



THE SENTIMENTS of an AMERICAN WOMAN

__BROADSIDE, PHILADELPHIA, 1780__

In the desperate months of 1780 as General Washington was pleading with Congress and the states to provide adequate supplies for his soldiers, the First Lady of Pennsylvania, Esther De Berdt Reed, spearheaded a fundraising campaign with other influential Philadelphia women that raised \$300,000 for the Continental Army. As such, Reed is considered the likely author of this broadside, a one-page handbill published to promote, explain, and justify the women's campaign. Why would Reed have felt it wise to publish such a broadside? As the governor's wife, why did she publish it anonymously (not uncommon in the period)? To whom did she address her "sentiments"? What opposition did she predict and address in the essay? (Reed died unexpectedly of a fever several months after the appearance of the broadside.)

On the commencement of actual war, the Women of America manifested a firm resolution to contribute as much as could depend on them to the deliverance of their country. Animated by the purest patriotism, they are sensible of sorrow at this day in not offering more than barren wishes for the success of so glorious a Revolution. They aspire to render themselves more really useful, and this sentiment is universal from the north to the south of the Thirteen United States. Our ambition is kindled by the fame of those heroines of antiquity, who have rendered their sex illustrious and have proved to the universe that if the weakness of our Constitution,¹ if opinion and manners did not forbid us to march to glory by the same paths as the Men, we should at least equal and sometimes surpass them in our love for the public good. I glory in all that which my sex has done great and commendable. I call to mind with enthusiasm and with admiration all those acts of courage, of constancy and patriotism, which history has transmitted to us — the people favored by Heaven, preserved from destruction by the virtues, the zeal and the resolution of Deborah, of Judith, of Esther!² The fortitude of the mother of the Maccabees in giving up her sons to die before her eyes; Rome saved from the fury of a victorious enemy by the efforts of Volumnia and other Roman Ladies: So many famous sieges where the Women have been seen forgetting the weakness of their sex, building new walls, digging trenches with their feeble hands, furnishing arms to their defenders, they themselves darting the missile weapons on the enemy, resigning the ornaments of their apparel and their fortune to fill the public treasury,³ and to hasten the deliverance of their country, burying themselves under its ruins, throwing themselves into the flames rather than submit to the disgrace of humiliation before a proud enemy.

Born for liberty, disclaiming to bear the irons of a tyrannic Government, we associate ourselves to the grandeur of those Sovereigns, cherished and revered, who have held with so much splendor the scepter of the greatest States [nations] — the Batildas, the Elizabeths, the Maries, the Catharines,⁴ who have extended the empire of liberty and contented to reign by sweetness and justice, have broken the chains of slavery forged by tyrants in the times of ignorance and barbarity. The Spanish Women, do they not make at this moment the most patriotic sacrifices to increase the means of victory in the hands of their Sovereign.⁵ He is a friend to the French Nation. They are our allies. We call to mind, doubly interested, that it was a French maid⁶ who kindled up amongst her fellow-citizens the flame of patriotism buried

¹ I.e., the physical weakness of women compared to men.

² Women of the Old Testament.

³ I.e., giving up their jewelry and funds to contribute to the cause.

⁴ Women monarchs: Bathilda of the Franks, Elizabeth I of England, Marie Antoinette of France, Catharine the Great of Russia.

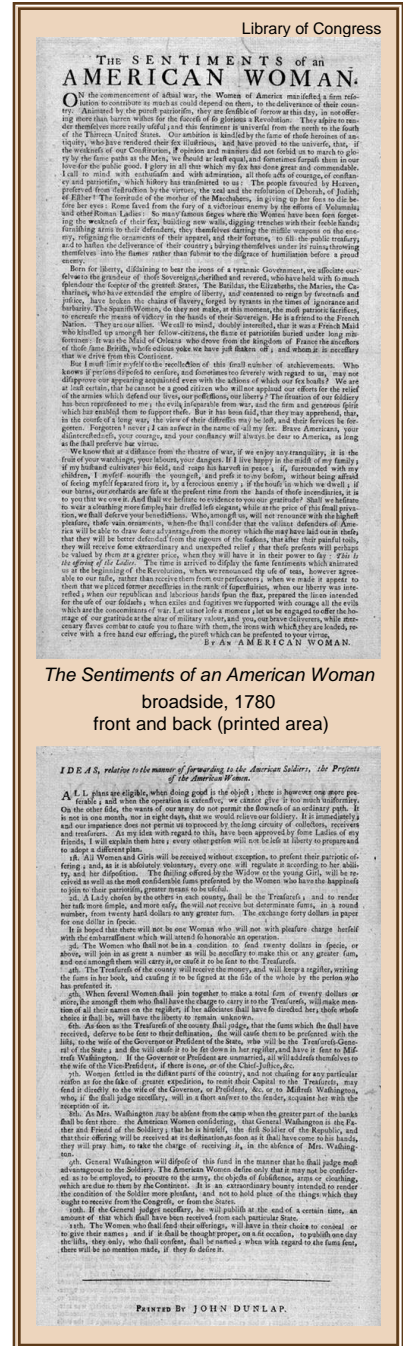
⁵ As Spain was allied with France, the major U.S. ally, a group of "Havana Ladies" in Cuba donated jewelry to support the Continental Army.

