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THOMAS JEFFERSON – A BIG CHEESE PRESIDENT

It is not always easy to find the right gift for someone important or special. We spend hours, days and even sleepless nights thinking and worrying that our choice will impress our giftee. We want it to be perfect, special and sometimes make a statement. Such was the case in the summer of 1801 when a Baptist preacher from Cheshire, MA named John Leland wanted to give a collective gift of magnitude to newly elected President Thomas Jefferson. The gift? A mammoth sized cheese made from the milk of 900 cows. The milk was deposited into a cider press to form it into a round measuring 4 feet across and 15 inches thick, weighing 1,234 lbs. The enormous gift was a reward for Jefferson's support of religious liberty. Jefferson believed in separating church from state. Reverend Leland persuaded the members of his Baptist congregation, who were mainly farmers, to show their love and support of their favorite President by using their skills to create the best and largest wheel of cheese ever. The townspeople worked hard and sang hymns while they labored. They would worry how to deliver their giant masterpiece later when it was finished. When they were through, Leland had an inscription engraved into the top of the cheese that read: "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God."



Cheshire Cheese Monument. Photo by *Makeitalready, Wikimedia Commons*

The cheese was ready for delivery in November. Its history says that it was transported by sleigh and

THE COLORS OF THE SUFFRAGETTES

In England in 1908, the Women's Social and Political Union or WSPU, adopted the color scheme of purple, white and green, that would not only distinguish them in their political movement, but would also prove to be a huge marketing success.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editor of the weekly newspaper, *Votes for Women* wrote, 'Purple as everyone knows is the royal color, it stands for the royal blood that flows in the veins of every suffragette, the instinct of freedom and dignity...white stands for purity in private and public life...green is the color of hope and the emblem of spring.'

One of the intentions of the colors was to promote public awareness of the depth of the belief for suffrage in England. Women were encouraged to 'wear the colors' to show support for the movement and to stand out in the crowds during public demonstrations. They particularly wanted the men that were opposed to the movement, to be aware of the connection of the colors to the suffrage, and in this, they succeeded. The characters on many anti-suffrage postcards drawn by male artists of that period were often draped in sashes and banners of purple, white and green, presuming that a suffragette would be recognized by her colors, even by the opposition of the movement.

The head of the WSPU was Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter,



Emmeline Pankhurst, dated 1913.
Library of Congress

Sylvia, was their official artist. She was a painter and designer of very high quality and her imaginative artwork was an invaluable contribution to the WSPU. She designed banners, flags, gifts and memorabilia, including badges and tea sets. The badges and buttons usually had the initials 'WSPU' or 'Votes for Women' and proved to be very popular, often worn on dresses and other clothing.

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wagon to the Hudson River harbor where it was loaded onto a sloop bound for New York, then Baltimore, then by wagon to the President's home in Washington.

The enormous Cheese was delivered in Washington 1 January 1802. Reverend John Leland made the presentation in a small ceremony at Jefferson's home in Washington where he praised Jefferson for his service to mankind. Jefferson, in turn, thanked him and praised the cheese as the fruit produced of the freeborn farmers without the assistance of slaves.

In a personal letter written afterward to his son-in-law, Jefferson stated that:

"It is an ebullition of the passion of republicanism in a state where it has been under heavy persecution."

President Jefferson practiced a policy to not accept gifts while in

office. His historical records show that he paid Reverend Leland \$200 for the cheese.

By November of 1802, the news traveled by press across the country of the giant cheese gift. Not to be outdone by the New Englanders, bakers from New York created giant loaves of bread to accompany the cheese and a glassmaker from Albany made a giant bottle to include wine that was forwarded to Jefferson. The records show that the cheese was served throughout White House dinners and functions for five years, ending in 1805, when the remainder of it was deposited in the Potomac. Thus to say that everyone, including White House staff, met their amount of dairy in their daily diet. Jefferson served as President until 1809. *LM*

— **Laureen Sauls-Lessard**

Large fashionable stores in London's West End, such as Dicken's and Jones, Swan and Edgar, Derry and Toms, Lilley and Skinner, Burberry and Peter Robinson, were among the shops that advertised frequently in *Votes for Women*, often taking a full-page advertisement and greatly increasing the paper's profits.

It was important to the women to be feminine in their appearance and not to appear mannish, as the opposition liked to render them. They would often wear dresses of white delicate fabrics, with purple and green sashes. Christabel Pankhurst implored, 'Suffragettes must not be dowdy!' In particular, Selfridges stocked a wide range of stylish clothes in delicate fabrics to accentuate their femininity.

The shoe shop, Lilley and Skinner, displayed in their window, shoes in the WSPU colors and Derry and Toms even sold tricolor underwear in purple, white and green! The

Elswick Cycle Company in Newcastle, marketed the Elswick bicycle for ladies, enamelled in the WSPU colors. Mappen and Webb, the London jewellers, issued a catalog of suffragette jewellery for Christmas in 1908. Brooches and badges were also worn in support of the movement, with many commissioned in honor of the suffragettes who were imprisoned for the cause, notably the Holloway brooch, which is now one of a collection in the London Museum.

Expensive dresses, coats, hats, furs and drapery were sold in the West End stores, while other merchandise such as household items, including china, tablecloths, confectionery and birthday cakes, could be bought in other retail outlets.

In addition to individual donations, merchandise in the tricolors proved to be a major factor in the financial success of the WSPU and gained them a stronger political advantage. *LM*

— **Debbie Blake**

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