

Emily Draper's Book of Journals and Early Female Education

by Susan Schulten



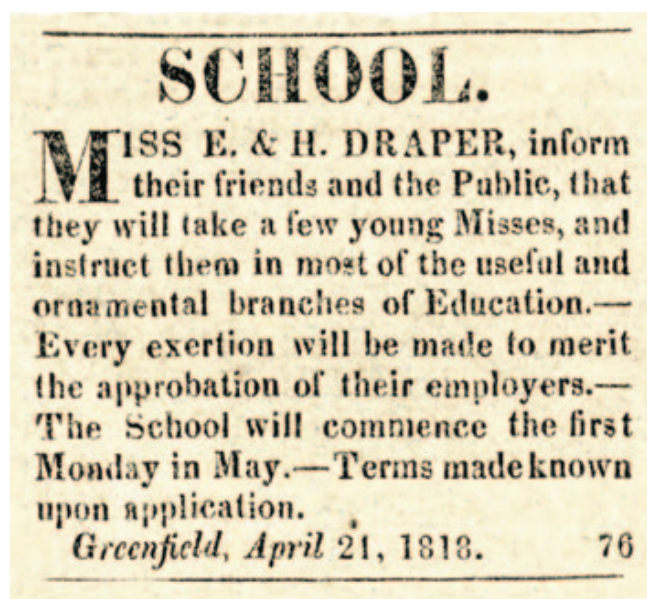
The centerpiece of these journals were maps, and especially maps of the nation itself. Throughout the 1810s, and especially after the end of the War of 1812, students drew maps of their nation to cultivate their new civic identity and unify a population spread across enormous distance. Draper's map of the United States appears to be copied from the 1820 edition of J.A. Cummings's common *School Atlas*. Notice the precise execution, from the neat line down to the lettering of each town and waterway. Museum Purchase in honor of David Bosse with funds provided by the Deerfield Collectors Guild. Historic Deerfield 2020.6.

IN 2020, Historic Deerfield acquired a manuscript that is both extraordinarily beautiful and historically important: an elaborate book of maps and penmanship drawn by a young woman in Greenfield, Massachusetts, in 1822. Emily Draper (1803–1865) produced a journal with more than 50 pages of finely rendered maps and exquisite calligraphy. In page after page, she presents her lessons with stunning artistry that dazzles the eye. But the journal is also a gold mine for historians. It shows us the lived experience not just of Draper, but of thousands of young women who were among the first to be educated outside of the home. It reflects the exceptional commitment to female education in the Connecticut River Valley. And it reminds us that learning in this era was, above all, visual.

Among the many changes brought by American independence was a conviction that young women could—and should—be educated outside of the home. Many at the time believed that the survival of this new and fragile nation hinged on the cultivation of “republican mothers” who would in turn raise responsible citizens of their own. This female education would not be wide nor catholic, of course, but it still represented an important shift in thinking. It should be no surprise, then, that many new schools for girls appeared in the decades after 1790.

The epicenter of this new enthusiasm for female education was the Connecticut River Valley. In the 1810s, for example, nine schools were founded in Hartford alone, six of these exclusively for girls. Among the most well-known of these was Sarah Pierce’s Litchfield Female Academy, founded in 1792, and Catherine Beecher’s Hartford Female Seminary, founded in 1823. But there were a multitude of others, and considered together they constitute a unique and important era in the history of female schooling that lasted until the advent of coeducational common schools in the 1840s. When Draper was fifteen, two of her sisters opened a school in Greenfield; she opened a school in Northfield in 1823, and a few years later she and her sisters opened another in Hartford. While we don’t know where she herself was educated, she would have had several choices—such as the Greenfield Female Academy founded in 1819—that would have been unavailable to women just a few decades earlier.

These schools had no established standards or even uniform expectations: most were small enterprises held in homes, some of which lasted just a few years. In many of these academies, the teachers were just a few years older than their students, relying on their own experience and a few common texts. Without any standardization, the curricula mostly centered on orthography, mathematics, and geography alongside the “accomplishments” of an earlier era: embroidery, music, and dance. Needlework, for instance, played a central role in the traditional schools of Misses Royce and Patten in Hartford. Emma Willard omitted the needle arts to make room for a more advanced and scientific curricula. Yet whether these



Advertisement for the Draper school, *Franklin Herald*, 1818. Historic Deerfield Library.