⁶ St. Joan of Arc.

under long misfortunes: It was the Maid of Orleans who drove from the kingdom of France the ancestors of those same British whose odious yoke we have just shaken off, and whom it is necessary that we drive from this Continent.

But I must limit myself to the recollection of this small number of achievements. Who knows if persons disposed to censure, and sometimes too severely with regard to us, may not disapprove our appearing acquainted even with the actions of which our sex boasts? We are at least certain that he cannot be a good citizen who will not applaud our efforts for the relief of the armies which defend our lives, our possessions, our liberty? The situation of our soldiery has been represented to me — the evils inseparable from war, and the firm and generous spirit which has enabled them to support these. But it has been said that they may apprehend that, in the course of a long war, the view of their distresses may be lost and their services be forgotten. Forgotten! never. I can answer in the name of all my sex. Brave Americans, your disinterestedness, your courage, and your constancy will always be dear to America as long as she shall preserve her virtue.

We know that at a distance from the theatre of war, if we enjoy any tranquility, it is the fruit of your watchings, your labors, your dangers. If I live happy in the midst of my family, if my husband cultivates his field and reaps his harvest in peace, if surrounded with my children I myself nourish the youngest and press it to my bosom without being afraid of seeing myself separated from it by a ferocious enemy, if the house in which we dwell, if our barns, our orchards are safe at the present time from the hands of those incendiaries, it is to you that we owe it. And shall we hesitate to evidence to you our gratitude? Shall we hesitate to wear a clothing more simple, hair dressed less elegant, while at the price of this small privation we shall deserve your benedictions. Who amongst us will not renounce with the highest pleasure those vain ornaments when she shall consider that the valiant defenders of America will be able to draw some advantage from the money which she may have laid out in these, that they will be better defended from the rigors of the seasons, that after their painful toils they will receive some extraordinary and unexpected relief, that these presents will perhaps be valued by them at a greater price when they will have it in their power to say: *This is the offering of the Ladies*. The time is arrived to display the same sentiments which animated us at the beginning of the Revolution when we renounced the use of teas, however agreeable to our taste, rather than receive them from our persecutors, when we made it appear to them that we placed former necessities in the rank of superfluities, when our liberty was interested, when our republican and laborious hands spun the flax, prepared the linen intended for the use of our soldiers, when exiles and fugitives we supported with courage all the evils which are the concomitants of war. Let us not lose a moment; let us be engaged to offer the homage of our gratitude at the altar of military valor, and you, our brave deliverers, while mercenary slaves combat to cause you to share with them the irons with which they are loaded, receive with a free hand our offering, the purest which can be presented to your virtue,



The Sentiments of an American Woman
broadside, 1780
front and back (printed area)

I D E A S, relative to the manner of forwarding to the American Soldiers, the Presents of the American Women.

1. A L L plans are right, when doing good is the object. There is however one great requisite, and when the operation is extensive, we cannot give too much uniformity. On the other side, the wants of our army do not require the Remedy of an ordinary path. It is in one month, not in eight days, that we would relieve our soldiery. It is immediately and not afterwards that we must be disposed to the doing thereby of collection, receipt and remittance. As my plan with regard to this, have been approved by Anne Leland of my friends, I will explain them here: every other plan will be left to theory or preparation to adapt a different plan.

2. All Women and Girls will be received without exception, to perform their patriotic offering: and as it is absolutely voluntary, every one will regulate it according to her ability and her disposition. The thing offered by the Widow, or the young Girl, will be received as well as the most considerable form preferred by the Women who have the happiness to see their patriotic, greater means to be used.

3. A Lady desires by the others in each county, that be the Trustees, and to render her task more simple, and more easy, do not receive but determinate forms, in a round number, from twenty hand dollars to any greater sum. The exchange forty dollars in paper for the dollar in specie.

4. It is hoped that there will not be one Woman who will not with pleasure charge herself with the exchange of her money into specie, and to be sent to her country.

5. The Women who shall not be in a condition to send twenty dollars in specie, or more, will join in a great number as will be necessary to make this an easy plan, and not amongst them will carry it, or be sent to the Trustees.

6. The Trustees of the county will receive the money, and will keep a register, writing the name in her book, and causing it to be signed at the side of the whole by the person who has performed it.

7. When several Women shall join together to make a total sum of twenty dollars or more, the strongest them who shall be chosen to carry it to the Trustees, will make mention of all their names on the register, if her assistance shall have been desired here, she shall be obliged to do so, and will have the honor to remain unknown.

8. As soon as the Trustees of the county shall judge, that the forms which they shall have received, delivered to the Trustees, do not exceed their number, they shall be sent to the Trustees of the State, and the will send it to be done in her register, and to be sent to the Trustees of the State. If the Governor or President are unmarried, all will address themselves to the side of the Trustees. If there is none, or if the Chief Justice.

