

NOTES

1. John Y. Cole, *For Congress and the Nation: A Chronological History of the Library of Congress*, (Washington, DC, 1979), pp. 112–114.

2. GSI seeks to realize Cranston’s vision with a team that includes former heads of state and government, distinguished diplomats, effective politicians, committed celebrities, religious leaders, Nobel Peace Laureates, disarmament and legal experts, and concerted citizens. See <http://gsinstitute.org> for more information. For further reading about Alan Cranston’s life and career, see Judith Robinson, *Alan Cranston—Senator from California: Making a “Dent in the World”* (2 volumes), (San Francisco, CA, 2012).

3. Lloyd Shearer, “Alan Cranston—Fastest Man in the Senate,” Parade Magazine, *The Washington Post*, 6 Feb. 1972, p. 16. ed.

4. Alan Cranston’s personal diary, in his family’s possession.

5. For an in-depth examination of Roosevelt’s challenges, see Nicholas Wapshott, *The Sphinx: Franklin Roosevelt, The Isolationists, and the Road to World War II* (New York City, 2015).

6. Herbert Hoover, “Should We Send Our Youth to War?” *The American Magazine* (Aug. 1939), condensed in *Reader’s Digest* (Sept. 1939).

7. Cranston translated, wrote, and annotated his condensed edition in a compressed eight days; however, editing, establishing Noram Publishing Company, and finding and contracting printers and distributors, as well as making deals with newsstands to carry the edition, would have taken weeks prior to the actual printing and delivery to newsstands.

8. Benjamin Epstein’s letter to Richard Gutstadt dated 27 April 1939, Alan Cranston Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley. At the time, Gutstadt had been the national director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) since 1931. In the 1930s, he worked and lectured through-

out the country and organized opposition to the growing fascist movement in the U.S. Later, Epstein became his successor as the ADL national director (1947–1978).

9. *Houghton Mifflin Co. v. Noram Pub. Co.*, 28 F. Supp. 676. 42 U.S. P. Q. 370 (S.D.N.Y. 1939). As criticism of Hitler began to gain more attention, Houghton Mifflin engaged with another publishing company, Reynal & Hitchcock, to publish an unabridged, unexpurgated edition of *Mein Kampf* at almost the same time Cranston issued his annotated condensed version. In fact, Houghton Mifflin was also battling in court a rival publishing company, Stackpole Sons, at about the same time over *Mein Kampf* copyright infringement: *Houghton Mifflin Co. v. Stackpole Sons, Inc.*, 104 F.2d 306 (2d Cir. 1939) Houghton Mifflin was a well-established publisher of educational books before these lawsuits. After WWII, it paid its largest-ever advance to Winston Churchill for his six-volume account, *The Second World War* (for which Churchill won the Nobel Prize in Literature), and published books by Gen. George S. Patton.

10. *Houghton Mifflin Co. v. Noram Pub. Co.*, 28 F. Supp. 676 (S.D.N.Y. 1939).

IMAGE CREDITS

- Fig. 1. U.S. Senate Historical Office
- Fig. 2. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-ds-01526]
- Fig. 3. Cranston family
- Fig. 4. Stanford University
- Fig. 5. UPI Photo/Leighton Mark/Files

The Political Lives of Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams and John Quincy Adams: Historical Memory, Slavery, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum Congresses

by Ryan Conner

More than half a century after their deaths, historian Henry Adams remembered his grandmother Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams as “the Madam” and grandfather John Quincy Adams as “the old President.” Adams’s earliest memories of his grandparents came from his time as boy with them in Quincy, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C. In a vision of his grandmother living in the capital in the 1840s, the young Adams saw the 70-year-old woman sitting calmly in a breakfast room, “thoroughly weary of being beaten about a stormy world....a vision of silver gray, presiding over her old President.” When the young Adams’s grandfather died in 1848, “the eighteenth century, as an actual and living companion, vanished.” Upon visiting his grandmother in the capital with his father in 1850 two years after his grandfather’s death, Adams stayed in her house on F Street. When he walked outside, slavery’s existence in the city “repulsed” him. He called it “a nightmare; a horror; a crime; the sum of all wickedness!” Coming from pastoral life in Quincy, Adams “wanted to escape, like the negroes, to free soil.” His critique of slavery influenced how he viewed the Senate during a visit with his father: “Senators spoke kindly to him [*Henry Adams*], and seemed to

feel so, for they had known his family socially; and, in spite of slavery, even J.Q. Adams in his later years, after he ceased to stand in the way of rivals, had few personal enemies. Decidedly the Senate, pro-slavery though it were, seemed a friendly world.”¹

As Adams’s recollection subtly implies, “the Madam” and “the old President” had a tumultuous relationship with the Senate and House throughout their lives—Congress indeed was a “stormy world” in the early nineteenth century. Never was their relationship more fraught than when Congress debated war with Britain and France in the 1800s, confronted slavery in the territories in the 1820s, and refused even to debate slavery in the 1830s. Louisa Catherine’s and John Quincy’s personal conceptions of morality informed their responses to these crises, yet each crisis, in turn, forcefully challenged their ideas of public virtue and morality. Their inter-denominational brand of Protestantism, which evolved throughout their lives, served as their “great guide in navigating the world” and “fulfilled their everyday needs,” especially during the periods of crisis.² As the Adamses became increasingly entangled in national politics, it became increasingly difficult for them to practice their ideas. During each crisis, the

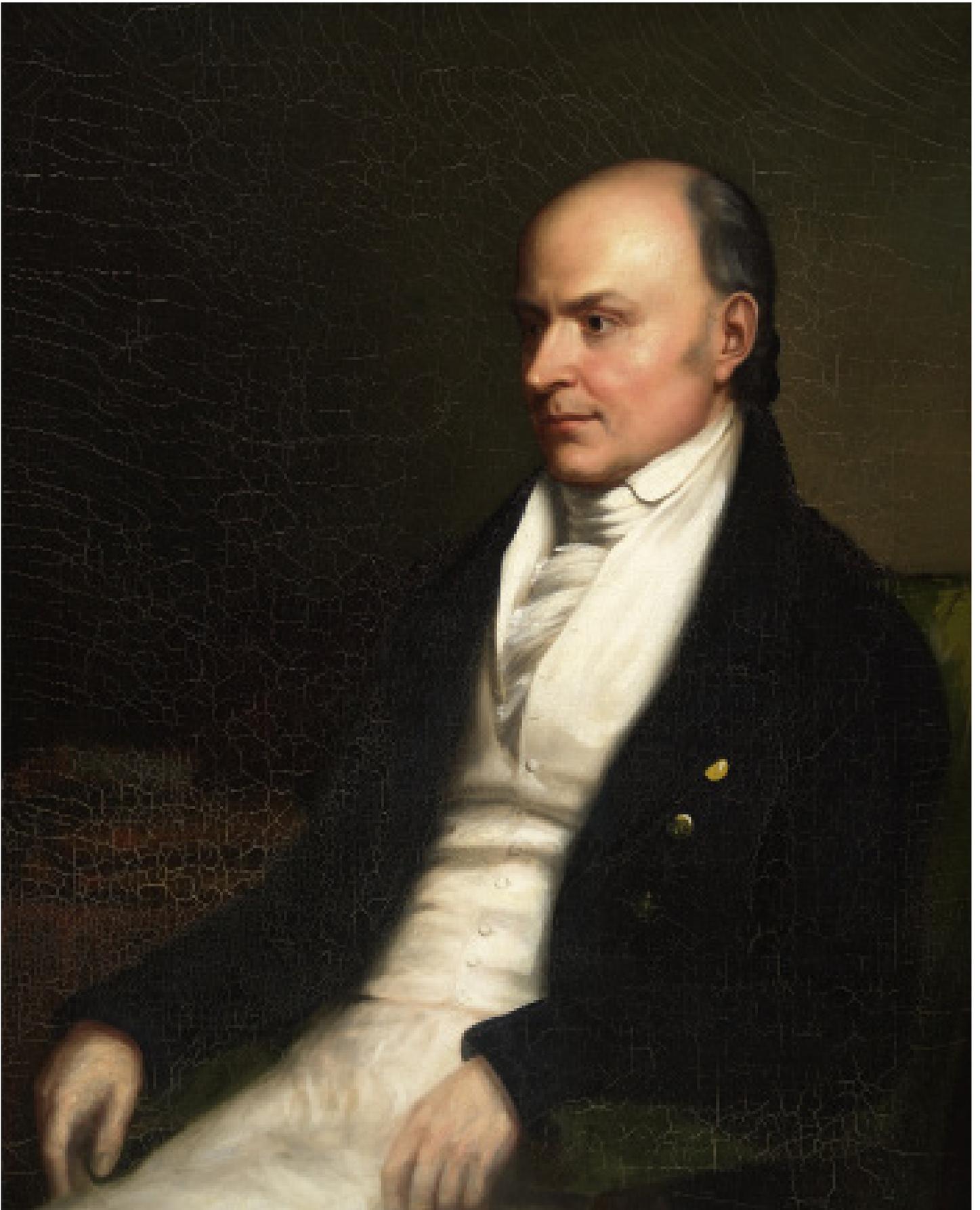


Fig. 1. Charles Bird King (1785-1862) painted this portrait of John Quincy Adams c. 1819.



Fig. 2. Charles Bird King painted this portrait, Mrs. John Quincy Adams, c. 1824.

Adamses thought and wrote often. They should be remembered as much for what they wrote as for what they did. This article is the story—in their own voices—of how John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams navigated these national dramas. This one is a unique take on a story that has been told many times and in different ways. It is one worth telling.

