110] Meanwhile, Payne continued to sell the enslaved individuals that had been deeded to him here and there from 1845 on, and it is quite unlikely that any of the proceeds from those sales which continued to decimate the enslaved community that had existed for generations in and around the Orange County estate went to Dolley's benefit[111] though

[105] Mattern and Shulman, eds 322
[106] Allgor 384; Mattern and Shulman, eds 323
[107] Allgor 384
[108] Allgor 384; Chambers 138, 147
[109] Chambers 147; Allgor 384; Taylor 152
[110] Allgor 384
[111] Chambers 138; Taylor 152

Payne did construct a house on the Toddsberth estate for Dolley's use.[112] By that point, though, Dolley Madison was firmly ensconced in Washington society.

Dolley leased out Paul Jennings, the one enslaved individual that she retained in her sole possession, to the incoming president, James K Polk of Tennessee,[113] as she mingled in the society that surrounded the halls of power. At this phase in her life, as described by Allgor, "she now became a personage for the ages." She had known every president going back to George Washington. She was a living link to the nation's history.[114] Family tragedy continued to weigh on her as the years progressed. In 1838, not one but two of her dearly departed sister Anna's children passed away.[115] In 1846, her sister Lucy Washington Todd suffered from what was probably a stroke and passed away.[116] One by one, the mainstays in her life were slipping away from her.

In 1846, Paul Jennings approached Sen. Daniel Webster to ask for his assistance in obtaining his freedom, and in September of that year, for $200, Jennings passed from Dolley's possession to Webster's and shortly after earned his emancipation.[117] Despite this change of status, Paul Jennings continued to check in on Dolley and, as described in one of our opening quotes, would at times give her money from his own pocket.[118] Not every person still enslaved by Dolley would end up on the path to freedom, however. In 1848, she sold one of the people she enslaved named Ellen for $400, claiming it to be due to "bad behavior" related to Ellen's role in the rebellion aboard the schooner Pearl by 76 enslaved individuals seeking their freedom.[119]

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[112] Bigler 197
[113] Taylor 153
[114] Allgor 395
[115] Allgor 380-381
[116] Allgor 396
[117] Taylor 159-160
[118] Allgor 396
[119] Allgor 396; Taylor 165, 175

Dolley Madison's financial woes were known in Washington circles, but she continued to be the center of society in the capital city. In March 1844, when Samuel Morse demonstrated his "Electro-Magnetic Telegraph" and sent a message from the Supreme Court chambers in the US Capital to a railroad depot in Baltimore nearly 50 miles away, Dolley Madison was present, and Morse invited her to become "the first private citizen to send her own telegraphic message."[120] The House of Representatives honored her by voting to "[provide] her a seat on the floor of the chamber…whenever she desired to attend sessions of Congress".[121] In 1847, she became the earliest presidential spouse to be photographed in a group photo that included President Polk, his wife Sarah, and Secretary of State James Buchanan made on the South Portico of the President's House. Her image may have been blurred because she moved during the long exposure time required with the technology of the time, but there was Dolley at the house she had presided over three decades prior alongside the movers and shakers of the day.[122] Despite all of this, there was one person missing from her circle in Washington that she wrote to with letter after letter asking him to join her to no avail.

As noted by Bigler, as the 1840s went on, "Payne's correspondence with his mother became increasing[ly] erratic and capricious."[123] Despite her repeated entreaties for him to come to Washington to help her lobby Congress to purchase the Madison papers in her possession, he continued to linger and languish on his Toddsberth estate.[124] Thus, he was not present in May 1848 when Dolley and her niece, Annie Payne, were awoken by the enslaved Ralph at four in the morning warning them of a fire in their home. The two women made their way to the garden, and Ralph was sent to retrieve the trunks

[120] Bigler 209; Allgor 395
[121] Bigler 211; Allgor 395
[122] Bigler 211
[123] Bigler 212
[124] Bigler 204, 212-213

containing Madison's papers.[125] As described by Allgor, "The fire was later determined to be arson, though the perpetrator was never caught."[126]

The papers of her late husband remained her last conceivable lifeline to financial security, and that month, Congress finally, after years of deliberation and discussion, agreed to their purchase for $25,000. There was a catch, however. Though Dolley would be granted $5,000 outright, her friends in Congress well knew about Payne Todd's ways and thus decided to put the remaining $20,000 into a trust which would be administered by James Buchanan, John Mason, and Richard Smith. The interest, it was believed, would "provide a steady income for Dolley for the remainder of her life," and then she could decide what would be done with the trust funds upon her passing.[127] This attempt to provide relief to the former First Lady ultimately caused her some unintended headaches. First, upon hearing of this agreement, Dolley's creditors ramped up their requests for repayment, and she struggled to pay back the nearly $11,000 she had accrued in debt.[128] Meanwhile, Payne Todd, upon hearing of the establishment of the trust, was furious. How dare anyone try to come between him and his money, er, I mean, the administration of his mother's money. Payne threatened to sue the trustees, but Dolley pleaded with him not to take such action, and he reluctantly agreed to hold off.[129] There was still the problem of getting enough funds to live off of, and Dolley devised the idea of holding either a raffle or an auction "to sell valuable paintings and other furnishings" still in her possession.[130] Before she could act on those plans, however, her health took an ill turn.

