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*Ex Tenebris Lux*





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## Welcome Letter

To say that the past six months have been unusual has to be the understatement of the century. While we are living a totally “new normal” life, we are still trying to maintain a semblance of the “old normal.” For the authors and editors at the of *The Saber and Scroll Journal*, this means keeping our commitment to quarterly publication and exemplary scholarship. Consequently, we have spent much the past several months putting together this, the Fall 2020 edition of the Journal.

There is no doubt that reading is a popular quarantine activity, and undoubtedly biographies are a favorite genre among the sequestered. We have, I believe, assembled a great selection of biographical material for this issue with something for everyone.

Perhaps you'd like to learn how Mait Thomas, and Britain's Bletchley Park, broke the German Enigma code saving thousands of Allied lives and considered to be one of World War II's best-kept secrets.

Presidential history buffs will learn how during the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln exceeded his constitutional authority to accomplish his primary goal which was to preserve the Union. Denied support for his actions by Congress, Lincoln trusted the voters to re-elect him.

It was my honor to pen the feature article for this biographical issue: “America's Forgotten Patriot: Mercy Otis Warren and the Writings that Fanned the Flames of Revolution.” Because she was a confidante to many of the central characters of the American revolutionary period, she became a leading advocate of colonial independence in a period where women, for the most part, were not politically active.

Did you know that one of *The Saber and Scroll Journal's* most prolific authors is not American but Swedish? As such, she has introduced us to unfamiliar historical and cultural figures. Her current submission is no different, introducing readers to Johan Thuri, the voice of the Sami, the indigenous people of Northern Scandinavia.

History and the Civil Rights Movement come together in Mamie Till Mobley: The Unsung Hero of the Civil Rights Movement. Emmett Till's murder was an essential push towards the Civil Rights Movement; it was, in fact, the actions of his mother following his death that led the country toward a reckoning with their brutal treatment of African Americans, especially in the Deep South.

The Making of the Modern Woman: British Suffragettes in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century, one of the articles presented at the annual meeting of APUS Historical Students Honor Society, completes the article lineup.

Our bookworms worked overtime to complete not two but four excellent book reviews on topics which range from; biographical sketches of prominent naval figures from Ancient Greece to the present-day; the role of American Indians, debtors, and slaves in the American Revolution in Virginia; the Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and their vendetta ride from hell; and finally a profile of American explorer John Charles Frémont.

To round out the issue, we have included a double helping of museum reviews: The National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington DC, and Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia.

While I've been "missing in action" through much of the hard work converting my humble Cape Cod bookstore into an online book emporium, the Journal has not been rudderless. If it were not for Jeff Ballard (Managing Editor) and Chris Schloemer (Senior Editor), this edition might not have come together. My hat is off to them for everything they are doing during this trying time.

The staff of *The Saber and Scroll Journal* has something special planned to close 2020, a special super-sized edition devoted to military history whose theme is "America at War." In the meantime, we hope everyone stays safe and well.

Take care.

Lew Taylor

Editor-In-Chief

## Letters to the Editor

### To the Editor, *The Saber and Scroll*:

Imagine you are part of an online theoretical physics group, and you saw posts by non-scientists who challenged Einstein's Theory of Relativity: " $E=mc^2$ ... Bah humbug—that's just revisionism, I'm a Newton man!" Sound implausible? Perhaps, and yet there are plenty of history groups—especially Civil War-related groups—where posts routinely challenge the scholarly consensus that it was slavery that was the principal force that drove secession and led to war. In this ahistorical imaginary construct—based upon what is popularly known as the "Myth of the Lost Cause"—the role of human chattel slavery is reduced to a bit part, supplanted instead by the catchall "States' Rights."

Lost Cause mythology was first conceived in the days following Appomattox. The war was lost, and clearly slavery would soon go extinct. How could the sacrifice of so many lives for an institution now deemed abhorrent by most Americans be justified? Prominent former Confederate political and military elites began devising an alternate history that spoke instead of states' rights, tariffs, agriculture vs. industrialism, rural vs. urban, localism vs. centralism, and a host of other issues.

While it is clear to historians—whose business is nuance and complexity—that these elements were indeed contributing factors, the centrality of slavery was paramount: without slavery there could never have been Civil War. Period. How do we know that? Take the advice of eminent Civil War scholar Gary Gallagher, who urges that you read what was written at the time by engineers of secession who advocated for a "proud slave republic" and by those who laid the foundation of the Confederacy, such as Alexander Stephens, who pronounced: "The great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man." There are ten direct references to slavery in the Confederate Constitution; Article I plainly declares that: "No bill of attainder, ex post facto law, or law denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves shall be passed." For the architects of rebellion, there was never any question what it was about. Yet, in the writings of some of these same men only five years later, slavery is but a footnote, if it is referenced at all.

Not only are posts by Lost Cause enthusiasts wrong-headed, they are often deliberately false and obnoxious, circulating memes equating white indentured servants to chattel slavery, such as the one about "Irish Slaves" that repeatedly makes the rounds. There's another that imagines legions of "Black Confederates" that simply never existed, while ignoring the reality of the half-million African Americans who fled to Union lines, and the 179,000 members of the United States Colored Troops that came to represent a remarkable ten percent of the Union army!

It is an ongoing frustration that the Lost Cause has not only persisted well beyond the war's sesquicentennial but has of late seen a disturbing resurgence in right-wing politics, rearing its ugly head in controversies over Confederate monuments and public displays of the Stars & Bars. As historians, it is our duty to challenge it, not only because it is fallacious, but also because it is a disgraceful distortion of a central moment in our national history that resulted in the deaths of more than 700,000 Americans. We owe it to the memory of all who perished—north and south—to tell the truth about what happened, warts and all. That is what history is about.

Lost Cause defenders typically wield accusations of political correctness and revisionism as cudgels upon the scholarly consensus they dispute. But history—like science—is supposed to be self-correcting; it is meant to be revised by the latest scholarship. There is nothing politically correct about revealing the truth. If there was revisionism to advance ideology over reality, it was the original Lost Cause myth itself, which spawned a revision of the truth and the propagation of a lie. Its extinguishment is just and necessary.

In that theoretical physics group, we would expect the Einstein detractors banned in an instant. This penalty should likewise fall to those peddling the Lost Cause in history groups. We should of course first attempt to educate the misguided, but if they refuse, they must be blocked. It is our duty to disallow a platform to those who routinely disparage the truth in order to recycle propaganda; there is no obligation within scholarly discourse to extend freedom of speech to those who would deliberately encourage fabrication. Putting a stop to this is not revisionism, but rather a necessary step to celebrate scholarship over the anecdotal, reality over the imaginary, history over fiction.

Stan Prager  
MA History, 2014  
APU



Stan,

Thanks so much for your letter. It is definitely important to strive for historical accuracy as much as possible. The Lost Cause movement has assuredly developed over time and persists to this day, especially in light of current events with flag and monument controversies.

The reason this myth has persisted for so long is that it has been ingrained into part of our society. The Daughters of the Confederacy not only propagated this view, they indoctrinated much of the nation's youth through their efforts in education. They pushed it in schools, even going so far as to review curriculum for

schools, ensuring portraits of Confederate leaders were hung, and holding essay contests and photo opportunities at memorial dedications.

For more information on the efforts of the Daughters of the Confederacy, I recommend “Dixie’s Daughters” by Karen L. Cox.

For more information on the reasons for the secession itself, there are many great books out there. One that I find useful is “Apostles of Disunion” by Charles B. Dew.

Thanks again,

*Saber and Scroll Team*



**Dear Editor,**

As both a reader and having contributed to the *Saber and Scroll Journal*, I wanted to take the time to commend the staff on the excellent work that is obviously done to put this journal together. I became familiar with the journal in 2013 when I began my education at American Public University and became involved in the Saber & Scroll History Club. Since then, I have witnessed the growth of the journal from a school publication to its successful move to Westphalia.

This journal offers an opportunity for some students and alumni to have their first taste of being published. This journal gives the authors the experience of going through the process of being published, from submitting your work and being selected, to the editing process, to getting to see the final piece in the journal. There is such a sense of accomplishment to see your work in this journal! It also affords the authors the opportunity to have their work reach a wider audience.

If I had to offer any critique, it would be that in this time of racial reckoning in this country, I think it would be nice to see more articles that highlight people of color, whether it be the authors or the subjects. Of course, I understand that it is predicated upon the material submitted to the journal!

I always look forward to the newest edition of the journal and I cannot wait to see what new stories have been told in the next issue!

Sincerely,

Deanna Simmons



Deanna,

Thanks so much for your letter. It is gratifying for us at the *Saber & Scroll* to be able to give authors a chance to contribute to historical knowledge. Having an opportunity to be published is a great thing!

We have been doing themed editions lately and it would be fantastic to have an issue highlighting people of color. Of course, we would need to have enough articles submitted to do this. Hopefully, we can generate enough interest to get them!

Thanks again,

*Saber and Scroll* Staff



We would like to hear from you. Your comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated as the *Saber and Scroll* staff strive to improve the *Saber and Scroll Historical Journal* and make it the superior publication we know it can become. Please send your letters to the Senior Editor c/o the Office of the Editor-and-Chief at [EICSaberandScroll@apus.edu](mailto:EICSaberandScroll@apus.edu).

## **Mair Thomas: Life at Bletchley Park**

Gina Pittington

*American Military University*

### ABSTRACT

Breaking the German Enigma Codes by Britain's intelligence team at Bletchley Park (BP) was considered to be one of World War II's best-kept secrets. Better than the secret itself is the fantastic feat of nearly ten thousand people keeping that secret for decades from friends and family, both during and following the war. In recent years, women have begun to gain recognition for their part in the codebreaking operation at BP. Less recognized are the women who tirelessly listened to radio transmissions at Y Stations across the globe, waiting for enemy communication. Women made up about 75 percent of BP's workforce and were the backbone of the cryptology team that broke Germany's so-called unbreakable codes. Nearly eight thousand women are listed on the Honour Roll at the installation, who kept silent for decades. The contributions of women at BP are too numerous to detail; therefore, this paper highlights memories of a few who were interviewed by various authors and focus primarily on one woman's experience and life at BP, Mair Eluned Russell-Jones (née Thomas).

**Keywords:** Enigma Code, women's history, World War II, Bletchley Park, Hut Six, Ultra, X-station

## **Mair Thomas: la vida en Bletchley Park**

### RESUMEN

Romper los códigos alemanes por parte del equipo de inteligencia británico en Bletchley Park (BP) se consideró como uno de los secretos mejor guardados de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Mejor que el secreto en sí es la fantástica hazaña de casi diez mil personas que lo han mantenido oculto durante décadas a amigos y familiares, tanto durante como después de la guerra. En los últimos años, las mujeres han comenzado a ganar reconocimiento por su participación en la operación de descifrado de códigos en BP. Menos reconocidas son las mujeres que escucharon incansablemente las transmisiones de radio en las estaciones Y de todo el mundo,

esperando la comunicación del enemigo. Las mujeres constituían aproximadamente el 75 por ciento de la fuerza laboral de BP y eran la columna vertebral del equipo de criptología que rompió los llamados códigos irrompibles de Alemania. Casi ocho mil mujeres figuran en el Cuadro de Honor de la instalación, que guardaron silencio durante décadas. Las contribuciones de las mujeres en BP son demasiado numerosas para detallarlas; por lo tanto, este artículo destaca los recuerdos de unos pocos que fueron entrevistados por varios autores y se centra principalmente en la experiencia y la vida de una mujer en BP, Mair Eluned Russell-Jones (de soltera Thomas).

**Palabras clave:** Código Enigma, historia de la mujer, Segunda Guerra Mundial, Bletchley Park, Hut Six, Ultra, X-station

## Mair Thomas: 布莱切利园的生活

### 摘要

英国情报队在布莱切利园（BP）破解德国恩尼格玛密码一事被视为二战期间保存最好的秘密之一。比这一秘密更妙的是近一万人在二战期间和二战后将该秘密保存几十年之久，不让朋友和家人知道。近年来，女性开始因其在BP执行密码破译操作中发挥的作用而获得认可。认可度较少的则是那些在全球Y电台孜孜不倦聆听无线电广播，等待敌方发送传播的女性。BP全体员工中75%是女性，她们是密码学团队的主心骨，破解了德国所谓的无法破译的密码。近8000名女性被列在工作地点的光荣榜上，她们在几十年里保守着该秘密。BP女性作出的贡献多到无法细数，因此，本文强调了少部分接受了不同作家采访的人的记忆，并主要聚焦于一名女性在BP的经历与生活，她就是Mair Eluned Russell-Jones (née Thomas)。

关键词：恩尼格玛密码，女性历史，二战，布莱切利园，6号营（Hut Six），Ultra，X-电台

## Abbreviations

BP	Bletchley Park
GC&CS	Government Code and Cypher School
GCHQ	Government Communication Headquarters
OSA	Official Secrets Act
RAF	Royal Air Force

## Definitions

bombe. This machine used to discover the wheel settings for the Enigma keys, based on an earlier version of the Polish bomba,

Enigma. A cipher machine used by German military and government from the 1920s until 1945.

hut. A temporary building built around the Bletchley Park Estate grounds, which housed different teams and the primary work-zones.

rotor. A wheel on an Enigma machine

Ultra. The British code-name for all signal intelligence from 1941 throughout the duration of World War II.

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Even though so much has happened to me since leaving BP, those four years have probably influenced me more than the other ninety-two.

—Mair Thomas Russell-Jones (1917–2013).

**T**he fall of Western Europe to Nazi forces was a devastating blow to the world. Britain found its people standing alone against a more advanced foe. Germany used cryptography to pass messages back and forth concerning movement, operations, and invasion plans. The German Enigma

machine was a highly complicated machine that looked like a typewriter, consisting of wheels that changed the code to write unbreakable messages. Britain's Foreign Office and MI6 opened an intelligence center at Bletchley Park (BP) dedicated to breaking the German Enigma Codes. Thousands of men and

women dedicated long hours and years of their lives in service to their nation, including breaking the codes, thereby shortening the war. Intelligence played a significant role during World War II, and secrecy was paramount. One of those people, Mair Thomas, kept her work on the codes at BP secret for close to sixty years and only recently decided to tell her story of spending four years of her life in Hut Six, working on breaking codes of the German army and air force.<sup>1</sup>

## **Intelligence War**

**I**ntercepting German intelligence was a crucial component in the war effort, piggybacked from Y stations, where messages were overheard and documented, then passed to Station X, BP for decrypting. Decoded messages were then passed to the Foreign Office under the code name Ultra. Ultra enabled British and Allied forces to plan and maneuver against Germany and the Axis. In the 1920s, Germany developed a system called an Enigma machine, used for commercial, military, and government communication. The machine was complicated, using rotors, keyboard, and plugboard to change settings daily. Polish cryptologists had worked for years on decoding German messages including building a bombe machine, which enabled the ability to search for rotor settings.

Frederick William Winterbotham (1897–1990), Group Captain in the Royal Air Force (RAF) and head of aerial intelligence in MI6, oversaw the distribution of Ultra Intelligence during

World War II. His book, *The Ultra Secret*, first published in 1974, was the first book in English to reveal Britain's success in breaking the German Enigma codes.<sup>2</sup> The term Ultra is the code name used for all intelligence received from BP concerning cryptographic intercepted messages. Winterbotham's book was written from his memory alone. His story shocked the English-speaking world when first released; Winterbotham opened the door for others, including Gordon Welchman, to break their sworn silence and tell their story of breaking the codes.

Gordon Welchman (1906–1985), in his book, *The Hut Six Story*, provides details of the operation in Hut Six and the development of the Secret Intelligence Service's move to BP. He explains that due to the buildup of war in Europe and the fear of a possible bombing of London once the fighting began, the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS) was moved to BP in August 1939, just weeks before Britain declared war on Germany. Admiral Sinclair purchased BP to transfer the GC&CS out of the Foreign Office in London, and the name of GC&CS was changed to Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). The estate was a prime location just forty-seven miles outside of London, with a railway junction making for easy access to Cambridge and Oxford.<sup>3</sup>

Commander Alastair Denniston was head of the GC&CS and began prepping BP with several outbuildings known as huts for the upcoming war with Germany. Denniston had also contacted leading mathematicians and

lecturers to request their service if war broke out, including Gordon who oversaw Hut Six. New technology was desperately needed to face the encrypted codes of the Enigma machine, and the best minds in the country were recruited to save their nation island. Encrypted message systems had changed rapidly from the Great War's simplified pad and paper system. Winterbotham claims Denniston explained that cryptology messages from World War I used the following method:

Denniston explains to me that there were a number of methods used to encypher messages, mostly based on the use of books of numerals held only by the sender and the recipient, but that machines had also been tried out. The basis of encrypting was that each service up to now had used its own particular codebook in which a multitude of words and phrases likely to be used by that particular service had opposite each phrase or word a numerical group.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, no code is infallible, as codebooks could become lost or even stolen, but the safest method used during the Great War was the "one-time pad method" described as:

In order to make the messages secret, therefore, additional groups of figures known only to the sender and receiver must be added so as to make the final groups in the signal untranslatable by any third party. The safest way to do this is for both the

sender and receiver to have a sort of tear-off pad, on each sheet of which are columns of four digit groups printed absolutely at random.... Once used the whole page of the pad is torn off and destroyed.... And was at the time the only known absolutely safe cypher.<sup>5</sup>

A few years following the war, the safest cipher method became outdated, making way for a mechanical and computerized method of cryptology that the Germans created in the 1920s, called the Enigma machine. According to Gordon Welchman, under Hitler's command, the entire German military was overhauled, creating divisions within branches to produce a fast-moving force. To be effective, the German's relied on "revolutionary radio communication capabilities."<sup>6</sup> A highly trained German "mobile signals organization" was developed and "equipped with an Enigma cipher machine."<sup>7</sup> Britain's only hope was to develop an intricate network of Y stations to intercept German radio transmissions to send to GCHQ.

Sinclair McKay's book, *The Secret Listeners: How the Y Service Intercepted the Secret German Codes for Bletchley Park*, provides insight into the frontlines of codebreaking.<sup>8</sup> The men and women assigned to Y stations spent countless hours listening across the airways for enemy communication. The Y Station workers would record the coded messages. Mair Thomas describes the importance of the Y stations to the work done at BP:

Beyond BP there are a number of listening stations, military and government installations that are intercepting German intelligence. They are called Y stations and run by the army, navy, RAF, Marconi, Foreign Office, MI6, and the General Post Office. These stations combine a mix of direction-finding and interception. Direction-finding tracks the exact location of enemy operations, but it is the intercepted intelligence that is precious to BP. The stations in Chatham and Denmark Hill provide BP with regular and powerful intelligence. Once intercepted and written down, they are transported to BP via motorcycle couriers coming to BP bringing, 3,000 messages daily from all over the country.<sup>9</sup>

## **Mair Thomas**

**I**n October 1917, in the midst of the Great War, news headlines read of the famous spy Mati Hari's execution by a French firing squad, Britain's first bombing raids of German civilians, and the Russian government take-over by Vladimir Lenin.<sup>10</sup> During the same week, Mair Thomas was born on October 17 in the small village of Pontycymer in South Wales.<sup>11</sup> Her parents Thomas and Agnes Thomas both contributed to the household financially. Thomas worked in senior management as a winding engineer, while Agnes owned a dress shop.<sup>12</sup> Mair's only sibling, Beti, her sister, was born in 1921. The Thomas's lived in a middle-class neighborhood with a maid that did the cleaning and looked after the girls. According to Mair, "most of the people

that lived on our side of the street kept maids; they were well-off families with fathers that earned good money."<sup>13</sup>

Like most children, Mair was enrolled in primary school at age five and began taking piano lessons. Her love of music and skill would follow her throughout her educational journey. With dreams of becoming a concert pianist, Mair was thrilled to become the school pianist once she started secondary school at the age of eleven and kept the position until she graduated at age eighteen.<sup>14</sup> Two events affected Mair deeply before finishing secondary school in 1936. The first occurred in 1934, when her mother was diagnosed with "pernicious anaemia," leading to her death in February 1935.<sup>15</sup> The second was Mair's newfound Christianity, which would provide her with strong "faith, resilience, and a fighting spirit," lasting qualities for the rest of her life.<sup>16</sup>

Following the death of her mother, Mair had a "yearning for adventure," and applied to Mount Hermon College located in southern London.<sup>17</sup> Mount Hermon focused on missionary training, dedicated to bible studies and public service. Mair was assigned to London's East End, which became highly populated with Jews fleeing persecution throughout Europe, primarily Germany. Anti-Semitism had been growing across Europe, and in 1935, Germany passed Nuremberg Laws that deprived Jews of their rights and citizenship.<sup>18</sup> England had its own fascist group, the British Union of Fascists, headed by Oswald Mosley, who planned a march on October 4, 1936, in London's East

End.<sup>19</sup> Remembered as the Cable Street Battle, the event remained with Mair, leaving with her constant guilt over the persecution of Jews before and during the Holocaust.

After her two-year stint at Mount Hermon, Mair applied to Cardiff University in Wales to focus on a Bachelor of Music degree and German studies.<sup>20</sup> She enjoyed one year of peace at university before the war began. Mair vividly remembered Sunday, September 3, 1939, when Prime Minister Chamberlain announced Britain was at war with Germany following the invasion of Poland. The first year of the war went badly for the Allies, as the Battle of Norway and Denmark provided a considerable blow to the Allies' morale. German forces brutally marched across Western Europe at an accelerated speed unseen during the Great War. Belgium, Holland, and France fell to Hitler's army, and allied forces were pushed back and surrounded at Dunkirk. Standing alone against Germany, Britain held back German forces from landing on her shores during the Battle of Britain.<sup>21</sup>

Following the German failure in the Battle of Britain, the German Blitzkrieg campaign began against Britain. From September 7, 1940 to May 1941, the Germans moved from daytime raids to nighttime raids.<sup>22</sup> In January 1941, Cardiff, where Mair attended university, was bombed, killing 165, while another 427 received severe injuries.<sup>23</sup> Mair's closest college friend died during the raid, and Mair realized it was her war now.<sup>24</sup> As March rolled around, Mair had two chance meetings that helped



*Figure 1:* Bletchley codebreaker Mair Russell Jones talks of War – BBC News. Accessed August 16, 2020 [https://www.google.com/search?q=https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-15525735&client=firefox-b-1-d&sxsrf=ALeKk03RHSbVUc0PiFjF3WcLQ2Vm cVXlFA:1597685676484&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=iL-YjX2tvA\\_QkM%252CYpDm9aexmA262M%252C\\_&vet=1&usg=AI4\\_-kTKw4bu5jNkTCXsq5QTYaNFgKSog&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjSmNb54qLrAhVDPawKHRwcAVgQ9QEWA3oECAMQBw&biw=1920&bih=938#imgsrc=iL-YjX2tvA\\_QkM](https://www.google.com/search?q=https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-15525735&client=firefox-b-1-d&sxsrf=ALeKk03RHSbVUc0PiFjF3WcLQ2Vm cVXlFA:1597685676484&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=iL-YjX2tvA_QkM%252CYpDm9aexmA262M%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4_-kTKw4bu5jNkTCXsq5QTYaNFgKSog&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjSmNb54qLrAhVDPawKHRwcAVgQ9QEWA3oECAMQBw&biw=1920&bih=938#imgsrc=iL-YjX2tvA_QkM)

decide her fate for the duration of the war. While studying for her final exams in the library, she was approached by a gentleman from the Foreign Office, most likely a recruiter sent to universities looking for people specializing in languages, such as German, Italian, and Japanese. The other encounter was a friend of Mair's whom she met through a Christian event at Cardiff and who

worked at BP. Mair decided to write the Foreign Affairs office. She received a response within a week with an interview appointment at the London office.

In early 1940, "Dilly Knox had made the first breaks into the Enigma code."<sup>25</sup> Mair's April 1941 interview consisted of questions regarding her "degree, music, and German in particular."<sup>26</sup> She was given a brief description of the job, "that they were looking for graduates to work in a new unit," and "the purpose of this new department was to intercept and crack codes the Germans were sending to their frontline troops."<sup>27</sup> At that point, the Foreign Office was hand-picking "all the brightest young men, and by the continuing belief that only a certain type of person could be trusted to keep a secret,"<sup>28</sup> such as Elizabeth Blandy, an early recruit assigned to Hut Six. Elizabeth had been referred by a friend of her father who knew someone in the Foreign Office. In fact, early on, one had to know somebody who knew someone to land a job at BP.

By the time Mair interviewed for BP, the Foreign Office had provided a simple description, unlike earlier recruits, such as Elizabeth's friend Jane Hughes. Jane provided insight into an early interview to work at BP; the first step was to find out if Jane was suitable. She met with Mr. Milner-Barry in an interview filled with lots of silence before advancing to the next level of interviews. Meeting with Commander Edward Travis was similar: he was under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) and could not say anything. Jane left with a job at BP and the understanding that

she had "an important job to be done and everyone ought to do it if they were able to because it was so vital."<sup>29</sup>

## Secrecy

**D**ecades of secrecy surrounded Britain's breaking of the Enigma code and the use of the intelligence gained. Thousands of people were sworn to silence while doing a job without detailed knowledge of their job description or the reason for their work. People and expectations were different in the 1940s compared to today. Currently, governments and militaries contain massive amounts of classified documents, missions, jobs, and so forth, where leaking information has become quite prevalent surrounding politics. Most military actions and movements are headline news, but not in England during World War II. The silence was golden, and Britain used the OSA of 1939 to ensure that progress made on the German Enigma was as silent as the radio waves on most days.

The OSA was reenacted in 1911 from a prior act of 1889.<sup>30</sup> The act outlines many liabilities to the state, such as spying, harboring spies, wrongful communication or information, and prohibited places, and the penalties for each, which could be either misdemeanors or felony charges. In 1920, new amendments were added to the OSA, which changed/added new wording and modified penalties. Other items included were details regarding the unauthorized use of uniforms, falsifying or forging reports, and interfering with police or his majesty's forces.<sup>31</sup> Fol-

lowing an incident in 1938 concerning details of RAF readiness and deficiencies uncovered by Winston Churchill's future son-in-law, Duncan Sandys, the act was amended again to specify the sharing of information and the correct ranks that needed notification before information was furnished.<sup>32</sup> It also added a disclaimer which combined the 1911, 1920, and 1939 acts into a single act: "This Act may be cited as the Official Secrets Act, 1939, and this Act and the Official Secrets Acts, 1911 and 1920, shall be construed as one, and may be cited together as the Official Secrets Acts, 1911 to 1939." It also extended the act to include Northern Ireland.<sup>33</sup>

The Secrecy Act carried great significance to the women of BP. Many of the women interviewed by both Tessa Dunlop and Michael Smith for their books placed extreme importance on the signing of the act and their ability to keep BP secret decades after the war ended. According to Dunlop, none of the women featured in her book "has forgotten her introduction" to the OSA.<sup>34</sup> Although the OSA clearly defines punishment for crimes against the state, many of the women remember threats of treason and execution. From an interview with Gwen Watkins (née Davies), Dunlop writes of Gwen's version of signing the OSA:

Death threats like these were not uncommon. The wing commander who oversaw Gwen's induction made a lasting impression on the eighteen-year-old recruit when he finished his sermon on secrecy with a florid

threat, If she disclosed any information she 'would be liable to the extremest penalties of the law, and I'm not sure whether, at the moment, that's hanging or shooting by firing squad.'