The Authors

John Quincy Adams (1767–1848) contributed to several of the most important political developments of the early United States. Having traveled to Europe with his father, John Adams, when the elder Adams was an American diplomat during the American Revolution, the young John Quincy quickly learned the travails of politics and diplomacy. Upon returning to the newly independent United States in 1785, he studied at Harvard until 1787, then became a lawyer in Boston like his father. Early in his career, he served as minister to Holland (1794–1797) and as minister plenipotentiary to Prussia (1797–1801). He first went to Washington, D.C. in 1803 as a U.S. senator, yet resigned five years later in 1808. After his term in the Senate, he served as minister plenipotentiary to Russia (1809–1815) and Great Britain (1815–1817). Though he often fell short of his political goals, his sense of a “grand strategy”—to defend the United States from the European powers while preserving a republican form of government—consistently guided his political life in the State Department, the White House, and Congress. In 1817, Pres. James Monroe appointed Adams as his secretary of state, a position Adams would hold until his inauguration as president in 1825. Adams led the development of the Monroe Doctrine, which abetted U.S. expansion across the North American continent. At the end of the 1824 presidential election, none of the candidates held a majority of the Electoral College votes, so the election went to the House of Representatives. Despite strong support for other candidates such as Andrew Jackson, the House elected Adams as president. Andrew Jackson later defeated Adams in the 1828 presidential election, leading Adams to retreat from national politics for several years. Adams returned to national politics in 1831 as a representative from Massachusetts. He would serve during each session of Congress over the next 17 years, where he fought the increasingly powerful “slavocracy,” for which he received assassination threats and southern representatives’ attempts to censure him. In 1841, by then vociferously opposed to slavery, Adams defended captive Africans before the Supreme Court in the famous



Fig. 3. John Quincy Adams in the House of Representatives, wood engraving (1870) by Russell Richardson

Amistad case. Seven years later, on 21 February 1848, Adams suffered a stroke on the floor of the House and died two days later in the Speaker’s Office. In honor of his life, Adams was given a funeral service in the House Chamber, a funeral procession from Washington to Boston, and a memorial service in Boston.³

Louisa Catherine Johnson (1775–1852) lived a life of public significance, though she probably did not see it that way for much of her life. As she defined the meaning of her own life, she navigated the nationalism of her husband’s family and the cosmopolitanism of her own family. Yet just as the arc of the early United States can be seen in her husband’s life, so too can it be seen in hers.⁴

Louisa Catherine Johnson married John Quincy Adams in London on 26 July 1797 while her father served as U.S. consul and John Quincy served as minister to the Netherlands. Born in London to a wealthy American merchant and an English socialite and educated at a convent school in Nantes, France, Louisa Catherine had a cosmopolitan upbringing which informed her entire life, one which often put her at odds with the Adamses’ nationalism. She spent 34 years of her life in Europe before spending the rest of her life in the United States. After marrying John Quincy, she accompanied him to Berlin on his diplomatic post before returning to the United States in 1801. During her husband’s terms in the U.S. Senate, Louisa Catherine traveled between Quincy, Massachusetts, where the Adams family lived, and Washington,

D.C. Although John Quincy did not inform her about the Russia post until it was time to leave, she traveled with her husband to Russia in 1809 and stayed in St. Petersburg until 1815. To meet John Quincy in Paris while he was negotiating the Treaty of Ghent in 1814–15, Louisa Catherine and her son departed from St. Petersburg and traveled unaccompanied (for the most part) across Europe, a journey made even more dangerous by the retreat of Napoleon's armies across the continent and ubiquitous European social customs which shunned women who traveled without their husbands. She reunited with her husband in 1815 in Paris and traveled with him to London in 1815, where they lived until they returned to the United States in 1817.⁵

While living in Washington, D.C. for much of the next decade, Louisa Catherine entertained politicians, diplomats, and their wives during parties, balls, and dinner receptions both at the Adamses' F Street house and the White House. When she and her husband returned to Washington in 1831, she continued to live at the F Street house, but entertained fewer people and less frequently. Where her husband increasingly took a stand in the House of Representatives for the freedom to debate slavery, Louisa started to think about the freedom of women. Upon her death in 1852, Congress adjourned for her funeral, attended by the president, heads of departments, Members of Congress, and numerous citizens of Washington.⁶

Remembering Their Writings

Since John Quincy Adams's death in 1848, various historians and authors have transcribed selections of his diaries, stored at and fully digitized by the Massachusetts Historical Society's Adams Family Papers. Spanning from his first entries in 1779 through his final entries in 1848, he privately wrote about not only political and diplomatic affairs, but also his private and family life. Biographers of Adams and other editors of his diaries suggest that Adams used the diary to improve himself, develop his political arguments, and transition between phases of his career. For Adams, the diary served "as a confessional, an aide—memoir, and a proving ground for his thoughts on everything from public policy to philosophy"—such as his evolution on slavery throughout this career. Whereas some historians who celebrate Adams's politics find much inspiration in the diary, others critical of his politics have dismissed the diaries and his antislavery politics as a cover for partisanship. Nevertheless, the diaries are useful for their summaries and commentaries

on cabinet meetings, congressional debates, and conversations with prominent politicians. The diary illuminates not only Adams's political and intellectual development, but also his personality and character; the diary "allows us to know this guarded and taciturn man and to occupy his world."⁷

Where biographers have covered comprehensively John Quincy's life and work, only in recent decades have they started looking fully at Louisa Catherine's life, her role in the family, and her relationship with national politics. Overshadowed by the political prestige of her husband, father-in-law John Adams, mother-in-law Abigail Adams, and son Charles Francis Adams, Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams received minimal attention in her own lifetime. Historians likely have devoted minimal attention to her because "she was contradictory...[h]er character was quicksilver, and the roles she held were unofficial." She was "a first lady in a country that was not entirely her own...torn between cultural and familial ideals and strong instincts that she could not ignore." The titles of each of her memoirs suggests a struggle to define her own identity, the means through which she found her voice, one that was "vivid and propulsive" rather than "sickly and delicate." Through these works, she likely intended to preserve her own voice and reputation against members of the Adams family (with whom she had tenuous relations as an outsider to the family) and for posterity.

Louisa Catherine wrote a diary while in Russia between October 1812 and February 1814 and again periodically after 1819. She infrequently wrote diaries from 1835 to 1841 and 1844 to 1849 in which she meditated on literature, religion, and philosophy. In addition to the diary journals, she wrote three memoirs between 1825 and 1840 about the period from her early life through her journey from St. Petersburg to Paris in 1815. The earliest is her "Record of a Life" (1825) which covers her childhood through her arrival in Prussia. Her second memoir, "Narrative of a Journey from Russia to France" (1836) recounts her trip two decades earlier from St. Petersburg to Paris. In 1840 she started writing her third memoir, "The Adventures of a Nobody," while she was concerned about the dangers facing the family and the declining health of her husband. Using her husband's daily diary entries for details, she wrote about the period from her wedding through their time in St. Petersburg, a period that notably covers her early life in Washington. Many of the letters reflect her commentaries in the diaries and memoirs, but there are many others which provide more details and longer accounts than the diaries. While she

wrote the Russian diary for herself, she wrote some of the 1819-1824 diaries as journal letters to members of her family including John and Abigail Adams. She eagerly wrote some of the journals to John Adams, who deeply appreciated them, to inform him about political news from Washington, D.C. Notably, she wrote letters during periods when she did not keep the diaries, especially between 1815 and 1817 and after 1824. Various scholars hope that study of her writings will elevate them and their author to the same reputation as those of her better-known family members.

Despite their value for research on John Quincy and Louisa Catherine, the diaries and memoirs have limitations. Historians, for example, must consider how the intended audiences of the works shaped the authors' motivations. Although the diaries and memoirs appear to be private, John Quincy hoped that his sons one day would read his diary for political, literary, personal, and moral guidance. Although Louisa Catherine intended that some of her works stay private, she wrote others to family members. Additionally, Louisa Catherine wrote her memoirs in the 1830s about her life in the 1790s-1810s; these memoirs, therefore, tend to reflect her mindset and emotions in the 1830s rather than her earlier life. Nevertheless, they offer considerable insight into her life, as long as they are used to discern her evolving character rather than the events or people she described. Aware of such limitations, historians have used the couple's diaries to analyze their social roles instead of the events they

described. In regard to the 1824 presidential election, for example, where the "vague and sweeping proclamations" in John Quincy's diaries reveal "his own lack of popularity, his astonishment at and distance from the electioneering around him," the "clear, specific pattern of action" in Louisa Catherine's early 1820s diaries reveal her unofficial "steady campaigning" through political networks for her husband in the 1824 election.¹⁰

Only in recent decades have historians studied Louisa Catherine and John Quincy together. This article brings together disparate scholarship to serve as a foundation for future innovative work on the lives of John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams. The following entries come from a letter, memoirs, and diaries. Although each of the following passages has limitations, they have been selected because Louisa Catherine's and John Quincy's voices and complex relationships with national politics are most evident. Although it will examine events in three significant periods in the Early Republic and antebellum eras, it will assume the Adamses' responses to the events to be more significant than the events themselves.¹¹

Episode I: Nation, Party, and Principle in the Senate

Following his appointment to the U.S. Senate in 1803, John Quincy refused to align with the Federalists in their opposition to the Louisiana Purchase and their refusal to

