AMERICA'S FIRST DAUGHTER

STEPHANIE DRAY & LAURA KAMOIE

A NOVEL

FROM MONTICELLO TO JEFFERSON'S WHITE HOUSE, SHE SHAPED THE LEGACY OF A NATION...

“A must read.”
—ALLISON PATAKI, NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

P.S. INSIGHTS, INTERVIEWS & MORE...
## Table of Contents

Discussion Questions 3

My Interview with Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie 4

On Inspiration: Interview with Stephanie Dray 8

Stephanie Dray Interviews Patsy Jefferson From America’s First Daughter 10

Five Lies We Told In America’s First Daughter And How We Got Away With It 13
Discussion Questions

1. If Thomas Jefferson’s wife hadn’t died, how might he and his daughter have lived different lives? Historically, Jefferson is said to have made a deathbed promise to his wife, and in the novel his daughter makes one as well. How might their lives have differed if they hadn’t made those deathbed promises?

2. As portrayed in the novel and in their letters to each other, how would you describe Jefferson and Patsy’s relationship with each other? Was Jefferson a good father? Did he change as a father over the course of the novel? Was Patsy a good daughter?

3. Does seeing Jefferson through his daughter’s eyes make him more relatable as a Founding Father? How so or why not?

4. The limited choices women had available to them in the Revolutionary era is one theme explored in this book. What were the most important choices Patsy made throughout her life? Do you agree with why she made them? Could or should she have chosen differently?

5. What did you think of Sally’s choice to return to Virginia with Jefferson? Why did she make that decision? What were her alternatives and how viable were they?

6. Another theme explored in this book is sacrifice. What does Patsy sacrifice in her effort to protect her father? What did Jefferson sacrifice? What did Sally sacrifice? What did William Short sacrifice?

7. Why does Patsy think her father needs to be protected? Why does she think she is the only one to do it? In what ways does she protect him? What do you think of Patsy’s effort to protect Jefferson? Would you have done the same thing?

(Questions issued by the publisher.)
My Interview with Stephanie Dray and Laura Kamoie authors of America’s First Daughter

ME: You both have successful careers as authors in a different genre, romance. Where and how did the idea come up to make the leap and collaborate on a historical fiction novel, and how was Patsy Jefferson chosen as the subject matter?

SD/LK: This novel, which explores the life and times of Martha “Patsy” Jefferson Randolph, the eldest daughter of our third president, was years in the making. It started one night when we were having dinner together and discovered a mutual interest in American history. Over burgers at a writing conference, we wondered what Jefferson was like as a father, not just a founding father.

At the time, Laura was a history of professor by day teaching senior seminars on Jefferson at the U.S. Naval Academy as well as a romance author by night, whereas Stephanie split her writing time between romance and historical fiction. We got the crazy brainchild to combine our experiences in co-authoring a book about Jefferson’s eldest daughter, and immediately raced back to the hotel room to research. Frankly, we had no idea the journey we were about to embark upon. We didn’t know that it would take five years, three agents, eighteen thousand letters and a road trip to get this book out.

But we did know, right from that very first night, that we had stumbled upon a great untold American story.

ME: I’ve read both of your bio’s and noticed that you don’t live too far apart, Stephanie in Baltimore and Laura in Annapolis, which I’m sure was a big help during the writing process. Living in or very close to the area that you were writing about was probably inspiring as well, did you travel to the sites you wrote about? And if so how often?

SD/LK: Living near one another certainly made co-writing easier when hammering out a particular chapter or a revision necessitated face-to-face work. We’d both been to Monticello individually, but after we completed the draft, we took a road trip to visit Monticello and Tuckahoe, both important sites in the novel. The visits allows us to layer in so many site-specific details that enriched the manuscript in unexpected ways – like the engraving of Tom’s mother’s death date in one of the windows at Tuckahoe, and Patsy’s daughters making necklaces out of dried Chinaberries. We also visited Monticello again a few weeks ago after the book released and we still were able to learn new things—or see new things at the site–because of having written the book. Visiting historical sites related to your story is always educational and inspiring!

ME: The entire novel was seamless, and I forgot, as I was reading it that it was written by a team. Did you each take a section to write? Was one of you more research and the other writer? Or did you share writing and research duties throughout the novel?
SD/LK: Thank you. That’s one of our favorite compliments about the book! We did most of the brainstorming and plotting together—we really had a shared vision for the book from the beginning. Initially we wrote back to back chapters with google video chat open while we were writing so we could talk to one another in real time. And then we’d trade them and revise freely. Then it got to a point where Laura’s deadlines on her solo projects needed attention, so Stephanie took the lead on drafting and Laura came behind to do revisions. So the process varied, but one thing that stayed the same was that shared vision and the incredible respect we had for one another that allowed us to complete the book with relatively few disagreements. And when we disagreed, we always managed to brainstorm a third solution that was better than anything we’d come up with on our own.

