**Dolley Madison Sites in Philadelphia (in chronological order)**

**1. Drinkers’ Home:** When the Payne family moved to Philadelphia in 1783, they stayed first with some friends who were also fellow Friends (in other words, Quakers): Henry and Elizabeth Drinker. They lived on the northwest corner of Front Street and Drinker’s Alley. Elizabeth Drinker is noteworthy in her own right for having left to posterity a diary full of local doings that spans many years. Her notes on the Payne family – though scant – offer the very few records we have of Dolley’s early life. Nothing remains of the original Drinker house, but nearby Elfreth’s Alley is remarkably well preserved, and it is worth a saunter down this lane to ponder what Miss Dolley Payne’s neighborhood looked like when the fifteen-year-old girl first arrived in Philadelphia.

**2. Northern District Meeting House,** also known as the Bank Meeting House, was already more than 100 years old when the Paynes moved to Philadelphia in 1783. The Paynes had a certificate of transfer from the Cedar Creek Meeting House, in Hanover County, Virginia, directly to their new spiritual home. They were members until 1786, when they transferred to the Pine Street Monthly Meeting House. Today, there is nothing of the old structure to be seen.

**3. Paynes’ Home and Starch Business:** John Payne had been a planter in Virginia, and he owned a store in North Carolina. After moving his family to Philadelphia, however, he decided to try his hand as a starch manufacturer. Unfortunately for him, Philadelphia experienced an economic downturn in the 1780’s, and laundry starch was a luxury item that many families decided they could forgo. His business had failed completely by 1789, and John Payne was read out of the Pine Street Meeting House for failure to pay his debts. Despondent, Dolley’s father took to his bed and turned his back on the world for much of the remaining three years of his life. The business was at 89 Elm St., which is now 231 New St. Presumably, the Payne family lived on the upper floors above the business. The structure there today appears to be a garage, and is just a stump of its former self.

**4. Franklin Court:** According to Dolley’s niece, Mary Cutts, Miss Dolley Payne was a friend of Benjamin Franklin’s daughter, Mrs. Sally Franklin Bache, who was 25 years her senior. She was therefore among the young people who visited the lively but elderly Franklin in his last days. She even received a rebuke from him after an episode that may be described as the only instance ever recorded of Dolley’s rudeness. Apparently, the young lady had slapped the hand of one of her friends, whereupon Dr. Franklin admonished her, “Dolley, Dolley I am ashamed of thee!” The rebuke was a “lesson to her through life,” reported her niece.

**5. Pine Street Monthly Meeting House:** The Payne family transferred here in 1786 from the Northern District Meeting House. John Payne quickly became an elder and lay preacher (at least, until he was read out of the Society in 1789). Here, Dolley Payne met the eligible bachelor, John Todd. Later the two would wed in this house of worship on January 7, 1790. Nothing remains of the original structure today.

**6. Todds’ first home:** Shortly after John Todd married Dolley Payne, he hung up his shingle as a practicing lawyer at 85 Chestnut Street (which is approximately 247 Chestnut today). It is presumed that this is the first place that the newlyweds lived after the wedding. By some accounts, the Todds lived with the Payne family immediately after the wedding, which, if true, would mean that this address was a transitional home between the John Payne starch business on Elm St. and the Mary Payne Boarding House on N. Third St. But that detail is not known for certain.

**7. Payne Boarding House:** After her father’s business failed, Dolley’s mother, Mary Payne, opened a boarding house in 1791 which served many of the politicians and other important personages who were flocking to the nation’s temporary capital. Her business venture would eventually promote the marital prospects for two of her daughters. One of her boarders was George Steptoe Washington (a favorite nephew of the president), and he would elope with Dolley’s younger sister, Lucy. And Senator Aaron Burr also stayed here. Burr became so well acquainted with Dolley that she named him in her will to be guardian of her child in the event that Payne Todd should be orphaned. Burr’s close acquaintance with Dolley Todd is what prompted James Madison, an old college acquaintance, to solicit him for an introduction to the widow. The boarding house was at 96 N. Third St., which was later renumbered to 150 N. Third St. The structure there today is, like the old starch business, an unprepossessing garage.

**8. Todd House:** About a year after their marriage, the Todds were able to buy a house of their own on the corner of Fourth Street and Walnut. There, John Todd practiced law on the first floor, in the room facing Walnut. The parlor and the family’s bedrooms were on the second floor, and Todd’s assistants lived on the upper floors. After Todd’s death in 1793, the young widow attracted many potential suitors. In the spring of 1794, Dolley wrote to her friend, Eliza, “Dear friend, thou must come to me. Aaron Burr says that the ‘great little Madison’ has asked to be brought to see me this evening.” The two gentlemen probably entered through the door to the right, then proceeded up the narrow staircase to greet the ladies in the parlor on the second floor. Family lore has it that Mrs. Todd was dressed in mulberry-colored satin. Before marrying Madison, Dolley conveyed this property in trust for her son from her first marriage, John Payne Todd. Today, the restored house is owned by the National Parks Service and is open for tours.

