



# A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation

*Catherine Allgor*

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**"Delightful and discerning . . . In this evocative study a remarkable woman, creator of the 'first lady' role, comes vividly to life."?The New York Times**

When the roar of the Revolution had finally died down, a new generation of politicians was summoned to the Potomac to assemble the nation's capital. Into that unsteady atmosphere?which would soon enough erupt into another conflict with Britain?Dolley Madison arrived, alongside her husband, James. Within a few years, she had mastered both the social and political intricacies of the city, and by her death in 1849 was the most celebrated person in Washington. And yet, to most Americans, she's best known for saving a portrait from the burning White House.

Why did her contemporaries so admire a lady so little known today? In *A Perfect Union*, acclaimed historian Catherine Allgor reveals how Dolley manipulated the constraints of her gender to construct an American democratic ruling style and to achieve her husband's political goals. By emphasizing cooperation over coercion?building bridges instead of bunkers?she left us with not only an important story about our past but a model for a modern form of politics.

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