

Dolley Madison



A Skit
By Mae Wilson
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Characters:

James Madison (Fourth President of the United States)

Dolley Madison (His wife)

Servant (If need be, can be double cast with whoever plays James Madison)

Messenger (Could be double cast with servant and/or James)

Costumes:

Dolley – Bright colored dress and a turban adorned with jewelry or feathers.

James – Dark pants & jacket, if possible

Messenger/Servant – Grey pants or knickers, & white shirt

Props:

4 cardboard boxes or containers in which to pack important papers

Lots of papers, some flat and some possibly rolled up to look important

Something to serve as Dolley's writing desk

A chair for Dolley's writing desk

Paper and a feather and ink well (can make easily with any container (yogurt?) covered with a piece of paper saying "ink" in big, bold letters)

Spyglass (can make or use a kaleidoscope)

Envelope

Ax made of cardboard

A large piece of cardboard to serve as a George Washington Portrait. You can draw something on it, just pretend, or write the words "George Washington Portrait" as a humorous substitute.

An old fashioned looking clock

Some jewelry

Some clothes

Silverware

Books

It might be fun to place a modern day "Dolley Madison" dessert in the set during the opening scene.

Setting:

The White House during the War of 1812

Scene I

James and Dolley are at the front door to the White House saying goodbye to their guests. The guests are unseen. (If you have a lot of brothers and sisters you can start this scene where they are eating the meal and have them play the parts of the dinner guests.)

James: Goodbye. Thank you for coming.

Dolley: (Smiling broadly) Goodnight. It was such a delightful evening. Goodbye. Goodnight.

James: Goodnight. [Closes door] (Speaks to Dolley) Well, my dear, I believe you really outdid yourself this time. That was a smashing dinner party!

Dolley: Oh, thank you, dear James. It was so much fun! It's so nice to get one's mind off this war for even a short time.

James: Yes, I agree. What was that fabulous dessert you served this evening? I don't believe anything like that has ever been served at the White House before.

Dolley: Oh, that little treat was ice cream. I do believe it was the first time it **was** served here in the White House. I do so enjoy surprising my guests with new and fun delicacies.

James: Well, you certainly pull it off every time. I declare, Dolley, you've certainly made a name for yourself when it comes to special desserts. One of these days some smart businessperson is going to name a line of desserts after you.

Dolley: That would be such an honor, James! I just hope they spell my name correctly – D-O-L-L-E-Y. SO many people leave out the E.

James: Yes, the spelling of your name is unique, just as you are, my dear.

Dolley: Oh, James, you are so sweet. The American people couldn't have elected a better man than you as their 4th president.

James: Why, thank you, Dolley. Let's get some sleep now.

Dolley: Oh, that's a splendid idea. I'm beat.

[Both exit]

Scene II

James: Are you sure you will be okay here for a night or two while I go check on the army?

Dolley: (matter-of-factly) James, you should know me well enough to know I will be fine. I just get so angry when I think of the possibility of those British soldiers coming in here and messing with my lovely things! But I am not afraid of them! Not for a moment!

James: Very well. If you would, please pack up my personal papers and put them in the carriage. We won't have room for any personal belongings. I've stationed 100 men to guard the house. Be safe, my darling.

Dolley: Yes, you be safe also dear James.

[James exits]

[Dolley packs 4 boxes with papers. As she packs she keeps glancing out the window with a spyglass. After she packs she goes to her desk and begins to write a letter.]

[Servant enters and exits, taking a box]

Servant: I'll load this in the carriage, Ma'am.

Dolley: Yes, good. I think I'll write my sister Lucy a letter. Dear Lucy ... [Dolley gets up and looks out the window again. Goes back to writing the letter.] I am rather stressed out at the moment. [Dolley goes back to look out the window and then back to her letter writing.] I have been busy packing important papers in the event that the British attack Washington. [Dolley looks out window again. Returns to letter writing.]

[Servant enters and takes box.]

Dolley: I just can't imagine what the British will do. [Dolley gets up and packs more papers.] Our own private property must be sacrificed. I am determined not to leave myself until I see Mr. Madison safe. [Dolley gets up again and looks out the window.] My friends and acquaintances are all gone. [Dolley writes for a few more seconds silently.]

[Dolley gets up again and looks at her beloved personal items. She starts packing some books, clothes, jewelry, silverware and clock.]

Dolley: (As she's packing) Oh, I cannot bear to leave behind all of these beautiful things. And these gorgeous red velvet draperies! I'm certainly not going to leave these to the British!

[Dolley pantomimes yanking down draperies around window and puts them in a packing box.]

[Messenger enters.]

Messenger: I have a message from the President that you should leave here at once.

Dolley: Very well, but I simply cannot leave this portrait of George Washington behind. Servant, please get an ax and break the frame.

[Servant takes ax and pretends to break the frame.]

Servant: There you are, Mrs. Madison.

Dolley: Thank you ever so much. [Dolley takes portrait and exits]

[Servant takes the last of the boxes and exits.]

Scene III

James: Dolley, you are truly a marvel. Not only did you save the Declaration of Independence and all these other important documents, but you saved the portrait of President Washington. You are a true American hero!

Dolley: Thank you, James. I just did what I felt was the right thing to do.