

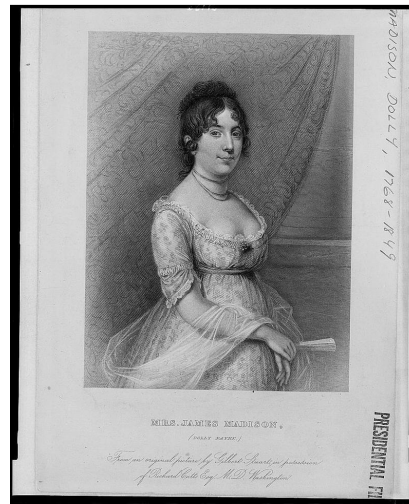


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First Ladies Who Changed America

In January 2013, when President Obama was inaugurated, Michelle Obama began HER second term as First Lady. Since our country's founding, our first ladies have distinguished themselves and changed America through campaigns and contributions of their own. In this month's enewsletter, we highlight Dolley Madison, Eleanor Roosevelt, Lady Bird Johnson, and Betty Ford.

For half a century, Dolley Madison was one of the most important women in the social circles of America. In 1814 (during the War of 1812), as First Lady, she was in the White House when the British were attacking and burning Washington, DC. Before she fled she managed to save many vital state documents and historic paintings, including the famous portrait of George Washington painted by Gilbert Stuart. She was a hostess extraordinaire during the administration of her husband, President James Madison, just as she was when he was Thomas Jefferson's secretary of state. She would continue to be a renowned Washington



Dolley Madison



Betty Ford

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt faced a very different time than Dolley Madison. Roosevelt broke with tradition in 1933 by holding her own White House press conferences and allowing only women reporters. Throughout her long life, Roosevelt continued a public service career by courageously speaking and writing, both in the United States and abroad. Her work dealt with many social issues and concerns; her constant efforts to improve the lot of the underprivileged made her one of the most loved--and for some years one of the most revered--women of her generation. Among her many quotable comments, she said "You

gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you stop to look fear in the face. . . . You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Lady Bird Johnson, who was the most politically active First Lady since Eleanor Roosevelt, worked to beautify America by helping ensure passage of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965. The act limited the number of billboards on major roadways. Johnson became well known for encouraging the planting of wildflowers. She supported the National Wildflower Research Center, which she founded in 1982. She also served on the Board of the National Geographic Society as a trustee emeritus.

In 1974, in an act that has saved and continues to save thousands of women's lives each year, First Lady Betty Ford spoke in public about her mastectomy and urged women to get a checkup for breast cancer. She explained that "maybe if I as First Lady could talk about it candidly and without embarrassment, many other people would be able to as well." She was equally frank about her successful battle against dependency on drugs and alcohol. She helped establish the Betty Ford Center for treatment of this problem in California and opened up public discourse for many as a result of her courageous actions.

These women helped to change America. We look forward to the day when the President, herself, will be a woman!

Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America
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