ME: One of the things I was so fascinated about was my own reaction as a modern woman to what Patsy had to endure at that time in history. I was brought up by a liberal woman who taught me that I could do everything myself and to not depend upon a man. In Patsy’s time, that wasn’t even an option. Women were truly property of the men in their families. As this was historical fiction based on a factual person, you had to be true to Patsy’s history. Did you struggle as the authors of the book over some of her choices, as much as I did as the reader? Can you give me an example of an instance where you would have wanted to stray from the historical facts?

SD/LK: We definitely struggled over some of her choices. Patsy isn’t always fully likeable or fully sympathetic, but you understand why she makes the choices she does. We actually loved that she was a complicated character that sometimes you had to cheer for while other times you wanted to yell at her. We are both totally in love with William Short, and it was heartbreaking for us that she makes the decisions she does in France, but he was right: she was a daughter first. And always. And that was the story. We also knew her decision to interfere in her husband’s military career couldn’t lead to good things between them. Those were definitely moments when we wish she’d made different choices, though I’m not sure we wanted to stray from the history there because those moments really defined who she was. And writing about the decline of her marriage and her husband’s escalating anger and violence was certainly difficult, too.

ME: You both chose to take a side in the argument about Thomas Jefferson fathering children with Sally Hemings. I’ll admit, after reading your book, I went on a researching tear (a few google searches), because I wanted a definitive answer. Did he or didn’t he have children with Sally Hemings? What I found out is that the DNA of her children do show that someone from the Jefferson line did father her children, but not a definitive yes that it was Thomas Jefferson. It could have been brothers, nephews, etc. Did you make the decision to include that storyline based on your research? Did the DNA tests sway you to believe it? Or was it because it created a great plot point that Patsy agonized over?

SD/LK: As a historian of this period, Laura was well read in the scholarship about this debate long before she ever came to this project. And she was well convinced, as most historians are,
that Jefferson fathered Sally Hemings’s children. There is more evidence than the DNA results—there’s also the fact that he had the opportunity more than anyone else, he was present every time she would’ve conceived, her sons bore a strong physical resemblance to Jefferson, and the oral history in the Hemings family says Jefferson himself was their forebear, to name a few. So we followed the position of most historians and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation/Monticello is embracing that interpretation. And it also created a fantastic and compelling plot point in the book. In many ways, Patsy and Sally lead parallel lives with Jefferson at the center of their worlds in very different ways.

ME: Patsy’s upbringing in Europe, daughter of the very erudite Thomas Jefferson and daughter and wife of a plantation owner, turned Patsy into a very bright woman who understood the subtleties of the political arena as well as the world around her. If Patsy lived in today’s world, what do you think she would love about it? What do you think she’d want to change?

SD/LK: She very well might love and hate the very same thing: the access to information. She would love the easy access to books and places via travel, but she would hate how easy it is to find out pretty much anything about anyone. She would also enjoy the progress that women have made in society.

ME: The greatest theme of all in this book was a daughter’s love for her father. By all accounts, she and Thomas Jefferson had a wonderful relationship and a great love for each other. Somehow, though, I felt that even though she was well loved, he manipulated her into staying by his side his entire life. How did your feelings for Thomas Jefferson, the father, change from the time you started to write to when you finished it?

SD/LK: One of the great things about a story on Patsy is that it allows us to see Thomas Jefferson, one of the most notable Founding Fathers, as a father. While writing the early part of the book, we were not impressed by Jefferson’s parenting. Then again, he was a new widower deep in grief over the loss of his wife; he was a clueless single dad in a time when men didn’t play a central role in raising daughters. One of the important character arcs in the book is the way Jefferson changes as a father and then even more as a grandfather. He becomes openly affectionate, protective, and wants nothing more than his family around him. Generous and devoted to his daughter and her family—even heroically so. But he’s definitely not above manipulating his children. Jefferson is quite accomplished in the art of the parental guilt trip!

ME: My last question is about the end of the book. I was pleased that in a sense she had an HEA. I wanted to believe it so badly, but I know the end was probably fictionalized, because there is just no way to know. Did you have any alternate endings in mind when you wrote it? Or was this the end that you always wanted to give Patsy?