Another woman interviewed by Dunlop, Ruth Bourne (née Henry) recalls the threat of a prison sentence at the very least, if she broke the OSA. Dunlop quotes Ruth's memory as:

I realize whatever we are doing, it is so secret that if you say anything you have to go to prison, "at least." I didn't know what at least meant. I thought what could be worse—chop off your head, hang you or deport you? I suppose everyone else thought the same.

Most of the women recruited early in the war years were from "relatively well-to-do families" and deemed trustworthy. They had connections to someone working at the GC&CS or a higher government office.<sup>35</sup> Very few of those early recruits interviewed by Michael Smith placed a high significance on signing the OSA in their recollection compared to those recruited later, as mentioned in Dunlop's book. Although all of the men and women associated with BP signed the OSA, those who were recruited through universities and crossword puzzle contests seem to have had a different experience placed upon the need for silence regarding their work than those with connections from the upper- to upper-middle-class families. Timing also seemed to play a part in the significance placed on the secrecy of the employees when informed of the

requirement to sign the OSA. In fact, the women working at BP at the beginning of the war remarked frequently on the “relaxed well-to-do atmosphere of the country estate” similar to a “weekend party at an English country mansion.”<sup>36</sup>

In *My Secret Life in Hut Six*, Mair Russell-Jones (née Thomas) also remembers signing the OSA. The explanation she received was as follows:

As a government official you are obliged to sign it, and it is a binding legal document. If you disclose your work at Bletchley Park to anyone, you will be in breach of this, and the consequences could be serious, and even include imprisonment.<sup>37</sup>

All people assigned to BP signed the OSA. Most of the women working there did not have detailed information on the operation but did understand that their job was of extreme importance, that the utmost secrecy was demanded, and that people would die if they shared information or failed at their job. Gossiping was not tolerated in or around BP, and anyone involved in loose talk found themselves dismissed or penalized by the law. Mair understood the need for secrecy, especially as the Germans never knew until after the war that their Enigma Code had ever been broken.<sup>38</sup>

## Life at Bletchley Park

**M**air joined the BP team in 1941 where she was assigned to Hut Six under Gordon

Welchman and recounts the working conditions with dim lighting and lots of cigarette smoke. Shifts ran around the clock: “eight o’clock in the morning until four in the afternoon; four o’clock in the afternoon until midnight and midnight until nine in the morning,” with a half-hour lunch break.<sup>39</sup> During her work shifts in Hut Six, Mair’s job was to key in the received “various codes” into her copy of the Enigma machine, which was then sent to another hut to be deciphered.<sup>40</sup> The codes came in as a jumbled language from Y stations to BP, and the process for keying in codes was time-consuming.

Once those codes were keyed in, they were moved to the correct hut by a “Wooden conveyor belt” which was the only connection between huts.<sup>41</sup> Apparently, along with the bad lighting and smoke-filled air, the conveyor belts made quite a “racket,” as they were “constantly moving in a clanking, vibrating kind of way.”<sup>42</sup> Mair noted the machine was constantly shaking the hut. Although she worked in a bad environment compared to standards today in a place of employment, she raved at the equality in treatment by the “top brass” and “social strata.”<sup>43</sup> According to Mair, class, education, or rank were unfelt. She describes Gordon Welchman and the general atmosphere of equality as:

Something I really liked about Gordon Welchman, and this would apply to the most of the top brass at BP, was they never talked down to you. You felt that we were all colleagues working together and that we were all



*Figure 2:* Bletchley Park was the home of the Government Code & Cypher School. GCHQ © Crown Copyright 2016. Accessed August 16, 2020. <https://www.gchq.gov.uk/information/world-war-ii-bletchley-park>



*Figure 3:* Hut 6 where Mair Russell Jones worked under Godon Welchman. Accessed August 17, 2020. [https://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/02436/Bletchley-Park3\\_2436845b.jpg](https://i.telegraph.co.uk/multimedia/archive/02436/Bletchley-Park3_2436845b.jpg)

equal. Most of us were graduates, but there was no pecking order. I was surrounded by people who'd been to Oxford or Cambridge, but no old boy network or anything like that. It was a marvelous atmosphere in many ways because you weren't aware of class or background. We were there to do a job and that's all that mattered. There were one or two annoying people who clearly felt superior to everyone else, but they were a minority. In many ways I'd known a privileged upbringing, but I was still from the Welsh valleys and probably sounded like it. But no one looked down on me or patronized me. And I would say there was also equality between the sexes. There were more women than men in BP, so the men had to watch their step! Even though we had to keep so many secrets and work the longest hours, there was something about that community in BP that I haven't seen since.<sup>44</sup>

The stress of long hours, abnormal workload, and the smoky environment caused quite a bit of sickness among the people working at BP. Mair suffered two different illnesses during her service; the first time was shortly after she arrived and due to stress, poor living conditions, and long hours. She fainted and was hospitalized. The next time Mair became ill was at the end of her service when she contracted pneumonia and nearly died. Several hundred employees at BP also ended up

with pneumonia, and a few did not survive. By the time Mair recovered from her long illness, Germany had surrendered, and she was relieved of her duty. The time Mair spent at BP impressed her deeply. Some days were a blur of confusion and dizzying, but to be a part of something unique and worthwhile provided exhilaration. She was honored to have had the opportunity to work alongside "some of the most brilliant men that Britain has ever produced."<sup>45</sup> She thrived on the thrill of riding the "intellectual frontline" and fighting the war with "encrypted codes and phoney messages" over "bullets and bombs."<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

Breaking the German Enigma codes was crucial to the survival and success of the Allies and not only helped win the war but also helped shorten the length of the war. Messages heard and recorded at Y station provided those at X station the information to understand the Axis movements and military tactics. More women worked in both Y and X stations than men, but received less recognition for their participation. Through national loyalty, threats of death or treason, and the signing of the OSA, the silence of BP held for thirty years following the war. Women were rarely mentioned in new evidence concerning code breaking of the Enigma, yet they played a considerable role in the entire process of the intelligence department. The British government has begun to commemorate those involved in Ultra and the bombe machine in the last decade. The recog-

nition of women is even less, but there are close to eight thousand women on BP's Honour Roll.

Mair Thomas Russell-Jones was born during the Great War and served her country nobly during the Second World War. She was proud of her time working for the Foreign Office at BP and felt like she was part of something important. Russell-Jones upheld her obligation to the OSA for fifty years following her discharge from the Foreign Office. She worked under extended, stressful, and mundane conditions, typing in jumbled codes into a replica of the German Enigma machine at the cost of her health. Mair's only regret during her time code breaking was that the millions of Jews killed during the Holocaust could not be saved via the deciphered information.

Mair provided valuable insight into the community of BP. She showed the fighting spirit of the men and women who dedicated themselves despite poor working conditions, sicknesses that sometimes resulted in death, exhaustion, and performing a job rarely understood. Women made the primary force of Y stations and Station X due to the large number of men fighting in the war, but they never felt inferior as the BP community bonded together for the critical positions they played in breaking the German Enigma Codes. Secrecy may have interfered with post-war connections of the BP folks, but national pride and dedication remained the link to BP.

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## Lincoln and the Constitution

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### ABSTRACT

During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln's primary goal was to preserve the Union, even when doing so may have exceeded his constitutional powers. Finding that the Constitution gave little guidance for emergency situations, Lincoln sought support for his actions retroactively from Congress and, when that was not forthcoming, trusting the voters to re-elect him. These actions included a declaration of war, although without using those exact words, enlarging the army, instituting a naval blockade, suspending habeas corpus, instituting martial law, and freeing Confederate slaves. Lincoln did not entirely ignore the courts—he carefully wrote the Emancipation Proclamation so it would fall under his war powers—but sticking to the letter of the law was clearly a secondary concern.

**Keywords:** Lincoln, Taney, Merryman, Vallandigham, Copperheads, *ex parte Milligan*, Constitution, habeas corpus, martial law, Civil War

## Lincoln y la Constitución

### RESUMEN

Durante la Guerra Civil, el objetivo principal del presidente Abraham Lincoln era preservar la Unión, incluso cuando hacerlo puede haber excedido sus poderes constitucionales. Al descubrir que la Constitución brindaba poca orientación para situaciones de emergencia, Lincoln buscó apoyo para sus acciones de manera retroactiva en el Congreso y, cuando eso no estaba disponible, confió en los votantes para que lo reeligieran. Estas acciones incluyeron una declaración de guerra, aunque sin usar esas palabras exactas, agrandar el ejército, instituir un bloqueo naval, suspender el hábeas corpus, instituir la ley marcial y liberar a los esclavos confederados. Lincoln no ignoró por completo a los tribunales —escribió cuidadosamente la Proclamación de Emancipación para que cayera bajo sus poderes de guerra— pero atenerse a la letra de la ley era claramente una preocupación secundaria.

**Palabras clave:** Lincoln, Taney, Merryman, Vallandigham, Copperheads, ex parte Milligan, Constitución, habeas corpus, ley marcial, Guerra Civil

## 林肯与宪法

### 摘要

南北战争期间，美国总统亚伯拉罕·林肯的首要目标是维护联邦，即使此举可能越过其宪法权。在发现宪法几乎没有关于紧急情况的指示后，林肯从国会处寻求对其之前行动的支持，而当其索求无果时，便将希望寄托在选民让其再度当选。这一系列行动包括宣布战争、扩充军队、建立海军封锁、暂停人身保护令、建立军事戒严、解放联盟奴隶。林肯并没有完全忽视法院——他小心撰写了《解放奴隶宣言》，以便该宣言处于其战争权力下——但一字不差地坚持法律很明显是次要顾虑。

关键词：林肯，Taney，梅里曼，Vallandigham，铜头民主党，米利根案（ex parte Milligan），宪法，人身保护令，戒严，南北战争

**D**uring the four years of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln did what he believed would preserve the Union. The political and military necessity of ensuring that the United States survived intact took precedence over legality and constitutionality. Lincoln responded to criticisms he was acting beyond his constitutional powers by seeking retroactive approval from Congress when it was not possible to get prior approval because of the nature of the emergency. That is not the whole story, though, as this essay shows that Lincoln did not always get approval, or Congress exceeded its

own authority in granting approval, but Lincoln proceeded anyway.

By the time Lincoln took office, Northern opinion—and Lincoln’s opinion—of the Supreme Court was low. Daniel Farber asserts that, prior to the Dred Scott case, Lincoln believed in judicial supremacy—the idea that only the Supreme Court decides what’s constitutional.<sup>1</sup> But after that politically charged ruling, Lincoln refined his thinking. In his Inaugural Address, Lincoln stated he had no problem with the court making a decision in a particular case that was binding on the parties involved, but noted that when the government

bases its policies on Supreme Court decisions, “the people will have ceased to be their own rulers.”<sup>2</sup> On the continual debate of whether the United States is a constitutional republic or a democracy, Lincoln appears to have leaned toward the latter. Yet, an alternative to judicial supremacy is the concept that each branch of the government decides what is constitutional for itself—this is the direction Lincoln and the Republican Congress leaned toward during the war. Lincoln had historical precedent here: Presidents Jefferson and Jackson, as examples, seem to have believed the same.<sup>3</sup>

Historians of the Civil War who have analyzed legal issues have probably paid most attention to three: military actions in the absence of a declaration of war; civil liberties, including habeas corpus and martial law; and slavery, including the Emancipation Proclamation and its military and congressional antecedents. It is instructive, however, to be aware of some other constitutionally questionable congressional and presidential actions. For instance, the Homestead Act promoting family farms, the establishment of land grant colleges, the creation of the Department of Agriculture to promote farming, the creation of a national banking system, the creation of paper money, and the tax on non-federal paper money. These were actions that had previously been rejected as unconstitutional.<sup>4</sup> Now, the President and Congress implemented them on the sole ground that they were beneficial to the country, largely without making an argument about how they were constitutional.

The handling of western Virginia is notable for this non-literal attitude toward the Constitution. Representatives of thirty-eight Unionist counties in the northwestern part of the state met in Wheeling and declared that they were the loyal legislature of Virginia, ignoring the more than one hundred other counties. This new “Virginia” legislature asked Congress to grant them secession from Virginia and admission into the Union. Well, that was a problem, because of the Constitution: “New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.”<sup>5</sup> Clearly, the real Virginia legislature, which still existed, was not going to consent.

Lincoln explained this away by saying that the Wheeling group may not have had the support of a majority of Virginians, but it had the support of a majority of those who voted, those in secession not having voted.<sup>6</sup> Lincoln was a lawyer, after all, and what a lawyer often does is find a way to interpret law to favor his client, often in the aftermath of some questionable activity by the client.

### **Initial Military Actions**

**B**y the time Lincoln was sworn in, seven states had seceded, and eight others were holding on only very tenuously. The new Confederacy

had seized Union arsenals and forts in the South and was now threatening Ft. Sumter. There was no declared state of war and Congress was not in session to declare one. Lincoln's predecessor, James Buchanan, had essentially given up on doing anything about the situation. Lincoln's main goal at this point was that the secessionists be brought back into the fold. He said as much in his Inaugural Address.<sup>7</sup> When that failed to have an effect, he proceeded as if there was in fact a state of war between the Union and the Confederacy. He sent supplies to Ft. Sumter, asked governors to call up their militias, called for army volunteers and for the expansion of the army and navy, prohibited the mailing of "disloyal" publications, had the Treasury provide money to private individuals who would make purchases for the military (in the absence of congressional appropriations), and ordered a naval blockade of Southern ports.<sup>8</sup>

Some of Lincoln's actions, such as the unauthorized expansion of the army and disbursement of funds, could be considered unconstitutional, as neither the history nor the text of the Constitution's relevant Article II is clear as to the limit of presidential power in this regard.<sup>9</sup> Lincoln justified a liberal interpretation of the Article in a Proclamation on April 15, saying he faced "combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, or by the powers vested in the Marshals by law."<sup>10</sup> Lincoln also faced the length of time necessary to bring Congress back into session, so when on April 15 he called for an extraordinary congressional session, he scheduled it

for July 4. In a message to Congress on that day, Lincoln justified his actions: "These measures, whether strictly legal or not, were ventured upon, under what appeared to be a popular demand and a public necessity; trusting then, as now, that Congress would readily ratify them. It is believed that nothing has been done beyond the constitutional competency of Congress."<sup>11</sup> Chris Edelson finds historical justifications for the exercise of emergency presidential powers, despite the Constitution having no provision for such.<sup>12</sup> George Washington, for instance, did just that when declaring neutrality in 1793, based on national security concerns.<sup>13</sup> Yet Lincoln had previously found there were limits. When President James K. Polk retroactively requested permission for a war with Mexico, Lincoln found the grounds dubious enough that he opposed it.<sup>14</sup>

Farber joins Edelson in finding historical support for emergency presidential actions by quoting an 1810 Jefferson letter that "the laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation."<sup>15</sup> Jefferson continued, stating that to "lose our country by a scrupulous adherence to written law, would be to lose the law itself, with life, liberty, property, and all those who are enjoying them with us; thus absurdly sacrificing the end to the means."<sup>16</sup> For examples, Jefferson had pointed to Washington's shelling of the Yorktown suburbs during the Revolution and to a chance to purchase Florida when Congress was not in session.<sup>17</sup> Farber suggests that Jefferson was arguing that a

president could go “beyond the law” but not “above the law.” Meaning that he must depend on absolution. He thinks Lincoln is making the same argument: not that he has the power to bypass the law, but rather that he can make a temporary decision that Congress would need to retroactively authorize.<sup>18</sup> Yet, as described later, Lincoln would often proceed anyway, even in the absence of congressional approval.

Lincoln also had a previous opinion by Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney (1777–1864) on this side here. This was not the political Taney of 1861, but rather the legal Taney of 1849. Taney had written the majority opinion in a case of insurrection in Rhode Island, *Luther v. Borden*:

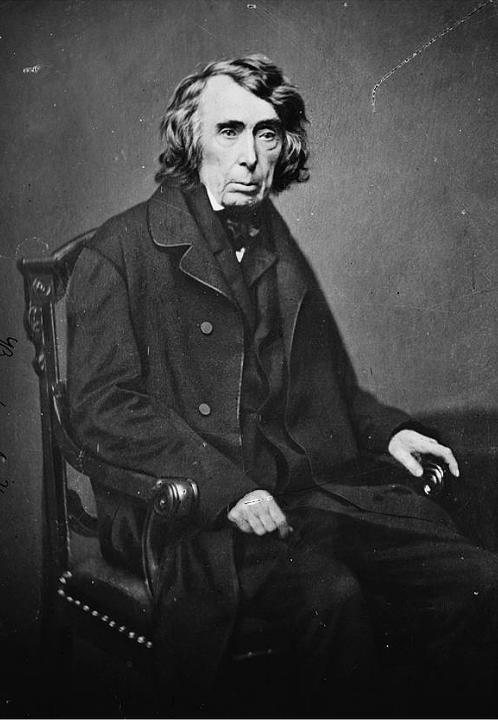
a state may use its military power to put down an armed insurrection, too strong to be controlled by the civil authority. The power is essential to the existence of every government, essential to the preservation of order and free institutions, and is as necessary to the States of this Union as to any other government. The State itself must determine what degree of force the crisis demands. And if the government of Rhode Island deemed the armed opposition so formidable, and so ramified throughout the State, as to require the use of its military force and the declaration of martial law, we see no ground upon which this court can question its authority. It was a state of war; and the established government resorted to the rights and

usages of war to maintain itself, and to overcome the unlawful opposition.<sup>19</sup>

While this was just *obiter dicta*, the non-binding part of an opinion in which the Court expresses the thinking behind its holding, it reflects how Taney had changed his thinking with the change in circumstances. Much later, Oliver Wendell Holmes and an 8-0 Supreme Court vote turned Taney’s dicta into law, in the similar case *Moyer v. Peabody* (1909).<sup>20</sup>

The question of implementing a naval blockade was a bit more complex. In April, Lincoln had approved the seizure by Illinois of a riverboat laden with munitions bound for Tennessee. Tennessee had not yet seceded, although Governor Isham G. Harris had not only refused Lincoln’s request for troops, but had said Tennessee troops would be used to defend the South.<sup>21</sup> Such a seizure was illegal under the Constitution, requiring a warrant, according to a Supreme Court ruling in *Mitchell v. Harmony* (1851), where the Supreme Court had ruled against a US officer seizing American wagons en route to Mexico.<sup>22</sup> Seizure was legal under the laws of war, but Lincoln had not yet labeled Southern secession as a war.<sup>23</sup> Lincoln here was looking for a pragmatic solution rather a legalistic one. Burriss M. Carnahan notes that a draft letter written by Lincoln on the subject indicates Lincoln was not going to allow “peacetime property law” to “impede the suppression of the rebellion,” legal or not.<sup>24</sup>

It is not logically hard to go from here to implementing a blockade. How-



Roger B. Taney, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court 1836–1864. Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Brady-Handy Photograph Collection. Digital ID cwpbh.00789.

ever, a blockade—stopping foreign ships outside the three-mile limit—implied that a state of war between nations existed, which Lincoln did not want to admit to; otherwise, the blockade would not be legal under international law.<sup>25</sup> In keeping with this non-state status of the Confederacy, Lincoln refused to recognize letters of marque issued by the Confederate government, meaning that any privateers captured would be treated as pirates rather than as prisoners of war.<sup>26</sup> This conflicted with blockade law.<sup>27</sup>

Yet Lincoln was forced, by the summer of 1861, into giving the Con-

federates some rights under international law. That July, Gen. George McClellan, moving from Ohio, took control of Unionist western Virginia, capturing Confederate soldiers. Gen. Winfield Scott decided to treat them as prisoners of war.<sup>28</sup> However, treating Confederate soldiers as prisoners of war meant Confederate civilians would also no longer be treated as US citizens, but rather as enemy aliens whose property could be seized or destroyed, according to *US v. Brown* (1812).<sup>29</sup> Lincoln had to decide between the *Brown* and *Mitchell* precedents: civilians as enemy or not.<sup>30</sup> He picked *Brown*. This was settled legally in the *Prize Cases* (1863) when the Supreme Court ruled that even though a civil war is not publicly proclaimed, it still exists, and so the President has the power to decide the status of belligerents, including what force to use against them.<sup>31</sup> This justified Lincoln's following *Brown*. By ruling that a state of war existed, the Supreme Court held that Lincoln was justified in implementing a blockade, even though Congress was out of session and approved it only retroactively.<sup>32</sup> Dissenters, including Taney, stuck to the position that only Congress can declare war.<sup>33</sup>

## Civil Liberties

Lincoln's assumption of emergency powers was based, as we've seen, on the belief that Congress would approve what he had done and that it was in Congress's power to do so. Lincoln would use the same justification when it came to civil rights, but in that area, Congress did not always support

him the way he wanted. A post-war Supreme Court decision, *ex parte Milligan* (1866), would say that Congress granted him power that the Congress itself did not have. (*Ex parte* means only one side's arguments are heard—the government was not given a chance to present its case. This is not uncommon where the decision is simply a grant-or-deny ruling, not based on the merits of the case, or at least so it is in modern courts.<sup>34</sup>)

The contentious dispute over civil liberties, which lasted the entire war, largely began with a ruling in *ex parte Merryman* (1861). The *Merryman* case grew out of the District of Columbia's unfortunate location of being surrounded on three sides by a Maryland with not insignificant secessionist feeling and a general desire to avoid war, and across a river by soon-to-secede Virginia. Capture of the city and especially of President Lincoln would certainly have damaged the Union cause. It was clear that Union troops had to move south to defend Washington. But to get there quickly, by railroad, they needed to go through Baltimore, where feeling against the movement of federal troops resulted in a riot that prevented the troops from continuing, with four soldiers and twelve civilians being killed. In the aftermath of the riot, in an attempt to avoid further bloodshed, Maryland leaders, including Baltimore Mayor George W. Brown and Governor Thomas H. Hicks—although Hicks would later deny it—agreed to prevent any further federal troops from going through Baltimore.<sup>35</sup>

To accomplish this, Hicks ordered the Maryland militia to destroy bridges and telegraph lines, although the Union troops would soon find an alternate route to Washington. After the worst of this was over, but with Lincoln still fearing further problems, Lincoln declared martial law in the area and suspended the right of habeas corpus.<sup>36</sup> Following this, John Merryman, a lieutenant in the state militia and accused bridge-burner, was arrested at his house by Union soldiers. His lawyer attempted to secure a writ of habeas corpus on his behalf from Roger B. Taney, who was acting as senior circuit court judge for Maryland. (In those days, Supreme Court justices “rode circuit,” teaming up with a district judge to create a circuit court.<sup>37</sup>) Taney granted the writ, but the federal marshal who tried to serve it was barred entrance to Ft. McHenry, where Merryman was being held, on the grounds that Lincoln had suspended habeas corpus. (The Federal Judiciary Act of 1789 allowed a judge to grant writs of habeas corpus, which require that authorities holding a prisoner present him before a judge, generally to determine the cause of commitment and to set bail.<sup>38</sup>)

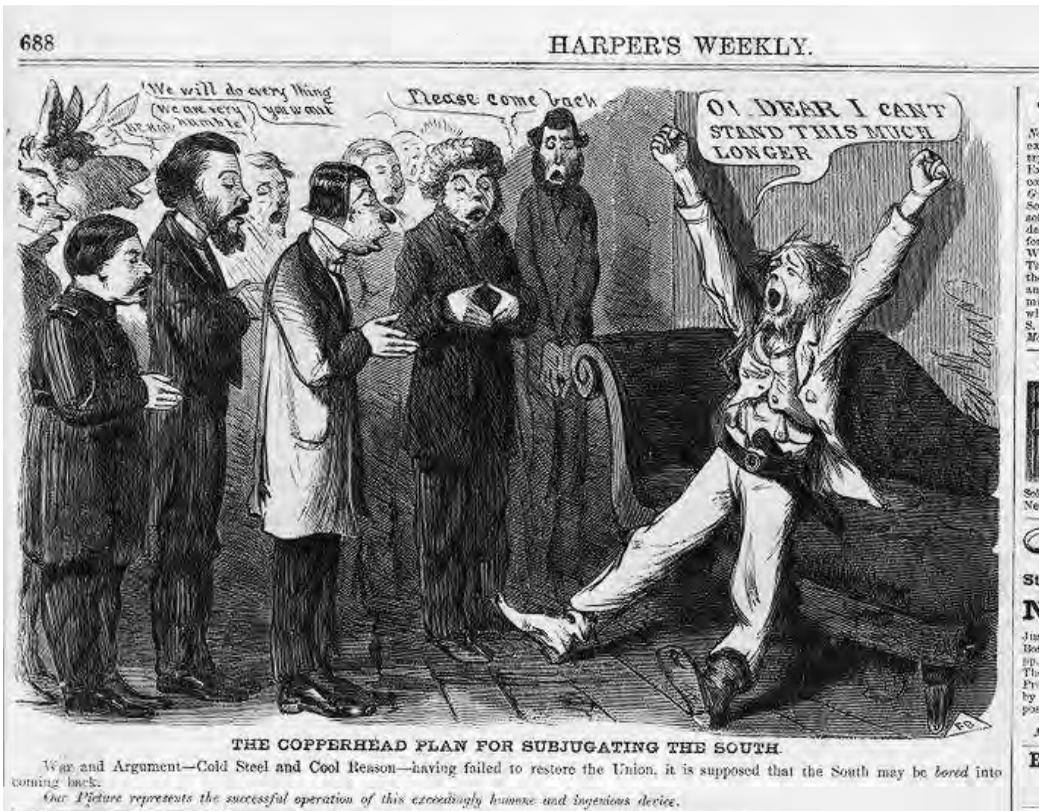
In response, Taney, again acting alone, wrote a politicized, highly controversial, and legally muddled rebuke of Lincoln in *ex parte Merryman*. Taney based his opinion on two key arguments: the President had no legal right to suspend habeas corpus and the military could not arrest a civilian where civil courts were in operation.<sup>39</sup> Lincoln responded to Taney in his July 4th message to Congress, noting the rebellion

that was underway: “The whole of the laws which were required to be faithfully executed were being resisted and failing of execution in nearly one third of the states.... To state the question more directly, are all the laws but one to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces lest that one be violated?”<sup>40</sup>

The first problem with Taney’s opinion, which is still discussed among historians today, is that Taney attempted to disguise the capacity in which he had made the decision. Taney knew that if he had been acting as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, his opinion would carry more weight than had he

been acting as a circuit court judge. According to Jonathan W. White, Taney’s notes indicated he had started writing his opinion as if he was acting as a circuit court judge, then changed the court references to the Supreme Court. But the Supreme Court would not have had original jurisdiction for a treason case, only appellate jurisdiction, so Taney had the case filed with the Circuit Court.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, Taney largely succeeded in making many think he was speaking for the Supreme Court.