**9. Free Quaker Meeting House** and **10. Free Quaker Burial Ground:** When John Payne was expelled from the Pine Street Meeting House, he joined the Free Quakers (also called the “Fighting Quakers,” because they had supported the Revolutionary War). They held their meetings at Fifth and Arch St. There he became an active member in good standing, but his family did not follow him into his latest conversion. When he died in 1792, Dolley’s father had his funeral service here, and he was buried in the Free Quaker Burial Ground on Fifth Street, north of Spruce. The burial ground is no longer there; in 1905, the remains were moved to various other sites. But the Meeting House has been restored, and historical interpreters help bring the place to life for visitors.

**11. Grays Ferry:** When the yellow fever epidemic broke out in late summer of 1793, John Todd removed Dolley and their young family to Grays Ferry, which was then a resort town about three miles southwest of the city of Philadelphia (today, it is a neighborhood of Philadelphia). Dolley survived, but her husband and their newborn son perished on the same day. Much later, when Dolley Madison returned to Philadelphia in 1805 to treat a knee ailment, she stayed in “Greys Green House” in Grays Ferry.

**12. President’s House:** Shortly after James Madison began courting Dolley Todd, Dolley was summoned to the President’s House by none other than Martha Washington. Mrs. Washington asked if the rumors were true that she was engaged to James Madison. Flustered by the unexpected question, Mrs. Todd answered no. “’If it is so,’ Mrs. Washington continued, ‘do not be ashamed to confess it: rather be proud; he will make thee a good husband, and all the better for being so much older. We both approve of it.’” Dolley was related to the Washingtons through the marriage of her younger sister, Lucy. As a pious Quaker woman, Dolley had never before attended the president’s levees, but after her marriage to Madison she would regularly attend these and other festivities. Today, only the foundation of the President’s House – recently unearthed by a team of archaeologists – can be seen.

 **13. Madisons’ First Home in Philadelphia:** When James Madison began courting Mrs. Dolley Payne Todd in the spring of 1794, he was living with James Monroe at 4 North Eighth Street. Early that summer, Monroe sailed to Paris after being named Minister to France. James and Dolley spent that summer (separately) visiting family in Virginia. Then they reunited at Harewood – her sister Lucy’s home in what is today West Virginia – to get married on September 15, 1794. When the newlyweds returned from their honeymoon later that fall, they set up housekeeping in the same residence. That site is currently the location of the old Strawbridge’s department store – an impressive building in its own right – but unconnected with anything from the Madisons’ era.

 **14. Congress Hall:** At the time that Dolley married her second husband, Madison was one of the most prominent members of Congress in the nation’s temporary capital of Philadelphia. Although there are no records of Mrs. Madison visiting Congress Hall while she lived here, we do know that she used to frequent such debates in Washington City. It is not difficult to imagine that she joined the curious throngs in the public gallery in Philadelphia, as well, to listen to her new husband speak. Today, the building has been restored, and visitors may take a tour of the old congressional rooms.

 **15. Madisons’ Last Home in Philadelphia:** During Madison’s last sessions of Congress, in 1795-97, the couple lived at what is now 429 Spruce St. In an example of eighteenth-century high-pressure salesmanship, Madison received a note in June of 1795 advising him to accept the terms at this residence as soon as possible: “I really do not know how you can do better than to secure this House at a time when Rents are every where Rapidly advancing and Houses in general so scarce as to be very difficult to be procured . . . You will therefore be good enough to let me know your determination early as may be.” From this residence the couple moved to Montpelier in 1797, and spent the next four years “in retirement,” before moving to Washington in 1801. The building still stands, and there is a plaque on the wall, but it is a private residence not open to visitors.

 **16. Dr. Physick House:** As a child, Dr. Philip Syng Physick had been a student of John Todd, Sr., and had boarded with John Todd, Jr., his childhood companion, who would grow up to be Dolley’s first husband. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Todds were frequent visitors to this home while they were living less than two blocks away on Walnut St. In 1805 Dolley Madison, then the wife of the Secretary of State, was suffering from a painful knee ailment. Travelling to Philadelphia from Washington City, she sought treatment from the eminent Dr. Physick. Although her healing took longer than he had predicted, it went well, and the good doctor had excellent bedside manners. He buoyed the spirits of his patient by talking to her of her husband (from whom she had never before been separated). Dolley wrote to James that “he regards you more than any man he ever knew and nothing could please him so much as passing his life near you.” She was clearly impressed with the doctor’s abilities as well. A few years later she recommended him to her sister, and she also consulted him about her eyes shortly after James Madison died. On that occasion, Dr. Physick recalled, “I remember with pleasure, that so long ago as the year 1805 Mrs. Madison when in Phila did me the honor to select me as her medical adviser, & so frequently since has favored me with friendly reccollections as to excite in me feelings of the most grateful remembrance.” Today the house is restored and open for tours.