As described by Allgor, "During the months before her death, she [i.e. Dolley] became noticeably frail. Her letters were no longer long and gossip-filled, but rather short and even elegant. It was as

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[125] Bigler 212; Allgor 396
[126] Allgor 396
[127] Mattern and Shulman, eds 324; Bigler 213
[128] Mattern and Shulman, eds 324
[129] Bigler 213-214
[130] Mattern and Shulman, eds 324

though age and time had distilled her to her essence."[131] Payne finally showed up in Washington in June 1849, and they talked about her wishes for the dispersal of her belongings and the trust upon her demise.[132] She had drafted an initial will in 1841 that left most of her estate at that point to Payne but also had provisions for $500 to go towards "erecting a plain monument of White Marble over the remains of my dear Husband" who Dolley wished to be buried alongside and for $3,000 for her longtime companion, her niece Annie Payne, in addition to "my negro Woman and her children[,] one third of my wearing apparel, my forte piano and the furniture of my chamber'…[as well as] one hundred books and 'a likeness of Mr Madison and Myself'" and requesting that Annie make provisions "to have 'my private papers…burn[ed]'".[133] It will come as no surprise that, in the updated will that she made out in June 1849 at Payne's instigation, Payne Todd was left as the sole heir of all the remaining funds and possessions and was named as the sole executor of the estate. This meant that Payne would get the $20,000 trust and anything else that he could get his hands on, and the still single Annie Payne, after being a part of her aunt's household and increasingly providing for Dolley's care on a day-to-day basis, would be left with nothing.[134]

As Payne was wont to do, he left his mother's deathbed, assured that he would be taken care of after her demise. In his absence, though, Dolley's nephew, James Madison Cutts, came to her bedside on July 9th to discuss her will. According to Bigler, Cutts did not know about the will that she had made in June.[135] As noted by Allgor, Dolley had taken to her bed the day prior and was slipping in and out of a coma.[136] Thus, it's unclear exactly how much she was aware of when she signed the will that Cutts had

[131] Allgor 396-397
[132] Bigler 214; Mattern and Shulman, eds 325
[133] Bigler 198-199
[134] Bigler 214; Mattern and Shulman, eds 325
[135] Bigler 215; Mattern and Shulman, eds 325
[136] Allgor 397

drafted which divided the congressional trust evenly between Payne Todd and Annie Payne, but Cutts insisted that Annie's devotion should be rewarded.[137] We'll return to this in a moment.

For her last few days, family members and friends gathered around her bedside, talking with her when she regained consciousness and reading Bible passages to her, including some of her favorite verses from the Gospel of John.[138] Dolley was aware that her son Payne had returned and was with her during her last hours as she was heard to mumble, "My poor boy."[139] Finally, at a quarter past ten in the evening of July 12th, "without a struggle or apparent pain," Dolley Payne Todd Madison passed away at the age of 81 at her home on Lafayette Square in Washington, DC.[140] Her body was prepared, and on July 16th, she was moved to nearby St. John's Episcopal Church where she had been a member of the congregation, and hundreds of loved ones, friends, and well-wishers came by to bid her farewell. The day of her funeral, all government business was cancelled so that President Zachary Taylor, his Cabinet, members of both houses of Congress, and justices of the Supreme Court could attend. As described by Allgor, "Dolley's was the largest funeral that had ever been held in Washington. Its formal nature may have signaled her official status; the size of the crowd was a testament to the place she had held in their hearts." President Taylor, Cabinet and congressional members, federal judges, and army and navy officers along with members of her family and an untold number of 'citizens and strangers' then escorted her body after the service to the vault at the Congressional Cemetery where it would be stored temporarily until Payne could make arrangements to move it to Orange County to be buried alongside her husband. There her body would sit for another ten years.[141]

Normally, we would start wrapping up the first lady episode here, but I think in this case, we need to continue to talk about Payne just a bit more. It wasn't long after the funeral that Payne learned about