A second problem came in Taney’s thinking that the Constitution intended for only Congress to have the



“The Copperhead Plan for Subjugating the South.” A satirical look at the Democratic Party’s anti-war Copperhead wing. Source: Library of Congress’s Prints and Photographs division. Digital ID cph.3c32934.

power to suspend habeas corpus. Taney noted that Article I section 9 of the Constitution states: "The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it." Because this statement is in Article I, the article about legislative power, Taney declared that only Congress could suspend the writ. This was in accordance with previous legal thinking on the subject, notably the well-regarded *Commentaries* of Justice Joseph Story, from which he quoted.<sup>42</sup>

In the same July 4th message to Congress, Lincoln rejected this, noting that this is not what the Constitution says.<sup>43</sup> Lincoln also asserted that it would be unbelievable if the framers of the Constitution had intended that nothing could be done in an emergency until Congress could be called together.<sup>44</sup> The second point seems like common sense, while the first point has more validity than Justice Taney, or Justice Story, would have credited.<sup>45</sup> Originally, during the framing of the Constitution, the relevant phrase had read: "The privileges and benefit of the Writ of Habeas corpus shall be enjoyed in this Government in the most expeditious and ample manner; and shall not be suspended by the Legislature except upon the most urgent and pressing occasions, and for a limited time not exceeding months."<sup>46</sup> After arguments were heard, this was changed, in the Judiciary article, Article XI section 4, on Aug 28, 1787, to: "The privilege of the writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended; unless where in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety

may require it."<sup>47</sup> Notably, the mention of the Legislature was removed. This clause was later shifted to the legislative Article I Section 9 in the finished product by the Committee on Style and Arrangement, late in the Convention. It seems quite possible that the implications of moving the sentence to the legislative article went unnoticed by the convention delegates, who at the time may have been thinking they were done and were getting ready to go home. David P. Currie adds that at least one other provision of Section 9, the one prohibiting the granting of titles of nobility, did not pertain solely to Congress.<sup>48</sup>

It did not help that there was also a mistake made by the military in the case. Even though Merryman was a uniformed officer and could have been taken as a prisoner of war, a lack of communication led Merryman to be arrested as a civilian. Whether this would have had an impact on Taney's opinion seems doubtful, however, as Taney, being pro-secession, seemed intent on attacking Lincoln's power,<sup>49</sup> despite what he had previously written in 1849 in *Luther v. Borden*.

Taney's argument that the military should not have arrested Merryman had a problem too. He had said that the civil courts were functioning, but that was arguable. When Merryman was indicted the following month, in civil proceedings, rules required the case to be heard by either Taney or the other circuit court judge, William F. Giles. Both declined to preside over the case, so no trial was able to take place. (Taking a cue from this, the Army re-

leased three other alleged bridge-burners.<sup>50</sup>) Taney also declined to preside over any of the other sixty or so treason trials that would come up and that needed his presence.<sup>51</sup> The civil court system in Maryland for handling treason cases was thus broken, despite what Taney had claimed in *Merryman*, and Taney was instrumental in breaking it.

The problem with trying a treason case in Maryland was not all Taney, though. White notes that it would have been difficult to find a Maryland jury that had no secessionists on it, so even if a case had gone to trial, a conviction was unlikely. White also notes that the Constitution places a “heavy burden” on treason convictions, the federal prosecutors in Baltimore were not up to the task, and Lincoln did not want to “make martyrs of disloyal citizens in a loyal state.”<sup>52</sup>

Lincoln had justified suspending habeas corpus on the grounds that when Congress met, Congress would retroactively support him. But there was no immediate Congressional approval for this. Nonetheless, Lincoln continued the suspension until February 1862.<sup>53</sup> Later in 1861, Lincoln arrested about thirty members of the Maryland General Assembly, perhaps for fear that they would encourage pro-Confederate activity. Also arrested that year were five Baltimore police officials, on suspicion that they had helped the rioters attack soldiers passing through Baltimore in April.<sup>54</sup> All told there were at least 166 Maryland civilians detained or arrested by the military in 1861.<sup>55</sup> Besides the police and legislators already

mentioned, the arrests included pro-secession newspaper editors, the mayor of Baltimore, and Congressman Henry May.<sup>56</sup>

After reinstating habeas corpus, Lincoln suspended it again because of opposition to the draft and to the war itself. Arrests and convictions in the North ranged from a teenage girl who sent war news to her brother in the Confederate army<sup>57</sup> to politician Clement Vallandigham (1820–1871). Vallandigham was a prominent Copperhead (anti-war Democrat) spokesman, who had written, as an example, in January 1863:

Soon after the war began... Constitutional limitation was broken down; habeas corpus fell off; liberty of the press, of speech, of the person, of the mails, of travel, of one's own house, and of religion; the right to bear arms, due process of law, judicial trial, trial by jury, trial at all; every badge and muniment of freedom in republican government or kingly government—all went down at a blow; and the chief law officer of the crown—I beg pardon, sir, but it is easy now to fall into this courtly language—the Attorney-General, first of all men, proclaimed in the United States the maxim of Roman servility: Whatever pleases the President, that is law!<sup>58</sup>

Vallandigham continued: “You have not conquered the South. You never will.” And: “But slavery is the cause of the war. Why? Because the South obsti-



Clement Vallandigham, Ohio congressman and prominent Copperhead activist. Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Brady-Handy Photograph Collection. Digital ID cwp-bh.01194.

nately and wickedly refused to restrict or abolish it at the demand of the philosophers or fanatics and demagogues of the North and West.”<sup>59</sup>

On March 3, 1863, Lincoln signed into law the Habeas Corpus Act, in which Congress gave the President to right to suspend habeas corpus anywhere in the United States. Yet, this did not quite cover what Lincoln had done, as White notes—because it did not say that Lincoln could hold prisoners indefinitely or arrest people only on suspicion, which Lincoln continued to do,

or at least approve of when his subordinates did it.<sup>60</sup> White observes that suspending habeas corpus does not also suspend the Sixth Amendment right to a speedy trial, but it’s how Lincoln used it. Lincoln also continued to use military tribunals, which were not part of the Act.<sup>61</sup>

After Vallandigham’s arrest a few months later, following an anti-war speech, Lincoln expressed his perhaps more-than-a-bit paranoid views on the Confederate threat within the North, in a public letter to Erastus Corning, June 12, 1863:

(The war) began on very unequal terms between the parties. The insurgents had been preparing for it more than thirty years, while the government had taken no steps to resist them. The former had carefully considered all the means which could be turned to their account. It undoubtedly was a well pondered reliance with them that in their own unrestricted effort to destroy Union, constitution and law, all together, the government would in great degree be restrained by the same constitution and law, from arresting their progress. Their sympathizers pervaded all departments of the government, and nearly all communities of the people. From this material, under cover of “Liberty of speech” “Liberty of the press” and “Habeas corpus” they hoped to keep on foot amongst us a most efficient corps of spies, informers, suppliers, and aiders

and abettors of their cause in a thousand ways.<sup>62</sup>

Lincoln continued: "He who dissuades one man from volunteering or who induces one soldier to desert, weakens the Union cause as much as he who kills a union soldier in battle."<sup>63</sup>

In arguing for preventive detention, Lincoln noted how much the war would be going differently if authorities had been able to detain Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, and others, while they were on Union territory.<sup>64</sup> He further noted that the Constitution makes no distinction between conflict areas and non-conflict areas, as public safety can be endangered anywhere, as when someone interferes with raising an army to be sent to a conflict area.<sup>65</sup>

About Vallandigham specifically, Lincoln rejected criticism that Vallandigham had been arrested just for criticizing the war, but rather asserted that Vallandigham was attempting to damage the army by discouraging enlistments and encouraging desertions. He asserted that this "warring upon the military" gave him constitutional grounds to arrest Vallandigham. "Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wiley agitator who induces him to desert?"<sup>66</sup>

Lincoln went on to say that the Constitution distinguishes between rebellion or invasion, and peacetime. He made a medical analogy: a drug for a sick man should not be rejected because the same drug is not good for a well one. So he did not see the danger

to future American peacetime rights by military arrests during the war.<sup>67</sup> Lincoln declared:

You claim that men may, if they chose, embarrass those whose duty it is to combat a giant rebellion, and then be dealt with in turn only as if there was no rebellion. The Constitution itself rejects this view. The military arrests and detentions which have been made, including those of Mr. V., which are not different in principle from the others, have been for prevention, and not for punishment.<sup>68</sup>

Lincoln had support from the troops on this. Chandra Manning, based on reading correspondence by soldiers writing home, finds that Union soldiers were angered by Vallandigham and the Copperheads in general. She believes the soldiers drew a distinction between the Democrats' loyal opposition and the Copperheads' disloyal one.<sup>69</sup>

Lincoln followed this up with two new proclamations, on Sept 15, 1863 and July 5, 1864. These reiterated the previous policy of suspending the writ of habeas corpus for the duration. The latter proclamation put Kentucky under martial law because of insurgent activity that threatened to renew civil war in Kentucky. Lincoln referenced the Habeas Corpus Act in both proclamations.<sup>70</sup> So, arrests continued, including those of newspaper editors, in the Union and the South, in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and elsewhere.<sup>71</sup> Lincoln continued to believe that there was an organized disloyal opposition in the

North, but Mark E. Neely, Jr., asserts that modern research has not found that to be the case.<sup>72</sup>

After the war, in *ex parte Milligan* (1866), an Indiana Copperhead case, the Supreme Court rejected Lincoln's use of military courts in non-conflict areas. A five-member majority wrote that Indiana was not a war zone and so martial law could not be applied; therefore, the military commission had no jurisdiction. A four-member minority ruled with the same result, but got there by a different route: that Congress had the power to create the military commission, but had not, and so the President had gone beyond what Congress had allowed him to do in the Habeas Corpus Act.<sup>73</sup> Essentially, the majority ruled that a civilian citizen of a loyal state with a functioning court system could not be tried by a military court.<sup>74</sup> The Court also noted that Lambdin P. Milligan's right to a trial by jury had been violated.<sup>75</sup> However, this ruling was not so much a rebuff to the late president as it was a warning to the future:

This nation, as experience has proved, cannot always remain at peace, and has no right to expect that it will always have wise and humane rulers, sincerely attached to the principles of the Constitution. Wicked men, ambitious of power, with hatred of liberty and contempt of law, may fill the place once occupied by Washington and Lincoln; and if this right is conceded, and the calamities of war again befall us, the dangers to human liberty are frightful to contemplate.<sup>76</sup>

## Slavery

Almost from the start of the war, Republicans had begun to take concrete steps to abolish slavery. Among military officers, Gen. John C. Fremont and Gen. David S. Hunter had noticeably declared some sort of emancipation. But Lincoln countermanded this, believing that such actions would not pass legal muster, especially given that Roger B. Taney was still presiding over the Supreme Court. In fact, Manning notes that researchers have found that just before the start of the war Taney had been working on an opinion that would have invalidated any state law against slavery and was just waiting for a test case to come before the court so he could deliver it.<sup>77</sup>

Gen. Benjamin Butler had also come up with a twist on emancipation, a clever contraband theory to keep fugitive slaves from being sent back to their owners, but Lincoln was not interested in following up on that either.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, in August 1861 and July 1862, Congress had passed two confiscation acts dealing with the slaves of rebels. Even though Lincoln signed these, as well as bills that abolished slavery in the District of Columbia and in the territories, Lincoln had his own plan. Interestingly, while it was clear that Congress could abolish slavery in Washington as it had Constitutional control of that city, it was not so clear that it could abolish slavery in the territories. This seems a direct violation of the Supreme Court's ruling in the Dred Scott case, although Susan Schulten notes that Dred Scott was not even brought up during

the passage of the act, so much had the case fallen into disrepute.<sup>79</sup>

On July 17, 1862, Lincoln revealed his plan to his cabinet. Allen C. Guelzo says that Lincoln did not act sooner because of Northern hostility to emancipation, particularly from the direction of popular Gen. McClellan, who could conceivably have staged a military coup. It was a risky time for Lincoln.<sup>80</sup> Recognizing that slavery was benefiting the Confederacy, Lincoln proclaimed emancipation of all slaves in rebel areas as a military necessity. Slaves had been directly aiding the Confederate army by doing work that would have otherwise needed to be done by soldiers, such as building defenses, and thus freeing up more soldiers for fighting. Even away from the military action, the use of slaves for farming meant that more white men could go off to war. While Lincoln understood that the Constitution and state laws considered slaves as property—in his first inaugural address Lincoln had agreed to respect the Fugitive Slave Act and so not interfere with the “right” of slave owners to retrieve their slaves across state borders—he decided the time had come to look past that.<sup>81</sup>

A preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Proclamation #93, was announced on September 22, 1862, granting permanent freedom to any slaves of people engaged in rebellion against the United States, and specifically noting that fugitive slaves may not be returned to anyone in rebellion.<sup>82</sup> The final Emancipation Proclamation, Proclamation #95, on Jan 1, 1863, add-

ed a list of states and partial states in which slaves were set free. Finally, it declared that the freed slaves could enter the army.<sup>83</sup> Many slaves obtained temporary freedom “with their feet,” but Guelzo notes the still-existing right of slave owners to get back their fugitive slaves, even after the war.<sup>84</sup> The Emancipation Proclamation ended that.<sup>85</sup>

There was a major public outcry against the Emancipation Proclamation, in both the South and the North. For some, it was what they had expected from the Republicans from the start. An indication of that attitude can be found in a June 29, 1862 issue of the *Daily Ohio Statesman* of Columbus Ohio. In an article bemoaning the failure of the Negro colonization concept, and headlined “The South to be Given Up to Negroes,” the *Statesman* said:

It is no part of the policy of the Republican Abolitionists to send the negroes away out of the country. It is the covert design to give them possession of the Southern States. Every means is to be used to aggravate, instead of putting down the rebellion, so as to afford a plausible excuse for general confiscation, emancipation and destruction of Southern property, which will lead to a virtual extermination of the white race in that quarter. Then it is proposed to give the country to the blacks.<sup>86</sup>

The outcry against the Emancipation Proclamation was political, economic, ethical, and social, but only minimally legal. Daniel Farber notes

that there had been Supreme Court cases like *Miller v. United States*, *Ford v. Surget*, and the *Prize Cases* that had determined it was within the power of the government to seize property during war, trumping any private property rights.<sup>87</sup> Because of the careful way that Lincoln had written the Emancipation Proclamation, avoiding any moral justification for his actions, it fell easily under the category of a war power. The only other legal question was whether the President could do this without authority from Congress, but it was clear from Congress's prior actions that Lincoln had consent. That Lincoln viewed the Emancipation Proclamation as strictly a war measure is evidenced by his efforts on behalf of a constitutional amendment as a permanent solution.

## Conclusion

Lincoln's aim was to preserve the Union. If he could interpret the Constitution in a way that al-

lowed him to proceed constitutionally, he would. If not, then he proceeded anyway, carefully, keeping in mind that Confederate citizens would be back in the United States someday. Some things done in his name by military and civilian officials were not his idea, but he often supported them, at least up to a point. He likely believed that his war-time measures would end with the end of the war, but he never got the chance to demonstrate that. There are those who viewed Lincoln's actions as despotic, but Lincoln held himself up for reelection, as a referendum on his actions, and had bound himself to the result. A majority of the American public, offered a clear choice between continuing with Lincoln and making a major turnaround, voted to continue with Lincoln.

The danger to the US, as the Supreme Court indicated in *ex parte Milligan*, is that lesser presidents, facing lesser wars or finding themselves in a state of permanent war, have used and could use Lincoln's actions as a precedent.

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# **America's Forgotten Patriot: Mercy Otis Warren and the Writings that Fanned the Flames of Revolution**

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## ABSTRACT

The following is a study of the life and writings of Mercy Otis Warren. Warren was not only a revolutionary, but also a writer and political thinker. As a satirist, poet, and historian who watched the sparks of insurrection grow into the flames of a full-blown revolution, she used her writings to help arouse the passions of the citizenry and fan the flames of revolution. Because she was a confidante to many of the central characters of the American revolutionary period, she became a leading advocate of colonial independence in a period where women, for the most part, were not politically active. Through her satirical plays, poetry, voluminous correspondence, and three-volume history of the Revolution, we can observe the patriot movement from the viewpoint of someone who lived during the period, and just as importantly, through the eyes of a woman—a republican woman.

*Keywords:* American Revolution, female historians, Massachusetts, US Constitution, Bill of Rights, propagandist, United States history

# **Patriota olvidado de Estados Unidos: Mercy Otis Warren y los escritos que avivaron las llamas de la revolución**

## RESUMEN

El siguiente es un estudio de la vida y los escritos de Mercy Otis Warren. Warren no solo fue un revolucionario, sino también un escritor y pensador político. Como satírica, poeta e historiadora que vio cómo las chispas de la insurrección se convertían en las llamas de una revolución en toda regla, usó sus escritos para ayudar a despertar las pasiones de la ciudadanía y avivar las llamas de la revolución. Debido a que era la confidente de muchos de los personajes centrales del período revolucionario estadounidense, se con-

virtió en una destacada defensora de la independencia colonial en un período en el que las mujeres, en su mayor parte, no eran políticamente activas. A través de sus obras satíricas, poesía, voluminosa correspondencia y la historia de la Revolución en tres volúmenes, podemos observar el movimiento patriota desde el punto de vista de alguien que vivió durante el período y, lo que es más importante, a través de los ojos de una mujer, una republicana. mujer.

**Palabras clave:** Revolución estadounidense, historiadoras femeninas, Massachusetts, Constitución de Estados Unidos, Declaración de derechos, propagandista, historia de Estados Unidos

## 被遗忘的美国爱国者：摩西·奥蒂斯·沃伦与其煽动革命情绪的作品

### 摘要

本文研究了摩西·奥蒂斯·沃伦 (Mercy Otis Warren) 的一生及其作品。沃伦不仅是一名革命家，还是作家和政治思想家。作为一名讽刺作家、诗人、历史学家，她目睹了起义的火苗发展为全面的革命火焰，并使用其作品帮助唤醒公民热情、煽动革命情绪。鉴于她是美国独立战争期间许多核心人物的知己，她在女性基本都不活跃于政治的时期成为了一名争取殖民地独立的主要倡导者。通过她的讽刺剧本、诗歌、大量信件、三卷革命历史记录，我们能从一个生活在革命期间的人的视角、以及同等重要地，从一名女性—共和党女性的眼中观察这一爱国运动。

关键词：美国独立战争，女性历史学家，马萨诸塞州，美国宪法，《权利法案》，（政治）宣传者，美国史

**M**ercy Otis Warren (1728–1814) was a poet, playwright, political pundit, propagandist, and historian, as well as “one of the greatest Enlightenment thinkers in America.”<sup>1</sup> Warren’s satirical plays (she referred to them as “dramatic sketches”), letters, poems, and three-volume history of the American Revolution are important because they were written by a woman during a period when women were frequently seen but seldom heard. Warren’s idea of public virtue was the guiding force of her political compass. She passed judgment on people based on their ability to abandon private am-

bition in favor of the long-term goals of the nation. But as an anti-Federalist, she “was a dissenter who wrote on the ‘losing’ side of history.”<sup>2</sup> When Boston was the center of the Revolutionary movement, Warren was instrumental in the swaying of public opinion. Had the entire Revolutionary War been fought on the battlefield, it may well “have remained beyond women’s scope. But since it came home, from the start, to women, they were virtually obliged to think and speak out about it.”<sup>3</sup> While she was not able to be an active participant in the war effort, she was able to voice her opinion, and her “vehicle for political participation [was] through anonymous publication, producing both tragedies and satires on current affairs without revealing herself.”<sup>4</sup>

While Warren has been studied by students of literature and drama, she was virtually overlooked by students of history until the middle of the twentieth-century, even though her three-volume *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*, published in 1805, was one of the first histories of the Revolutionary period, and her passion as a writer was instrumental in the inclusion of a Bill of Rights in the Constitution. The writings of both John Marshall (1755–1835) and David Ramsay (1749–1815), two early historians of the Revolutionary War, have become part of the literature of the period, but “not even one review of Mercy’s work can be found in archives today,”<sup>5</sup> other than an anonymously printed review in *The Panopolist*,<sup>6</sup> which states that Warren “sometimes exercised that freedom ‘in some instances

which a gentleman would not, perhaps, have found prudent.”<sup>7</sup> It has been suggested that this is because Warren was an anti-Federalist in a state dominated by Federalists or because of her gender. Regardless of the reason for ignoring Warren, by the middle of the twentieth century, historians were beginning to take a closer look at this important work and to reexamine the effects of Warren’s other writings on the pre-Revolutionary War period and the Constitutional period of American history.

During the revolutionary period, women assisted the war effort and made significant contributions that “endowed them with a new kind of respect.”<sup>8</sup> No American woman was more deserving of that respect than Mercy Otis Warren. Besides her writing, Warren’s home was used as a meeting place for many of the early Patriots, and by 1774, Warren was interested in far more than just the speeches and debates that were taking place throughout the colonies. Warren was in a unique position, being a member of the upper level of society and having a circle of friends that not only included members of the Patriot movement, but their wives and families as well. From her vantage point, she was able not only to observe, but through her writing, to assist in moving an insurrectional movement into open rebellion and finally to war for American independence.

Warren’s writings can be divided into three groups: plays or dramatic sketches, poetry and correspondence, and historical writings. A study of all three groups is necessary if one wishes to look at the possible effects of Warren’s

writings, and while all are important, her “Observations on the New Constitution” and *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* are her crowning achievements.

Warren’s initial public writings were the satirical plays that were published anonymously in newspapers such as the *Boston Gazette* and the *Massachusetts Spy*, newspapers that were accessible to a large number of the colonists living in Massachusetts, as well as other colonies. Warren’s cultivation of that audience caused her to be concerned about whether it was appropriate for a woman to write satire, but the gender/genre conflict that she experienced was reconciled by her close friend John Adams, who “assured her that her work had an immediate and urgent purpose.”<sup>9</sup> Through these satirical plays, Warren was able to combine her role as wife and mother with that of a Patriot, and as a result, gain a tremendous amount of respect for her revolutionary (and feminine) voice. During this time, Warren also wrote numerous poems and had a large circle of friends with whom she corresponded on a regular basis. These poems and letters covered a wide range of topics, from family issues to political issues—another way that Warren shaped the opinions of others. Finally, in her later years she published her two important historical tracts, both of which had a profound influence on the thinking of many people.

Warren’s writings led John Adams to say that she was “the most accomplished lady in America,” and Thomas Jefferson praised her “high

station in the ranks of genius, and was certain that her work would be “equally useful for our country and honourable to herself.”<sup>10</sup> There is little doubt that Warren deserved the compliments paid to her by Adams and Jefferson. She was not only a writer, but a political thinker/philosopher as well. However, Warren did not continue to hold her “high station” following the end of the revolutionary and constitutional periods. It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that historians began re-examining Warren’s work, even though other disciplines had long studied Warren and her writings.

Born in 1728, Mercy Otis was the daughter of Mary and James Otis, Sr. Mercy was the first girl, and third of thirteen children, making her one of the fifth generation of the Otis family living in Massachusetts. While the Otis family was never affluent enough to claim membership as one of the leading families in the colony, their social credentials as early settlers were impeccable. Warren’s mother, Mary Allyne Otis, was a descendant of Edward Dotey, one of the signers of the Mayflower Compact, and on her father’s side, the first John Otis came to America shortly after the arrival of the Mayflower. After having first settled in Hingham, Massachusetts, John Otis moved his family to the village of West Barnstable on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and it was here that four generations of the Otis family became known and respected throughout the area.

James Otis Sr. (1702–1778) was a farmer, merchant, and attorney. His successful law practice helped him win



Mercy Otis Warren (1720-1814) at the age of about thirty-six or thirty-seven, Plymouth, Massachusetts housewife and mother of three who would later make her name as one of the first chroniclers of the American Revolution. Painted by John Singleton Copley. Oil on canvas, 126.05 x 100.33 cm (49 5/8 x 39 1/2 in.). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Massachusetts.

election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives as the representative of Barnstable County. Otis was not an educated man, and possibly because of this, he wanted to be sure that his two sons, James Jr. (1725–1783) (known as Jemmy) and Joseph (1725–1810), received an education that would prepare them

for college. In mid-eighteenth century Massachusetts, going to college meant going to Harvard, and to help prepare the boys, Otis hired Reverend Jonathan Russell, a relative on their mother's side, to tutor them. When it became obvious that Joseph had no interest in academics, Mercy was allowed to take his

place in the tutoring sessions. During the time she spent with Russell, Mercy took the same classes as Jemmy (what would be considered today a college preparatory course), except for Latin and Greek, which were not necessary for her since she would not be attending college. Instead, she read the classics in their English translations. Through Reverend Russell, Mercy developed an interest in history by reading Alexander Pope's and John Dryden's translations of the classics and Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*. Another writer who attracted Mercy's attention was John Locke, and through his writings she learned about the governments of Greece and Rome—knowledge that she would later use in her own writing. In all probability, Russell's teaching also included instruction in writing, rhetoric, and deductive reasoning.