SD/LK: We always wanted to end on a more upbeat note. Patsy struggles through so many trials as an adult, ending with the loss of Monticello after her father’s death, that we knew we didn’t want to leave the reader in despair. A continued relationship with William Short (of some
sort) and her friendship with President Jackson were both true to history, so though elements of the ending are fictionalized or dramatized, it’s still based on factual elements from near the end of her life.

ME: Thank you both so much for taking the time to answer my questions about yourselves and your wonderful book America’s First Daughter. I know that you are currently writing another novel together called My Dear Hamilton about Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton. Can you give us a teaser or excerpt from that novel? I’m looking forward to reading it in 2018!

SD/LK: Thank you! We can share a little tagline which is: A revolutionary courtship. A scandal-ridden marriage. A legacy of lasting love.

On Inspiration: Interview with Stephanie Dray
September 26, 2016 By Elisabeth Storrs

I am absolutely delighted to welcome Stephanie Dray as my guest today on Triclinium. Stephanie is a bestselling, award-winning, two-time RITA award nominated author of historical women’s fiction. Her critically acclaimed series about Cleopatra’s daughter has been translated into eight different languages and won NJRW’s Golden Leaf.

As Stephanie Draven, she’s a national bestselling author of genre fiction and American-set historical women’s fiction. She is a frequent panelist and presenter at national writing conventions. Before she became a novelist, she was a lawyer, a game designer, and a teacher. Now she uses the stories of women in history to inspire the young women of today.

What or who inspired you to first write? Which authors have influenced you?
I blame my grandmother. She used to cart my cousins and me around in the back of her Lime Green Ford Fairlane while she shopped garage sales, and it was my job to keep the other kids in the car. The only way I could think to do it was by telling them outrageous stories to keep them in my thrall. It was good practice for a writing career! As for which authors influenced me, I’d have to say Margaret George, because when I finished reading her MEMOIRS OF CLEOPATRA I had to know more about her daughter, Cleopatra Selene, and thus my career was born.

What is the inspiration for your current book? Is there a particular theme you wished to explore?
My latest book, AMERICA’S FIRST DAUGHTER is a family saga about the loving but sometimes dysfunctional relationship between Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the US, and his devoted daughter, Martha “Patsy” Jefferson Randolph. My co-author and I were inspired to write about this because so much has been done on Jefferson the founding father. We wanted to explore what he was like as a father. And I think the theme that grew out of it all was that this country was enormously hard to build. It took a great deal of sacrifice and pain from people who chose to sacrifice and those who were forced to it.

What period of history particularly inspires or interests you? Why?
I’m in love with the ancient world for all the same reason the Founding Fathers were in love with it. So it’s a natural thing for me to switch back and forth between, say, ancient Rome and the early American Republic. I was a Government major in college, and went on to law school, and so the stories about how people choose to govern themselves are meaningful and interesting to me.

What resources do you use to research your book? How long did it take to finish the novel?
For the Jefferson novel we were both extraordinarily lucky and unlucky. The lucky part is that the National Archives has digitized more than 17k letters of Thomas Jefferson’s. That’s also the unlucky part. We had such a wealth of information to draw from, but it also limits you when there is a historical record of what a man was doing almost every day of his adult life. As for how long it took us, we like to joke that it took five years, three agents, eighteen thousand letters and a road trip. And that’s really not far off the mark.

**What do you do if stuck for a word or a phrase?**
I’d love to say that I skip it and move on so as not to interrupt my writing flow, but the truth is that everything comes to a screeching halt, I start searching and wracking my brain for exactly the right phrase. And next thing you know half my work day is gone.

**Is there anything unusual or even quirky that you would like to share about your writing?**
When I’m writing about the founding fathers I’m very reluctant to put words in their mouths. That means going through their letters to find things that they actually said that would substitute for dialogue. It’s crazy time-consuming. But very rewarding. And a little bit nutty.

**Do you use a program like Scrivener to create your novel? Do you ever write in long hand?**
I do use scrivener. I very rarely write anything in longhand. Only when I wake up in the middle of the night with an idea and I have to scribble it down really fast.

**Is there a particular photo or piece of art that strikes a chord with you? Why?**
I guess I have to say the Ara Pacis from the Augustan age. It inspired the approach of my trilogy about Cleopatra Selene. There is a so-called Tellus panel of a mysterious goddess. One that Augustus felt obliged to honor. From that panel, I spun out a story about who I believe the identity of that goddess to be.

**What advice would you give an aspiring author?**
Know what you’re getting into! The writing business is unlike any other business out there.

**Tell us about your next book.**
My next book will also be co-authored with my good friend and colleague Laura Kamoie. It will be about Life Eliza Schuyler Hamilton the wife of our first secretary of treasury. And I’m so excited about it! The musical that is so popular right now is of course fantastic. But it leaves so many questions that Laura and I are going to be able to answer.