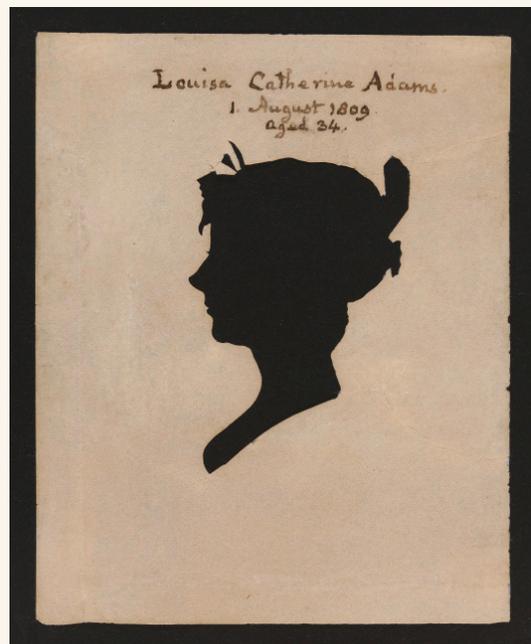
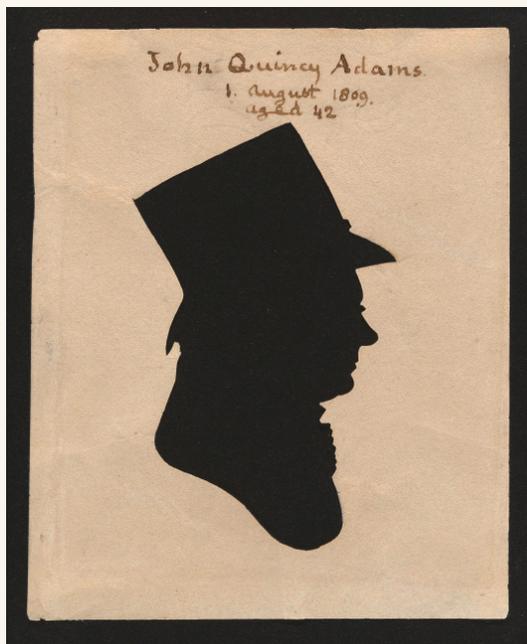


Fig. 4. (left) and Fig. 5 (right). Henry Williams (1787-1830) crafted these white-paper silhouettes of John Quincy Adams and Louisa Catherine Adams in 1809.

condemn the British for impressing American sailors in 1807. Before the Federalists could reverse their position on the impressment issue, Adams joined the Republicans in opposition to Britain and supported the Jefferson administration's embargo on all trade to avert war. Such an act incensed the Massachusetts Federalists, who strongly favored commerce with Britain. His decision initially drew the ire of his parents, but both came to tacitly support it. Adams's decision to dissent from the party represented his nationalistic desire for a strong United States independent of Britain and France. He desired to place the nation over sectional politics; internal divisions would make the country susceptible to the European powers.¹²

Quickly exposed to American politics, Louisa Catherine became a keen observer of John Quincy's crisis of party and a critic of the Massachusetts Federalists. Nevertheless, she was concerned more in this episode about her family than the wars between Britain and France. In a letter to Abigail Adams, dated 2 January 1808, Louisa Catherine reveals the ramifications for her family of the tensions between the Federalist Party and John Quincy:¹³

Our situation here this winter is not very pleasant as it is universally believed your Son has changed his party and the F[ederalists], are extremely bitter [. . .] his talents are of too much real importance for them to venture publicly to throw him off but in private they circulate reports very much to his disadvantage he bears it with great fortitude and keeps up his health & spirits surprizingly indeed our time now so short that I myself do not feel very anxious although I almost impatiently anticipate the moment of our release¹⁴ —

Despite John Quincy's "great fortitude," the Federalists in the Massachusetts legislature elected James Lloyd for Adams's seat well in advance of the regular election and voted to instruct Congress to repeal the embargo, forcing Adams to resign from the Senate on 8 June 1808.¹⁵ Louisa Catherine reflected on her husband's resignation and its consequences for the family, as well as her sense of relief at leaving Washington for Quincy. In her memoir "Adventures of a Nobody," she wrote:

Thus ended my travels for a time and began a system of persecution painful to our Family but disgraceful to the State of Massachusetts whose Citizens are ever Slaves to a handfull

of Men who right or wrong submit to their dictation—They [are] utterly incapable of an enlarged and noble policy: but with all their boasted independence hang on the Skirts of Great Britain, as [a] Child Clings to its Nurse— And with the true slavish spirit The more they are scorned the deeper the worship¹⁶ —

A month after his resignation, John Quincy—in the privacy of his Diary—defended his reputation throughout the crisis:

In the course of the last year I have been called by my duties as a Citizen and a Man to act and to suffer more than at any former period of my life—To my duties I have steadfastly adhered. The course I pursued has drawn upon me much obloquy, and the change of parties in the State, with an accumulated personal malignity, borne me both on my father's and my own account, by those who rule the State, produced in the first instance the election of a Senator to fill my place after the 3d of March next—This election was precipitated for the sole purpose of specially marking me—For it ought in regular order not to have been made untill the Winter Session of the Legislature—They also pass'd Resolutions enjoining upon their Senators a course of conduct, with which neither my judgment could approve, nor my Spirit brook—I therefore resigned my seat—For my future prospects I have no reliance but on the disposer of Events. For the past I have the testimony of a good Conscience; and a firm belief that I have rendered essential service to my Country.¹⁷

Concerned with the "disposer of Events," "testimony of a good conscience," and a "firm belief" in his "essential service to [his country]," John Quincy's sense of moral public service and relationship with national politics would become more complicated in the 1820s as he wrestled with questions of patriotism, party allegiance, and slavery.

Episode II: Congress Debates the Admission of Missouri to the Union

Debates over the admission of Missouri as a slave state or free state dominated the 1819-20 session of Congress.

From January 1820, Adams—as Monroe’s secretary of state—hesitated to express publicly his views on the Missouri debates. At this time, Adams remained a strong Unionist and needed southern slaveowners’ support for his 1819 Treaty with Spain (now known as the Adams-Onís Treaty) and for his potential bid for the presidency in 1824. As secretary of state, he also desired the continental expansion of the United States. If he spoke out against slavery, he could have hindered this political goal. Even as he observed more speeches in Congress, he continually hesitated to express in public his views on the debates. He often observed that the pro-slave state congressmen—“the side of oppression”—more passionately defended the admission of Missouri as a slave state than the “partizans of freedom” because the pro-slave state orators supposedly had greater personal interest in the issue than the pro-free state orators. In the North, for example, the question of slavery was “merely speculative; the People do not feel it in their persons or their purses.” But on the “Slave side, it comes home to the feelings and interests of every man in the community.” Where pro-slavery advocates generally argued that Congress had no constitutional authority to place any restrictions on slavery in the territories, anti-slavery advocates contended that Congress had a “moral and political duty” to prevent the expansion of slavery, according to Adams. He surmised that slavery might lead to the dissolution of the Union and the emancipation of the slaves. To him, leading such a cause “would be [a life] nobly spent or sacrificed.” By the end of February, Adams had expressed his opinions in closed Cabinet meetings and confidential meetings with Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. But he would not publicly denounce slavery until he could be assured that the United States would be strong enough that European powers would not exploit the sectional tension to interfere in its domestic affairs.¹⁸

Like her husband, Louisa Catherine had a complex relationship with slavery. Unlike her husband, however, she never would take a stand against it. Slavery was a central part of life in Washington, D.C. in 1820, so Louisa’s daily activities often brought her into contact with slaves, including the household’s single house slave who might have belonged to her niece Mary Hellen. While in Washington that winter, Louisa Catherine frequently heard guests converse about the debates at dinner parties. Yet despite her immersion in the political climate of spring 1820, Louisa Catherine wanted to avoid such dinner-party conversations; the debates “deeply troubled” her. At a dinner on 4 March 1820, for example, she privately shunned congressmen who asked for her opin-

ion on the crisis. In one of her letters to John Adams, she admitted that she comprehended not the complex policy dimensions of the issue, but its painfully obvious moral dimensions as a “gross political inconsistency with all our boasted Institutions, liberty, and so forth.” She and numerous other women started visiting the Capitol to hear speeches in the House and Senate, as women by then could enter the Senate through the permission of a senator.¹⁹

After months of debate, Congress on 3 March 1820 admitted Missouri into the Union as a slave state and Maine as a free state, but prohibited slavery in northern territories. According to Adams, representatives of the free states, by virtue of their congressional majority, could have forced more concessions from the “slave-holders,” but were divided over the legislation. Louisa Catherine and John Quincy were in the Old Brick Capitol when they heard the news about Missouri’s admission.²⁰

The famous question was decided this morning—[. . .] They having passed the bill with a compromise—*M^r* [John] Randolph [of Roanoke] rose and moved to reconsider—The Speaker called him to order stating that they had not

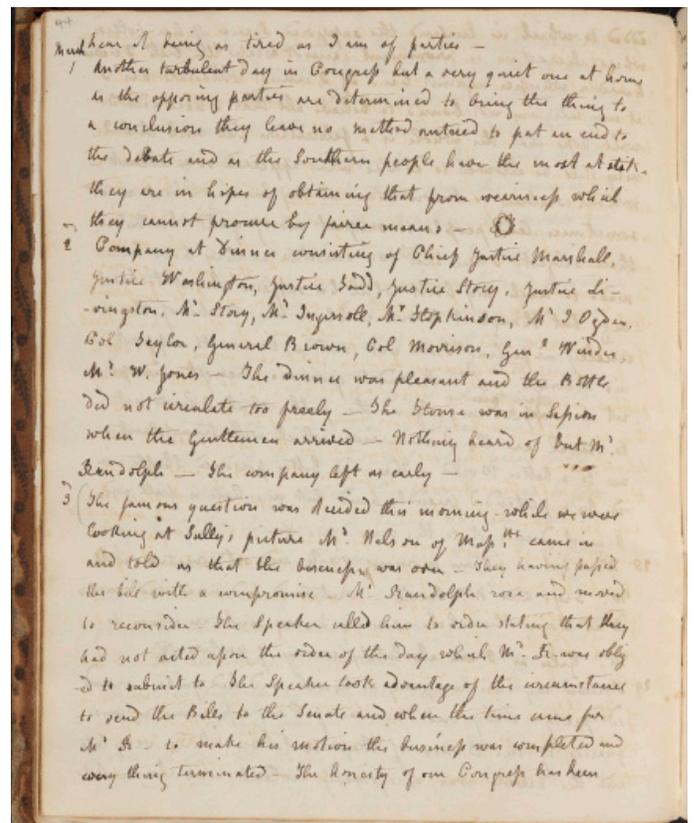


Fig. 6. This page from Louisa Catherine Adams’s diary includes the entry for 3 March 1820.