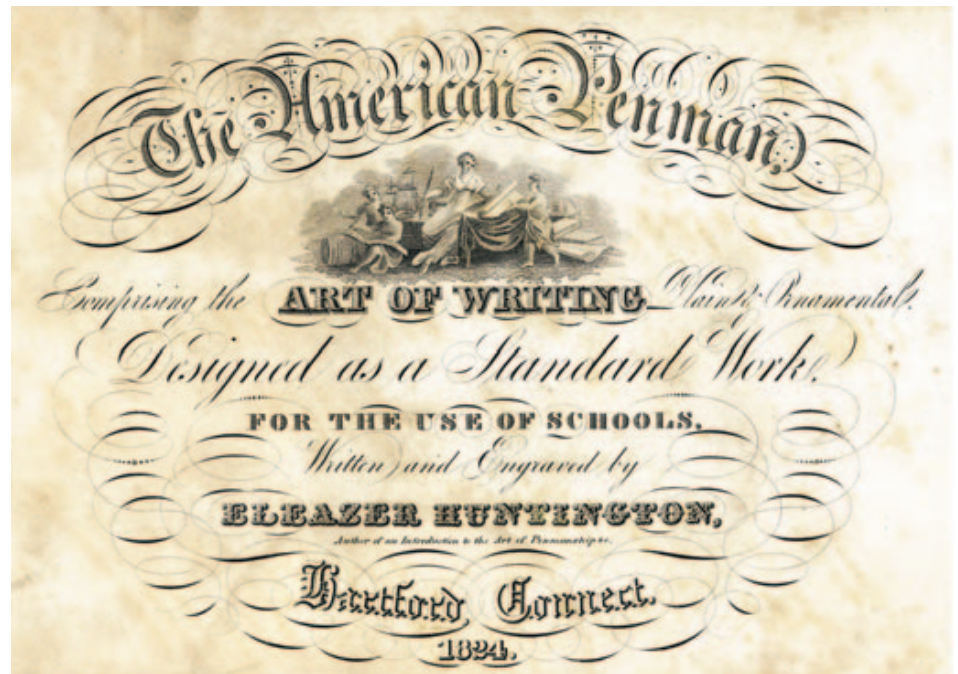
schools were seeking to offer a more expansive or limited set of offerings, they all shared an emphasis on visual learning. Willard, for instance, may have rejected needlework, but she still embraced drawing—especially drawing maps—to cultivate memory and learning.

This embrace of visual learning is apparent in the educational leaders who came out of Hartford as well. Emma Willard, educated in and around Hartford before moving to Vermont and New York, established schools of her own. She extended her reach further by producing geography and history texts that asked students to draw maps and visualize information in graphic forms to facilitate memorization. Eleazer Huntington also had a deep connection to the community of female academies in the area, many of which taught penmanship and calligraphy. In 1816, he produced a guide to “round and running hand” (penmanship) that in turn extended these lessons well beyond the region. All of these schools and leaders made the Connecticut River Valley the heart of female education in the early republic.¹

This regional background helps to explain not just Emily Draper’s journal of maps and calligraphy, but the hundreds of other “schoolgirl maps” now held in archives and private collections across the United States. Interestingly, no textbook of this era mandates the teaching of map drawing in a particular way: the subject is ubiquitous in advertisements for female academies, but no published texts or guides explain the style of map produced by so many young women between 1790 and 1830. As Draper’s manuscript shows, these were popular exercises because they enabled students to practice penmanship, perfect their calligraphy, hone their artistic skills, learn geographic information, and of course draw maps.

Left: Title page of Eleazer Huntington's *The American Penman*, second edition, 1824. Historic Deerfield Library.

Below: Although the city of Washington and District of Columbia had been formed by 1802, Draper's use of an eagle, the national emblem, as her cartouche may reflect New York's earlier role as the initial seat of the new republic. Note also her use of two prime meridians along the top and bottom of the map, signaling a time when several of these were in use. In 1817, the state consisted of 55 counties; Genesee Co. (formed 1802) in the far west would eventually be divided into eight other counties. Draper's depiction of St. Lawrence Co. (1805) shows it hugging the St. Lawrence River, but in fact it also occupied the unnamed portion to the south and east.