Many thanks!
Thanks so much for sharing your sources of inspiration, Stephanie. What a challenge to research such a prodigious number of sources!

https://www.elisabethstorris.com/interview-with-stephanie-dray/
Stephanie Dray Interviews Patsy Jefferson From America’s First Daughter

Released March 1, 2016

Today we are absolutely thrilled to share our new book, America’s First Daughter, which portrays the relationship between Martha “Patsy” Jefferson Randolph and her famous father, Thomas Jefferson, and explores the sacrifices Patsy made and the lies she told to protect him, his legacy, and the new nation he founded.

In order to have a chat with Patsy, we imagine ourselves not at Monticello, where we doubt she would ever be so candid, but at the house she would share with her daughter late in life, in Washington City, where we can imagine she was in a mood to reflect on her life…and the book we wrote about her.

SD: Thank you for extending your hospitality to us, Mrs. Randolph. Laura and I have some questions for you. We’d like to know what influence your birth family had on you, your choices, your life? Explain why and how.

MJR: I was only 3 years old when my father, Thomas Jefferson, wrote and signed the Declaration of Independence. Thus, from the youngest age, I had to learn what it meant to be the daughter of a revolutionary and the man who would become the third president of the United States. A widower, my father depended on me in my mother’s place, and so I took on his mission, and his legacy, as my own.

LK: One of the challenging things about writing a book about you in 18th Century vernacular was getting the language right. Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

MJR: When something vexes me or surprises me, I cry ‘How provoking!’ But that was the style of the day. Everyone said it. Even Abigail Adams. Look it up.

SD: Which historical figure do you most identify with?

Outside of my father? I suppose I would have to say the Marquis de Lafayette. As you imagined it in your book, there was a particularly difficult decision I had to make when I lived in Paris with my father at the start of the French Revolution. And at the moment I had to make this choice, there was Lafayette on the street, torn between his duty and the sympathies of his heart. I felt torn that way too and he became my touchstone, as he would remain all my life.

SD: How did you feel when you first saw the love of your life?
MJR: Such things aren’t really spoken of for public consumption, so I’ll keep my secrets. But if we presume that your version of me is correct, though I was married only once, I never loved only one man. I suppose, like my father, I had a trinity of men I most admired. One was Papa, who, of course, I knew all my life. One was the most handsome and passionate man I ever met—who quite literally took my breath away the first time I saw him riding up to our front porch. The third was my father’s protege, an important but forgotten Founding Father, who was always with us, right from the start, so much so that the love I bore him just snuck up on me.

LK: Tell us why you believe women really are/are not the weaker sex?

I can’t imagine any of the men in my life bearing with silence and stoicism the sort of deprivation and trials endured by the women in their lives. When men get angry, they lash out, or they pick up pistols and duel each other. Women have to fight their battles in far subtler ways and I learned young that I could never, ever fall to pieces. Because I couldn’t count on a man to hold me together.

SD: What’s the worst thing you’ve ever done? Why?

MJR: I’m sure that you would say it was that I played a primary role in the erasure of Sally Hemings and her children from the story of my father’s life, and from the history of the nation.

LK: On what occasion would you tell a lie?

MJR: I’m afraid that the sacrifices I made—and that my family made—to build a new nation will all be for naught. That the losses we suffered won’t mean anything in the end. Every sin I ever committed was born of that fear, and lying is the first amongst them.

SD: What do you most dislike about your appearance?

MJR: I look so much like my father that I’m a delicate rendition of his features. And I’ve sometimes wondered if the men who loved me, loved me not for myself, but because I reminded them of him.

LK: Which living person do you most despise?

MJR: Do I have to pick just one? I’ve had many enemies in my day, but my drunken abusive son-in-law has done the most damage to me and mine. From beating my children to blood spilled on the floors of Monticello…he’s such a villain that I hoped to lock him in a room with all the whiskey he could desire, and let him drink himself to death.

SD: What is true about you that wasn’t revealed in the novel?
MJR: I'm afraid you both left out quite a bit. I met many more important people than they ever explored in the telling of my life story. You never told readers about the fascinating and cranky Aunt Marks, who lived with us for much of our time at Monticello. Nor the competent and omnipresent John and Priscilla Hemings, who helped me raise my children, and are often overshadowed by their more famous family members. And your novel just scrapes the surface of my relationship with the Duke of Dorset, the British ambassador to France. Given that my years in Paris were some of the most interesting and eventful of my life, maybe you'll write a novella capturing that episode and exposing the depths of my friendships with the other girls at my convent school.

https://historyimagined.wordpress.com/gettingintocharacter/stephanie-drey-interviews-americas-first-daughter/
Five Lies We Told In America’s First Daughter And How We Got Away With It
By Stephanie Dray

We are thrilled to discuss our new book, America’s First Daughter, which portrays the relationship between Martha “Patsy” Jefferson Randolph and her famous father, Thomas Jefferson, and explores the sacrifices Patsy made and the lies she told to protect him, his legacy, and the new nation he founded.