When Jemmy departed for Harvard, a void was created in Mercy's life that could not be filled by her other siblings. Aware of his sister's capabilities and intelligence, Jemmy chose Mercy as his confidant while he was at Harvard, and corresponded with her on a regular basis, sending her suggestions for her reading. Following his graduation from Harvard, Jemmy returned to Cape Cod to begin studying for a master's degree, and while doing so, tutored Mercy in her studies, sharing what he had learned at Harvard, including possibly the "dialectical, topical, modal, and indirect syllogisms as expounded by Franciscus Burgersdicius (1590–1635), who had been a leader of Puritan thought in the seventeenth century."<sup>11</sup> Mercy continued her education, even though she

never expected to emulate the lofty ambitions of her brother. Mercy, like other young women of her age, was looking forward to marriage and her own family and home. Even though she would move as a woman into a man's world with her writing, she did not display a feminist mentality struggling to escape the bounds placed on her by society, but rather "she passed her youth in the quiet retirement of her home, in the midst of those duties and employments to which, as the eldest daughter, she was called."<sup>12</sup> The adult relationship between Mercy and Jemmy is the culmination of an early and profound bonding between the two siblings. It was Jemmy who first stimulated Mercy's political awareness and encouraged her to continue her studies.

When Mercy was sixteen years old, she made her first trip off Cape Cod to attend her brother's graduation from Harvard. There she met her brother's friend James Warren (1726–1808). A relationship began then which culminated in their marriage in November 1754. This marriage produced five sons—James Jr., Winslow, Charles, Henry, and George—and lasted for more than fifty years. Following their marriage, the Warrens moved to Plymouth, Massachusetts, where Mercy would spend the rest of her years. When James's father died, James inherited all of his father's estate and also his position as high sheriff of Plymouth County.

Mercy's life, while "lived out in one unchanging set of scenes,"<sup>13</sup> was involved in the revolutionary movement from the very beginning. As the daughter of one Patriot (James Otis, Sr.), the

sister of another (James Otis, Jr.), and the wife of a third (James Warren), Mercy was personally acquainted with many of the distinguished figures of the period. John Adams maintained a regular correspondence with her, and she was well known to Samuel Adams, Dr. John Winthrop, Elbridge Gerry, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington. When Warren's *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* was published in 1790, the subscription list included the president of Harvard College, Dr. Joseph Willard; Henry Knox; James Bowdoin; Paul Revere; President George Washington; and Vice President John Adams. Prior to the outbreak of the War for Independence, the Warren home in Plymouth was a meeting place for members of the Sons of Liberty, and according to James Bowdoin (who would later become the governor of Massachusetts), Mercy was a good judge in politics, and many "sage deliberations were held at her fireside."<sup>14</sup>

It is not surprising that Warren became a political writer and that her political views were, in all probability, influenced by her family and her circle of acquaintances. Jemmy encouraged her to write poetry, something that he was interested in himself. Perhaps this encouragement by her brother and the fact that her father encouraged her education might explain why, throughout her life, Mercy remained closer to her father and brother than to her mother.

Mercy's brother Jemmy was, at one time, considered by many to be the most promising and intelligent man in Massachusetts, as well as one of the most able and accomplished lawyers in

the colony. Known for his opposition to the Stamp and Sugar Acts, Jemmy was one of the first colonists to openly defy British authority and in 1764 published a pamphlet titled *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*. In this pamphlet he kept returning to the issue that "the very act of taxing, except over those who are represented, appears to me to be depriving them of one of their most essential rights as freemen."<sup>15</sup> It was also at this time that Jemmy wrote "Are not women born as free as men ... and should not they also have a right to be consulted ... in the formation of a new original compact or government?"<sup>16</sup> It is quite possible that this comment inspired his sister to continue her education and was possibly instrumental in her decision to become involved in the revolutionary movement.

Because of a head injury sustained in an altercation with a Loyalist, Jemmy's star began to fade. Jemmy's mental issues were instrumental in his sister being "one of the earliest herself to proclaim independence as the need and logic of events," and hers was "an intensely patriotic view of the struggle." This involvement in politics "might well have remained a private hobby or curious feminine affectation" had Jemmy not been destroyed by mental instability.<sup>17</sup>

Warren's interest in politics began at her home in West Barnstable while she was a child and continued after her marriage to James Warren. The Warren's home in Plymouth was the setting of many meetings between men who would eventually form the Massachusetts Committee of Correspon-

dence. Based on knowledge of Mercy's temperament, it can be safely assumed that she was very active in these meetings and did not just welcome the guests and retire to her room. But Mercy was not satisfied just to talk about independence. Through her writings Mercy became one of the leading propagandists of the period, a period in which the "Coercive Acts made open rebellion in America inevitable."<sup>18</sup>

In the eighteenth century, satire was acknowledged to be a way "to serve the public good by holding public officials to account,"<sup>19</sup> and writers in both the colonies and England used satire in their arguments both for and against the argument for American independence.

According to Jeffrey Richards, "many of the earliest plays written in English-speaking America are political or historical in nature, and frequently satirical."<sup>20</sup> It is ironic that the dramatic form was used in New England since the Puritans objected to both the cost and the lifestyle that was associated with the production of dramatic performances.

When Warren began writing, she used satirical plays as a medium for trying to get her message out to the people of Massachusetts. Even so, she was conflicted about whether the writing of satire was within the realm of a lady, a conflict that was eased somewhat by support from both John Adams and her husband James Warren, who told his wife, "God has given you great abilities. You have improved them in great Acquirements.... They are all now to be

called into action for the good of Mankind, the good of your friends, for the promotion of Virtue and Patriotism."<sup>21</sup>

Warren did not put her name on her work, preferring anonymity. She was hesitant about speaking out, worried that discussing "war, politicks, or anything relative thereto"<sup>22</sup> was outside the bounds for women. Even so, Warren is credited with the writing of three dramatic sketches, *The Adulateur*, *The Group*, and *The Defeat*, and is thought, by most historians, to be the author to two additional ones, *The Blockheads: Or, The Affrighted Officers* and *The Motley Assembly*. She is also known to be the author of two plays, *The Ladies of Castile* and *The Sack of Rome*.

For Warren, history was seen as "three fundamental conflicts: a political conflict between liberty and arbitrary power; an ethical conflict between virtue and avarice; and a philosophical conflict between reason and passion."<sup>23</sup> These conflicts were the basis of her satirical dramatic sketches and suggest that Warren "viewed history as a vast morality play."<sup>24</sup> The "major literary and political aims [of Warren's sketches were] to form minds, fix principles and cultivate virtue,"<sup>25</sup> and so these dramatic sketches "are representative examples of early American political satire and well-timed propaganda."<sup>26</sup> Warren's first three sketches have one thing in common: "the evils of Tory administration in Massachusetts," and "while her main antagonist is Governor Thomas Hutchinson, Warren also attacks other American Tories, British officials, or Whig turncoats."<sup>27</sup> These



Statues of Mercy Otis Warren (L) and James Otis Jr. (R) outside the Barnstable County Massachusetts Courthouse. Photos from author's private collection.

sketches focused on the political situation in Boston in the 1770s, especially the ongoing dissension between the Loyalists and Whigs. Warren's intention was to attack what she perceived to be British tyranny and to rally support for the Patriot cause.

Warren's first sketch, *The Adulateur*, was written in blank verse and published in two installments, March 26 and April 23, 1772, in Isaiah Thomas's *Massachusetts Spy*. An advertisement located on the next-to-last page of the March 26th issue stated: "To be exhib-

ited for the entertainment of the public, at the grand parade in Upper Servia, *The Adulateur* – A Dramatic performance, consisting of three Acts, and as a specimen of this work, we have excerpted the following passages.”<sup>28</sup> Even though the advertisement stated that the play would be performed, it never was, nor was it ever intended to be. The entire sketch consisted of just two short scenes with stage directions that would have been impossible to perform.

In May 1773, *The Defeat* was published in *The Boston Gazette*, along with a few lines introducing the “play.” Warren began the sketch by saying, “As many of your country readers have been out of the way of Theatrical amusements of the last Season, it may perhaps be some Entertainment to them to see a few Extracts from *The Defeat*, a Dramatic performance lately exhibited.”<sup>29</sup> Like *The Adulateur*, *The Defeat* was never performed in public. However, Warren added a new twist to this sketch, turning her pen against Americans who complained about the personal sacrifices they were asked to make to support the Patriot cause. The catalyst for this play was a group of letters Governor Thomas Hutchinson wrote to Thomas Whatley, a former secretary to George Grenville. In these letters, Hutchinson wrote that “if the colonies’ connection with England were to be maintained, ‘an abridgement of what is called English liberty’ might be necessary.”<sup>30</sup> Warren also added a new villain to this sketch: “the wretched Scribbler, bartering for Gold.”<sup>31</sup> This was, almost without a doubt, Jonathan Sewall, a Loyalist journalist. Again,

Warren did not develop characters or a conflict between the characters, but instead used this sketch primarily as propaganda, trying to raise the passions of the people of Massachusetts.

The third and final sketch, *The Group*, which most scholars believe was her best, was published in two parts in 1775, just before the battles at Lexington and Concord. The first part was published in *The Boston Gazette* on January 23, 1775, and the second in *The Massachusetts Spy* three days later. This sketch focused on a group of individuals rather than Hutchinson who, by that time, had left for England and had been replaced by General Thomas Gage. The group Warren targeted were those who had accepted appointments to the Massachusetts Council, men who, Warren believed, should be supporting the colonies rather than selling out for positions of status and money. This happened because the king had repealed the colony’s charter, dissolved the Council that had been elected by the people, and then installed friends of the Crown. While Warren did not name names, by using pseudonyms, parodies, and little-known facts about the men, their personalities, and their families. Warren’s satire was not subtle. She “called Timothy Ruggles ‘Brigadier Hate-All’ because he hated his country and beat his wife.”<sup>32</sup> Warren painted a word picture which made it easy for the reader to know the true identities of her players, and because she was a propagandist, she was loose with the facts and made sure that the characters were assigned traits that were not positive, and instead revealed the individ-

ual's corrupt and reprehensible natures. Warren believed that many, if not most, of her readers of the sketches would be acquainted with those being satirized, and without this "familiarity on the part of the audience, much of the fun of the pieces—the disguised characterizations, the obscure reference, the private jokes, the numerous innuendos—is lost."<sup>33</sup>

Warren wrote two additional plays which were published in *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* (1790), a book she dedicated to George Washington. The first play, *The Ladies of Castile*, is "a historical drama about political rebellion in sixteenth-century Spain." The second, *The Sack of Rome*, is a tragedy about the end of the Roman Empire.<sup>34</sup> In the introduction to *The Sack of Rome*, Warren says, "theatrical amusements may, sometimes, have been prostituted to the purpose of vice.... [but] the exhibition of great historical events, opens a field of contemplation to the reflecting and contemplative mind."<sup>35</sup> This suggests that Warren believed that plays could be a medium for teaching history and morality.

From the publication of *The Adulterator* in 1773 to the publication of her *History* in 1805, Warren saw the potential for political corruption. Her dramatic sketches were full of references to the personal ambition, greed, tyranny, and despotism of public officials. Warren believed that the public interest needed to be led by virtue and political morality, not personal ambition, and throughout her writings, her vision of honor and republican virtue is evident,

and she is saddened that Great Britain, once revered, is now the enemy of liberty and virtue.

In 1848, Elizabeth Ellet wrote that "[Mercy Otis Warren's] correspondence with the great spirits of that era, if published, would form a most valuable contribution to our historical literature."<sup>36</sup> Ellet would be pleased to know that most of Warren's correspondence is now available to the historian. Unfortunately, much has not been fully analyzed or cataloged. Jeffrey Richards writes that "over a period of forty-five years ... [Warren] extolled, educated, preached, prayed, raged, and wept in her letters."<sup>37</sup>

Warren was solidly upper class and an enthusiastic letter writer who wrote in "an ornate eighteenth-century prose."<sup>38</sup> More than three hundred of Warren's letters, as well as the draft versions of many of those letters, have survived the years and are now safely ensconced in libraries such as that of the Massachusetts Historical Society. One thing that has been determined from the study of her letters is that Warren took her letter writing seriously. In her *History*, she notes that "nothing depicts the characters, the sentiments, and the feelings of men, more strongly than their private letters at the time."<sup>39</sup> Whether Warren meant for the term "men" to apply to women as well is not clear, but the statement certainly applies to her.

During her long life, Warren corresponded with immediate and extended family, men in the professional classes (ministers, politicians, intellec-

tuals, and military officers), and women of her same social status who were, quite often, the wives and daughters of those men with whom she corresponded. In all probability, the content of these letters was also shared with many other people. Warren's correspondence with Patriot leaders such as Samuel and John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Elbridge Gerry, Henry Knox, and others has been preserved and is available for study by historians.

Warren had a role model, Catharine Ann Macaulay (1731–1791), the British historian and radical Whig who published *The History of England from the Accession of James I to the Revolution* (1763–1783). Warren and Macaulay corresponded for more than eighteen years and during this time they discussed (among other things) “ideas, military engagements during the war, the character of George Washington, and the fate of the young nation.”<sup>40</sup> When Warren began corresponding with Macaulay, “She drew the most famously politicized woman in the Atlantic world into her circle of Massachusetts readers and writers.”<sup>41</sup> In one exchange of letters, Mercy asked, “whether the genius of Liberty has entirely forsaken our devoted isle [England]”<sup>42</sup> and Macaulay's response was that the Intolerable Acts were the answer to her question. However, Macaulay also told Mercy not to lose hope because there are still many “who strenuously and zealously defend the injured rights of your countrymen.”<sup>43</sup>

Warren's letters covered many topics: from politics in letters to her husband and John Adams, and in the

case of Abigail Adams, comments about child rearing and compliments on the management of the Adams farm. Mercy's correspondences with Abigail also helped Abigail develop her own political philosophy and to become more confident in expressing it. This development proved to be important because “As a practical matter, John depended on Abigail's political observations.”<sup>44</sup> Adams, in a letter to his wife said, “If I could write as well as you, my sorrows would be as eloquent as yours, but upon my Word, I cannot.”<sup>45</sup> It is quite possible that Abigail's correspondence with Mercy is what helped her improve her writing skills to a level that would generate such a compliment from her husband.

While visiting her husband in Cambridge (1776), Mercy met and visited with George and Martha Washington. In a letter to her husband, Warren recalled Washington, saying how “in his character was blended a certain dignity with the appearance of good humor,”<sup>46</sup> and in a letter to Mrs. John Hancock, Mercy described Mrs. Washington by saying “Mrs. Washington is amiable in her deportment and sweet in her manner and I am very glad [the General] has had her companionship so well qualified to soften the cares and toils of war.”<sup>47</sup> Warren also received letters from Martha Washington and in one particular letter wrote “I hope and trust that all the states will make a vigorous push this spring . . . and thereby putting a stop to British cruelties.”<sup>48</sup> In another letter, written after Washington had returned home following the war, Martha told Mercy that she did not believe “that any

circumstance could possibly happen to call the general into public life again” and that she “anticipated that from that moment they should have grown old together in solitude and tranquility. This, my dear madam, was the first and fondest wish of my heart.”<sup>49</sup> Martha’s correspondence continued even after Washington was elected president. In a letter written from New York, Martha said that she could not blame her husband “for having acted according to his ideas of duty in obeying the voice of his country.”<sup>50</sup>

Along with numerous letters to her family, friends, and acquaintances, another group of letters survived—letters between Mercy and John Adams. These letters were basically an ongoing disagreement regarding her treatment of Adams in her *History*. Adams believed that Warren ridiculed him, and wondered, after having been a friend for a lifetime, what he “had done to deserve this.”<sup>51</sup> At first Mercy attempted to smooth over the disagreement by writing about the “difficulty and delicacy of drawing living characters,” but she said that she wrote “under a strong sense of the moral obligation of truth, adhering strictly to its dictates according to the best of my information.”<sup>52</sup>

With the publication of *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* in 1790, Warren “made known to the public at large that she was a writer, that she was a poet and dramatist.”<sup>53</sup> In *Poems*, there are pieces that show Warren’s Christian beliefs, philosophical writings, and “a poem on the decaying morals in post-Revolutionary War America.”<sup>54</sup>

For the most part, Warren’s poems consisted of the short verses typically written by a lady marking a death, birth, or wedding, such as eulogies to her son, General Joseph Warren, and poems such as “A Political Reverie,” published in January 1774, “previous to the breaking out of the Civil War, while America was oscillating between a Resistance by Arms and her Ancient Love and Loyalty to Britain.”<sup>55</sup> Other poems, written in the 1750s, spoke of her loneliness during times when she was separated from her husband because of his political duties.

One poem in Warren’s book was inspired by the Boston Tea Party. Warren wrote “The Squabble of the Sea Nymphs, or the Sacrifice of the Tuscararoroes” (1774) in response to a request from John Adams. Adams, in a letter to Mercy’s husband, asked that “a poetical Genius . . . describe a late Frolic among the Sea Nymphs and Goddesses,” and then added, “I wish to See a late glorious event, celebrated, by a certain poetical Pen, which has no equal that I know of in this country.”<sup>56</sup> In the introduction to the poem, Warren acknowledged Adams’ involvement by saying that it (the poem) was “written at the request of a particular friend, now in one of the highest grades of American rank.”<sup>57</sup>

John Adams was not the only person of “rank” who was impressed with Mercy’s abilities. John Winthrop, a professor (and twice acting president) at Harvard asked Mercy to write a poem about the indulgence, of both men and women, in the luxuries of tea and other

goods imported from England. In 1774, she accommodated him with "To the Honorable J. Winthrop, Esq." In this poem, she does as Winthrop requested, and then ends by celebrating those who "spurn the yoke."<sup>58</sup>

Warren's dramatic sketches were written for the masses and were meant to inflame the passions needed to promote the Patriot movement. Her poems, on the other hand, were written for those whom she expected to be as intellectually critical as she was. Emily Watts writes that Warren's poems show an "analytic and educated mind attempting to solve the moral and social crises of her day,"<sup>59</sup> and that Warren particularized freedom and, at the same time, "gave it a scope of intellectual foundation simply not evident in the poetry of the men in her day."<sup>60</sup>

Warren never "signed" her dramatic sketches, but she was the recipient of much recognition for her poetry. Warren was the subject for nearly half of the twelve issues of *Massachusetts Magazine* in 1790, received praise from Sarah Wentworth Morton, and Thomas Jefferson wrote her a letter thanking her for sending him a copy of *Poems*, saying that it was "proof Americans could excel at poetry" and suggested that "the superiority of her verse refuted the hypothesis that supposed a degeneracy even of the human race on this side of the Atlantic."<sup>61</sup>

Following the conclusion of the American War for Independence, Warren took a brief hiatus from writing although she continued her correspondence with Abigail Adams, Catharine

Macaulay, her family, and a few female acquaintances. This respite ended when Warren learned about the new Constitution that was being drafted in Philadelphia.

During the debate over the Constitution in 1788, Warren issued a pamphlet titled "Observations on the New Constitution and on the Federal and State Conventions," written under the pseudonym "A Columbian Patriot." This pamphlet opposed ratification of the Constitution and advocated the inclusion of a Bill of Rights. Fewer than five hundred copies were published in Boston, but more than sixteen hundred copies were printed in New York "to deliver them to their local county committees in preparation for the New York debate on the adoption of the Constitution."<sup>62</sup> If Warren's dramatic sketches were written to help fan the flames of revolution, her "Observations," and later her *History*, were meant to keep those flames burning.

In a letter to Catharine Macaulay, Warren expressed displeasure with the secrecy of the meetings in Philadelphia, referring to the "busy geniuses no plodding over untrodden ground, and who are more engaged in the fabrication of a strong government than attentive to the ease, freedom, and equal rights of man."<sup>63</sup> Warren believed that the Constitution was failing to meet "the standard of pure republican principles" and that "the document was not the product of the Revolutionary generation, but of younger men who saw opportunities for advancement and power."<sup>64</sup> Even though Warren believed that the new government was, in all probability, "a threat to

liberty," it did not stop her from writing that "perhaps genius has never devised a system more congenial to their wishes, or better adapted to the condition of man, than the American Constitution."<sup>65</sup> This is not surprising because Warren was a diehard nationalist, and by 1805, the year she published her *History*, the Constitution "had become the symbol as well as the reality of union."<sup>66</sup> Even so, Warren reminds us that there were some who believed that "the secret transactions of the convention at Philadelphia" did not consider "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."<sup>67</sup> Mercy was also concerned that the representatives "ordered their doors be locked [and] their members inhibited from all communications abroad."<sup>68</sup>

The first volume of *History* traces the rise of the Revolution from the reactions and protests to the Stamp Act of 1765 until Washington's winter encampment at Valley Forge in 1777. Warren specifically mentions the formation of the Committees of Correspondence and how her husband had broached the formation of a committee at his home in Plymouth.

The second volume continues with descriptions of the battles of the Revolution, characterizes the personalities involved in the campaigns, and concludes with the events leading up to the Battle of Yorktown. Warren was critical of the English commanders, writing that "they did not harmonize in opinion: their councils at this time were confused, and their plans indecisive."<sup>69</sup>

The final volume of *History* begins with a description of the forces

that were involved in the contemplation of an attack on New York, the Battle of Yorktown, and finally the Paris Peace Treaty. Volume three is also a commentary on the world situation from the successful completion of the Revolution until the close of the century.

Warren's *History* was written from the viewpoint of a Republican. There was an obvious criticism of George Washington. Warren attacked his presidency for "his partiality for monarchy and aristocratic elitist.... and that dignified ranks, ostentatious titles, splendid governments and supernumerary expensive offices, to be supported by the labor of the poor, or the taxation of all the conveniences, were not the objects of the patriot."<sup>70</sup> Warren also criticized John Adams, although most historians believe that her description was fair and perceptive. Warren wrote that Adams had "pride of talents and much ambition," but that in his later years he may have "forgotten the principles of the American Revolution" and "discovered a partiality in favor of governments ruled by royalty."<sup>71</sup> Warren targeted John Adams in particular. At the Warren home in Plymouth, Adams had said, "For my part, I want Kings, Lords, and Commons." Adams shrugged this off saying he had meant "only a balance of power as the Constitution contained." In another comment Adams had said, "We are like other people, and shall do as other nations, where all well-regulated governments are monarchic."<sup>72</sup>

What Adams objected to was Warren's portrayal of him during his

years of service in Europe as a representative of the United States—not her portrayal of him as an early leader of the Patriot movement. Adams challenged Warren’s *History* and “object[ed] to her writing a classical narrative of acts of living statesmen since she was not one of them and could not know from her own experience.”<sup>73</sup>

Warren could have ended her *History* at the end of the war and avoided the confrontation with Adams; however, that would have left things unsaid that she believed important. As Jean Fritz wrote, “She wanted to set the record straight,” including writing about her family’s “position in regard to Shays’ Rebellion, the Constitution, and more recently the French Revolution.”<sup>74</sup>

Today, Warren’s *History* is studied not “because it is the most complete account of the American Revolution,”<sup>75</sup> but rather because we can study the period in the first person. We also read it because the concepts of patriotism that Warren espoused in her writings are still, today, the core of our American idealism.

Warren was seventy-three-years-old when her *History* was published. Not only was this one of the first histories of the American Revolution, it was the first one authored by a woman. Warren had been taking notes as events occurred throughout the Revolutionary period, and for more than twenty-five years she wrote and revised what would become her greatest work. During this period, Warren also consulted public records, the letters and memoirs of eyewitnesses, and even asked friends

to check the accuracy and validity of what she had written. Eventually Warren’s eyesight became so bad she was no longer able to read or write on her own, and her son James, Jr., under her supervision, finished transcribing the final version of her history, readying it for publication.

Warren’s friends also stepped up to help with the completion of her history: James Winthrop, Jr.—the son of Mercy’s friend, Hannah Winthrop—acted as a critic and worked to encourage subscribers and Elbridge Gerry read the final manuscript and worked to obtain subscribers in New York. It was, however, an old family friend, Reverend James Freeman, who convinced Warren to submit her *History* for publication and then handled the negotiations with Ebenezer Larkin, the publisher. The final product was just under thirteen hundred pages, and included thirty-one chapters in three volumes.

The purpose of Warren’s *History* was not to inflame the passions of the colonists, as she tried to do in her earlier writings, but instead to provide a scholarly examination of the American Revolution. However, it is evident that Warren’s personal bias and patriotic fervor had not eased. If anything, it provided a platform where she could continue her attack on Thomas Hutchinson and other Loyalists. For Warren, history was, as Lord Bolingbroke had written, “philosophy teaching by examples, inculcat[ing] images of virtue and vice.”<sup>76</sup>

Following the end of the Revolutionary War, Mercy and James Warren retired to their home in Plymouth.



**Above:** West Parish Meeting House, West Barnstable, Massachusetts. Mercy's uncle and tutor Jonathan Russell was the Minister of this church. **Below:** Stone plaque marking the Otis family homestead at Great Marsh (West Barnstable, Massachusetts). Photos from author's private collection.



James served as Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1787, but was defeated in his quest for the office of Lieutenant Governor. Both Mercy and James fell out with many of their friends—James for his support of Daniel Shays and his rebellion in Western Massachusetts (some people believed that the Warrens had a hand in Shays' Rebellion, but no concrete evidence has been discovered to support this thesis); Mercy for her comments regarding John Adams in her *History*. During this period, John Adams turned down both Henry and James, Sr. for government positions, a slight that Mercy never forgot. However, Thomas Jefferson, cognizant of the Warren's republican loyalty, appointed their son, Henry Warren customs collector for Plymouth, James Warren, Jr. the Plymouth postmaster, and in 1804, appointed James Warren, Sr. as a presidential elector from Massachusetts.

In the decade following the American Revolution, Warren faced exhaustion, depression, and severe headaches, but took comfort in the beauty of her family's large, tree-shaded house in Plymouth, where she lived for the rest of her life. Warren's life had been filled with great tragedy, but she tried to accept this "as stoically as the heroines of her verse drama accepted theirs."<sup>77</sup> Three of Mercy and James Warren's sons died during the couple's lifetime. Winslow was killed by Indians at the Forks of the Ohio, Charles died of illness in Spain, and George died in Maine, also of illness. The Warrens had two surviving sons: James, Jr. was both a teacher and postmaster and Henry became a farmer and

had eight children, which allowed her to enjoy her later years as a grandmother. In 1808, after a marriage of fifty-four years, James Warren died. Mercy had lived through two wars, and now another had broken out putting Plymouth and her peace in jeopardy. But even so, she did not want anyone to think she was "alarmed by womanish fears or the weakness of old age."<sup>78</sup>

In her later years, Warren began to speak out about the restrictions that were imposed on women, focusing on securing educational reform for young girls. Remembering that when she and Jemmy were being tutored, she had not been allowed to study Greek and Latin, Mercy argued that young women should be allowed to obtain an education and that artificial restraints were harmful.

