

Volume 8

Number 054

Leadership: Amelia Jenks Bloomer

Lead: Leadership in one field often emerges from convictions in another.

Amelia Jenks Bloomer began by advocating temperance, but her vision came to include the wider rights denied women.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Amelia Jenks was born

in 1818 the daughter of a clothier.

Despite a meager formal education,

she was a prodigious learner and

evolved into an excellent writer.

Marriage in 1840 to Dexter Bloomer,

an attorney and the editor of the

***County Courier* in their hometown of**

Seneca Falls, New York, opened new

opportunities for publication. He

encouraged her to write on a variety

of subjects. In 1848 she attended, but did not participate in the Seneca Falls Convention, the first national woman's rights gathering. Four months later she launched *The Lilly*, a monthly women's journal that at first focused primarily on temperance but at the urging of her Seneca Falls neighbor Elizabeth Cady Stanton, increasingly became a forum for

women's rights.

One of the issues that animated *The Lilly* and gave a huge boost to its popularity was the reformation of apparel. Amelia was one of the first to advocate lighter, more functional clothing for women, including a combination pant/dress that came to bear her name. Bloomers were considered scandalous by polite

society and soon became the fad that faded, but Mrs. Bloomer, did not hesitate to wear them if they would draw a crowd so that she might address the much more important issues of women's rights, a cause she enthusiastically pursued until her death in 1894. Research assistance by Cassie King as a part of this series recognizing the tenth anniversary of

**the Jepson School of Leadership at
the University of Richmond, this is
Dan Roberts.**

Resources

**"Amelia Jenks Bloomer." *Encyclopedia of World Biography*,
2nd ed. 17 Vols. Gale Research, 1998. Reproduced in
Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, MI:
The Gale Group, 2001.
<<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC>> (January
24, 2002)**

**Bloomer, D. C. *Life and Writings of Amelia Bloomer*. 1895.
Reprint. New York: Schocken Books, 1975. (Call
number HQ1413.B6)**

**Byrde, Penelopy. *Nineteenth Century Fashion*. London: B.
T. Batsford, 1992. (Call number GT737.B96)**

**Feeney, Kathleen. "Bloomer, Amelia Jenkins." *American
National Biography Online*. Oxford University Press,**

2000. <<http://www.anb.org>> (January 30, 2002)

Monro, D. H. "Godwin, Oakeshott, and Mrs. Bloomer." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (October - December 1974): 611-624.

Riegel, Robert E. "Women's Clothes and Women's Rights." *American Quarterly* 15 (Autumn 1963):390-401.

Stearns, Bertha-Monica. "Reform Periodicals and Female Reformer, 1830-1860." *American Historical Review* 37 (July 1932): 678-699.

Steele, Valerie. "Dressed to Kill: The Medical Consequences of Corsetry." Chapter 3 in *The Corset: A Cultural History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

Thorp, Margaret Farrand. *Female Persuasion: Six Strong-Minded Women*. 1949. Reprint. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971. (Call number CT3260 T5)

Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.