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[137] Bigler 215; Mattern and Shulman, eds 325
[138] Bigler 215; Allgor 397-398; Mattern and Shulman, eds 325
[139] Bigler 215
[140] Allgor 398; Bigler 215; Mattern and Shuman, eds 325
[141] Allgor 398-399; Mattern and Shulman, eds 325; Bigler 215-216

the last minute will that his cousin had convinced Dolley to sign which superseded the will he had convinced her to sign a month prior, and he was furious. He accused James Madison Cutts and Annie Payne of trying to cheat him out of his rightful inheritance and contested the will in court.[142] Technically, Payne had a point as it could be argued that Dolley was not in her right mind and body to make a new will just before her death, but the family felt that splitting the congressional trust was only fair given how much Annie had sacrificed over the years to care for her aunt while Payne did nothing to help his mother.[143] It would take years, but finally, in February 1851, the courts upheld Dolley's will of July 9th, and Payne chose not to appeal the ruling. Unfortunately, by this point, due to the legal fees that both had incurred in the process, the amount that both ultimately got was half of what they would have gotten if Payne had just agreed with the even split.[144] The amount that Payne got was only a drop in the bucket of what he needed to pay back his debts, and thus, in March 1851, he held a public auction of Madison memorabilia in Washington, DC including the Gilbert Stuart portrait of his mother painted in 1804. Annie Payne and her new husband were so aghast at Payne Todd's lack of sentimentality that they attended the auction and successfully bid on the portrait. This portrait was ultimately donated to the White House where it remains to this day.[145] Despite their ill will, when Payne Todd came down with typhoid fever and rented an apartment on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington in order to recover, Annie Payne and her husband would visit him regularly to check in on him.[146] Dolley's beloved son passed away on January 17th, 1852 at the age of 59, still single and, as far as we know, childless. His passing was far less remarked on than his mother's, and only one representative of the family would attend the services committing his body to a grave at the Congressional Cemetery.[147] Though Payne manumitted the remaining 11 enslaved

[142] Bigler 216-217; Mattern and Shulman, eds 325
[143] Bigler 229
[144] Bigler 231
[145] Bigler 231-232
[146] Bigler 232
[147] Bigler 234

individuals in his possession in his will, due to his passing away while heavily in debt, this provision was not honored, and these individuals would be sold in order to pay his debts.[148]

Shortly after Payne's death, Annie Payne's husband made arrangements for Dolley Madison's remains to be taken from the public vault at the Congressional Cemetery and transferred to his family's private mausoleum.[149] There, her body would remain for six years until, on January 12th, 1858, it arrived at Montpelier for a proper burial beside her husband under a 22-foot granite obelisk that had been purchased by local citizens.[150] Over 21 years after his death and the better part of a decade after hers, Dolley and James Madison were finally at rest together.

As I'm sure you agree, dear listener, Dolley Madison leaves us with a complicated legacy. I'll be honest, initially, the more I read about her, the less I liked her. She reminded me of the worst parts of Jefferson in her financial irresponsibility and the disruptive, detrimental impact she had, both directly and indirectly, on the enslaved population at Montpelier. Further, her need to be at the center of everything could be interpreted as having a twinge of narcissism and vanity. However, as my reading and research went on, I realized that there were more elements at play than my initial knee-jerk reaction had taken into account. First, more than any other woman that we've talked about to date in the podcast, Dolley stepped indirectly into the political arena through the medium of the social sphere. She got to know the movers and shakers of Washington, DC before, during, and after her time as First Lady and used those connections to get things done, both for herself and for the causes to which she subscribed. As you'll see in future series, dear listener, this will be a rarity in terms of 19th century First Ladies, though there are a few other examples. Second, her partnership with James cannot go unremarked. This is one of the closest and most devoted relationships we've seen in the narrative series since Abigail and John Adams, and again, this will be more of the exception than the rule for a good portion of presidential

[148] Bigler 235; Mattern and Shulman, eds 325-326
[149] Bigler 243
[150] Bigler 244

history. It is clear that they were devoted to one another and sacrificed for one another. There is something to be said for such a strong marriage that lasted for over 40 years. The last point that I'd like to make in terms of my understanding of Dolley, however, has been rather of a recent revelation that's come through a tangential personal reflection.

Those of you who follow Presidencies on social media may know that the Head Cat in Charge here at Presidencies HQ recently passed away after being a part of our family for nearly 18 years. Ours is a small nuclear family – my husband, myself, and up until recently, our dear cat, Lazzy. She's been a part of our household nearly as long as there's been such a thing as our household as she came into our lives shortly after we moved in together. We had only been together for nearly two years prior to that, so again, she's been a part of our relationship nearly as long as there has been an 'us.' Thus, her loss, though not completely unexpected, threw us for a bit of a loop. A constant point, a fixture in our life, part of the bedrock of who we are, was suddenly not there. This happened while I was in the middle of writing the narrative episodes for this Dolley Madison miniseries, and it dawned on me that I was starting to relate to Dolley a bit more, especially as I wrote the section on the impact of the Yellow Fever Epidemic on the young Todd family. Not only did Dolley lose her husband and youngest child in that tragic time, but the entire world seemed to be crumbling around her. She had not long before lost her father, and she lost her in-laws. The city of Philadelphia was shaken to its core with the tragic loss of life and the disruption to normal operations. Everywhere she turned, there was tragedy and loss. I think those of us in the early part of the 2020s can relate to that feeling all too well.

