

## Hail, Columbia!

Uncle Sam is one of our most recognizable national symbols. But did you know that from the colonial period to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, America was most often personified by a woman? In honor of International Women's Day which was celebrated earlier this week, let's explore some of the political cartoons featured in the [Historic Images, New Technologies \(HINT\) project](#) [1] that depict America as a woman.

In "Liberty Triumphant or the Downfall of Oppression," the pre-revolutionary war cartoon about the colonists' resistance to the Tea Act, we see a Native American woman wearing a headdress, wielding a bow and arrow, and leading a group of men or the Sons of Liberty into battle. As the cartoonist indicates in the description below the image, the warrior-woman represents America.



[2]

*Liberty Triumphant or the Downfall of Oppression, 1773, in the [Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Medium Graphics Collection](#) [3].*



[2]

Native American Woman in *Liberty Triumphant or the Downfall of Oppression*, 1773, in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Medium Graphics Collection [3].

On the upper left side of the political cartoon, Britannia, a symbol of Great Britain, laments over the actions of her “degenerate sons.” Meanwhile, on the upper right side of the image, the goddess Liberty praises her sons to the goddess Fame, and implores her to not allow their bravery to “be buried in oblivion.”



[2]

Britannia in *Liberty Triumphant or the Downfall of Oppression*, 1773, in the [Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Medium Graphics Collection](#) [3].



[2]

Liberty and Fate in *Liberty Triumphant or the Downfall of Oppression*, 1773, in the [Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Medium Graphics Collection](#) [3].

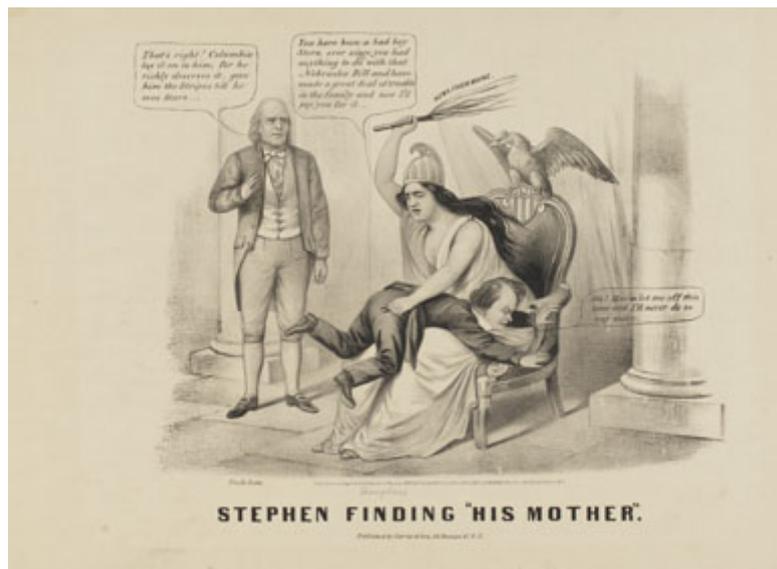
In the political cartoon below, “The Parricide: A Sketch of Modern Patriotism,” America is once again depicted as a fierce Native American woman. Instead of a bow and arrow, she wields a knife and an axe and is about to violently murder Great Britain’s Britannia. Next to the Native American woman, stands Medusa, a female mythological figure whose image was traditionally used for protection in battle.



[4]

*The Parricide: A Sketch of Modern Patriotism, 1776.*

Columbia is one of the most famous personifications of America. The District of Columbia, Columbia University, and Columbia Pictures, as well as dozens of American cities, were named after Columbia. “Hail, Columbia,” a former unofficial national anthem, is now the official Vice Presidential Anthem.



[5]

*Stephen Finding 'His Mother', 1860, in Historical Society of Pennsylvania cartoons and caricatures collection (#3133) [6]*

Columbia is often depicted wearing classical robes and a Phrygian or liberty cap similar to the one worn by Britannia, the symbol of Great Britain. In the above cartoon, “Stephen Finding His Mother,” Columbia gives Democratic presidential candidate Stephen A. Douglas a spanking for his support of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. In the cartoon, she is wearing her liberty cap and is seated next to an eagle and shield. Uncle Sam approves of her actions and tells her to “give him the Stripes till he sees the Stars.” Stephen begs his “mother” to “let him off this time” and promises “never to do so anymore.”

Columbia reappears as a motherly figure once again in the political cartoon “Columbia: He's not only been abusing Billie, but the little Wilson girl says she never heard such language.”



1865, in the *Historical Society of Pennsylvania cartoons and caricatures collection (#3133)* [6]

We hope you've enjoyed our post about female personifications of America. Be sure to keep an eye out for our upcoming post about the image of Uncle Sam in our HINT [1] political cartoons!

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### Links

[1] <http://hsp.org/history-online/historic-images-new-technologies>

[2] <https://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/2562>

[3] <http://discover.hsp.org/Record/ead-V64>

[4] <https://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/12017>

[5] <https://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/12330>

[6] <http://discover.hsp.org/Record/hsp.ead.at01-3133>

[7] <https://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/11571>

[8] <https://digitallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/11755>