Interestingly, one of Warren's last battles was "a fight for her own identity."<sup>79</sup> In August 1814, Warren was told that the Boston Athenaeum was attributing *The Group* to another writer. Mercy wrote to John Adams and asked if he would contact the library and verify that she was the author. Adams, although he was grieving the loss of his daughter, went to the Athenaeum, located the pamphlet, and "on one leaf he scribbled that was indeed written by Ms. Mercy Warren." On the back of the same leaf he added, "Whose energies and abilities were exerted by the use of her pen on all occasions and in various shapes in promoting the principles that resulted in the Independence of America."<sup>80</sup>

Mercy Otis Warren died on October 19, 1814, at age eighty-six. On her

final day, Mercy wrote that “we are hourly expecting the depredation of the British.”<sup>81</sup> Her son Henry, in a letter to Mary Otis said, “the last fail reed was broken.... My dear and respected Mother left us this morning and took her flight for heaven.”<sup>82</sup> On the day of Warren’s funeral, a regiment of British soldiers who had been sent to Boston in June unknowingly formed “an honor guard for the patriot’s coffin going past.”<sup>83</sup>

Mercy Otis Warren had learned to live within the established roles granted to women of the eighteenth century, yet she indirectly challenged those roles through her writings. She found a way to combine her writing talent and political beliefs, while being a wife, mother, and grandmother, making her the first female historian in America, and America’s forgotten Patriot.

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## Notes

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## **Johan Thuri: A Voice for the Sami, the Indigenous People of Northern Scandinavia**

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### ABSTRACT

Johan Thuri (1854–1936) wrote *An Account of the Sami*, the first book written in the Sami language and translated into multiple languages. It gave him an international platform to speak about Sami issues. During his lifetime, he witnessed firsthand the impacts of rapid modernization on the Sami. The railroad connected Sweden, allowing mining operations and inviting tourists to the area, but it also disrupted the annual reindeer migration of the Sami. Settlers and tourists viewed the Sami as a primitive, backwards people. Thuri understood that the process of modernization was irreversible, but it did not mean that the Sami had to suffer. He used his writings and status to give a voice to the Sami, humanizing them. They were a people with unique culture, traditions, and history. Throughout his life, he remained in the international spotlight, so newspaper articles were used to piece his story together.

**Keywords:** Sami, Johan Thuri, Turi, Sweden, Scandinavia, Kiruna, Indigenous people, modernization, race biology

## **Johan Thuri: una voz para los sami, los pueblos indígenas del norte de Escandinavia**

### RESUMEN

Johan Thuri (1854-1936) escribió *An Account of the Sami*, el primer libro escrito en el idioma sami y traducido a varios idiomas. Le dio una plataforma internacional para hablar sobre los problemas de Sami. Durante su vida, fue testigo directo de los impactos de la rápida modernización en los Sami. El ferrocarril conectaba Suecia, permitiendo las operaciones mineras e invitando a turistas a la zona, pero también interrumpió la migración anual de renos de los Sami. Los colonos y los turistas veían a los Sami como un pueblo primitivo y atrasado. Thuri entendió que el proceso de modernización era irreversible, pero eso no significaba que los samis tuvieran

que sufrir. Usó sus escritos y su estatus para dar voz a los Sami, humanizándolos. Eran un pueblo con una cultura, tradiciones e historia únicas. A lo largo de su vida, permaneció en el centro de atención internacional, por lo que los artículos de los periódicos se utilizaron para reconstruir su historia.

**Palabras clave:** Sami, Johan Thuri, Turi, Suecia, Escandinavia, Kiruna, pueblos indígenas, modernización, biología racial

## 约翰·图里：斯堪的纳维亚北部土著萨米人的发声者

### 摘要

作家约翰·图里（Johan Thuri，生于1854年，卒于1936年）撰写了《萨米人的记录》（An Account of the Sami），这是第一部以萨米语撰写的著作，被翻译为多种语言。这部书为他讲述萨米人问题提供了国际平台。在其一生中，他目睹了快速现代化对萨米族造成的影响。连接瑞典的铁路让萨米族居住地区的开采作业和游客观光成为可能，但也扰乱了每年萨米族驯鹿的迁徙。移民与游客将萨米人视为一个原始落后的民族。图里明白现代化进程无法逆转，但这并不意味着萨米人需要因此受难。他用其作品和身份为萨米人发声，对后者进行人性化。他们是一个拥有独特文化、传统和历史的民族。在图里的一生中，他一直受到国际瞩目，因此报刊文章被用于汇集其故事。

关键词：萨米人，约翰·图里（Johan Thuri），图里，瑞典，斯堪的纳维亚，基律纳，土著，现代化，种族生物学

Every year, tens of thousands of tourists visit Jukkasjärvi, a small town in upper northern Sweden, for the Ice Hotel. Guests enjoy the unique experience of sleeping in rooms sculpted from ice, with an opportunity to engage with the local Sami culture. Activities include reindeer sledding, tasting traditional Sami food, hand-feeding reindeer, and purchasing Sami trinkets. The Sami homeland spans across the northern portion of the Fennoscandia Peninsula, including Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia's Kola Peninsula. Another popular attraction is the Jukkasjärvi Church, located next to the Sami tourism company, where three plaques hang in the church's entrance. One memorializes Gabriel Gyllengrip's (1687–1753) expedition to survey the natural resources of the region, while the other two recount the experienc-

es of French travelers from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many visitors leave with romantic images of the Sami and information about the accomplishments of non-Sami in the region. What did those accomplishments mean for the Sami and their way of life? Between the 1850s and the 1920s, Sweden pushed for the exploitation of its rich natural resources in the north because new techniques made it possible to extract iron. Sweden modernized the region, transforming the lives of thousands of nomadic Sami. Many settled down, becoming objects of curiosity for tourists. The nomadic Sami faced the possibility of violent clashes with settlers, who complained about trespassing and agricultural damages from reindeer. Settlers had little tolerance for the Sami, since most considered them an uncivilized, primitive race. This period was a turbulent time of expansion for the settlers and Sami, who had different social, political, and cultural needs in a modern society.

In the Jukkasjärvi Church Cemetery, many tourists unknowingly walk pass the grave of a significant Sami historical figure named Johan Thuri (1854–1936). Thuri soared to fame when he published *An Account of the Sami* in 1910, with two subsequent publications: *Lappish Text* in 1919 and *From the Mountain* in 1931. He was the first Sami author to illustrate and write a work in the Sami language, which was translated into multiple languages, including Swedish and English. Thuri wanted to inform readers about Sami culture, history, and the injustices com-

mitted against his people by Norwegian settlers. Throughout his lifetime, he experienced firsthand how modernization and race biology impacted the Sami. Non-Sami wrote most of the literature about the Sami in the early twentieth century, so his work offered a Sami perspective of conditions and who they were as a people. Thuri humanized the Sami, while showing how they were active participants in history with a unique culture and story of their own.

Johan Olofsson Thuri was born on March 12, 1854 in Kautekeino, Norway to Inga Aslakdotter and Olof Thuri. In 1852, Finland, then a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire, closed the Norwegian-Finnish border, preventing the Sami from migrating with their reindeer to Finnish pastures. The competition for pastures became too much, and in 1856, Thuri and his family moved to Karesuando, Sweden. As Swedish subjects, the government allowed their reindeer to graze near the Swedish-Finnish border and undertake the annual migration to Norway, then part of Sweden.<sup>1</sup> Inga passed away when Thuri was in his mid-twenties, and within a year, his father married his stepmother Anni Aslakdotter. His father was a wealthy reindeer herder with about one thousand reindeer.<sup>2</sup> In 1883, Olof moved his herd and family near Jukkasjärvi, where they became part of the Talma Sami community. Along with his particular Sami language, he learned Finnish and some Swedish. After his father passed away, he inherited some reindeer, but many of his animals were stolen or lost.<sup>3</sup> To earn an income, he

tended to his reindeer in the winter and worked for mining companies in the summer, co-owning three ore mines.<sup>4</sup>

During the seventeenth century, Swedish and Danish investors opened copper and iron mines in northern Sweden and processed the ores in local forges. The nearest shipping ports were about 300 kilometers (185 mi) away, so the investors hired the local Sami to transport the ores using their reindeer. Investors or the state never established permanent settlements because the mines were closed, reopened, and closed again. Moreover, the Swedish government knew about the rich iron deposits outside present-day Kiruna, located about 20 km (13 mi) from Jukkasjärvi, but they did not have the technology to effectively process the ore. Without the proper technology and mining infrastructure, the state left the iron untouched. In 1856, the British inventor Henry Bessemer (1813–1898) developed the Bessemer process, an inexpensive method that removed impurities from iron. Sidney Thomas (1850–1885), another British inventor, improved upon Bessemer's method by developing a technique that removed phosphorus from iron. These two methods made it possible for prospectors to direct their attention to the untouched resources of northern Sweden.<sup>5</sup> Herman Lundborg (1868–1943), a Swedish physician and eugenicist, wrote, "The state's prosperity and security depend on better utilization of the natural resources in this part of the country."<sup>6</sup> Even though written in 1919, his statement echoes the sentiment of Swedish officials in the late nineteenth century.

In order to promote mining ventures, the Swedish government passed new legislation in 1855 that allowed prospectors to obtain ownership of minerals through a claim system.<sup>7</sup> There were no efficient means of transporting the iron ore to any of the shipping ports in northern Sweden. From the 1860s to the 1880s, multiple British companies such as Gellivara Company (1864) and the Northern of Europe Railway Company (1882) started the process of building railroads from the mines to the ports. Their profits were too low, so by 1891, British investors sold their railroad properties to the Swedish government at a steep discount.<sup>8</sup> The acquisition of these railroads started the rapid modernization of the region.

The Luossavaara-Kirunavaara mountains had the largest iron ore deposits, so Hjalmar Lundbohm (1855–1926) developed the city of Kiruna around the base of the mountains. Lundbohm was a Swedish geologist who became the first managing director for the mining company LKAB (*Luossavaara-Kiirunavaara Aktiebolag*). In his book, *Kiruna*, published in 1910, he noted that there were only twenty small children in 1900, increasing to 241 in 1909. His statistics emphasized the expanding community. He worked hard to implement running water, sewers, tramways, housing, schools, and hospitals to meet the needs of the ever-increasing settlers and their families.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Lundbohm was an art collector and promoted the beautification of Kiruna's public spaces, including the Kiruna Church. He promoted the local Sami culture, encouraging and publish-

ing Thuri's work. In 1910, Lundbolm wrote the Foreword for Thuri's *Account of the Sami*, acknowledging the clashing needs of the Sami and the settlers. He hoped the book would provide insight into the problem, so the Sami and settlers could co-exist, benefitting from one another.<sup>10</sup> Despite his words, he held some prejudices against the Sami, which influenced government policies. Lundbohm understood that the mining operations disrupted the Sami's traditional migration routes, but he never proposed to help them. He did not want to employ the Sami in the mines nor compensate them for losing grazing land.<sup>11</sup> The relationship between Lundbohm and the Sami was complicated, but he was an active force in helping Thuri with logistics and finances for his writing and artwork.

Between 1899 and 1903, the Swedish government improved and expanded the railways to key port cities, such as Narvik. Railroads connected the entire country, making travelling easier between the major cities, such as Kiruna and Stockholm. The Royal Administration of the Swedish State Railways and the Swedish Tourist Association (STF) pumped out advertisements promoting tourism in northern Sweden. For instance, in 1905, the STF published an article that described the land as a "poetic wilderness" and "majestic," where tourists would enjoy the sight of "the mountains reflected in the lakes."<sup>12</sup> One of those tourists was Emilie Demant-Hatt (1873–1958), a Danish artist and amateur ethnographer; she met Thuri while riding the train. They did not speak the same language,

but there were two people who could translate for them. Thuri expressed to Demant-Hatt that he wanted to write a book about his people, and she expressed a desire to live as a nomad. Demant-Hatt returned home to Denmark, where she learned the Sami language, and she returned a few years later to live with Thuri's brother.<sup>13</sup> In 1908, she spent about two months with Thuri in a mountain cabin, assisting and prodding Thuri to finish his writing, so she could polish and translate it into Danish. In 1910, she published her own book, *With the Lapps in the High Mountain*, in which she described her experiences living with Thuri's family. She was sympathetic to the Sami and outraged at the disgusting behavior of the Norwegian farmers. Dogs were an important asset to the Sami, so the farmers set poison traps out along the Sami's migration routes, killing some of their dogs.<sup>14</sup> Demant-Hatt respected the Sami and their way of life, but her attitude was decades ahead of her time.

Even though the arrival of the settlers and railways destroyed the livelihood of the Sami, the state expected them to pay their taxes and fines. Thuri explained that conditions for the Sami worsened after Sweden and Norway separated in 1905. Sami racked up debts from Norwegians claiming damages to their land from the reindeer and the killing of their dogs.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, he claimed that Norwegians stole everything and anything from the Sami, such as hides, milk, and cattle, even killing some Sami.<sup>16</sup> Many Sami started to cater to the tourists to make enough income to survive, abandoning their

nomadic way of life. In 1910, Martha Buckingham Wood published *A Trip to the Land of the Midnight Sun*, describing her experiences with the Sami in northern Scandinavia. When her ship arrived in northern Norway, the Sami entered the ship and entertained the tourists with music, stories, and food. They wore traditional dress, confusing Martha on why some they wore their clothes inside out, and had reindeer, who she complained looked sick.<sup>17</sup> The Sami were a spectacle to behold, with critical eyes. Moreover, Demant-Hatt wrote,

When the tourists gather around the corral, taking photographs and gesticulating, the atmosphere seems filled with exclamation marks... The Lapps go around with small bundles of wares; bargaining and buying goes on while the reindeer stand there drowsy and hungry after having run themselves ragged around the corral, frightened of the confusion and all the strange people. The children, who look like miniature adults, enthrall the tourists, who feed them candy and money. It's remarkable that so-called cultivated people can't conduct themselves with more dignity and understanding. It's as if, for the foreigners, the Lapps are only a flock of curious and sweet animals.<sup>18</sup>

The tourists' behavior stemmed from the mainstream ideas of superior and inferior races.

During the early twentieth century, race biology and eugenics were popular modes of social, political, and scientific thought. Herman Lundborg pushed the eugenics movement in Sweden, eventually becoming the head of the State Institute for Racial Biology. He argued that Sami had no culture or history, and so they were an inferior race. Moreover, he wrote that the Sami never created a great nation such as Sweden, nor did they possess the ability to do so. In 1921, he wrote, "mixed types occur, and not so seldom, among the Lapps which seem to indicate that they have revived an infusion of both Swedish and Finnish blood."<sup>19</sup> Five years later, Lundborg published *The Racial Characters of the Swedish Nation*, where Thuri's picture appears labeled as a Nordic-Lapp type. Under his picture, Lundborg wrote, "Nomad from Norbotten (Jukkasjärvi): Author of an ethnographical work about the Lapps of northernmost Sweden."<sup>20</sup> He believed that lingering traces of superior Nordic blood gave Thuri the ability to write a book.

Even though Lundborg dismissed the work, many people in the world did not, praising it for its honesty, knowledge, and storytelling. Thuri became internationally recognized and sought after for his knowledge on the northern landscape. Some high-level state officials invited him to events. In 1912, Thuri attended a Swedish Exhibit in Copenhagen, where he met the Danish Queen. He dressed in traditional Sami clothing, forgetting to take off his hat in her presence. When a journalist asked about his blunder, Thuri respond-

ed “she kept her hat on,” so he did too.<sup>21</sup> The report highlighted the differences between the Sami and Danes, especially since he did not know royal protocol.

There were tourists who travelled to northern Sweden, seeking the guidance of the famous wolf hunter. For instance, Ossian Elgström (1883–1950), a Swedish writer and artist, travelled around northern Sweden and Norway, illustrating Sami folktales and songs. Thuri helped him on his journey.<sup>22</sup> More famously, Thuri travelled with Frank Hedges Butler (1855–1928), a British wine merchant, across Fennoscandia, acting as an interpreter and guide. Butler published his experiences in *Through Lapland With Skis & Reindeer* in 1917, including a handful of journal entries from Thuri. Thuri described how he helped Butler to use the skis and showed him a traditional Sami wedding. When Butler had the opportunity, he slept in hotels instead of where the Sami slept.<sup>23</sup> Butler wanted a look into the Sami world, but in the comforts of “civilization” when the opportunity presented itself. Other visitors included professors who wanted to learn about Sami life for their lectures. Thuri’s fame offered him the platform to teach others about the Sami culture and the injustices committed against his people, but he unintentionally promoted tourism to the area. On November 11, 1931, the *Norrskensflamman* reported that two Germans fell through the ice and drowned, attempting to reach Thuri’s home.<sup>24</sup> People from the Western world travelled to northern Sweden, hoping for the chance to see and speak with him. Tourists learned about

the Sami, which reinforced the need to develop the tourism sector, including hotels, activities, and restaurants.

In September 1929, the United States sent John Osborne (b. 1868), the American Consul General, to northern Sweden to explore investment opportunities. He travelled the region, learning about mining operations, natural resources, and tourism. Osborne and Thuri spoke for four hours, with Osborne describing him as a “really nice old philosopher.”<sup>25</sup> Two months later, Osborne reported his findings in *Commerce Reports*, remarking on the Sami in passing. He wrote,

Although the development of the resources of Lapland in the past 30 years has had a stimulating influence on all branches of Swedish industry and has contributed materially to the notable prosperity of the county, the northern territory remains practically an undiminished asset. Its greatest value lies perhaps in the future, when conditions favor a fuller development of its vast natural wealth.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, Osborne mentioned the Swedish mines used American mining equipment.<sup>27</sup> He never commented on specific investments, but American companies earned profits from selling heavy machinery and their parts to Swedish companies. Sweden’s expansion in its mining and harvesting industries benefited the national economy, while providing foreign companies investment opportunities. It was a win-win scenario, except for the Sami. Fur-

ther development meant more disruptions and seizures of land from them.

Thuri was aware of the massive political and social changes taking place, and he understood that the national push into the region was irreversible. He acknowledged that the Swedish government wanted to improve conditions, but they did not understand the needs of the Sami, creating social policies based on their own perspective.<sup>28</sup> Sami parents sent their children to school for nine months, with three months off for the summer, and they learned mathematics, reading, and writing. Thuri found these subjects beneficial for the children, especially since they protected them from being cheated by settlers or storeowners. On the other hand, children remained away from their families too long, changing the children's nature. Children started to prefer a settled lifestyle and returned home sick.<sup>29</sup> This education system slowly eroded the Sami nomadic character. In 1913, Sweden addressed these issues with the nomadic school system. Its main goals were to preserve Sami culture and character while providing an education to all Sami children for six years. For the first three years, Sami children travelled with their families and reindeer, learning the essential skills of reindeer herding. Parents were responsible for supplying the children with cultural knowledge that the state could not provide. In the last three years, parents sent their children to a localized boarding school, where the children slept in housing that resembled a traditional Sami home. Teachers conducted their lessons entirely in

Swedish.<sup>30</sup> Only Sami children attended these schools, which segregated them from Swedish children. Sweden expected Sami children to assimilate into the Swedish culture, yet they kept them segregated. These schools remained in effect until 1962, when Sami and Swedish children attended school together. Thuri knew that the Sami had to speak up, clearly expressing their needs and interests.

Politically conscious, Thuri attended the Sami political conference in Östersund, Sweden held February 5-9, 1918. About three hundred Sami attended the conference. The Sami criticized Sweden's nomadic schools, preferring local education for their children. Parents were not against modern education, but they did not want to send their children away. Moreover, they argued against the law that prohibited Sami from settling down in permanent homes, claiming it led to the neglect of reindeer herds. If a Sami decided to settle and abandon reindeer herding, then they were no longer recognized as Sami.<sup>31</sup> Not much resulted from the conference, but it emphasized the need for the Sami to organize and express their needs to the state. Moreover, there were state officials who were receptive to the Sami, arguing the state should provide financial support for Sami organizations.

Thuri, due to his works, was the most famous Sami, but there were others who fought for Sami rights, including Elsa Laula (1877-1931), who was born in the Vilhelmina Municipality in Sweden to Lars Tomasson Laula and



**Figure 1:** Sami meeting with Hjalmar Lundbohm, pictured in front, in Jukkasjärvi, 1905. Borg Mesch (photographer), Digital Museum, *Järnvägmuseets foton*, January 5, 2019. CC pdm. <https://digitaltmuseum.se/021018133364/text-pa-baksidan-av-fotot-lappmote-i-jukkasjarvi-1905-framst-synes-hjalmar> (accessed August 17, 2020).



**Figure 2:** Sami Johan Thuri. Borg Mesch (photographer), Digital Museum, Sweden. *Nordiska museets arkiv*, June 3, 2016. CC By-NC-ND4.0 <https://digitaltmuseum.se/021016466499/samen-johan-turi-forfattare-till-muitalus-samiid-birra-1910-en-bok-om-s-amernas> (accessed August 17, 2020).



*Figure 3:* Johan Thuri's grave at Jukkasjärvi Church visited, 1957. Borg Mesch (photographer), Digital Museum, Sweden, *Nordisk muskeets arkiv*. January 12, 2018. CC By-NC-ND4.0. <https://digitaltmuseum.se/021016466499/samen-johan-turi-forfattare-till-muita-lus-samiid-birra-1910-en-bok-om-samernas> (accessed August 17, 2020).



*Figure 4:* Professor Emilie Demant-Hatt donates items belonging to Johan Thuri to the Nordic Museum, December 4, 1940. Photographer unknown. Digital Museum, *Nordiska muskeets arkiv*, November 1, 2016. CC pdm. <https://digitaltmuseum.se/021016667338/professorskan-emelie-demant-hatt-overlamnar-en-samling-foremal-som-tillhort> (accessed August 19, 2020).

Kristina Josefina Larsdotter. The *Svenska Amerikanaren* reported that she grew up in poor conditions, learning the hardships of life, but she had a strong desire for knowledge. She succeeded in gaining entry to the Nyhyttan's Mission School located in Västmanland in 1899.<sup>32</sup> In the same year, her nine-year-old brother, Matteus, and father, were found bound together, with their bodies beaten and thrown into the local swamp. The police never investigated the murders. After finishing her schooling, she devoted her time fighting for the rights of the Sami.<sup>33</sup> In 1904, she travelled to Stockholm to speak with the Queen and King about Sami affairs, offering to pay for her schooling to become a midwife with the recommendation of Pastor Lars Dahlstedt. She completed her midwife training in Stockholm.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, she wrote the pamphlet *Before Life or Death: The Truth of the Lappish Conditions* in 1904, but she wrote it in Swedish, limiting those who could read it. Her pamphlet emphasized the problems that the Sami community faced, such as intoxication and the right to their own land. Their conditions would never improve without the Sami community organizing and demanding their rights.<sup>35</sup> Eventually, she married Thomas Renberg and moved to Norway, living as reindeer herders. Laula's work was more about the political and social problems of the Sami, while Thuri focused on social problems, history, and culture. With his work translated into multiple languages, his work reached an international audience.

Even though Thuri was politically active for Sami rights, attended events

with high state officials, and educated those who listened, he lived in poverty, with frequent financial problems. Lundbolm built a house for Thuri on the far side of Lake Torneträsk, hoping to detour tourists from bothering him. Moreover, Lundbolm provided regular financial support to Thuri, even gifting him a fishing boat with an engine, but this ended with his death in 1926 from a heart attack. Bad investments in mining and timber operations placed Thuri in bad financial straits. Demant-Hatt sent small amounts of royalty money to Thuri, but he did not understand the business of publishing. His books earned little money, but he believed his books sold well from Lundbolm's gifts. He questioned Demant-Hatt about holding income from his books, placing a strain on the friendship.<sup>36</sup>

Thuri received an annual stipend of 600 kronor from the state. Knud Rasmussen (1879–1933), a Danish explorer and anthropologist, visited Thuri in 1921, finding him in poor health. In his late sixties, Thuri was unmarried and childless and found it difficult to earn enough income through hunting and fishing. He reportedly had thirty reindeer, but his frequent bouts of illness forced another person to take care of them. Rasmussen petitioned the Swedish government on Thuri's behalf for financial assistance, which they granted on March 18, 1921. Thuri received 600 kronor annually until his death.<sup>37</sup> Towards the end of his life, Thuri hired a lawyer to contact Demant-Hatt about royalties from the British edition of *An Account of the Sami*. In 1930, his lawyer threatened her with a lawsuit if she

did not stop withholding the funds. Demant-Hatt worked hard to translate and promote his book, so she wrote the British publisher asking for compensation for her and Thuri. The publisher declined her request because the book contract was between Elizabeth Gee Nash, the British translator, and the publishing company. There were no funds, and neither benefitted from the British edition. Thuri dropped the threat of legal action, reconciling with his long-time friend.<sup>38</sup> In Thuri's later years, he embraced aspects of modernization, such as using a fishing boat with an engine and owning a fully furnished wooden cabin.

In the last years of his life, he remained in the public eye, never forgetting to give the Sami their voice. On his seventy-fifth birthday, he celebrated with a close circle of twenty-five friends, including Carl August Olsson (1848–1926), a Swedish architect, who gifted money to him. Additionally, he received many flowers and telegrams from friends and relatives of Lundbohm, who could not attend the celebration.<sup>39</sup> For his eightieth birthday, King Gustaf V (1858–1950) honored Thuri with the King's Medal for his life's work and a large birthday banquet. High profile friends attended such as Borg Mesch (1869–1956), a Swedish photographer, who travelled with Thuri on his journey with Butler. The newspaper reported that the guests gave him many presents.<sup>40</sup> Thuri had status within his community and friends in high places, but he never forgot his people and their problems. In the Jukkasjärvi municipality, there was an agreement

that the Talma Sami's reindeer had their own grazing land, separate from the settlers. For three years, the settlers ignored the agreement, allowing their reindeer to graze on Sami land. In 1930, Thuri spoke up for them. The Swedish Crown intervened on behalf of the Sami, and they decided with the Sami that a fence would be built to keep the settlers' reindeer off their land.<sup>41</sup> Even with his rise to fame, he kept his community close to his heart. On November 30, 1936, Johan Thuri passed away at the age of eighty-two.