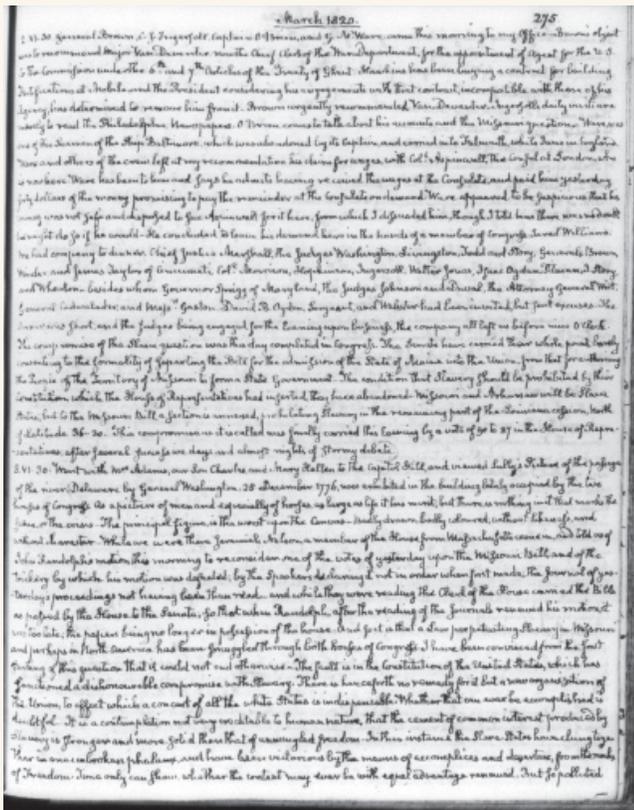


Fig. 7. This page from John Quincy Adams's diary includes the entry for 3 March 1820.

acted upon the order of the day which Mr. R. was obliged to submit to—The Speaker took advantage of the circumstance to send the Bills to the Senate and when the time came for Mr R—to make his motion the business was completed and every thing terminated The honesty of our Congress has been displayed in such exalted colours this Session that the next generation will certainly have cause to be proud of their fathers—Indeed it is a pity that we have not a Homer to chant in the most elevated strains the glory of *such patriots*—At least we shall be allowed to have attained a high pitch of excellence when such knavish trickery can be practiced in the face of an enlightened nation and delight in the glory of *tricks atcheived* which would do honour to a gamester or a blacklegs. These are the rulers I am bound to admire—If this is the case, if this is the vaunted superiority of our Government, and the purity of our elective Institutions, I do not think we have much to be proud of, and morality and Religion are of little use if they cannot teach us to discern the difference between right and

wrong—If such is publick virtue, may my Sons have nothing to do with it—May they be far above polluting their name and fair fame in such a School; I had rather see them live in the most secluded state than thus sell their honour to favour the views of any man, or any party, even tho' that man were my husband—A place obtained in such a way would be an incessant scourge to conscience and I should be ashamed to fill it lest I read the contempt of the good in every speaking eye—It is all barter and he who can afford to bid the highest is the most sure of success—Enough however on this subject excepting that I understand the Clerk of the House was publicly reprimanded for doing the dirty work of his Masters²¹—

Louisa Catherine took affront to Congress's deceitful parliamentary maneuvering. Although her thoughts about the content of the legislation itself are unclear in this passage, her lack of commentary provides further evidence that Louisa “wanted to avoid the whole issue” of slavery.²²

John Quincy similarly derided Congress for the passage of the legislation, but he publicly accepted expansion to preserve the Union.²³ Privately, however, he wrote that slavery “taint[ed] the very sources of moral principle,” disregarded the “first and holiest rights of humanity,” misled owners into believing that they had “ties of mutual attachment and affection,” and would be “the question upon which [the Union] ought to break.”²⁴ In contrast to his wife's opinion, however, he additionally condemned the content of the legislation, its implications for the future of slavery in North America, and its institutional safeguards of slavery:

While we were there [*in the Old Brick Capitol*] Jeremiah Nelson, a member of the House from Massachusetts came in, and told us of John Randolph's motion this morning to reconsider one of the votes of yesterday upon the Missouri Bill, and of the trickery by which his motion was defeated; by the Speakers declaring it not in order when first made; the Journal of yesterday's proceedings not having been then read—and while they were reading the Clerk of the House carried the Bills as passed by the House, to the Senate; so that when Randolph, after the reading of the Journals renewed his motion, it was too late; the papers being no longer in possession of the house. And so it is that a Law

perpetuating Slavery in Missouri and perhaps in North America has been smuggled through both houses of Congress. I have been convinced from the first starting of this question that it could not end otherwise—The fault is in the Constitution of the United States, which has sanctioned a dishonourable compromise with Slavery. There is henceforth no remedy for it but a new organization of the Union, to effect which a concert of all the white States is indispensable. Whether that can ever be accomplished is doubtful—It is a contemplation not very creditable to human nature, that the cement of common interest produced by Slavery is stronger and more solid than that of unmingled freedom. In this instance the Slave

States have clung together in one unbroken phalanx, and have been victorious by the means of accomplices and deserters, from the ranks of Freedom. Time only can show, whether the contest may ever be with equal advantage renewed. But so polluted are all the streams of Legislation in regions of Slavery, that this Bill has been obtained only by two as unprincipled artifices as dishonesty ever devised; one by coupling it as an appendage to the Bill for admitting Maine; and the other by this outrage, perpetrated by the Speaker upon the Rules of the house ²⁵—

As this episode suggests, Louisa Catherine's and John Quincy's conceptions of morality strongly inform their



Fig. 8. Interior of the House of Representatives, Washington, *hand-colored copper plate engraving* (c. 1834) by *William Goodacre* (1803–1883), published by *J & F Tallis* (London and New York)

relationship with national politics in the 1820s. Although she avoided the issue of slavery in her commentary, Louisa Catherine's mockery of Congress conveys an increasingly bold and confident, yet still private, stand on national politics as compared to her 1808 commentary on the Federalists. To both Louisa Catherine and John Quincy, public service should preserve one's honor, yet, to John Quincy, the institution of slavery corrupted public servants and national politics. Over a decade later, John Quincy would translate his conception of morality into action on the floor of the House.

Episode III: Anti-slavery Petition Crisis in the House of Representatives

John Quincy returned to Congress in December 1831 as a representative of Massachusetts's Eleventh District. Although he was reluctant once again to leave his family and enter public service, his election privately gratified him: "My Election as President of the United States was not half so gratifying to my inmost Soul—No election or appointment conferred upon me ever gave me so much pleasure." By 1835, the abolitionist and pro-slavery movements were becoming more powerful throughout the North and South. Abolitionists increasingly petitioned Congress to address slavery, especially in the District of Columbia, but pro-slavery southerners immediately acted to suppress the presentation of antislavery petitions to the House to prevent Congress from inciting slave rebellion. On 26 May 1836, the House passed two resolutions. The first stated that Congress did not have the constitutional power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia or in the states. The second declared that the House would table antislavery petitions, prohibiting floor debate on the issue of slavery—the so-called "gag rule."²⁶

Driven by numerous petitions from Massachusetts constituents calling for Congress to at least place restrictions on the future of slavery, Adams led the fight to debate it in the House; he insisted that petitioners had a right to be heard in Congress. When he presented on 6 February 1837 an anti-slavery petition from enslaved women in Fredericksburg, Virginia, southern representatives demanded that the House censure him. Recognizing that Northerners generally opposed the abolitionists, Adams framed his argument in terms of "free states' civil liberties" rather than abolitionism. Such a fight endangered his life and his family. Adams's crusade was unsuccessful until 3 December 1844 when the House rescinded the "gag rule."²⁷

Louisa Catherine during this time wrote and thought

frequently about slavery. The crisis over the freedom to petition inspired Louisa to think more about women's rights and correspond with prominent female abolitionists; she "connected [*the evils of slavery*] . . . to the injustice of women's exclusion from politics." Nevertheless, her relationship with slavery had remained as complex as it was during the Missouri Crisis; while she remained torn between her husband's actions and her own prejudices, she would have preferred altogether to avoid the petition crisis rather than confront it because the prospect of racial violence and slave rebellions frightened her. In diary journals between 21 December 1835 and 10 March 1836, she reveals the complexity of her relationship with slavery and the danger her family faced during the petition crisis. She was in the House gallery on the day when Southern representatives called for the censure of her husband on 6 February 1837. She sought neutrality in the conflict and left its resolution to forces outside her and her husband's control; she prayed to "the wondrous wisdom of the Almighty Power" for the safety of her husband. She was concerned most of all with her husband's safety, reputation, and legacy:²⁸