Now, when you’re writing historical fiction about real people, accuracy is important. But real people’s lives seldom fall into a neat narrative arc. Large portions of a person’s life are spent waiting, frustrated, mired down with meaningless coincidences. Can you imagine reading a book about a gun on the mantelpiece that not only never goes off…but was put there by accident by some character who never appears again in the novel at all? That’s the sort of thing that happens in real life—but nobody wants to read about it!

Truly, half the challenge of a good historical fiction writer is to wrestle the biography into a structure that at least vaguely approximates the hero’s journey. Fortunately for us, the life of Patsy Jefferson was already a sweeping epic with a natural rise and fall…and rise again. But that didn’t mean we weren’t forced to take a few liberties, and though we confessed our sins in our author’s note, we thought it would be fun to more fully expose the lies we told in pursuit of good storytelling!

1) **We sometimes put our heroine where we knew she wasn’t.** The historical record indicates that Patsy Jefferson wasn’t actually by her mother’s bedside when she died; for that matter, there’s a bit of ambiguity about whether Jefferson himself was there at the moment she took her last breath. But there’s no denying that Martha Jefferson’s death was dramatic (as recounted by Edmund Bacon, who described a deathbed scene.) It was also the formative experience that shaped Patsy’s life. And because the book is written in first person, that would mean that if Patsy wasn’t there to see it, the reader wouldn’t be able to see it either. No good writer wants to do that to their readers, so we slipped Patsy in somewhere unobtrusive, where she wouldn’t be noticed, and let her describe the scene with all the historical details we know.

2) **We said things happened where they didn’t happen.** Imagine that you had to build a stage setting for every place anything important ever happened to you. Now imagine that as many important things happened to you as happened to the Jefferson family. That’s a lot of stage sets to build, and that adds a lot of length to a book. So whenever possible, we tried not to add a new setting. Patsy Jefferson and her sisters were inoculated for smallpox on an isolated farm but we put them at Monticello. Patsy’s son Jeff was carried to his wife’s home following his stabbing, but we put him at Monticello too. And hardly anyone was the wiser until this blog post!
3) **We said Patsy ferreted out a spy.** A lot of interesting things happened to the Jeffersons when they were in Paris—including, but not limited to, the British government’s apparent attempt to place a spy in our embassy under Jefferson’s nose. No one knows exactly how Jefferson came to be suspicious of the spy in his midst, which is exactly the sort of mystery that a historical fiction author loves. Given all the things we knew about the historical Patsy Jefferson—namely that she was intimately involved in her father’s life to a degree seldom seen even in a daughter, that she was described as very intelligent, that her letters reveal her to be observant about people’s character—it seemed natural that she would be the one to have both the suspicion and the opportunity to discover a spy in her father’s embassy. What’s more, we knew that the British ambassador subsequently singled out Jefferson’s daughter for his attention, probably for political reasons, so our heroine was deeply involved in matters of state. So that’s what we went with!

4) **We made one of the Randolph sisters into a killer.** The Scandal at Bizarre Plantation that dragged Patsy and her family into court in an infamous murder case is, to this day, an unsolved crime. But novelists are supposed to come up with a theory, to pick a side and present a plausible scenario, and that’s just what we did. We won’t say which sister we really think did it; you’ll have to read the book to find out!

5) **We Made Colonel Randolph Into a Nasty Villain.** There really isn’t much in the historical record about this man, but Patsy’s father-in-law caused her a lot of trouble. We know that his daughters fled his household when he remarried. We know that he deprived Patsy and her husband of their expected inheritance. And amongst all Jefferson’s correspondence, a letter to Colonel Randolph is amongst the most pointed and heated. Given that Jefferson was usually so mild-tempered, one can only imagine what sort of character Colonel Randolph was to agitate him so. And that’s exactly what we did. Looking over all the anecdotes and documentation we could find, we imagined what sort of man Colonel Randolph might have been. Extrapolating character from actions and consequences, we decided on villainy, because that’s what good writers do!

So now you know some of the lies we told and why, but most of the outrageous things that happen in America’s First Daughter are actually true!

Thanks for reading.