Emilie Demant-Hatt spent a year with the Sami and described her impressions of them in her book, *With the Lapps in the High Mountains*. She wrote that the Sami had "always understood that to be oppressed is to develop a great deal of sharpness and flexibility that, along with his intelligence, makes it easy for him to adjust how he responds to whatever he faces."<sup>42</sup> Thuri lived during a time of rapid social and political change, with the Swedish government pushing into the Sami homeland. Modernization of the region with the railways and permanent settlements invited tourists and settlers into the area, disrupting the annual migration of the Sami. Norway's independence from Sweden mixed with racial prejudices caused endless conflicts between the settlers and the Sami. Thuri understood that modernization was permanent and would continue; however, this did not mean the Sami had to suffer. His book sought to dispel the belief that the Sami were inferior and had no history; rather, the Sami were a unique people with a culture and story of their own.

Sweden based their Sami policies from their perspective rather considering the interests of those they impacted. Thuri argued that this had to do with many Sami's inability to clearly express their needs and interests to the Swedish government. Throughout his life, he tried to be that voice. He was buried at Jukkasjärvi Church, with his tombstone reading Samernas Författare, or Author of the Sami. After the Second World War, Sweden slowly started to abandon their discriminatory policies, viewing the Sami with more sympathetically and as people with needs and interests of their own. The Swedish Parliament formally recognized the Sami as an Indigenous people in 1977, giving them special cultural rights under the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, such as the repatriation of Sami remains from museums and private collections. It was not until 2011 that the Swedish Constitution acknowledged the Sami as a people, giving them political rights.

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## **Mamie Till Mobley: An Unsung Hero of the Civil Rights Movement**

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### ABSTRACT

It has been argued that the death of Emmett Till was the catalyst to the Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950s through the late 1960s. Despite the numerous times the lynching of Emmett Till has been analyzed and evaluated, there is little information that points to the importance of the actions of his mother, Mamie Till Mobley. This research aims to prove that although Emmett Till's murder was an important push towards the Civil Rights Movement, it was in fact the actions of his mother following his death that led the country toward a reckoning with their brutal treatment of African Americans, especially in the Deep South.

**Keywords:** Mamie Till Mobley, lynching, lynching in Mississippi, Civil Rights Movement, Emmett Till, NAACP

## **Mamie Till Mobley: un héroe anónimo del movimiento de derechos civiles**

### RESUMEN

Se ha argumentado que la muerte de Emmett Till fue el catalizador del Movimiento de Derechos Civiles de finales de la década de 1950 hasta finales de la de 1960. A pesar de las numerosas veces que se ha analizado y evaluado el linchamiento de Emmett Till, hay poca información que apunte a la importancia de las acciones de su madre, Mamie Till Mobley. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo demostrar que aunque el asesinato de Emmett Till fue un impulso importante hacia el Movimiento por los Derechos Civiles, fueron de hecho las acciones de su madre después de su muerte las que llevaron al país a un ajuste de cuentas con el trato brutal de los afroamericanos, especialmente en el Sur profundo.

**Palabras clave:** Mamie Till Mobley, linchamiento, linchamiento en Mississippi, Movimiento de Derechos Civiles, Emmett Till, NAACP

## 玛米·提尔·莫布利：美国民权运动中被埋没的英雄

### 摘要

论证认为，艾米特·提尔（Emmett Till）之死是20世纪50年代至60年代末期美国民权运动的催化剂。尽管Emmett Till被处以私刑一事经过了无数次分析和评价，但几乎没有研究指出其母亲玛米·提尔·莫布利（Mamie Till Mobley）所付出的行动的重要性。本研究旨在证明，尽管Emmett Till的谋杀是民权运动的重要推动力，但事实上其母亲在其去世后的行为才导致全国思考他们对非裔美国人、尤其是对南方腹地的非裔美国人的残忍对待。

关键词：玛米·提尔·莫布利（Mamie Till Mobley），私刑，密西西比私刑，民权运动，艾米特·提尔（Emmett Till），全国有色人种协进会（NAACP）

There are a handful of names that are synonymous with the Civil Rights Movement. Images of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers, Rosa Parks, John Lewis, and Malcolm X are conjured when discussing leaders in the fight for justice and equality for Black Americans. The lynching of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till in August 1955 has been called the catalyst to the Civil Rights Movement. There is little doubt about the impact of this tragedy on the movement. However, the actions of Mamie Till Mobley, Emmett Till's mother, following the death of her son, should be recognized as the true push towards the Civil Rights Movement. Her decision to have an open casket and to be present at the murder trial, her push for justice for Emmett, and her subsequent work as an activist, sparked actions in the South that were felt around the world.

The historiography on the murder of Emmett Till can be described as mutually expansive and lacking. Emmett Till's lynching is mentioned in most works on the Civil Rights Movement, however, it is often mentioned just briefly. Mamie Till Mobley's actions are mentioned with even less frequency, if at all. In 1962, journalist Ralph Ginzburg published *100 Years of Lynchings*, the first edition of his compilation of news articles that reported lynchings from the previous hundred years. *100 Years of Lynchings* contains three news articles written about the murder of Emmett Till. The first, published in the *Washington Post-Times-Herald* on September 1, 1955, describes the lynching and what allegedly led to Till's kidnapping and killing. The other two articles, published by two other newspapers, describe the arrests and trials of Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, both of whom were

charged with the crimes in connection with Till's death.

In 1990, filmmaker Henry Hampton and writer Steve Fayer, in their work *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*, discussed Emmett Till's murder with a combination of interviews with several people who had firsthand knowledge of the incident and their own writings on Emmett's case. What this work provides is the intimate thoughts of those that knew Emmett or those that participated in seeking justice for the teen. Till's mother, Mamie Till Mobley, is one of the voices featured in this narrative. It is apparent that the intent of these authors is to allow the voices of those who were there to tell the story. However, they failed in their attempt to highlight the importance of Mamie Till Mobley's actions.

John Lewis, in his book *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, briefly discusses the lynching of Emmett Till. However, his point is to make a comparison to himself. He writes, "As for me, I was shaken to the core by the killing of Emmett Till. I was fifteen, black, and at the edge of my own manhood just like him. He could have been me. *That* could have been me, beaten, tortured, dead at the bottom of a river."<sup>1</sup> While powerful, this also does little to highlight any importance on Mamie Till Mobley's impact on the Civil Rights Movement.

Not surprisingly, the most complete account of Emmett's lynching and his mother's actions was written by Ma-

mie Till Mobley herself. In *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime in America*, Mamie Till Mobley discusses Emmett's slaying and her own actions in great detail. This work allows for a more complete analysis on the impact her actions had on the movement as whole. Furthermore, this work allows us to examine her thought process and how she arrived at the decision to, as she described it, "Let the world see what I've seen."<sup>2</sup> However, she stops short of identifying how her own actions shaped the Civil Rights Movement.

In 2017, Timothy B. Tyson published his book, *The Blood of Emmett Till*. This work seems to be another more complete account of the lynching of Emmett Till. Furthermore, Tyson uses the only known interview with Carolyn Bryant, the woman that accused Emmett of whistling at her, which ultimately led to his murder. Tyson discusses Mamie Till Mobley more extensively than any other author, offering a better-rounded source of information on her. In terms of peer-reviewed articles on Mamie Till Mobley, there is a severe lack of scholarship.

The sources available show two things. First, most authorities on the Emmett Till case agree on its importance to the Civil Rights Movement. Second, and most importantly, they show a seemingly unintentional disregard for the role that Mamie Till Mobley played in the aftermath of the death of her son. Mamie Till Mobley allowed her son's racially motivated murder to do something few others had been capable of doing up until that point, and

that is grab the attention of the entire world.

Violence against Blacks in America did not begin with the case of Emmett Till. The brutalization of Blacks began congruently with their forced arrival in the Americas at the start of the slave trade. The violence bestowed upon them did not end with slavery. More alarmingly, violence against them increased during the Reconstruction period following the end of the Civil War. This violence has carried on into the twenty-first century.

The increase in cruelty against Black Americans following the Civil War is both well-documented and severely underreported. White Southerners were angry. They had lost the Civil War and to them, along with it, their way of life. Those that owned slaves struggled to move forward without their labor system. This created an environment and a culture of hostility towards the newly freed slaves. While former slaveowners seemingly had no other choice but to accept the fact that slavery was over, they did not have to accept the idea that Blacks were equal to them. Thus began a long history of racially motivated intimidation and violence toward and often murder of the Black population.

In an article that focuses on race riots, Melinda Meek Hennessey describes the overall causes of some of the race riots in the South during Reconstruction. She notes, "fifty-five percent of the riots began with an attempt by whites to break up a black political meeting or to keep blacks from vot-

ing."<sup>3</sup> Many Southern Whites viewed the disenfranchisement of the Black population as a successful method of keeping them relegated to second-class citizenship.

The period of Reconstruction also ushered in an era of terror which can be credited to the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan. According to Julian Bond of the Southern Poverty Law Center, "The Klan itself has had three periods of significant strength in American history—in the late 19th century, in the 1920s, and during the 1950s and early 1960s when the civil rights movement was at its height."<sup>4</sup> The Klan's main purpose was to incite fear and to assist in maintaining control over the Black population in their respective towns.

In a letter published on December 3, 1868, a witness wrote about some Klan activities, "About a week ago Saturday night the Ku Klux came into town to regulate matters ... five hundred in all. They shot one very bad negro.... They also hung three or four negroes nearly dead, and whipped several others in order to make them tell them about their nightly meetings, and what their object was in holding the same; also as to who their leaders were."<sup>5</sup> Much like the restriction on enslaved persons meeting in groups during the antebellum years, white Southerners were fearful of Blacks meeting in groups as well. Since there were no laws forbidding the congregation of Blacks in the South following the abolishment of slavery, it was the opinion of groups like the KKK that Black people should be regulated and prevented from meeting.

Due to the severe violence, racism, and Jim Crow laws in the South, many Blacks migrated to Northern cities like Detroit and Chicago. The movement of Blacks to the North occurred between 1916 and 1970 and is often called The Great Migration. Mamie Till Mobley's family was no different.

Mamie Till Mobley was born in Mississippi on November 23, 1921. Her family emigrated to a small town outside of Chicago the following year. When Mamie was eighteen years old she married a man named Louis Till. Louis worked at the Corn Products Plant in Argo, Illinois. She became pregnant right away and Emmett Louis Till was born on July 25, 1941. Although Mamie was incredibly happy in motherhood, her relationship with her husband had soured and Louis Till became violent. In their final altercation, Mamie threw hot boiling water on him after he had attacked her. In the end, she was able to take out a restraining order against her husband.<sup>6</sup>

Mamie raised Emmett with the help of her mother. In an interview, Mamie describes her relationship with Emmett as being like brother and sister. She said, "We never did much fighting until he and I moved alone, and it would become necessary to discipline him every so often."<sup>7</sup> Like many Black mothers in the North, Mamie had to work in order to provide for herself and Emmett, so she relied on her mother often, creating a close bond between Emmett and his grandmother, who became more like mother and son in many instances.

At fourteen years old, Emmett had never been far from his mother and grandmother. In August 1955, when his great Uncle Mose arrived in Chicago for the funeral of a relative, Emmett, enamored with stories of the South, begged his mother to let him return to Money, Mississippi with his uncle. According to Mamie, "The answer was no. Absolutely not. I was against it, my mother was against it."<sup>8</sup> It took a great deal of convincing both Mamie and her mother to let Emmett go to Mississippi to visit, and even when they agreed, they did so reluctantly.<sup>9</sup>

The North was not untouched by racism during that time; however, it was incomparable to the extent and danger of the racism that existed in the Deep South. Mamie Till Mobley had to have a talk with Emmett. It was a talk that most Black mothers and fathers had with their children throughout Jim Crow South. Educating their children on how to behave around and toward the white people they might encounter was often a matter of life or death.

Mamie recalled the conversation she had with him, "Chicago and Mississippi were two different places, and white people down South could be very mean ... even to black kids." She recalled telling him, "If you're walking down the street and a white woman is walking toward you, step off the sidewalk, lower your head. Don't look her in the eye. Wait until she passes by, then get back on the sidewalk, keep going, don't look back."<sup>10</sup> Considering the fate of Emmett Till, that piece of advice is the most chilling.

In a manner typical among teenagers, Emmett did not take his mother too seriously, even brushed her off a little. However, he made sure to reassure her that she had raised him well and that he knew how to act.<sup>11</sup> On August 20, 1955 Mamie took Emmett to the train station, where he hurriedly kissed her goodbye. That was the last time that Mamie Till Mobley saw her son Emmett alive.<sup>12</sup>

This was the first time he had truly been away from home, away from his mother and grandmother, and away from what would ultimately prove to be the safety of the North. He had only been in Mississippi for a few days when he would make a mistake that would cost him his life and change the trajectory of the Civil Rights Movement. The accounts of what happened, what Emmett did or did not do, vary slightly depending on who is asked. However, the foundation of the story remains the same.

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On August 24, 1955, Emmett, his cousin, and some friends met outside of Bryant's Grocery Store. Some of the boys that were with Emmett that day recalled that Emmett was showing off pictures in his wallet and had been bragging that he had a white girlfriend back home in Chicago. One of the boys told Emmett that there was a white woman working inside the grocery store and dared him to go inside and speak to her. Emmett went inside of the store to purchase some candy and as he walked out, he allegedly said, "Bye baby," to Carolyn Bryant.

As Emmett and the boys stood outside of the grocery store, Carolyn Bryant came outside to her car and it was then that Emmett wolf-whistled at her. This seemingly insignificant action scared the boys with Emmett so much that they grabbed him, jumped in their car, and sped off. The boys were so scared that they did not want to tell Uncle Mose what happened. As with most small towns, news travelled quickly, and somehow Emmett's uncle heard about the incident anyway. It seemed that many people in the town had heard about the boy from Chicago that had made a pass at a white woman in town.

When Carolyn Bryant's husband found out about what had allegedly taken place, he was furious. Together with his brother J.W. Milam, he decided that they would teach Emmett a lesson. On August 28, 1955, around three o'clock in the morning, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam arrived at Mose Wright's home and demanded to speak to the boy from Chicago. They woke Emmett up and forced him out of the house. Even if his uncle had wanted to try to protect him, he knew that he could be creating an even greater danger if he defied those men. Milam and Bryant told Mose Wright that they were just going to talk to Emmett about what happened and that they would bring him back when they were finished.

Although Mose Wright stayed up waiting for Emmett to be returned, he never was, and the next time he saw Emmett, he was dead. During the trial, the prosecution asked Mose Wright when he next saw Emmett. He replied,

“I saw him when he was taken out of the River. He was in a boat then.... He was dead.”<sup>13</sup> Mose Wright was able to identify Emmett’s badly mangled body by the ring he was wearing. It was a ring that belonged to his father, engraved with the letters L.T. His mother had given it to him just before he left Chicago.

By this time, Mamie Till Mobley had already been notified that Emmett had gone missing and she was notified when Emmett’s body had been found. Emmett’s body had been brutalized and had a cotton gin fan tied to him, presumably to help the body sink in the river. The Sheriff who was responsible for the case decided that Emmett’s body should be buried immediately, “And so someone notified a few of Till’s Mississippi family members that the body was to be buried right away and that they might want to be present.”<sup>14</sup> Author Timothy B. Tyson makes the following observation: “That they immediately complied probably illustrates the extent to which it was not safe for African Americans to challenge white men in 1950s Mississippi.”<sup>15</sup>

Mamie had no plans to let her son’s body be buried in Mississippi. Against the wishes of the Sheriff, Mamie was able to get one of her family members to secure the coffin to be sent to Chicago with the agreement that the coffin would never be opened. However, Mamie had no intention of keeping her sorrow and grief to herself. Media outlets in Chicago “were already starting to cover the lynching.”<sup>16</sup>

When Emmett’s body arrived in Chicago, Mamie Till Mobley was de-

termined to identify his body herself, even if that meant she had to open the coffin herself. The funeral director there agreed to open the coffin and to call Mamie Till Mobley to come back once he got it open and was able to remove Emmett’s body. When Mamie received the call to return to view Emmett’s body, she described the smell that met her about two blocks away from the funeral home, “At first, I thought about the stockyards, where they slaughtered hogs and cattle.... This was much worse. This was overpowering.... It was the smell of death and it was everywhere.” She continued, “I will ever forget that smell. It was Emmett.”<sup>17</sup>

In her book, Mamie goes on to describe how she examined every inch of Emmett’s body. She said, “Step by step, as methodically as his killers had mutilated my baby, I was putting him back together again, but only to identify the body.”<sup>18</sup> One of Emmett’s eyes was hanging out of the socket, the other seemed to be missing. All but two of his teeth were missing. The bridge of his nose had been chopped. It looked as though someone had taken a hatchet to the top of his head and sliced it from ear to ear, “The back of his head was loose from the front part of his face.” Finally, Mamie saw the bullet hole, “That’s when I had to stop... With all the grisly things I had just witnessed in silence, it was that one bullet hole that finally caused me to speak, ‘Did they have to shoot him?’ I mean, he had to be dead by then.”<sup>19</sup>

After Mamie finished her thorough, and obviously heartbreaking, examination of Emmett she made the

most selfless decision she could have made. She decided that she would have an open casket. The funeral director offered to try to fix up Emmett's body as best he could. Mamie refused, stating simply, "No, let the people see what I've seen. I want the world to see this, because there is no way I can tell this story and give them the visual picture of what my son looked like."<sup>20</sup> And so, the world saw.

Although Ralph Ginzburg had compiled a 252-page book of news stories reporting the lynchings of Black Americans, not one of those stories up until that point received the national and international attention that the lynching of fourteen year-old Emmett Till received. The United States was no longer able to keep its dirty little secret of the American South contained. Mamie was determined for the South to have to reckon with its history of brutality against Black Americans. She was equally determined to get justice for her son.

In an interview, Reverend Al Sharpton noted, "The easiest thing would have been to say, 'No, close the casket. I can't bear it,' but she somewhere found the strength to say, 'I'll bear my pain to save some other mother from having to go through this,' and because she put the picture of this young man's body on the conscience of America, she might have saved thousands of young black men and young black women's lives."<sup>21</sup> According to the *Chicago Tribune*, more than 40,000 people viewed Emmett Till's body.<sup>22</sup> *Jet Magazine* also published the photos of

Emmett Till's brutally mangled body for the world to see.

If anyone thought Mamie's forcing of America to face the world for its history of racism and violence towards Blacks was enough, she was not finished. Following Emmett's public funeral and burial, Mamie Till Mobley shifted her focus on the upcoming trial of Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam. While she was encouraged not to attend the trial on the grounds of it being too dangerous for her and her family, Mamie would not hear of it. She was going to be present for the trial of the men that murdered her son. Up until that point, Mamie had been outspoken about what had happened to her son and her family had received threats.

Mamie's mother recalled, "A number of letters and many telephone calls... they threaten us with words like n-----s, savage, or uncivilized people, people that want to be ornery... they threaten that our house will be bombed."<sup>23</sup> These threats did not make a difference to Mamie. She was going to face the entire town for what they allowed to happen to her son.

Mamie travelled to Mississippi, and with the help of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was able to secure witnesses to testify for the prosecution. The presence of the NAACP was an irritant to Sheriff H. C. Strider, "I'd like for the NAACP, any colored organization anywhere to know that we are here giving all parties a free trial and intend to give a fair and impartial trial and we don't need the help of the NAACP



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and we don't intend for them to help. We never have any trouble until some of our Southern n-----s go up north and the NAACP talks to them and they come back home."<sup>24</sup> At the time, Medgar Evers was quietly conducting an investigation with the help of other activists to get people to testify and then to help them get to safety if they did.

Emmett Till's great uncle Moses Wright was the first to testify. It was a moment that those who were there to witness would never forget. The danger he put himself and his family in to see that justice was served is astounding. Not only did he give witness about the night that Emmett was taken from his home, but he stood up and positively identified both Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam as the men who arrived at his house to kidnap Emmett.

Mamie Till Mobley also bravely gave her testimony. She discussed how she had told Emmett to behave when he

was in the South. She walked the jury and the courtroom through how she found out that Emmett had been kidnapped and subsequently found in the river. Finally, she discussed how she examined his body. The lawyer for the defense attempted to indicate that perhaps Emmett's murder was staged in an attempt for Mamie to collect on a life insurance policy, but Mamie stood firm that she had yet to receive any money and that the money was not important to her. When it was time for Carolyn Bryant to testify, Mamie was escorted out of the courtroom. At the conclusion of the trial, Mamie decided to leave. She knew that both Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam were going to be found not guilty for the murder of Emmett and she did not need to hear the jury say it.

Following their trial, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam agreed to be interviewed by William Bradford Huie for *Look Magazine*. Due to the double

jeopardy rule, where a person cannot be tried again for a crime they had been found not guilty for, Bryant and Milam were not fearful of any retribution for telling their version of the truth. In their accounting of what happened, Emmett was smart-mouthed and did not seem to know his place. Milam was determined to show him. None of what Milam and Bryant describe explains the brutality of Emmett's injuries, beyond being shot and a cotton gin fan tied to him. "The youth turned to catch that big, expanding bullet at his right ear. He dropped. They barb-wired the gin fan to his neck, rolled him into 20 feet of water."<sup>25</sup>

The impact of Mamie Till Mobley's decisions following the death of Emmett were about to have an even greater impact. Back home in Chicago, Mamie Till Mobley became an activist for the Civil Rights Movement. She began to travel the country speaking out about the injustices Black Americans faced in the South and in the country as a whole. When Rosa Parks refused to get up from her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, Emmett Till was on her mind. She had seen his picture in *Jet Magazine* and had written to a friend, "This case could be multiplied many times in the South, not only Miss. [sic], but Ala, Georgia, Fla."<sup>26</sup> Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat to a white passenger

sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Certainly, Emmett Till's lynching was a tragedy of historic proportions. However, had Mamie Till Mobley not forced the world to see what had been done to her son, his story would probably have just been another entry in Ralph Ginzburg's collection of news reports of lynchings. According to the NAACP, "From 1882–1968, 4,743 lynchings occurred in the United States. Of these people that were lynched 3,446 were black. The blacks lynched accounted for 72.7% of the people lynched. These numbers seem large, but it is known that not all of the lynchings were ever recorded."<sup>27</sup>

According to these statistics, thousands of men and women had been lynched in the years leading up to August 1955. While all are unexplainable tragedies, the lynching of Emmett Till had one notable difference: Mamie Till Mobley. Her strength, will, and determination ensured that her wish came true. "As much as my son had to die, that I don't want his death to be a vain thing, if it can further the cause of freedom, then I will say that he died a hero."<sup>28</sup> Emmett Till's murder will always remain at the forefront of any conversation about the Civil Rights Movement and it is because of Mamie Till Mobley that the country entered an era of change.

## Notes

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## **The Making of the Modern Woman: British Suffragettes in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries**

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### ABSTRACT

The British suffragettes built upon the societal changes that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The increased literacy and access to education started to level the playing field in terms of engagement in the political process. As laws regarding women owning property changed, women began to fight to exercise their political will directly. At the turn of the twentieth century, women in the United Kingdom began to picket, rally, and protest for universal suffrage. In the years leading up to the First World War, the suffragettes became more violent and aggressive in their protests, leading to multiple arrests, hunger strikes, and at the Epsom Derby in 1913, Emily Wilding Davison was trampled to death by the king's racehorse. With the outbreak of the war, nationalism took precedence over individualism, and during the conflict years, the suffragettes were less active. Universal suffrage for the United Kingdom was finally accomplished in 1928 with the passing of Equal Franchise Act, which allowed both men and women over the age of twenty-one to vote, regardless of whether or not they were property owners.

**Keywords:** universal suffrage, Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), Women's Freedom League, Emily Davison, Mary Maloney, Millicent Fawcett, Emmeline Pankhurst, Mary Wollstonecraft.

## **La creación de la mujer moderna: Sufragistas británicos a finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX**

### RESUMEN

Las sufragistas británicas se basaron en los cambios sociales que tuvieron lugar en los siglos XVIII y XIX. El aumento de la alfabetización y el acceso a la educación comenzaron a nivelar el campo de juego en términos de participación en el proceso político. A me-

dida que cambiaban las leyes relativas a las mujeres propietarias de propiedades, las mujeres comenzaron a luchar para ejercer directamente su voluntad política. A principios del siglo XX, las mujeres en el Reino Unido comenzaron a hacer piquetes, manifestaciones y protestas por el sufragio universal. En los años previos a la Primera Guerra Mundial, las sufragistas se volvieron más violentas y agresivas en sus protestas, lo que provocó múltiples arrestos, huelgas de hambre y, en el Derby de Epsom de 1913, Emily Wilding Davison fue pisoteada hasta la muerte por el caballo de carreras del rey. Con el estallido de la guerra, el nacionalismo prevaleció sobre el individualismo, y durante los años del conflicto, las sufragistas fueron menos activas. El sufragio universal para el Reino Unido finalmente se logró en 1928 con la aprobación de la Ley de Franquicia Igualitaria, que permitía votar tanto a hombres como a mujeres mayores de veintiún años, independientemente de si eran propietarios o no.

**Palabras clave:** sufragio universal, Unión Social y Política de Mujeres (WSPU), Unión Nacional de Sociedades de Sufragio de Mujeres (NUWSS), Liga de la Libertad de las Mujeres, Emily Davison, Mary Maloney, Millicent Fawcett, Emmeline Pankhurst, Mary Wollstonecraft

## 现代女性的形成：19世纪末与20世纪初的英国妇女参政论者

### 摘要

英国妇女参政论者 (suffragette) 的形成基于18世纪和19世纪发生的社会变革。就政治过程参与而言，素养和教育机会的增加开始让竞争环境变得公平。随着关于女性拥有财产的法律发生变化，女性开始争取直接实现其政治愿望。20世纪初，英国妇女开始为争取普选而罢工、集会、抗议。在第一次世界大战前几年，妇女参政论者在抗议中变得更为暴力和激进，导致多次逮捕、绝食抗议，在1913年叶森打吡大赛上，艾米丽·威尔丁·戴维森 (Emily Wilding Davison) 被英王的赛马践踏至死。随着战争爆发，民族主义相较个人主义占上风，在冲突年代期间，妇女参政论者的活跃度有所减少。随着1928年《男女平等选举权法》 (Equal Franchise Act) 的通过，英国普选终于实现，该法允许超过21岁的男女参与投票，不管其是否是财产所有人。

关键词：普选，英国妇女社会政治同盟(WSPU)，全国妇女参政协会联盟(NUWSS)， 妇女自由联盟，艾米丽·戴维森(Emily Davison)，Mary Maloney， 米利琴特·费塞特(Millicent Fawcett)， 艾米琳·潘克斯特(Emmeline Pankhurst)， 玛丽·沃斯通克拉夫特(Mary Wollstonecraft)

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a tumultuous period in terms of social upheaval. The humanist ideology of the Enlightenment led toward a radicalization of women in the quest for equality. What did it mean for a modern woman to be equal? Universal suffrage. The key obstacle standing in the way were the coverture laws, laws that considered a married couple as a single political voice and gave control over the woman's property first to her father, then to her husband, and finally her sons. The Married Women's Property Act of 1882 was the first step toward universal suffrage. For British society, the path toward political power began with being a property owner. From that, an increase in literacy and education and a degree of economic independence by working outside of the home helped secure the votes for women in 1928.