In the struggle now passing between the great men of this Country my whole soul teems with disgust with apprehension with compassion and with sorrow—Not to sympathise with my husband is utterly impossible as I know his motives to be pure and Patriotic—Not to sympathise with old friends is equally difficult; although my judgment convinces me that they have suffered the bitterness of hate towards a successful administration, to obscure their sense of right, and to harden their hearts against the visible truth in the fervency of party faction—[. . .] I await the result in fear and trembling for the result He who rules all things knows best what is good for us; and weak and short sighted as we are we cannot foresee or even shun the tribulation which man so madly works out for himself—and that which oft-times seems a chaos of cimmerian darkness, breaks forth with the vivid splendor of a meridian Sun darting its glorious rays of vivid light to shed new warmth and glory on the teeming earth—and thus may its dying glories soften and illumine the last days of my husband; that he may leave a fame to posterity and awaken the justice of his Nation to record his name,

As one the fairest midst the race of man—

John Quincy stood at the center of this political crisis, as Louisa Catherine's entries reveal, to act on his desire "that the United States be not only powerful, but also moral." This desire reflected his belief in "Christian patriotism" by which it was his duty as a Christian to reform the republic for its moral improvement. Yet he struggled to carry out his moralism about slavery. He resisted the "gag rule" during each session of Congress until it was overturned, but still did not take a consistent position on slavery. Where he condemned slaveholding politicians and associated himself with prominent abolitionists, he struggled with the idea of rapidly abolishing slavery. Indeed, he had not always so vociferously opposed slavery. Not until his service in Congress did he take such a stand. Where his "competing priorities" as secretary of state hindered him from "translating his fervent private expressions of antislavery principle into policy," he pursued a more unrestrained course in Congress. His fight to debate slavery drew as much from his opposition to slavery on historical and religious grounds as to the domination of the government by the minority of southern states—the "slave power." He struggled to balance a sense of prudence and moral duty to the cause of antislavery. Such a struggle is evident in the following 19 April 1837 diary entry which Adams wrote after receiving an invitation from the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society to attend its convention in May 1837:³⁰

Upon this subject of Anti-Slavery, my principles and my position make it necessary for me to be more circumspect in my conduct than belongs to my Nature—I have therefore already committed indiscretions of which all the political parties avail themselves to proscribe me in the public opinion—The most insignificant error of conduct in me at this time would be my irredeemable ruin in this world, and both the ruling political parties are watching with intense anxiety for some overt act by me, to set the whole pack of their hireling Presses upon me. It is also to be considered that at this time the most dangerous of all the subjects for public-contention is the Slavery question—In the South it is a perpetual agony of conscious guilt and terror, attempting to disguise itself under sophistical argumentation and braggart menaces. In the North, the People favour the whites and fear the blacks of the South—The Politicians court the South because they want their votes—The abolitionists are gathering themselves into So



Fig. 9. Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828) painted this oil portrait of Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams between 1821–1826.

cieties increasing their numbers and thriving upon persecution—But in proportion as they increase in numbers and in zeal they kindle the opposition against themselves into a flame; and the Passions of the Populace, are all engaged against them—The exposure through which I passed at the late Session of Congress was greater than I could have imagined possible: and having escaped from that fiery furnace, it behoves me well to consider my ways before I put myself in the way of being cast into it again—On the other hand may God preserve me from the craven Spirit of shrinking from danger in the discharge of my duty—Between these two errors let me pursue the path of rectitude unmov'd, and put my trust in God.³¹

Although one might read Louisa's "despair" and "torture" as evidence of her weakness or melodrama, her musings on slavery in national politics reveal not only her intelligence but also her morality. Her references to the divine in this later passage guided her as she strug-

A Note about Portraits

by William C. diGiacomantonio

Louisa Catherine Johnson (LCJA) and John Quincy Adams (JQA)—like Abigail and John Adams before them—had a remarkable record for being captured on canvas during their lifetimes.¹ The Adamses' portraiture allows historians to take an additional measure of their character, approaching a more complete and rounded assessment of the differing perspectives they recorded in their words.

The earliest known companion portraits of LCJA and JQA date to the twelfth year of their marriage (figs. 4, 5). While the first individual portraits of each of them were made much earlier (of 15-year-old JQA in 1783, and of LCJA in c. 1792, at a slightly older age), the twin silhouettes cut by Henry Williams in August 1809 represent a deliberate effort to “frame” the individuals as a family unit just days before they and their youngest child were about to embark upon JQA's newest diplomatic posting in St. Petersburg, Russia. Parents John and Abigail, and older sons George and John, were also traced by Williams, and JQA preserved all six images in the same frame for many years.²

Boston-born Henry Williams (1787–1830) was a true Yankee jack-of-all-trades; his artistic media embraced lifesize oil portraits, miniatures, and wax, in addition to silhouettes. Of all these choices, the silhouette seems uniquely suited to the politically inscrutable JQA, who transcended and defied party labels throughout his life. (Williams's silhouettes were cut in the year of JQA's final break with the Federalists and his appointment as minister plenipotentiary by one of the architects of Jeffersonian-Republicanism, Pres. James Madison.) If, as one art historian suggests, a silhouette “empties the person out . . . that emptying out also creates a version of the infinite self, the unknowable self.” Because “all that hidden depth gets pushed to the linear edges,” the silhouette “might for that

reason have most aspired to portraying the unfathomable depths of a person.”³

The second pair of portraits illustrating this article was also the work of a single artist (figs. 1, 2). Charles Bird King (1785–1862), best known for his images of Native Americans on diplomatic missions to Washington, D.C., captured JQA and LCJA five years apart and in vastly different poses. King began painting JQA in the late spring of 1819—not yet two years into his service as Monroe's secretary of state. Responding to unflattering critiques, King continued working on it (or perhaps started over again) until completing the only known version almost two years later. Family members at the time thought it a good likeness but—and not necessarily inconsistently—lacking in warmth. JQA later praised it as surpassed only by John Singleton Copley's and Gilbert Stuart's portraits of him (painted in 1796 and 1825, respectively). Unlike her husband's, LCJA's portrait by Bird is embellished by material attributes of her personality: a large harp and the book of music laying open before her attest to her artistic interests, while her elaborate turban headdress, a style popularized by Dolley Madison, testifies to her elegant taste. All were props in D.C.'s “Parlor Politics,” which LCJA navigated so skillfully to help secure her husband's victory in the hotly-contested presidential election of 1824.⁴

LCJA wears a faint smile below the turban headdress. But when an artist chose to show them, sorrow and care were there too—wearing heavily on LCJA's face precisely because of their contrast with the gaiety she donned as a counterweight to her husband's solemnness. No canvas and accompanying backstory show this more revealingly than Gilbert Stuart's portrait of LCJA, begun in 1821 but not finished until 1825–26 (fig. 9). One of the truly great native-born American portraitists of his time, Stuart (1755–1828) painted the rich, famous, and well-born of London, Dublin, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. before returning to his native New England in 1805. There, in his Boston studio in the

gled to grasp the calamity of slavery and the consequences of the petition crisis for her husband. Most notably, this passage reads as a prayer; her conception of morality led her to believe that only her God could solve the political turmoil. Like his wife, John Quincy entreated the protection of the divine to guide him through the crisis. Congress had become a “fiery furnace” for him. These entries reveal their inner moral struggle—as national politics became an increasingly “stormy world” tied to the institution of slavery, and as they had become increasingly caught in that storm, Louisa Catherine and John Quincy

navigated such dangers by relying on their faith and the sense of public virtue which had sustained them throughout their lives.



RYAN P. CONNER recently graduated with a B.A. in History & Public Policy from William & Mary, where he delved far into American history, international history, and foreign affairs. He first discovered the diaries of John Quincy Adams and the writings of Louisa Catherine

autumn of 1818, he painted a bust portrait of JQA that disappointed the sitter (although it was used as the basis for many later, successful engravings).⁵

Stuart's portrait of LCJA was no less disappointing to the family, but that may not have prevented them from hanging the couple's portraits in the White House during the last years of JQA's administration.⁶ "Nobody likes it," LCJA admitted, "and Stuart is quite vexed." And yet, "It looks very much as I looked, like a woman who was just attacked by the first chill of death and the features stiffening into torpor. . . . It speaks too much of inward suffering and a half broken heart to be an agreeable remembrance. Mais n'import . . ." Like her husband, LCJA was a poet at heart, and verses she wrote for her sons, to accompany the portrait, convey the same sentiment:

Go flatter'd image tell the tale / Of years long
past away;
Of faded youth, of sorrows wail, / Of times
too sure decay . . .⁷

Her willingness to go on-record about those innermost feelings—like her uninhibited musings about politics, whether in 1808, 1820, or 1837—has given LCJA a "voice" that historians should heed whenever studying the most important relationship of her husband's life.

NOTES

1. The Adamses' portraiture is such an important element in their legacy that the Adams Papers Editorial Project at the Massachusetts Historical Society decided to dedicate a separate series of volumes to the topic not long after it was assigned custody of the Adams Manuscript Trust by deed of gift in 1956. The second volume of that series, Andrew Oliver's *Portraits of John Quincy Adams and His Wife* (Boston, 1970), is the source for much of the information cited

here under the short title "Oliver, *Portraits*."