9. Women settled in the different parts of the country, and not choosing for any particular reason to do the like of greater expedition, to send their Capital to the Trustees, may send it directly to the wife of the Governor, or President, also, or to Mrs. Sarah Washington, who, if she shall judge necessary, will be a great service to the public, especially in the reception of it.

10. As Mrs. Washington may be absent from the camp when the greatest part of the books shall be sent there, the American Women considering, that General Washington is the Father and Friend of the Soldier; that it is his wish, that the Soldier of the Republic, and that their offering will be received at his destination as soon as it shall have come to his hands, they will pray him, to make the charge of receiving it, in the address of Mrs. Washington.

11. General Washington will direct if this fund in the manner that shall judge most advantageous to the Soldier. The American Women desire only that it may be considered as to be employed, to procure the army, the objects of fulfills, when they are which are due to them by the Continent. It is an extraordinary bounty intended to render the condition of the Soldier more pleasant, and to hold place of the things which they ought to receive from the Congress, or from the States.

12. If the General judge necessary, he will publish at the end of a certain time, an account of what shall have been received from each particular State.

13. The Women who shall find their offerings, will have as they shall think no reward or give their names: and if it shall be thought proper, on its occasion, to publish one day the names, they only, who shall receive, shall be named: when with regard to the fund, there will be no mention made, if they do desire it.

Printed By JOHN DURLAP.

BY AN AMERICAN WOMAN.

*I D E A S, relative to the manner of forwarding to the American Soldiers
the Presents of the American Women.*

All the plans are eligible when doing good is the object; there is however one more preferable, and when the operation is extensive, we cannot give it too much uniformity. On the other side, the wants of our army do not permit the slowness of an ordinary path. It is not in one month nor in eight days that we would relieve our soldiery. It is immediately, and our impatience does not permit us to proceed by the long circuitry of collectors, receivers and treasurers. As my idea with regard to this have been approved by some Ladies of my friends, I will explain them here. Every other person will not be less at liberty to prepare and to adopt a different plan.

- 1st. All Woman and Girls will be received without exception to present their patriotic offering; and, as it is absolutely voluntary, every one will regulate it according to her ability and her disposition. The shilling offered by the Widow or the young Girl will be received as well as the most considerable sums presented by the Women who have the happiness to join to their patriotism greater means to be useful.
- 2d. A Lady chosen by the others in each county shall be the Treasures; and to render her task more simple and more easy, she will not receive but determinate sums, in a round number, from twenty hard dollars to any greater sum. The exchange forty dollars in paper for one dollar in specie.

It is hoped that there will not be one Woman who will not with pleasure charge herself with the embarrassment which will attend so honorable an operation.

- 3d. The Women who shall not be in a condition to send twenty dollars in specie, or above, will join in as great a number as will be necessary to make this or any greater sum, and one amongst them will carry it or cause it to be sent to the Treasures.
- 4th. The Treasures of the county will receive the money and will keep a register, writing the sums in her book, and causing it to be signed at the side of the whole by the person who has presented it.
- 5th. When several Women shall join together to make a total sum of twenty dollars or more, she amongst them who shall have the charge to carry it to the Treasures will make mention of all their names on the register, if her associates shall have so directed her; those whose choice it shall be will have the liberty to remain unknown.
- 6th. As soon as the Treasures of the county shall judge that the sums which she shall have received deserve to be sent to their destination, she will cause them to be presented with the lifts to the wife of the Governor or President of the State,⁷ who will be the Treasures-General of the State; and she will cause it to be set down in her register and have it sent to Mistress Washington. If the Governor or President are unmarried, all will address themselves to the wife of the Vice-President, if there is one, or of the Chief-Justice, &c.
- 7th. Women settled in the distant parts of the country [state] and not choosing for any particular reason as for the sake of greater expedition, to remit their Capital to the Treasures, may send it directly to the wife of the Governor or President, &c. or to Mistress Washington, who, if she shall judge necessary, will in a short answer to the sender acquaint her with the reception of it.
- 8th. As Mrs. Washington may be absent from the camp when the greater part of the banks shall be sent there, the American Women considering that General Washington is the Father and Friend of the Soldiery, that he is himself the first Soldier of the Republic, and that their offering will be received at its destination as soon as it shall have come to his hands, they will pray [request of] him to take the charge of receiving it in the absence of Mrs. Washington.
- 9th. General Washington will dispose of this fund in the manner that he shall judge most advantageous to the Soldiery. The American Women desire only that it may not be considered as to be employed to procure to the army the objects of subsistence, arms, or clothing which are due to them by the Continent. It is an extraordinary bounty intended to render the condition of the Soldier more pleasant and not to hold place of the things which they ought to receive from the Congress or from the States.
- 10th. If the General judges necessary, he will publish at the end of a certain time an amount of that which shall have been received from each particular State.
- 11th. The Women who shall send their offerings will have in their choice to conceal or to give their names, and if it shall be thought proper on a fit occasion to publish one day the lifts, they only, who shall consent, shall be named, when with regard to the sums sent there will be no mention made if they so desire it. _____

⁷ I.e., Esther De Berdt Reed, wife of the governor Joseph Reed (titled President of the Council).