What begins in the long nineteenth century was a progressive movement to include women in spheres of influence that until that point were generally closed to them. A woman's right to inherit had always been a bit of a gray area; if a male of the peerage died without a male heir, the land could either be forfeited back to the crown, passed on to his daughter and her husband, or held

by that daughter until she produced a living male heir. During the sixteenth century, Elizabeth I made significant progress toward equal inheritance and the rights of a single woman, but that movement forward did not last. By the early eighteenth century, around 5 percent of titled landholders were women.<sup>1</sup> If women wanted to be involved in the social, economic, and political control of their lives, they had to own property.

The Married Woman's Property Act of 1870 was the catalyst that led to the full investiture of women in the workforce and political spheres. Prior to this act of Parliament, anything that belonged to the woman was ceded to the man upon marriage.<sup>2</sup> The Act was further amended in 1882 to secure the woman's right to control not only the money that she earned but also all other properties that the modern woman would consider rightfully hers. Even with those steps forward, women did not have full property rights, that is, the right to hold and dispose of property in equal terms to men, until 1926.<sup>3</sup> Since universal suffrage did not happen until 1928, one could interpret a strong connection between property and politics.

Income is an absolute necessity for the self-sufficiency of women. Prior to the start of the First World War, the

percentage of unmarried female workers in Britain was around 69 percent and the percentage of married female workers was less than ten percent.<sup>4</sup> Scott and Tilly attribute this to the rate of industrialization in Britain, and the sub-sequential increase in technical difficulty in the jobs that were created.<sup>5</sup> While this theory has some merit, one must also consider that the majority of women employed outside of their home worked as domestics, or in childrearing, garment manufacture, and early education.<sup>6</sup> Those fields were not changed much in the post-industrialized workforce in Britain, as the positions for women within that workforce were tightly restricted to those fields.<sup>7</sup> It really took the war to bring women into the industrialized workforce.

It was necessary for the good of the commonwealth that women entered the workforce during the war—manufacturing, transportation, even medical careers became available to women during this period.<sup>8</sup> This was not intended to be a permanent move into the workforce. Once the conflict ended and the men came home, the women workers were expected to happily return to the status quo: women mostly in the home and men as the primary earners. Women were going into different careers, but the number of women workers remained almost stagnant.<sup>9</sup>

There were two major contributing factors to the decision that working- and lower-class women made in regards to joining or remaining in the workforce: utility and satisfaction.<sup>10</sup> The neoclassical economic theory of weigh-

ing the wage rate against the reserve rate presented a very technical analysis of one of the most important decisions working women had to face—what was more important, time with their families or providing for them?<sup>11</sup> This would continue to be a deciding factor in the rates of women's employment throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Second to economic stability, education was paramount in the creation of modern women. Without the steps taken to formalize education at all levels—primary, secondary, collegiate—the future for women would have been dark, dim, and an even greater struggle for equality than it has been. The primary themes of the Enlightenment, such as progress and liberty, were fundamental in generating a change in British society that made formal education for women a possibility. Unfortunately for most working- and lower-class women, the opportunity for education still had restrictions until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Education was expanded to include women. First, it was more for fashionable subjects, such as homemaking and music. Then finally as the merchant class increased and the need for women to be involved in the family business grew, those families began educating their daughters in the subjects necessary for business. Through the renaissance and into the enlightenment, the literacy rate for Britain began to increase, from roughly 60 percent for men and 30 percent for women to almost 100 percent by 1880.<sup>12</sup> Part of this increase

can be tied to the diffusion of the printing press, which allowed for an increase in access to the written word. Women were by no means entirely ignorant prior to industrialization. Noble women, and eventually middle-class women, needed to be able to manage the household, balance budgets, and were typically responsible for the early education of the children of the household. Peasants and the working class had to handle on the spot calculations in the marketplace, as often the purchases made were smaller than the coinage they were using.<sup>13</sup> The rates of education for working-class girls were a pendulum that swung back and forth between acceptability and taboo during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>14</sup>

Formal education was a primary catalyst in creating the idea of the modern woman because of their exposure to ideas and theories while attending university. The Women's Colleges of Cambridge and Oxford were opened in 1869 and 1879, respectively.<sup>15</sup> If education was key to the self-sufficient single woman, this was where the attitudes of women toward their role in the world were challenged and remade. While it was still expected for women to exercise much of their focus on running the household and caring for the children, the advances to society that came out of the Industrial Revolution made the increase in education of women a near necessity.

As evidence has shown, this push toward modernity did not happen overnight or unilaterally. Those with power and influence had easier access to ed-

ucation simply because they had the funds to invest in the tools necessary for education. An investiture in public education created not only jobs for middle-class women, but education for working-class children.<sup>16</sup> The Elementary Education Act of 1880 changed the lives of the daughters of the working class, enabling them to have access to the academic life from an early age. Yes, women were still expected to be proper wives and mothers, but the children of these women became the revolutionary women who would fight for political equality in thirty years.

Education was uniquely important in the creation of the modern woman for so many reasons. The exposure to new ideas that happens in formal education does not happen to the same degree within the home. Formal education provides a social setting for the growth and development of ideologies that twenty-first-century women tend to take for granted—women working outside of the home on an almost even playing field with men, women voting in elections, and women holding political office.

By 1900, upper- and middle-class British women were provided with more educational opportunities than ever before. The response to this was hauntingly similar to what women face in twenty-first-century education: resentment, token representation, and social hindrance.<sup>17</sup> Even though these women were able to study alongside their male counterparts, Oxford would not allow them to earn degrees until 1920 and Cambridge would not until

1948.<sup>18</sup> Most British universities did their best to limit the number of women in attendance, attempting to further dissuade them from seeking to further their education and, along with it, their independence. Women were not to be denied, and the percentage of female students enrolled grew from 16 percent at the turn of the twentieth century to nearly a quarter by the end of the 1920s.<sup>19</sup> Higher education for women was well on its way to becoming the new normal.

The final major piece in creating the modern woman was universal suffrage. Economic stability and education were important, but without the ability to shape and control their political destinies, women were still short of achieving their true potential. The path to universal suffrage in Britain was as nonlinear as working and education access. The fight was long, arduous, and deeply unequal. Women's voting rights faced many challenges, some from the obvious offender, the patriarchy, and some from the internalized misogyny of fellow women. Compound those factors with the global scale conflict that Britain was dealing with during and immediately preceding some of the staunchest campaigns for universal suffrage and the fight seemed doomed from the start.

Women's political rights were born out of hundreds of years of work by women and men who believed in the equality of the genders and the rights for every person to have a level of control over their lives. Modern feminism built upon the writings of women like Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), who

raged against the hero of the Enlightenment, Rousseau (1712–1778), for his flippant and sexist disregard for women.<sup>20</sup> This fight built upon the foundations of self-sufficiency and education and completely changed the idea of women for a modern world.

The Women's Movement in Britain built upon antislavery sentiment and the push for women's equality for which Mary Wollstonecraft so eloquently fanned the fire. Born out of these marches were the laws that laid the foundation for the suffragist movement and its eventual success, the Reform Act of 1884.<sup>21</sup> This Act restricted the number of electors and limited the amount of funds that investors could funnel into the campaign funds of politicians, essentially preventing those investors from buying candidates who would, upon election, be beholden to the whims of those investors. This paved the way for married, property-owning women of the time to have direct, consequential influence on politics.<sup>22</sup> The Reform Act built upon the Married Women's Property Act 1882 to further expand voting to women. In 1893, there were approximately 110,000 women on the electoral roll and of those women, barely more than ninety thousand voted. Fifteen years later in 1908, there were almost a quarter of a million women on the voting roll and of those, 190,000 cast votes.<sup>23</sup> Just like in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, women wanted to be involved in the political process.

As the suffrage movement began to take hold, ordinary women start to become extraordinary. Millicent

Fawcett (1874–1929) was one of these women. Millicent Fawcett was a feminist, leading suffragist, and creator of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), a non-violent suffragist organization. She rallied her group to fight for women to have the right to vote alongside many other prominent members, men such as John Stuart Mill and Henry Fawcett, who became her husband in 1867 and was fourteen years her senior and a fellow militant for the right for women to vote. She wrote thirteen books about suffrage and the political atmosphere of the time during the war and supported the efforts of the British during World War I; if women would support the war efforts, then suffrage would be granted at the end of it.<sup>24</sup>

In *Women's Suffrage*, 1912, Fawcett wrote about how there were others who fought for the rights of women. While these other groups were few and far between, their existence and numbers helped further the cause more than what she would have accomplished on her own. Millicent Fawcett's NUWSS grew to be a powerful source for women's rights thanks to Millicent and the other countless people who allied with her. As of January 1909, there were seventy affiliated societies and by October 1911, there were 305 societies involved in NUWSS.<sup>25</sup>

In 1925 at the New Year's Honors, Fawcett was granted the title of Dame Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire by King George V in the civil division, she was granted this title for her long-fought battle for women's

rights.<sup>26</sup> A statue of Dame Fawcett was erected in Parliament Square in 2018—the first of a woman to ever be displayed there.<sup>27</sup>

Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928) and her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, fought for women's rights and used more militant tactics. Driven by what Fawcett was doing, the Pankhurst women fought hard and even went to jail for rallying for women's rights. Sylvia was the voice of the Women's Social and Political Union and suffered more than any other suffragette at that time; while imprisoned she was force-fed and subjected to violent beatings.<sup>28</sup> Her mother, Emmeline, was highly involved with politics thanks to her husband's unsuccessful runs for Parliament.<sup>29</sup> Christabel studied law but was not allowed to practice because of her gender. She rallied with the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and fought for women's rights. She later became the Dame Commander of the British Empire.<sup>30</sup>

The Third Women's Parliament increased the visibility of the Pankhursts and helped secure their place as major players in the suffragette movement. When Mrs. Pankhurst marched with a group of supporters, both men and women, while carrying a petition to Parliament. This act led to her arrest and subsequently drove more people from her supporters to rally against the government.<sup>31</sup> The WSPU continued to stay strong and fight for women's rights even while the Pankhursts served time in jail. In 1908, Mary Maloney (c.1870–unknown), a fellow suffragette and

Women's Freedom League member, protested Mr. Churchill's speaking engagements by ringing a bell every time he tried to speak, to frustrate him and force him to feel some of the frustration women experienced. Churchill eventually abandoned the argument, saying, "The amazing episode concluded."<sup>32</sup>

Just as earlier women faced resistance against them owning and keeping property and entering higher education, there was resistance focused on the women's suffrage movement. The Primrose League, a Tory subsidiary, focused on conservatism and worked against the enfranchisement of women—a woman's nature was not strong enough to handle the stress of politics. If women were exposed to something so seedy, it would tarnish their purity past the point of no return. Worse yet, it would lessen them in the eyes of their husbands and would come at the cost of their influence over their husbands.<sup>33</sup>

Resistance to women in politics was often violent, and that resistance was met with violence in return. There is a clear comparison between the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and the British Suffragette movement of the early twentieth century. Sylvia Pankhurst urged women to fight back, arguing that if the male police force were trained in unarmed combat, the suffragettes too should be trained.<sup>34</sup> Once these women militarized themselves, violence was inevitable. Things started simply, with women like Eugenie Bouvier throwing stones at the Home Office, and progressed rapidly from there.<sup>35</sup> Mary Leigh, a member of both the WSPU and the East London

Federation of Suffragettes, repeatedly committed acts of violence in the name of equal rights for women. While incarcerated, Leigh was force-fed by guards to prevent her becoming a martyr for the cause.<sup>36</sup> That incident was not her last run-in with the law, nor was she the only woman who was fed against her will while incarcerated. Charlotte Marsh, a compatriot of Leigh's, was force-fed 139 times during her repeated incarcerations.<sup>37</sup>

One moment that appeared to change the tone of the suffragette movement was the trampling death of Emily Davison in 1913.<sup>38</sup> Davison (1872–1913) was a member of the WSPU and a militant feminist. Prior to her death she was arrested nine times, suffered through seven hunger strikes, and was force-fed by police on forty-nine occasions.<sup>39</sup> The morning of the derby at Epsom on June 4, Davison and other suffragettes were at the track protesting in an attempt to gain notice by the King and Queen. Davison entered the track and grabbed the reins of the king's horse Anmer, who rolled over mildly injuring his jockey, Herbert Jones, and fatally injuring Davison. She never provided a clear motive for her actions—whether it was to pin a ribbon onto the king's horse, to cross the track as a feat to draw attention to the cause, or if she genuinely intended to take her own life. Nonetheless, Davison's actions catapulted the suffragette cause into the daily life of the British subjects at the time.

For the suffragettes, both in England and abroad, everything changed in July of 1914. Once the war broke out,

most of the suffragettes adapted their focus from exclusively working toward the women's vote to either nationalistic support of the troops in war or charitable works for poor women and children at home.<sup>40</sup> Millicent Fawcett and Emmeline Pankhurst called for a cessation of militancy and campaigning during the war, intending to focus on the good of Britain rather than pushing forward for universal suffrage.<sup>41</sup> Those men and women who agreed with Pankhurst and Fawcett wanted to put the needs of their country ahead of the needs of the citizens, although some saw it as putting the needs of the citizens ahead of the political desires of the few.

It comes as no surprise that Christabel Pankhurst and Nina Boyle refused to put a stop to their politicking. Those women saw the cause as the truest form of liberty and that no matter what was going on around the world and at home, to cease their agitations would be tantamount to giving up.<sup>42</sup> They rejected the traditional roles women played in times of war, refusing to play nursemaids to wounded soldiers.<sup>43</sup> Their perseverance paid off to an extent.

Toward the end of the Great War, the Parliament of the United Kingdom put forth legislation that cemented women's place in the political arena. The Representation of the People Act, ratified by Parliament in 1918, tripled the number of voters in the United King-

dom. With it, all men over the age of twenty-one, or those nineteen and older who served in the First World War, were now able to cast votes.<sup>44</sup> Within the law, there was also a provision for women's voting rights, expanding them to include women over the age of thirty who met at least one of the specified qualifications—with being property owner or a member of or married to a member of the local government register being the most likely qualifications to be met.<sup>45</sup> Their hard work still not finished, women continued to fight for what was the most important qualification as a modern woman, political equality. The year 1918 had an additional surprise, and with the passing of the Qualification of Women Act, women finally secured their right to be part of the political destiny of their country by serving in Parliament.

The hard-fought creation of the modern woman took centuries for some traits and mere decades for others. After over a half of century of progress, with some backslides along the way, and a world war, women finally achieved universal and equal suffrage with men after the passing of the Representation of the People act of 1928. Women could finally have the same access to the right to vote and at the same age as men. The modern woman, as those of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries would see her, is born.

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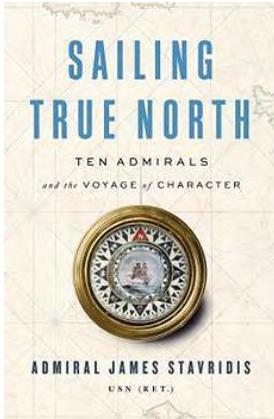
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## Book Review: Admiral James Stavridis's *Sailing True North: Ten Admirals and the Voyage of Character*

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*Sailing True North: Ten Admirals and the Voyage of Character*. New York: Penguin Press, 2019. ISBN 0525559930, pp. 336. Hardcover \$28.00.

Author Admiral James Stavridis served in the United States Navy for over thirty years. From his modest beginnings as a midshipman at the US Naval Academy at Annapolis to his final tour of duty as a four-star admiral and Supreme Allied Commander at NATO, he has had a lot of time to reflect on leadership and character and has seen many examples of both firsthand. *Sailing True North: Ten Admirals and the Voyage of Character* offers biographical sketches of prominent naval figures from Ancient Greece to the present-day United States, with Admiral Stavridis's interpretation on what made them leaders of great character.

To this reviewer, the book's greatest contribution is Chapter Two. While serving as an executive assis-

tant to Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig, Stavridis was impressed by the secretary's insistence that his staff become acquainted with the history and culture of any nations they were scheduled to visit. In 1999, this led him to study Zheng He before a trip to the People's Republic of China. As a servant to China's Yongle Emperor by mid-1430, Zheng He led the largest naval excursion in recorded history up to that time, with over three hundred ships and 27,000 crewmen taking part. Stavridis vividly put the voyage into a context that American readers could understand: "For comparison, imagine if the United States had determined to send people to the moon on the first rocket it ever built—and succeeded" (40). By the mid-1630s, Zheng He had led sev-

en voyages that defeated pirates in the Straits of Malacca and reached locations in India, the Arabian Peninsula, and East Africa.

Zheng He's accomplishments are frequently invoked to justify China's modern-day claims to island chains in the South China Sea and beyond; the grandiosity of his voyages in the fifteenth century are well remembered as modern-day China seeks to expand its influence throughout the world. When Stavridis offered toasts to Zheng He, the Chinese were impressed and honored by his knowledge of their most celebrated admiral and frequently offered toasts to Chester Nimitz in return. Stavridis's study of Zheng He gave him a clearer picture of the mindset of his Chinese counterparts and made his work there that much easier in an object lesson of how studying history remains relevant today.

Each chapter of *Sailing True North* presents a different admiral from history and highlights the aspects of their character most worthy of emulation. The chapters discuss the ability of Themistocles to inspire, the determination of Jacky Fisher and Elmo Zumwalt to effect revolutionary change, Chester Nimitz's willingness to trust in and delegate to his subordinates, and the future-mindedness and drive to innovate of Hyman Rickover and Grace Hopper. An eleventh chapter offers shorter vignettes that present the resilience of William McRaven and the trailblazing courage of Michelle Howard in the present day.

While he concentrated on the positive, Stavridis wisely sought to learn from his subjects' flaws as well. Themistocles crossed the line from confidence to arrogance, leading to his eventual disgrace and exile. Rickover's explosive temper may have motivated his subordinates to succeed, but it also may not have been the most productive use of energy. Stavridis also alluded to instances in his own career where came up short, reminding the reader that failure can be just as instructive as success.

Like two of Admiral Stavridis's previous books, *Destroyer Captain* and *The Accidental Admiral*, *Sailing True North* is a memoir of sorts. He presents twelve admirals and highlights the lessons that he himself learned by studying them throughout his career. It is important to note that these are not the only admirals worthy of study, nor are Stavridis's lessons the only ones to be learned from them. Fully aware of this, he provided one or two suggestions for further reading at the end of nearly every chapter and an extensive annotated bibliography at the end of the book. Stavridis's sources cover a variety of perspectives (including a novel inspired by the relationship between Horatio Nelson and Emma Hamilton) from ancient times to the modern day, which challenge the reader to synthesize the material into their own interpretation of these historic figures.

In his conclusion, Stavridis wrote that "above all, we learn from these admirals that the quality of finding sufficient time to think and reflect is a crucial part of building character. In our

frenzied world today, we should learn from their collective example” (xii). He follows this with the suggestion that readers make a list of people they admire, describe the qualities of character they find most inspiring, and then reflect on how they do or do not live up to those qualities. In addition to an excel-

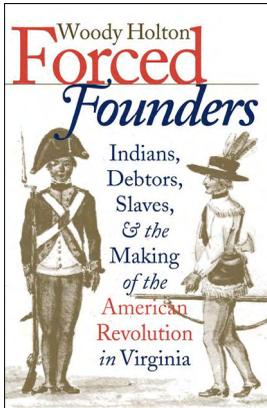
lent primer on prominent naval leaders, *Sailing True North* is an exhortation to have the courage to know oneself honestly and to consistently seek improvement, which in Stavridis’s own words “is indeed the work of a lifetime for us all” (287).



## Book Review: Woody Holton's *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*

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*Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia.* Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1999. ISBN 978-0807847848. Pp. 231. Hardcover \$63.50 Paperback \$17.50

Students throughout the United States spend several years of their elementary and secondary education studying American history. Much attention in these classes is given to the American Revolution. The traditional narrative describes how Americans rose up against the English to protest unjust taxes and excessive abuses by Great Britain. Author Woody Holton is currently the McCausland Professor of History at the University of South Carolina, where he specializes in early American history with a focus on underrepresented populations like women, Native Americans, and African Americans. In this text, Holton seeks to add to the story of the Revolution by presenting a different perspective, that of the non-elites. He argues that while the stories of taxation and abuses con-

tributed to the Revolution as previously acknowledged, it was the actions of the non-elite groups in Virginia, the largest American colony, that pushed the gentry of the colony to seek independence.

Holton arranges his text into seven chapters divided among four sections. These chapters engage the different parties involved in Holton's narrative: Native Americans, enslaved Africans, British merchants, small landholders, and debtors. Each section attempts to describe the interaction of selected groups during key events. He discusses the role of Native Americans in collectively opposing the expansion of the colonists following the Proclamation of 1763 and allows this opposition to set the stage for understanding how the elite of Virginia began to feel pressure from their fellow Virginians.

The forces acting on the Virginia gentry continue to grow as Holton's text continues. He also emphasizes the economic consequences of colonial actions and describes how these consequences affected the elite. Holton describes the vast amounts of debts held by both the gentry and smallholders, and explains how the debtors attempted to circumvent the debt collection process. Again, Holton highlights the pressures placed upon the elite in their dealing with those who owed them money. The smallholders owed the gentry, and the gentry often owed individuals back in Britain; Holton argues that the gentry considered seeking independence as a way to break free, not only from British tyranny, but also from debt.

Although interactions with natives and dealing with debt were stressful to the gentry, it was the threat of slave uprisings, according to Holton, that had them worried for their safety. With 40 percent of the population consisting of enslaved people, and with much greater percentages in certain areas, the gentry feared mass revolts. These revolts came to fruition and were often encouraged by the British as a way to thwart the actions of Virginian Patriots. Holton details the attempts of Lord Dunmore, Virginia's last royal governor, to emancipate the slaves and recruit them into the British forces.

Although these events may appear to occur in the background of American history, Holton brings them to the forefront. He uses a plethora of documentation to support his claims, although it should be noted that, with

a few exceptions, the majority of these sources come from the gentry themselves. Thus, it may seem questionable that Holton was truly able to document the full story without the use of any material from the non-elite Virginians. Holton responds to this criticism in his introduction, stating, "I did not find using gentry sources to study nongentlemen as difficult as I had feared, for it quickly became obvious that gentlemen were very interested in the actions of Indians, slaves and smallholders" (xxi). Although Holton may have done an effective job of representing the views of the non-elite through the words of the gentry, it potentially leaves space open for biases and misunderstandings from the elite.

In addition to his selection of sources and their interpretations, Holton also takes an approach to potentially stretching the possibilities of what may have actually occurred versus what actually occurred. Throughout the text he often uses words and phrases like "might have," "apparently," or "possibly" to explain an event. While this practice is commonplace among historians who try to interpret the past based on the available evidence, it does indicate that Holton's argument might not be completely watertight.

Despite its flaws, the text presents a perspective that is not traditionally told, and Holton effectively uses those resources available to him to demonstrate what he refers to as a "web of influences" in Revolutionary Virginia. It was this "web of influences" stemming from Native Americans,

slaves, smallholders, British merchants, and debtors that ultimately forced the gentry to move toward independence. Holton documents these influences throughout the course of the text and supports his argument that the actions of these non-elite groups created a powerful force strong enough to com-

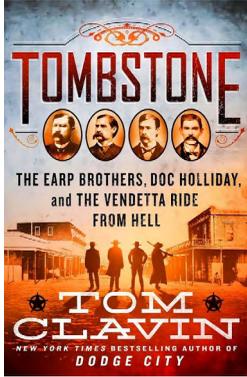
pel the gentry into leading the largest American colony into the creation of a new nation. The pressures the non-elite placed upon the gentry were impressive enough to warrant not only political action, but also a thorough historical analysis by Holton.



## Book Review: Tom Clavin's *Tombstone: The Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and the Vendetta Ride from Hell*

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*Tombstone: The Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and the Vendetta Ride from Hell*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2020. ISBN 9781250214584. Pp 400. Hardcover \$29.99.

The American Wild West is forever symbolized by the iconic image of the Earp brothers and Doc Holliday facing down the Clantons and McLaurys at the O.K. Corral in the windswept town of Tombstone, Arizona, in October 1881. It is a well-tread story that never seems to lose its fascinating appeal in its simple American charms: the good guys take on the bad guys, and the bad guys take it on the chin. With thirty shots in just as many seconds, the showdown signaled something far more significant than a grudge match between surly cowboys and testy lawmen, according to a new book.

In *Tombstone: The Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and the Vendetta Ride from Hell*, best-selling author and Western historian Tom Clavin pens a fitting conclusion to his self-described “Frontier Lawmen” trilogy. His previous two

volumes, *Dodge City: Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, and the Wickedest Town in the American West* and last year’s *Wild Bill: The True Story of the American Frontier’s First Gunfighter*, document in engaging detail the American frontier, its first gunfighters, and the lawmen who tried to tame the Wild West’s worst. In this coda, the author posits that the past and the future of the American West itself were on the line in Tombstone, going so far as to compare the events to Greek tragedy. As Clavin puts it: “I realized that the so-called Gunfight at the O.K. Corral and the Earp ‘vendetta ride’ are our *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, two separate but connected events that are big parts of the foundation of our mythology.”

The history of Tombstone, the gunfight, and the vendetta ride have all been glorified in books and movies over the past century, but perhaps it

has not been told this personally before. In *Tombstone*, Clavin seeks “to tell my version of the Tombstone story, to have it refracted through my lens,” and to “gain a sense of completion” with his other books. Weighing in at a sturdy four hundred pages, *Tombstone* tells a big story and tells it well. Replete with a rich repertoire of colorful characters, Clavin skillfully weaves multiple storylines into a taut thread that reaches its breaking point in late October 1881.