2. Oliver, *Portraits*, pp. 18, 25, 48–50. JQA and LCJA were captured together in silhouette on two later occasions: by the British-born New York artist William James Hubbard (1807–1862) in late 1828, during the couple's last few months in the White House; and by the sometimes-sign painter Jarvis F. Hanks (b. 1799) a few months later, early during the Adamses' temporary retirement on Meridian Hill in D.C. JQA was the sole subject of a piece done by the most famous silhouette artist working in America, French artist Auguste Edouart (1789–1861), in Washington in 1841 (*ibid.*, pp. 144–48, 212–17).

3. Oliver, *Portraits*, p. 50; Alexander Nemerov, "Without a Trace: The Art and Life of Martha Ann Honeywell," in Asma Naeem, ed., *Black Out: Silhouettes Then and Now* (Princeton, NJ, 2018), p. 54.

4. Oliver, *Portraits*, pp. 91–106; Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville, VA, 2000), pp. 165–68.

5. Oliver, *Portraits*, pp. 73–83. In addition to his 1818 bust portrait of JQA, Stuart began a more famous full-length portrait intended as a matching pendant to John Singleton Copley's portrait of John Adams (1783), both hanging at Harvard University since 1828. Stuart completed only the head before his death; the rest was completed by a young Thomas Sully (1783–1872).

6. William Kloss, Doreen Bolger, David Park Curry, John Wilmerding, and Betty C. Monkman, *Art in the White House: A Nation's Pride* (Washington, DC, 1992), pp. 44, 90. The supposition that Stuart's portraits had indeed hung in the White House was motivation to seek their return—made possible through the gift of their great-great-grandson John Quincy Adams, in 1971.

7. Oliver, *Portraits*, pp. 83–87.

Adams as a USCHS summer research intern, and learned about John Quincy Adams's relationship with slavery during the historian David Waldstreicher's book talk at the Society in July 2017. Ryan would like to thank all of the professionals that guided him throughout the internship and the production of this article, especially William C. diGiacomantonio, Lauren Borchard, and those who granted him the permissions to use the images and texts in this article. He finally would like to thank his family and friends for their unyielding support throughout the process.

NOTES

1. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907; reprint, New York City, 1990), pp. 23–24, 44–47. Bracketed text within all quotes represents this author's editorial insertions. Italicized text provides information for clarification; roman text is intended to provide the best supposition for words or letters missing from the original source.

2. Sara Georgini, *Household Gods: The Religious Lives of the Adams Family* (New York City, 2019),

pp. 41–60, 69–70, 79–81.

3. “John Quincy Adams,” *Massachusetts Historical Society*, accessed 28 March 2018, http://www.masshist.org/adams/john_quincy_adams; James Traub, *John Quincy Adams: Militant Spirit* (New York City, 2016), pp. xi–xv; Charles N. Edel, *Nation Builder: John Quincy Adams and the Grand Strategy of the Republic* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), pp. 294–96; “The Last Hours of John Quincy Adams,” *History, Art, & Archives: United States House of Representatives*, accessed 6 May 2019, https://history.house.gov/Blog/2019/February/2–26_JQA_lasthours/.

4. Michael O’Brien, *Mrs. Adams in Winter: A Journey in the Last Days of Napoleon* (New York City, 2010), pp. xiii–xvi; Louisa Thomas, *Louisa: The Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams* (New York City, 2016), pp. 6–8, 454.

5. “Louisa Catherine Adams,” *Massachusetts Historical Society*, accessed 28 March 2018, http://www.masshist.org/adams/louisa_catherine_adams; O’Brien, *Mrs. Adams in Winter*, pp. xiv–xv; Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, pp. 4–6; Margery M. Heffron, *Louisa Catherine: The Other Mrs. Adams*, ed. David L. Michelmore (New Haven, CT, 2014), pp. 1–5. For a useful, detailed chronology of Louisa’s life, see Judith S. Graham, Beth Luey, Margaret A. Hogan, and C. James Taylor, eds., *Diary and Autobiographical Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 2013), 2:777–94. Louisa Catherine endured numerous tragedies including the untimely loss of three of her four children—the eldest to a presumed suicide and the youngest as an infant while she was in Russia. Only Charles Francis Adams (1807–86) survived early adulthood to become a congressman and ambassador to Great Britain, like his father and grandfather before him.

6. Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, pp. 6–8, 454–55.

7. David Waldstreicher, ed., *John Quincy Adams: Diaries*, 2 vols. (New York City, 2017), 1:xiii–xiv; David Waldstreicher and Matthew Mason, *John Quincy Adams and the Politics of Slavery: Selections from the Diary* (New York City, 2017), pp. ix–xxi, xv; Traub, *John Quincy Adams: Militant Spirit*, p. xvii.

The “Note on the Texts” in the Waldstreicher two-volume edition, the most comprehensive version of Adams’s diaries, contains more information about how JQA wrote and assembled the diary as well as how the recent edition compares to previous editions. Other editions include Charles Francis Adams’s

Memoirs of John Quincy Adams: Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848 (Philadelphia) between 1874 and 1877, which notably omits most of the details about John Quincy’s private life, and historian Allan Nevins’s *The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794–1845: American Political, Social and Intellectual Life from Washington to Polk* (New York City, 1928), which focuses on Adams’s social, diplomatic, and political accounts (*John Quincy Adams: Diaries*, 2:658–62). For the digitized version of the diary manuscripts, see Massachusetts Historical Society, “The Diaries of John Quincy Adams: A Digital Collection,” <https://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries/php/>. For more information about the Adams Family Papers, see <https://www.masshist.org/adams/?goto=adams>.

8. Heffron, *The Other Mrs. Adams*, p. 4; Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville, VA, 2000), pp. 147–89; Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, pp. 7–8, 410–11, 440–42; Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 1:xxiv–xxv.

9. Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 1:xxiv–xxvii. A guide to the Adams Family Papers microfilm can be found at <http://www.masshist.org/collection-guides/view/fa0279>. The 730 digitized letters can be accessed at <https://founders.archives.gov/search/Author%3A%22Adams%2C%20Louisa%20Catherine%20Johnson%22>; Adams, “Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams,” 22 Oct. 1812 to 15 Feb. 1814, in Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 1:357–74; “Record of a Life,” *ibid.*, 1:1–61; “Narrative of a Journey from Russia to France,” 27 Jun. 1836, *ibid.*, 1:375–406; “The Adventures of a Nobody,” *ibid.*, 1:63–355; Heffron, *The Other Mrs. Adams*, pp. 311–12; Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 1:xxv, xlv–xlvii; Margaret A. Hogan and C. James Taylor, eds., *A Traveled First Lady: Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), pp. xxii–xxiii.

10. Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, pp. 149, 153; Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 1:xxiv–xxv; Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, pp. 441–42; Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, p. 162.

11. Since Jack Shepherd’s path-breaking dual biography, *Cannibals of the Heart: A Personal Biography of Louisa Catherine and John Quincy Adams* (New York City, 1980), biographies have increasingly considered the joint perspectives of Louisa Catherine and John Quincy.

12. Waldstreicher, *John Quincy Adams: Diaries*,

1:612-13; Waldstreicher, *Politics of Slavery*, pp. xviii–xix; Edel, *Nation Builder*, pp. 92-96.

13. Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, p. 159; Heffron, *The Other Mrs. Adams*, pp. 190–92.

14. Louisa Catherine Adams to Abigail Smith Adams, 24 Jan. 1808, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-03-02-1635>.

15. Waldstreicher, *John Quincy Adams: Diaries*, 1:613.

16. Adams, “Adventures of a Nobody,” 1 Jun. 1808, in Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 1:274.

17. *John Quincy Adams Diary: An Electronic Archive* (Boston, 2018), v. 27 (1 Jan. 1803 to 4 Aug. 1809): 362 [11 Jul. 1808] [electronic edition], <http://www.masshist.org/jqadiaries>.

18. Waldstreicher, *Politics of Slavery*, pp. 67, 70; Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, p. 287; Edel, *Nation Builder*, p. 157; JQA diary for 10, 16 Jan., 11, 23, 27, 24 Feb. 1820, *John Quincy Adams: Diaries*, 1:523–24, 525–26, 528–29, 533–34, 536–37, 534–35; Waldstreicher, *Politics of Slavery*, p. 76; Edel, *Nation Builder*, pp. 249–51.

19. Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, pp. 285–89; Heffron, *The Other Mrs. Adams*, pp. 309, 317; Louisa Catherine Adams diary for 21, 29 Jan., 26 Feb., 4 Mar. 1820, Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 2:459, 463–64, 476–77, 481–82; Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, pp. 110, 118–19.

20. For a timeline of congressional debate on the Missouri Compromise, see <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/missouri.html>; JQA diary for 7 Mar. 1820, in Waldstreicher, *Politics of Slavery*, p. 86. The Old Brick Capitol used to stand where the Supreme Court does today. Congress met there for several years while the Capitol was rebuilt following its burning by the British in August 1814.

21. Louisa Catherine Adams diary for 3 Mar. 1820, Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 2:480–81.

22. Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, p. 288.

23. Edel, *Nation Builder*, pp. 158–59.

24. Waldstreicher, *John Quincy Adams: Diaries*, 1:544-45.

25. *JQA Diary*, v. 31 (1 Jan. 1819 to 20 March 1821, 10 Nov. to 6 Dec. 1824): 275–76 [3 Mar. 1820] [electronic edition]; Edel, *Nation Builder*, pp. 157–58.