When I started to reflect on this time in Dolley's life and what I was learning about myself while in the midst of our personal grief, my heart opened up, and I realized I could understand her a bit better. Of course she doted on Payne as she did. That one was obvious – he was her last remaining member of her core family and her last living child. While he clearly could have stood for some tough love, it's understandable that she did everything she could to make sure that he didn't suffer in life, not realizing

that she wasn't helping him to learn key life lessons that would help him to deal with life's inevitable challenges. Less obvious than that impact, though, was the fact that, after the tremendous loss and grief that she experienced in 1793, Dolley started to push the boundaries a bit more and became the center of social life wherever she went. I think that, too, can be understood as a product of her experiences in that dark time, though, naturally, I invite you to keep your grains of salt at the ready, dear listeners. Dolley felt utterly and completely alone in the aftermath of that decimation. Her family by blood couldn't help her. Her family by marriage was abandoning her. Any friends she had were dealing with their own affairs. In her darkest hour, she was alone. Small wonder then that she remarried a man who was near the center of the political universe at the time and did all she could in the social sphere to support his rise. In doing so, she ensured that, no matter what she was experiencing, there would be folks surrounding her. She struggled in any instance that she felt isolated. She emotionally needed to know after the trauma that she had faced that that she was not alone. She wanted desperately to be a part of something rather than apart from everything and everyone.

There is much to criticize in Dolley Madison's legacy, but there are also aspects of her life, both the admirable and the failings, to which we can all relate as hers was a very human experience. Hers was a life shaped by tragedy and turmoil, and she soared to great heights as well as suffered humiliating setbacks. She didn't always make the best choices, and her choices would at times have detrimental, life-altering impacts on individuals who were oppressed and repressed by a system from which she personally benefitted. Her life serves as a reminder that we should all strive to be cognizant of the impact of our decisions on others and our responsibility to our larger society, to help to be a force of good rather than enable bad habits and support inequitable systems that ultimately work to everyone's detriment. For all her faults, I think that Dolley would want her legacy to be one that encouraged forging greater bonds of love and community with those around us, and that is what I am taking from this time spent researching her life.

With that, I thank you for joining me for this episode! In our next narrative episode, we'll be checking in to see what was happening in Europe in 1809 and 1810 and the impact that it would have to the fraught relations between the US and Great Britain. In the meantime, we can't part ways before I have a chance to again thank Bry, Matt, and Stacey for providing the intro quotes for this episode! Be sure to check out Pontifacts, Ranking 76, and History's Trainwrecks wherever you get your podcasts. I'll have links to each of these fantastic podcasts on the sources section for this episode at the website, which is presidencies podcast, that's all one word, dot com. There, you'll find past episodes of the podcast, resources for further exploration of presidential history, and a way for you, yes, you, dear listener, to leave a rating and review to let folks know why they should give Presidencies a try. It's a quick, easy, and free way to support the work of this podcast. If you would like to provide financial support to ensure that I have the equipment and resources needed to continue this work, I do have a Patreon available. Just head over to patreon dot com slash presidencies to sign up. Thanks to all of those who have in so many ways supported this work over the years – I am eternally grateful to each of you! If you have any questions or comments for me, feel free to send an email to me at presidencies podcast, again, all one word at gmail dot com. You can also reach out to me on social media if you don't follow me on there already. I can be found on Facebook at presidencies, on Twitter at presidencies eight nine, and on Instagram at presidencies podcast, that's right, all one word. Special thanks also to Christian of Your Podcast Pal for his audio editing work on this episode! If you're a podcaster and would like to enlist Christian's services to edit your podcast, check out his website at your podcast pal, that's all one word, dot com. I'd also like to thank the Itinerant Band for allowing me the use of clips from their rendition of Jefferson and Liberty for the intro and outro music for this episode. I often find myself listening to their music while I'm working on scripts, so if you haven't checked them out yet, go to a music app and search them out, or you can find a link to their website on the sources section for this episode. Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank all of you for listening. Knowing that I have a community of folks listening and

learning along with me makes what is already personally enriching work in researching history doubly rewarding, and I am so grateful that each of you are on this journey with me. Until next time, stay safe and healthy, be kind to one another, and take care, dear friends!

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