



The Queen of America: Mary Cutts's Life of Dolley Madison (Jeffersonian America)

Mary Cutts

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For biographers and fans of Dolley Payne Todd Madison, Mary Cutts's memoir of her famous aunt has been indispensable. Because Madison left behind no account of her life, the common assumption has been that Cutts's account is the closest we have to Madison's autobiographical voice.

With this new, annotated transcription of both drafts of the memoir, *The Queen of America* offers scholars and general readers the first modern and contextualized version of this crucial piece of Founding-era biography. An opening essay by the acclaimed Dolley Madison biographer Catherine Allgor presents the memoir not only as a source for information on Madison herself, but also as a prime example of a nineteenth-century woman, Mary Cutts, making a bid for historical significance. Essays by Holly Shulman, editor of *The Dolley Madison Digital Edition*, and Montpelier research scholar Beth Taylor evaluate the historical uses and misuses of the document for understanding Dolley's life and supply background information on Mary, the niece who fashioned Dolley Madison's life into part of the historical record.

The questions raised by Cutts's memoir are intriguing: Given that most of the story takes place before Cutts's birth, whose voice are we hearing? What are we to make of the lies and omissions along the way? What family secrets is Cutts hiding, and whose are they? With Allgor as guide, we enter the fascinating world of nineteenth-century history in the making.

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