26. JQA diary for 7 Nov. 1830, Waldstreicher, *John Quincy Adams: Diaries*, 2:236–38, 649–50; Waldstreicher, *Politics of Slavery*, pp. 171–91; JQA diary for 18 Dec. 1835, 18 Jan. 1836, Waldstreicher, *John Quincy*

Adams: Diaries, 2:368, 377–78, 652–53; Edel, *Nation Builder*, pp. 266–72; Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, pp. 416–21, 424–26.

27. Waldstreicher, *Politics of Slavery*, pp. 171–91; JQA diary for 3 Dec. 1844, Waldstreicher, *John Quincy Adams: Diaries*, 2:603, 657; Edel, *Nation Builder*, pp. 266–72; Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, pp. 416–21, 424–26.

28. Thomas, *Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams*, pp. 416–18, 421–26, 427–32; Louisa Catherine Adams diary for 21, 24 Dec. 1835, Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 2:694, 696–97.

29. Louisa Catherine Adams diary for 10 March 1836, Graham, *Diary and Autobiographical Writings*, 2:700–01, 1:xxxiv.

30. Edel, *Nation Builder*, pp. 253–54; Georgini, *Household Gods*, pp. 69–70; Edel, *Nation Builder*, pp. 264–66, 279–86; Waldstreicher, *Politics of Slavery*, pp. xx–xxi, 45, 198–99.

31. *JQA Diary*, v. 33 (“Diary in Abridgment,” 1 Dec. 1821 to 31 Dec. 1838 [with gaps]): 251–52 [19 April 1837] [electronic edition].

IMAGE CREDITS

Fig. 1. Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, Rhode Island, gift of Charles Bird King

Fig. 2. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Adams-Clement Collection, gift of Mary Louisa Adams Clement in memory of her mother, Louisa Catherine Adams Clement

Fig. 3. Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives

Fig. 4. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Fig. 5. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Fig. 6. Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society

Fig. 7. Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society

Fig. 8. Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives

Fig. 9. White House Collection/White House Historical Association

SOCIETY NEWS

Spring Talks from USCHS



Sandra Weber

The U.S. Capitol Historical Society hosted lunchtime lectures throughout the spring, with topics ranging from artwork in the Capitol to political science studies of House leadership races. The series kicked off with a Women's History Month Lecture that featured former Capitol Fellow **Sandra Weber** discussing artist Adelaide Johnson and her work sculpting woman suffrage activists. Johnson's portrait monument of Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton currently stands in the Capitol Rotunda.

April opened with a presentation from **John Brady**, president of the board of directors of the Flagship Olympia Foundation, replete with details about the *USS Olympia's* construction and history, as well as notes about its role in bringing an unknown WWI soldier from Europe to the US—a journey that ended when the remains lay in state in the Capitol and were buried at Arlington Cemetery. USCHS also welcomed back **Matthew Green** (Catholic University) to offer highlights from his just-published



John Brady

book *Choosing the Leader: Leadership Elections in the House of Representatives*, co-authored with Douglas Harris. His talk highlighted several of the races that the book examines in detail and ended with audience members sharing recollections of their involvement as staff members in leadership races.

Award-winning historian **Brenda Wineapple** joined us in May, just after the well-received publication of her new book, *The Impeachers: The Trial of Andrew Johnson and the Dream of a Just Nation*. She argued that the impeachment was an attempt to preserve the Union and eradicate the effects of slavery; to understand the Johnson impeachment, we must recall the context of the intimidation and killing of black people occurring throughout former Confederate states. Without that context, we miss the story and the point. To downgrade this moment of impeachment, to forget why it actually happened—these reasons beyond the Tenure of Office Act—is to ignore that the impeachment was about how to create a fair and free country.



Brenda Wineapple

C-SPAN recorded several of these lectures, and those talks are now available on c-span.org. Search for "Capitol Historical Society" and the speaker (John Brady and Matthew Green) to find them in the online archives. All of our history lectures and book talks are free and open to the public; our members and other donations support the programming. If you'd like to donate or become a member, see uschs.org for full membership details or use the envelope included in this issue to send in your donation.

To learn more about upcoming USCHS history events, visit uschs.org and check the news releases or calendar events for the latest updates.

USCHS Assists as Congress Dedicates Lincoln Room

BRUCE GUTHERIE



The Hon. Jerry Weller, Rep. Darin LaHood, Linda Elliff, John O'Brien, and Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi

On Wednesday, May 1, 2019, the Congress officially dedicated a historic room off of National Statuary Hall to Abraham Lincoln. During the 115th Congress, then-Majority Whip **Steve Scalise** of Louisiana unofficially named the room after our 16th president and began displaying Lincoln memorabilia therein. During the 2018 observation of the Illinois Bicentennial, Reps. **Raja Krishnamoorthi** and **Darin LaHood** of Illinois introduced the bipartisan legislation to formally dedicate the room to his memory. The United States Capitol Historical Society participated in the event to provide historic context.

Krishnamoorthi and LaHood both spoke about renaming the room in honor of Lincoln. Hon. **Jerry Weller**, a former Member of Congress from Illinois, president of the Illinois State Society, and an active USCHS volunteer, gave remarks thanking Krishnamoorthi and LaHood for their efforts in getting the naming legislation passed. **John O'Brien**, president of the Lincoln Group of Washington, D.C., gave remarks of gratitude for the leadership of the late **John Elliff**, a former member of the Abraham Lincoln Association who passed away before the dedication occurred; Elliff's wife Linda was on hand to celebrate.

At the conclusion of the formal program, guests were invited to enter and explore the Lincoln Room. Once inside, **Samuel Holliday**, USCHS manager of communications, gave remarks on the conditions of the House Chamber at the time Lincoln served.

USCHS thanks the offices of Reps. Krishnamoorthi and LaHood for organizing this event and for the

opportunity to participate; the office of Majority Whip **James Clyburn** for opening its historic space for this event; and the Illinois State Society and Abraham Lincoln Association for their leadership in calling for this commemoration.

USCHS Honors Volunteers and Partners

On Wednesday, January 30, 2019 the United States Capitol Historical Society held an event to honor its volunteers and partners. Following a reception of drinks and heavy hors d'oeuvres, USCHS Board of Trustees member Brig. Gen. **Tim White** (ret.), Ph.D., welcomed the more than 70 guests and thanked them for the vital role they play in the organization. White also officially introduced the Hon. **Jane L. Campbell** as the Society's new president and CEO. Campbell emphasized the importance of volunteers and partners to the Society's success, and expressed her excitement at leading the organization at this time.

The evening's featured speaker was the Hon. **Stephen T. Ayers**, the recently-retired 11th Architect of the Capitol, who presented on perhaps the keynote achievement of his tenure: the full restoration of the Capitol Dome. In his talk entitled "The Capitol Dome: A 30,000 Piece Jigsaw Puzzle," Ayers shared amusing anecdotes and fascinating facts about the project. From the unique challenges of repairing more than 150-year-old cast iron elements to humorous encounters with adventurous animals, he kept the audience spellbound for more than half an hour.

USCHS would like to thank **Altria** for hosting the event.



KATIE GARLOCK/PORTRAITONS

USCHS Trustee Tim White, former Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers, and USCHS President/CEO Jane L. Campbell

USCHS Hosts Tax and Trade Committee Staff Panel

KATIE GARLOCK/PORTRAITIONS



USCHS Chairman **Donald G. Carlson**, panel moderator and USCHS Trustee **Mary Moore Hamrick**, and panelists **Angela Ellard**, **Aruna Kalyanam**, and **Tiffany Smith**

On December 11, 2018, the United States Capitol Historical Society hosted a panel discussion featuring congressional committee staff who specialize in tax and trade issues. The discussion was moderated by USCHS Trustee **Mary Moore Hamrick**. The bipartisan, bicameral group of speakers included **Angela Ellard** and **Aruna Kalyanam** of the House Committee on Ways and Means and **Tiffany Smith** of the Senate Committee on Finance.

USCHS Leadership Council and Constitution Signers members attended the lively, candid, and at times humorous discussion of the current state of tax and trade policy and politics. The panelists discussed the challenges of bipartisanship in our polarized times but highlighted the areas in which they and their fellow staffers were able to cooperate and compromise.

When asked to share their fondest memories of congressional service, Kalyanam told of a celebrity encounter she experienced early on: film legend Paul Newman had come to the Capitol to meet with members of the tax-writing committees who were meeting with a foreign leader and unavailable; Kalyanam had to entertain the Academy-Award winner. She also recommended that every-

one play Neil Diamond's "America" while driving on East Capitol Street from 7th Street towards the Capitol—the chorus will begin just as the Dome becomes visible!

Ellard and Smith both recalled moments of awe that struck them late at night when passing through an empty Capitol Rotunda. There is rarely a more profound stillness than that which permeates that breathtaking space when the crowds have left and all who remain are quietly, diligently pursuing the business of our country.

The "Taxistas"—as the panelists are sometimes referred to on the Hill—were also asked to share any advice they would give to someone looking to succeed them in the future. Smith advocated a flexible demeanor; the ever-evolving politics and circumstances on Capitol Hill mean that only those who can adapt can keep up. Kalyanam said that the most successful staffers are those who do not let questions of authorship bother them; sharing or even yielding credit can still help advance a career. Ellard noted that the best staffers always remember that the Member of Congress is the boss; at the end of the day the Member's opinion is decisive.

USCHS thanks **Express Scripts** for generously hosting and supporting this event.

