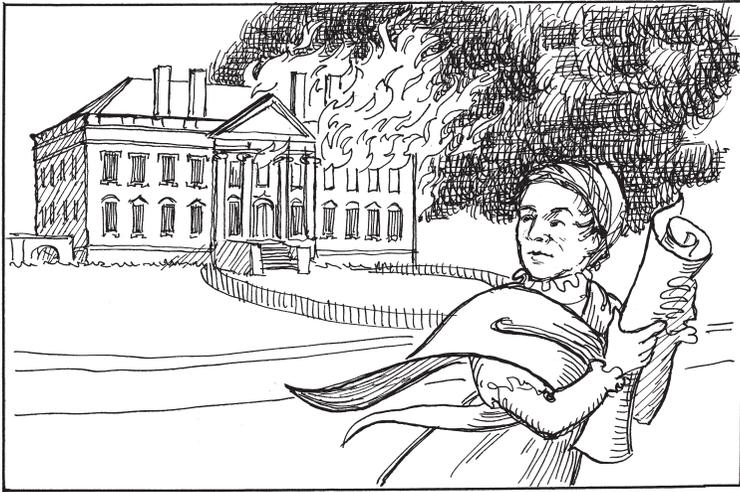


Don't Burn the White House!



Dolley Madison

1768–1849

During the War of 1812, the British invaded Washington, D.C. They set fire to the president's house. Dolley Madison, wife of the fourth U.S. president, James Madison, saved George Washington's portrait and many documents just minutes before the British burned the White House.

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Dolley Madison

Don't Burn the White House!

Cast: Narrator
Dolley Madison
Messenger
Chorus

Narrator: The White House, where the president lives, is a very special and important place because it is a symbol of freedom and democracy. We are going to learn a little bit about the White House — its history, how it almost burned down, and how it got its name.

CHORUS: *The White House is
A special place.
It belongs to you,
It belongs to me.
It is a symbol
Of democracy!*

Narrator: This story is about a First Lady, Dolley Madison. She was the wife of the fourth president of the United States, James Madison. She was a very special and popular First Lady. She was an excellent hostess, known for her kindness and tact. She was also very brave. It is 1812, and the U.S. is at war with Britain.

CHORUS: *Dolley, Dolley,
What did you?
What did you do
that was so brave?*

Dolley: Well, I don't really think I was that brave. Let me explain. We were at war with Britain, and they were invading the capital! They were coming to the White House! I couldn't believe that! I couldn't believe that they might burn it down — this beautiful house where we had many wonderful parties and ceremonies.

CHORUS: *Dolley, Dolley,
What did you do?
What did you do
That special day?*

Dolley: Well, at first, I did nothing. I was having supper, and I heard cannons in the distance! It couldn't be! The British couldn't be in Washington! I had not finished eating when I heard a knock on the door.

Messenger: Madam, this is a message from your husband, the president! He wants you to leave Washington at once! He wants you to go to Virginia, where it is safe! You will not be safe if you stay here!

Dolley: No, I'll wait for the president! I'll wait right here. I'll wait until he comes. I will not leave alone. We will leave together!

Messenger: Madam, I beg you. Leave! Leave at once. There is no time! The president cannot come. Don't you hear the cannons? The British are near!

CHORUS: *The British are coming!
The British are coming!*

Messenger: They'll capture you!

Dolley: Then I must go at once. Please get me a carriage, for I have much to pack.

Messenger: Madam! Don't wait another minute. Don't pack too much. Don't take too long!

CHORUS: *Dolley, Dolley,
What did you pack?
What did you pack?
On the run?
On the run?*

Dolley: I thought about all the documents in the White House. I had to take them. They were treasures, national treasures! I wanted to take as many as I could. I couldn't leave without them. The Declaration of Independence, for example — I had to take that and other documents, too.

CHORUS: *Did you leave
Right then?
Did you leave
Right there?
When did you leave?
When did you leave?*

Dolley: Not right away. I saw that wonderful portrait of George Washington on the wall and thought, "I cannot leave without it!" So, I told my servants to take it down and to cut it out of the frame.

Messenger: Madam, please! Please! The president insists that you leave at once! The British are almost at your doorstep! Go! Now! Before it is too late.

CHORUS: *Go, Dolley, go!
Go, Dolley, go!
Go to a safe place
Before it gets too late!*

Dolley: Yes, yes, I'm leaving. I pray the British do not destroy this beautiful home.

Narrator: And so she left quickly, with treasures in hand and dinner still warm on the table. The British arrived, ate the food, and then set fire to the house. After the Americans turned back the British, the president and Dolley returned to the White House. It was now gray with the burn marks of the fire. But it was still there!

CHORUS: *How sad, how sad,
To burn it down.
How sad, how sad,
To burn it down!
The house so white,
But now so gray.*

Narrator: Well, the house was restored and painted white once again. Soon after, people began calling it the White House. Then, in 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt made it official: it was to be called the “White House” from then on.

CHORUS: *The White House is
A very special place.
In this place
The president lives.
In this place
The president works.
His house, our house,
Everybody’s house!
The White House is
A very special place!*

Narrator: The White House is truly a national treasure, and so are the things Dolley Madison saved.