At the forefront of the story, of course, are the inimitable Earps. Clavin is his most entertaining when exploring the Earp family history and discussing the brothers’ interesting habit of not marrying their lady companions. Another fun fact: there were five Earp brothers (and one half-brother): Newton, James, Virgil, Wyatt, Morgan, and Warren. Warren and James often backed up their brothers when it came to “lawing” in the rough and tumble town. We also come to know the rogue’s gallery of misfits known simply as “the cowboys”: Ike and Billy Clanton, Frank and Tom McLaury, Curly Bill Brocius, Johnny Ringo, and countless others who fell in with the cowboys’ rustling and stagecoach robbing perfidies.

A refreshing aspect of *Tombstone* is the experience of the women who were impacted by the events just as much as the men. Through primary source material, Clavin introduces us to an eclectic and fiery set of women who

threw their lot in with the Earps and Doc Holliday, as well as the female citizens of Tombstone. Clavin shares the memories of Allie and Mattie Earp (Virgil’s and Wyatt’s common-law wives), “Big Nose Kate” Elder (Holliday’s on again/off again relationship), and Clara Spalding Brown, a journalist whose letters describing her experiences living in Tombstone from 1880 to 1882 were published regularly in the *San Diego Union* newspaper.

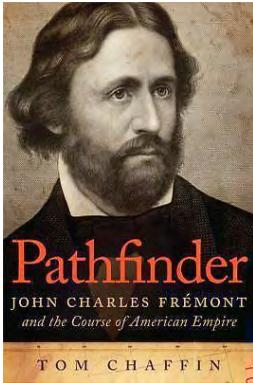
Whereas Dodge City symbolized the Wild West and the fabled gunfighter at its apex, Tombstone, indeed, represented its epitaph. A curtain was dropping on an old way of life as one lifted on a new day, illuminated by the introduction of electricity in 1881 and the novelty of hot and cold running water in some of the hotels. The gunfight at the O.K. Corral was merely the first death spasm of the old way, the wild way. After Morgan Earp’s retributive murder by the cowboys, Wyatt set out on his odyssey of vengeance, as Clavin calls it. When the last cowboy met final justice at Wyatt’s hands, a stillness seemed to descend on the American West.

*Tombstone* is a rousing tale of American Wild West mythology recounted by a raconteur *par excellence*. For those who enjoyed *Dodge City* and *Wild Bill*, Tom Clavin’s latest is a must for your bookshelf.

## Book Review: Tom Chaffin's *Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American Empire*

Kathleen Guler

American Military University



*Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American Empire*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014. ISBN 978-0-8061-4474-0. Softcover, \$24.95.

*Pathfinder* is popular historian Tom Chaffin's well-researched biography of John Charles Frémont (1813–1890). Many biographies of Frémont tend to concentrate on his far-flung expeditions across the western territories (1838–1854), for which he was famously dubbed “The Pathfinder.” Besides the expeditions, this biography also details Frémont’s life leading up to them; other non-expeditionary events during his travels, such as his confusing role in California’s Bear Flag Revolt (1846); and post-expedition exploits, including his brief tenure as territorial governor of Arizona, unsuccessful presidential bid, work as an abolitionist, generalship during the Civil War, and questionable entrepreneurial efforts during his waning years.

Through Frémont’s actions and reactions, Chaffin evenhandedly shows

how patterns emerge in the explorer’s personality that are “often brilliant but also impulsive, vainglorious, and given to quixotic behavior.”<sup>1</sup> Some of the latter may have resulted from his upbringing as an illegitimate child, the result of an affair between a French immigrant and the young wife of a wealthy elderly man. Although his father died when he was only four years old, Frémont seems to have inherited from him both a profound restlessness and a strong disregard for authority and sound advice. From tales of adventure, detailed maps, and learning to read the stars, Frémont became inspired to explore the world, and that inspiration grew into a relentless determination to do so. This brought him into contact with powerful mentors, including the Missouri senator, Thomas Hart Benton. Fremont married Benton’s daughter Jessie.

Frémont's life within the context of the United States' political leadership of the time is explored in depth. As Frémont prepared to embark upon his expeditions to survey the west, Senator Benton's vision of the western territories as a path to trade with China and the Far East became an important basis for Frémont's travels. The Plains in the center of the continent were seen as a vast desert that was useless for settlement. Frémont's restlessness and admiration of exciting tales that mountain men brought back from the Rocky Mountains served Benton's vision well.

Frémont eventually saw that the "vast desert" was in truth a spectacularly fertile region, which he called the "Great Basin." Following his reports on this, the political attitude shifted, and "Manifest Destiny" became the rallying cry to annex the west into the United States. Meanwhile Benton's influence waned. Some of this shift may have been aided by Frémont's contemporary and expedition member, William Gilpin (1815–1894).<sup>2</sup> Gilpin saw the west as a source for an untapped economic boom. With persistent skilled persuasiveness, he succeeded in rebranding it through numerous speeches and writings, starting as early as the mid-1830s and continuing throughout the rest of his life.<sup>3</sup>

Chaffin chronicles the way Frémont, once he gained fame from his work, appeared to let his ego get in the way of not only his work, but also his relationships with colleagues and even his wife. During his time in California, he often became his own worst enemy,

waffling when he should have been decisive, fomenting a bitter rivalry with General Stephen Watts Kearny, and not keeping track of expenses because he thought the government would pay him back for anything he bought. This worsened throughout his Civil War days, and numerous "get rich quick" business schemes in his later years left him deeply in debt.

Ironically, for a book about a man whose explorations included mapmaking, a couple of geographical flaws appear. The narrative states that the Republican River flows through south-central Kansas. Those familiar with the Midwest know the river is located in north-central Kansas/south-central Nebraska. The author also mentions Frémont's party riding westward up Kings River into California's Sierra. They had to have been traveling east to head into the mountains.

In places where sources leave historical gaps, Chaffin usually notes this. One gap that he did not mention and that leaves the reader confused comes in the second expedition (1843–1844). At St. Vrain's Fort, Frémont ordered expedition member Lucien Maxwell to bring mules from Taos, New Mexico, giving a deadline to rejoin the expedition farther up the South Platte River. The deadline was missed, and Frémont left a message with a second deadline to meet back in St. Vrain's. Frémont was told Maxwell may have been captured or killed by Indians or Mexican soldiers. The second deadline was missed, but Chaffin doesn't mention Maxwell again until he abruptly appears with the

third expedition (1845). Apparently he survived.

Despite these minor flaws, Chaffin's writing is engaging and his extensive bibliography is highly valuable for the researcher. The story of Frémont's life is well told and absolutely well worth reading. Chaffin, Research Professor of History at University of Ten-

nessee, Knoxville, has written several other books and essays on US history, primarily covering the nineteenth century, that will appeal to both casual and serious readers.<sup>4</sup> His most recent book is *Revolutionary Brothers: Thomas Jefferson, the Marquis de Lafayette, and the Friendship that Helped Forge Two Nations*, published in 2019.<sup>5</sup>

## Notes

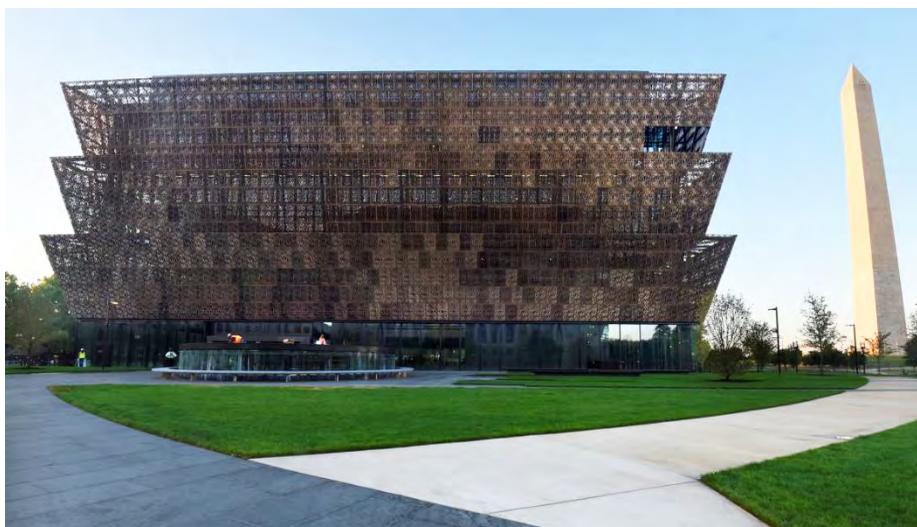
- 1 Tom Chaffin, *Pathfinder: John Charles Frémont and the Course of American Empire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 7.
- 2 William Gilpin sometimes displayed eccentric personality traits similar to Frémont's. He later became the first territorial governor of Colorado (1861–1862). The reviewer is distantly related to Gilpin (third cousin, five times removed).
- 3 J. Christopher Schnell, "William Gilpin and the Destruction of the Desert Myth," *Colorado Magazine* 46, no 2: 131–44.
- 4 Earlier editions of *Pathfinder* (2002) cite Chaffin as the director of Emory University's Oral History Project.
- 5 Reviewed in *Saber and Scroll*, Spring 2020.



## **Museum Review: The History Galleries of The National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC**

Deanna Simmons

*American Public University*



Author's photo of the Museum of African American History and Culture, taken from Constitution Avenue, Washington DC.

**T**he idea for a museum dedicated to the contributions made by African Americans was born over a century before the opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). In 1915, African American Civil War veterans proposed the idea of building something dedicated to those African Americans who served in wars throughout US history. For decades, officials debated the idea, but it never materialized. Finally, in 2003, Congress passed the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act. This placed the museum under the umbrella of the Smithsonian Institution.

From 2003 to the opening of the museum in September of 2016, the project received considerable thought, hard work, and dedication. For those who have never been to any of the Smithsonian Museums in the heart of downtown Washington, DC, there is very little difference in the architecture of the museums. The shape of the buildings may change, but for the most part, they are made of the same off-white colored stone or concrete. This is not true of the NMAAHC. Situated between 14th and 15th Streets off Constitution Avenue, there is no mistaking this incredible museum for any of the other Smithsonian Institutions.

The unique design speaks volumes to the importance of the information and artifacts that rest within the walls of the NMAAHC. The building, inspired by the Yorùbá people of West Africa, appears to be a series of inverted pyramids.<sup>1</sup> The ironwork of nineteenth century slaves from New Orleans inspired the copper-colored design, which covers the outside of the museum. In an interview with *Architectural Digest*, lead designer David Adjaye says, “From the moment you see the silhouette, you’re thinking of the journey, . . . referring to the notorious Middle Passage of captured Africans across the ocean.”<sup>2</sup>

Due to the enormous success of the museum, free, timed daily passes are still required. The museum releases passes months in advance; however, a limited number of passes are available online on a daily basis, beginning at 6 a.m., but they sell out quickly. This reviewer logged on to the website at 7:00 a.m. on March 18 to check availability and it showed a sold out date. To avoid disappointment, it is imperative that visitors get passes in advance of a planned visit. As parking for Washington, DC museum and memorial visits is limited, visitors should consider the Metro as the best means of transportation. However, there are parking garages close to the museum. The closest is in the Ronald Reagan building, but expect to pay at least \$25 for the entire day.

After passing through security, one enters the museum at Heritage Hall. This houses the welcome desk and the museum store. Despite the dark, copper-colored exterior, the inside is

open and bright. By taking the escalator down one floor to the concourse, visitors will find the Sweet Home Café, the Oprah Winfrey Theatre, and the entrance to the History Galleries. There are numerous museum guides willing to help visitors. As guests walk into the History Galleries, pictures of famous African Americans hanging on the walls welcome them. Guests then proceed to an oversized glass elevator that looks as though it could easily hold one hundred people. The elevator attendant instructs everyone to enter the elevator but to face the opposite side, as those doors will open to the beginning of the galleries.

Before the elevator descends, visitors will notice the black wall to the right with the year 2008 painted in white. As the elevator makes its way down, the years roll back. The elevator stops at the year 1400. Visitors begin in Africa, because African American history did not begin in America. Walking through the exhibits, visitors get the feeling that they are walking through history. The displays show Africans going from having their own lives, cultures, and identities to becoming a profitable commodity. Although the artifacts rest behind glass enclosures, this does not diminish their statement. There are short five-minute videos playing throughout, and etched into the glass are quotes, some belonging to Europeans attempting to justify the capturing and selling of Africans and some are from captured Africans themselves.

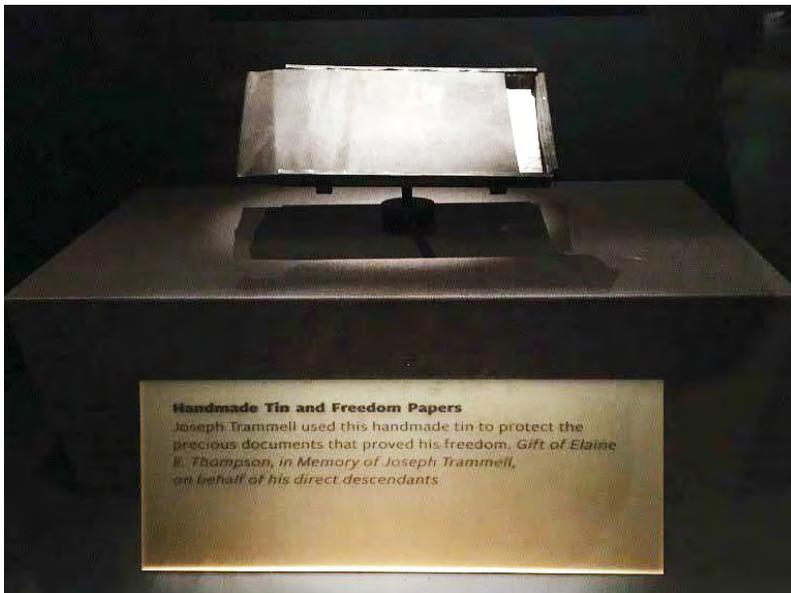
The galleries transport visitors through centuries of African Ameri-

can history. Beginning with their brutal capture in Africa, the exhibits help guests understand the horrifying Middle Passage ship voyages experienced by captured Africans, followed by the misery that greeted them upon arrival in the Americas. The museum displays show that enslaved Africans were sold throughout various regions in the Americas and that this influenced their overall horrendous experience. Moving through the years, guests see the important roles that Black people played in the American Revolution, the founding of the United States of America, and the years leading up to the Civil War.

One of the reasons people were fearful of the creation of a museum dedicated to the African American experience was that the ability to hide from the devastating history of blacks in America would be even more difficult. This museum does not allow any-

one to ignore or even attempt to explain away the tragedy that was the African American experience. To see actual chains that were used on men, women, and children in order to not only keep them from running, but also as protection for their captors, can be more than a little jarring.

One of the artifacts, although small and easy to pass over, perfectly captures the atrocity that was the institution of slavery. At first glance, it just looks like an old tin case. Upon closer inspection, visitors realize the importance of this homemade tin case. Through a slight opening, folded papers are visible. The tin case belonged to a free Black man named Joseph Trammell and it housed the papers that proved he was free. His freedom and safety, while not guaranteed, depended on the protection of those precious documents.



Author's photo of Joseph Trammell's handmade tin and freedom papers. Taken from the Slavery & Freedom Exhibit in the History Galleries, NMAAHC, March 16, 2017.

The level of shock that one experiences from one artifact to the next varies; however, all the items, structures, and information on display are equally important to telling the story of African Americans. There are faces and people that are familiar and immediately recognizable, and others whose stories are less familiar. Furthermore, some of these stories and personalities have not received recognition until now. When visitors enter the area dedicated to the Reconstruction Period, they enter the unmistakable era of African American history darkened by Jim Crow. This part of the museum is just as remarkable and devastating as the first. It is here that one realizes that the term “free” only loosely described the status of African Americans following the abolishment of slavery.

The images on display are even more horrific and haunting than the ones from the floor dedicated to slavery. So powerful are the displays that there is a sign that warns visitors that what they are about to view may not be suitable for children or people who are sensitive. For those who decide to proceed, an unmistakable relic greets them: a Ku Klux Klan white hood. Seeing one in images or on television pales in comparison to seeing such a symbol of hate and racism up close. Furthermore, surrounding the hood on display are small images, outlined in red, that document the atrocities committed by people who often wore them.

There are images of African Americans being lynched. The most horrific ones include white citizens posing with mangled and mutilated bodies



Author's photo of *Jet Magazine*, featuring an article on Emmett Till's lynching. Taken from the entrance to the Emmett Till memorial exhibit. NMAAHC. March 16, 2016.

hanging from trees or bridges by ropes, looking proud of their accomplishments. This floor also houses artifacts from possibly the greatest catalyst to the civil rights movement, the lynching of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till. With permission from his family, his original casket is on display. Per the family's instructions, taking pictures here is forbidden. A museum worker at the entrance explains this to visitors.

The blood, sweat, and tears put into the Civil Rights Movement are well documented throughout this floor. The importance of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X to the Civil Rights movement is on display for the world to see. Throughout history, many have attempted to tarnish the image of the Black Panthers. However, this museum shows that although their methods were sometimes uncomfortable to both Black and white America, they were equally important to the Black Americans fighting for the respect they demanded and deserved. The final floor of the history galleries moves through the decades leading up to the election of the first Black president, Barack Obama. It also encourages guests to connect the dots from the arrival of the first slaves in North America to the killings of unarmed black men like Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. The third floor displays force guests to consider whether the country has entered a post-racial era or is rather in another, more modern, civil rights movement.

The incredible amount of information, artifacts, and the sheer number of visitors is overwhelming. It is difficult to absorb everything because there is pressure to keep moving so that others may get a chance to see and experience all that each floor has to offer. Despite this fact, the NMAAHC proves that its creation is an important addition to the Smithsonian Institute's family of museums. Even more importantly, it serves as a reminder that those Black Civil War Veterans understood the importance of recognizing not only their own achievements, but also the achievements of their own people who came before them.

One quote that stood out among all the others was that of a slave named David Walker in 1829: "America is more our country ... we have enriched it with our blood and tears."

Visitors get the feeling upon exiting those galleries that he was not wrong. Visitors cannot grasp the impact of the African American to the development of the United States in one visit to the museum and the floors that house that history. It is imperative that guests visit the museum with the understanding that more than one trip is required to fully capture what its creators had intended for the world to see. Even then, it may not be possible to comprehend it fully. Only with this mindset can one attempt to understand African American history.

## Notes

- 1 The transatlantic slave trade displaced millions of Yorùbá people from areas in Africa, including Nigeria and Benin. They arrived in the United States via the Middle Passage. In addition, British, French, and Spanish colonists purchased Yorùbá slaves.
- 2 Fred A. Bernstein, “Architect David Adjaye Tells Us About Washington D.C.’s National Museum of African American History and Culture,” *Architectural Digest*, August 29, 2016, <http://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/david-adjaye-national-museum-of-african-american-history-and-culture>.

## Museum Review: Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia

Michael Romero

*American Military University*



The reconstructed Governor's Palace, one of Colonial Williamsburg's most popular exhibits. Huber Gerhard, (photographer) August 17, 2017. CC-BY-NC\_4.0+Edu. [https://global-geography.org/af/Geography/America/United\\_States/Pictures/Jamestown/Colonial\\_Williamsburg\\_-\\_Governors\\_Palace\\_3](https://global-geography.org/af/Geography/America/United_States/Pictures/Jamestown/Colonial_Williamsburg_-_Governors_Palace_3) (accessed August 17, 2020).

Until I began working at Colonial Williamsburg as an interpreter nine years ago, I was unaware as to just how extensive this living history museum really was. After nearly a century of work, Colonial Williamsburg is approximately one mile long and a half-mile wide, close to the size of the original town circa 1770.

Williamsburg was established in 1699 to replace Jamestown as the cap-

ital city of Virginia. Built on the site of a previous settlement called Middle Plantation, Williamsburg boasted healthy water and proximity to the recently established College of William and Mary and was a more convenient meeting place for representatives coming from throughout the colony. It was in Williamsburg that the Virginia House of Burgesses organized the colony's resistance to the Stamp Act and

Townshend Duties, and such figures as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry got their first legislative experience. Much of the American Revolution was fought with Williamsburg of the capital of Virginia. In 1780, the capital moved to Richmond where it remains today.

With the removal of the government, Williamsburg essentially dried up. Wealthy shopkeepers, artisans, tavern owners, and the like all followed the General Assembly to Richmond. The continued presence of the College of William and Mary notwithstanding, Williamsburg became a typical small Southern town. In the early 1920s, Dr. William A.R. Goodwin, the one-time rector and restorer of Bruton Parish Church (a building in continuous service since 1715), sold John D. Rockefeller, Jr. on the idea of returning Williamsburg to its colonial glory. In total, a sum of \$68 million, in pre-Depression figures, was used to preserve eighty-eight eighteenth-century buildings and reconstruct several hundred others in their original locations and on their original foundations when possible.

There are forty exhibit sites at Colonial Williamsburg through which guests can engage with Virginia's Revolutionary War history. Open sites included government buildings such as the Capitol and Governor's Palace, homes of prominent citizens like George Wythe and Peyton Randolph, trade shops, religious spaces, and taverns. Costumed interpreters within serve as your bridge between the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries by conduct-

ing tours, contextualizing self-guided exploration at some sites, performing period-appropriate music and theatre, and working at eighteenth-century trades. It is important to note that Colonial Williamsburg's tradespeople are just what they seem; when you meet a printer, silversmith, or carpenter, they do not just share the history of these trades but preserve these skills by working the trade with eighteenth-century tools and techniques.

When it comes to interpreting history, Colonial Williamsburg strives to present as complete a picture as possible. This means that when you visit the home of Peyton Randolph, you hear about his contribution as Speaker of Virginia's House of Burgesses and President of the First Continental Congress and what it meant for him to be the largest private slaveholder in Williamsburg. At the Courthouse, you see the familiar legal protections afforded to eighteenth-century British men in action and discover how they did not apply equally to women or people of color. Depending on the day, you might encounter General George Washington riding off to victory at Yorktown or meet with a much younger Washington joining the colony's legislature with a mediocre performance during the French and Indian War fresh in his mind.

Among Colonial Williamsburg's greatest offerings are those known as "nation builders" and "character interpreters," individuals who through exhaustive research have labored to bring historic figures to life. Through their efforts, you can interact "in person"



A local sailor teaches celestial navigation while several wigmakers take advantage of the pleasant weather. Photographed 9 June 2018 by Fred Blystone.



Eighteenth-century drill performed by members of the Colonial Williamsburg Military Programs staff. Author's personal collection.

with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or Patrick Henry. This group is not limited to the most famous names, however. You can also meet Clementina Rind, a female publisher of the *Virginia Gazette* in 1773; Ann Wager, tutoress of the local Bray School for enslaved and free African children; local merchant Robert Prentis; blacksmith and public armorer James Anderson; enslaved people laboring in homes and businesses; and many others. As an introductory vignette to the Historic Area states, “our history is complicated and not always positive”; it takes a multitude of diverse voices to paint a balanced picture of the past. Without reservation, I can say that Colonial Williamsburg delivers in that regard.

While most exhibits close at 5:00 pm daily, Colonial Williamsburg’s two art museums are open until 7:00pm, and a guest could easily spend a full day exploring the galleries within. The DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum features an extensive collection of furniture, portraits, maps, coinage, military equipment, and much more. Of particular interest is a small gallery dedicated to the reconstruction of Charlton’s Coffeehouse in 2009: this was the first full reconstruction on the main street of the Historic Area in fifty years. The gallery begins with the removal (and preservation in another location) of a nineteenth-century home, archaeology on the site, extensive research into the original coffeehouse, and construction of the new exhibit utilizing the skills of Colonial Williamsburg’s tradespeople; the gallery is the perfect microcosm of the development of the Historic Area

that began in the 1920s. Sharing a building with the DeWitt Wallace is the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum which houses an eclectic collection of Americana gathered from Virginia and beyond.

Colonial Williamsburg’s offerings do not end once the exhibits are closed. Well into the evening, specialty programs offer you the opportunity to take part in a recreation of a historically-based felony trial, learn eighteenth-century military drill with the members of the Virginia Regiment, attend a candlelight concert at the Capitol, dance at the Governor’s Palace, hear stories from the African-American population of the 1700s, or visit historic buildings to experience a series of ghost stories. Even the supernatural programming is (loosely) based on period records and myths. When you finish touring for the day and crave a good meal, Colonial Williamsburg also operates four taverns, each with a unique menu based on eighteenth-century recipes.

In the end, no matter what part of eighteenth-century American history interests you, exploring it at Colonial Williamsburg would be time well spent.

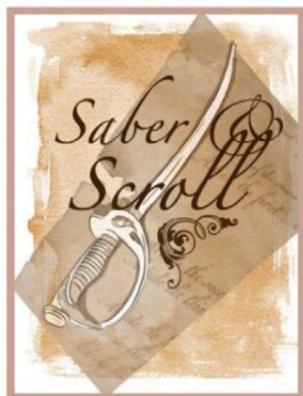
Barring unusually severe weather or other adverse circumstances, Colonial Williamsburg is open 365 days a year from 9:00am to 5:00pm. Single-day admission is \$41.99 for adults, \$22.99 for children age six to twelve, with free admission for children under six. Multi-day tickets (it is exceptionally difficult to take in everything Colonial Williamsburg has to offer in a single day) and annual passes are also

available. Evening programs require a separate ticket purchase. Bruton Parish Church and the Wren Building at William and Mary (portions of which date to the late 1600s) are usually open to visitors as well, although separate from Colonial Williamsburg. Further information, including the current programming schedule, is available at <http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org>.



# Saber & Scroll Historical Journal

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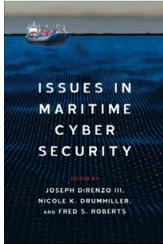
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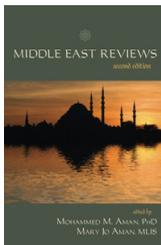
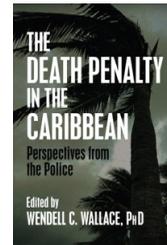


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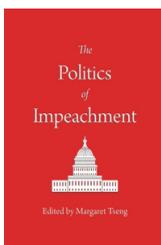
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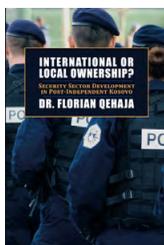
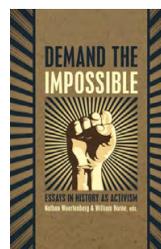


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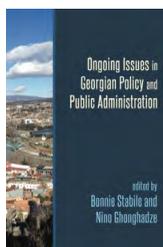
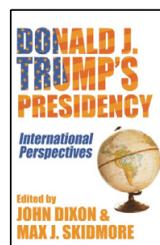


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