USCHS Holds Annual Trustee Lunch with Rep. Connolly

LAURA HATCHER PHOTOGRAPHY



USCHS Chair Donald G. Carlson, President Jane Campbell, and Trustee Rep. Gerry Connolly

opened the event by welcoming members of the Capitol Committee and introducing Hon. **Jane L. Campbell**, president/CEO of the Society. Campbell spoke about the Society's important mission "to educate and inform the public about congress and the legislative process."

In the wide-ranging discussion that ensued, Connolly shared his thoughts on current events, his perspective as chair of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Relations, and some of his favorite stories from Capitol history. In particular, he movingly recounted the origin story of the Statue of Freedom, the statue which graces the Capitol Dome; the men who began making the statue as slaves were emancipated while it was in progress and were paid to finish the job. Connolly spoke with great admiration for the Congress as an institution and the Capitol as a symbol of our democracy.

The Society thanks the **Volkswagen Group of America** for supporting this event.

On Monday, February 25, 2019, the United States Capitol Historical Society held its annual Trustee Lunch with Rep. **Gerry Connolly** of Virginia. **Donald G. Carlson**, chairman of the Society's Board of Trustees,

CAPITOL COMMITTEE RENEWALS, UPGRADES, AND NEW MEMBERS

DECEMBER 1, 2018–MAY 31, 2019

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For more information about the many benefits available to Capitol Committee members, please contact Director of Outreach and Development Jennifer Romberg at (202) 543-8919 x23 or jromberg@uschs.org or Development Associate Alex Del Vecchio at (202) 543-8919 x21 or adelvecchio@uschs.org.

Spring Symposium (continued from the back cover)



An audience member asks a question during the concluding Q&A session on May 2.

The afternoon session began with an exploration of the ways veteran James Hope's Civil War-related art shifted after an Antietam battlefield reunion in 1888; **James J. Broomall** (Shepherd University) identified some of Hope's sources and argued that his "grisly" artwork portrayed the battlefield differently than contemporaneous popular prints. Next, John David Smith (University of North Carolina at Charlotte) discussed several postwar proposals for and strategies to approve reparations for formerly enslaved people. Finally, **Heather Cox Richardson** (Boston College) traced the way opponents of civil rights for African-Americans claimed that they were actually opposed to a kind of socialism and redistribution of wealth—language that echoes through the twentieth century to the present.

The Friday, May 3 session met in the Russell Senate Office Building's Kennedy Caucus Room. The first two speakers presented a panel on the Supreme Court and Reconstruction. **Paul Finkelman** (Gratz College and symposium director) argued that changes in more immediate postwar laws, especially those that dealt with segregation, the black vote, and black officeholders, represented a "revolution in law" that the Supreme Court rolled back because it was ill-equipped to understand both the revolution and the lives of actual black people. **Randall Kennedy** (Harvard Law School) detailed the 1875 Civil Rights Act and the Supreme Court's 1883 decisions that invalidated the "public accommodations" portion of it—which allowed individuals to discriminate against other individuals and remains the case law today

(twentieth-century civil rights challenges relied on the commerce clause to challenge segregation). He concluded with a challenge for the audience to do more than learn about these types of decisions, to be aware and critical of our current law and the way it exists under a pall from the destruction of Reconstruction.

Orville Vernon Burton (Clemson University and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign College of Law) opened the last segment of the symposium with a very personal presentation about his experiences as an expert witness in voting rights cases; his role as a historian helped minority plaintiffs meet their burden to establish intent, for instance. **Brook Thomas** (University of California at Irvine) provided the last presentation of the day; he explored three different twentieth-century portrayals of Andrew Johnson's impeachment and argued that their common reliance on a 1903 history led to a dubious narrative—still alive today—that Johnson's impeachment was flawed because it was a partisan, political process.

You can find more information about each of these talks by searching #reconstructionhistory or #history-talk on Twitter. The Friday talks appeared on C-SPAN and are available on C-SPAN's website; search the speaker's name and "capitol historical society." And in the long run, most of these talks will appear in a volume from Ohio University Press collecting the symposium proceedings in 2020 or so.

To learn more about upcoming USCHS history events, visit uschs.org and check the news releases or calendar events for the latest updates.



Judith Geisberg

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THE INSURGENT DELEGATE

Selected Letters and other Writings of George Thatcher

William C. diGiacomantonio
EDITOR

THE INSURGENT DELEGATE

George Thatcher served as a U.S. representative from Maine throughout the Federalist Era (1789-1801)—the most critical and formative period of American constitutional history. A moderate on most political issues, the Cape Cod native and Harvard-educated lawyer proved a maverick in matters relating to education, the expansion of the slave interest, the rise of Unitarianism, and the separation of church and state. Written over his forty-year career as a country lawyer, national legislator, and state supreme court justice, the over two hundred letters and miscellaneous writings selected for this edition will appeal to historians, lawyers and legal scholars, teachers, and genealogists as an encyclopedic resource on the Founding generation, and to all readers captivated by the dramatic immediacy and inherent authenticity of personal letters. Following Thatcher's journey as a New England Federalist, abolitionist, religious dissenter, and pedagogical innovator is to add depth and complexity to our understanding of the early American Republic. Compiled and edited by Chief Historian of the United States Capitol Historical Society William C. diGiacomantonio. Cloth, cxlv, 692 pp., 2019

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THE ART OF THE ROTUNDA POCKET GUIDE

The United States Capitol Rotunda is home to some of the most recognized artwork depicting major landmarks in American history. Eight niches in the Rotunda hold large, framed historical paintings. The *Apotheosis of Washington* in the eye of the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol was painted in the true fresco technique by Constantino Brumidi in 1865. Brumidi (1805–1880) was born and trained in Rome and had painted in the Vatican and Roman palaces before emigrating to the United States in 1852. The frieze in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol contains a painted panorama depicting significant events in American history. The frieze's 19 scenes are the work of three artists: Constantino Brumidi, Filippo Costaggini, and Allyn Cox. Paperback, 16 pp., 2019

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"Battle of Lexington"
British troops fire on colonists, who had gathered at Lexington to stop them from going on to Concord to destroy a colonial supply depot. Major Pitcairn, the British officer on horseback, has ordered the colonists to disarm and disperse. As they begin to do so, a single shot was fired, which led to an exchange of fire between British platoon and the colonial militia. Eight militiamen were killed and one wounded before Pitcairn regained control of his troops. Thus, the American Revolution started, with "the shot heard round the world." (1775)
Filippo Costaggini



Landing of Columbus by John Vanderlyn
Placed in the Rotunda in 1846. The New York artist, a pupil of Gilbert Stuart, had earlier painted a portrait of George Washington for the Hall of the House of Representatives. His painting portrays Columbus claiming the island of Guanahani in the West Indies on October 12, 1492, in the name of Spain.



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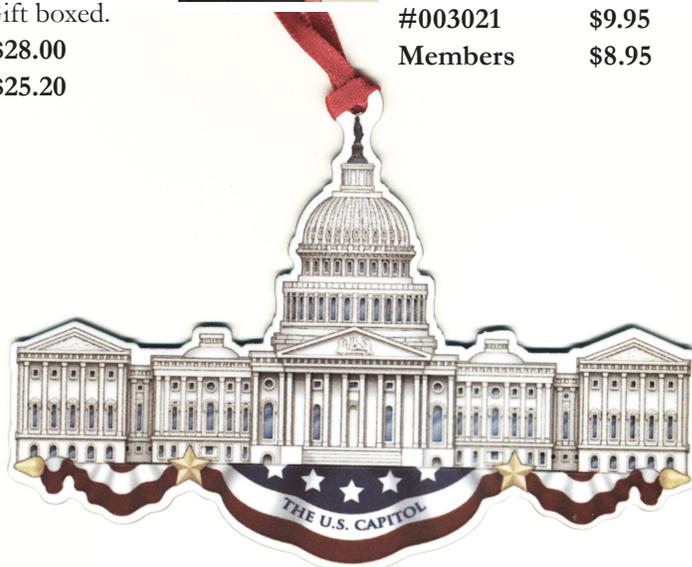
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Symposium on Reconstruction Traces Effects to the Present



Randall Kennedy (Harvard Law School) speaks on May 3.

On May 2 and 3, 2019, the U.S. Capitol Historical Society hosted its annual history symposium. This year's edition, *Reconstruction and the Long Reconstruction: 150 Years toward Freedom*, concluded a three-year dive into the post-Civil War period of congressional and U.S. history, including explorations of the ways that Reconstruction-era events, policies, and decisions continue to reverberate through the twentieth century and the recent past. Speakers from across the country addressed topics ranging

from Grant's presidency to current conversations about reparations, voting rights, and census questions.

On Thursday, May 2, attendees met at the Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital for a full day of presentations. The morning session opened with four panelists discussing "Ulysses S. Grant: Presidency and Legacy." **Joan Waugh** (University of California at Los Angeles) reviewed the election of 1868, when Americans were already debating both the meaning and the memory of the Civil War. **Charles W. Calhoun** (East Carolina University emeritus) walked through Grant's attempts to thread the needle of bringing southern states back into the Union and supporting and protecting civil rights for black people. **Tim Alan Garrison** (Portland State University) covered Grant's early views on Indians, a summary of his actions as president, and the challenges of understanding those actions. **Ryan P. Semmes** (Mississippi State University Libraries) explored Grant's attempts to annex Santo Domingo—one way to connect domestic Reconstruction to U.S. foreign relations. Finally, all four panelists took questions from the audience. **Judith Giesberg** (Villanova University) finished out the morning session with a discussion of her work on the 1870 census, which included two questions intended to track illegal vote suppression. *(continued on p. 46)*