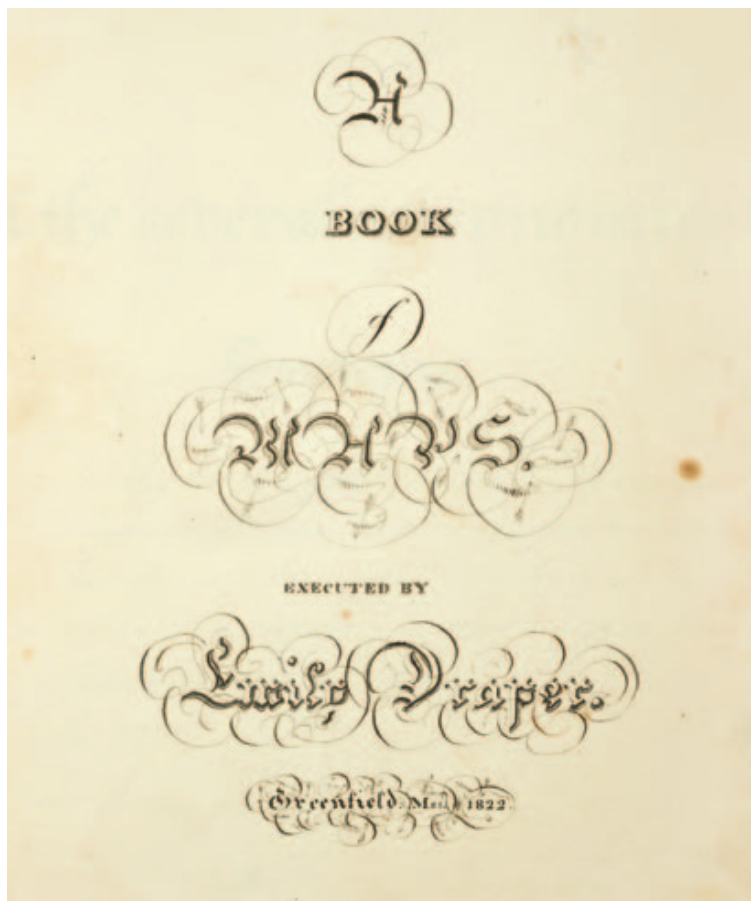
Most cartographic exercises completed by female students in this era are individual maps, usually undertaken over the course of a term as part of either “geography” or “map drawing” courses, and often judged on their merits as part of academic competitions. In this respect Draper’s lengthy journal is unusual.²

Her journal begins with several pages that showcase her knowledge of geography and skills of penmanship and calligraphy. In *The American Penman*, the narrative derives from a common geography school text, indicating that the goal was repeating textual information to commit it to memory. Geography was considered an especially appropriate science for young ladies given its breadth and accessibility. After writing out several pages of text, Draper turned toward different forms of mapping. Among the most common of these schoolgirl projects, double hemisphere world maps had been a longstanding lesson in England and France that easily migrated across the Atlantic. But after about 1810, and especially after the War of 1812, American educators often asked female students to create maps of their own nation as an expression of civic pride. Typical then is Emily Draper’s map of the United States.

Draper followed her map of the nation with maps of the individual states, beginning with Maine and working her way south and then west. Here again she showed immense attention to detail, copy-

Top right: Emily Draper was nineteen when she crafted this “Book of Maps” in Greenfield, measuring about nine inches high by seven inches wide. At that age, she had likely completed her own formal education, and may have drawn the journal as a model for the school she opened the following year in Northfield. In 1830 she went on to serve as preceptress of Deerfield Academy. Several of her sisters operated schools in and near Greenfield as early as 1818. Notice that this is a book of maps “executed by” Emily Draper, a word that suggests the importance of their finished appearance.

Right: The first several pages of Emily’s journal consist of textual information, mostly taken from common geography books of that era such as Jedidiah Morse’s *Geography Made Easy*. In copying these passages, she was committing the information to memory, but also practicing her “running hand” penmanship as well as more elaborate calligraphy. The rose garland around “The Twelve Signs” shows up in other similar journals that have recently surfaced at auction and in archives. This indicates that teachers might have been sharing models of these texts as they themselves moved from being students to teachers, and from school to school.



ing atlas maps with care while also adding flourishes of her own. Her map of Massachusetts, for example, most likely draws from a current edition of Mathew Carey's commonly available atlas of the United States. The decorative cartouche, however, was entirely her own. Equally intriguing and individual were Draper's "word maps," where she arranged text in visually striking ways to reinforce her knowledge of geographical relationships while practicing her skills of art and calligraphy. In all, Draper created word maps for 23 states and territories.

Emily Draper's map of Massachusetts typifies school mapping exercises that peaked in the early 19th century. Each state map included an elaborate decorative cartouche that reflected her artistic skills. Throughout the map, she uses different styles of penmanship and calligraphy to mark the different types of place names. The colored neat line around the edge of the map mimics printed maps of that time, and the careful execution indicates that these maps were often created to be judged for their artistic merits. That this was just one of 19 maps of equal detail shows us a young woman with enormous patience, dedication, and attention to detail.

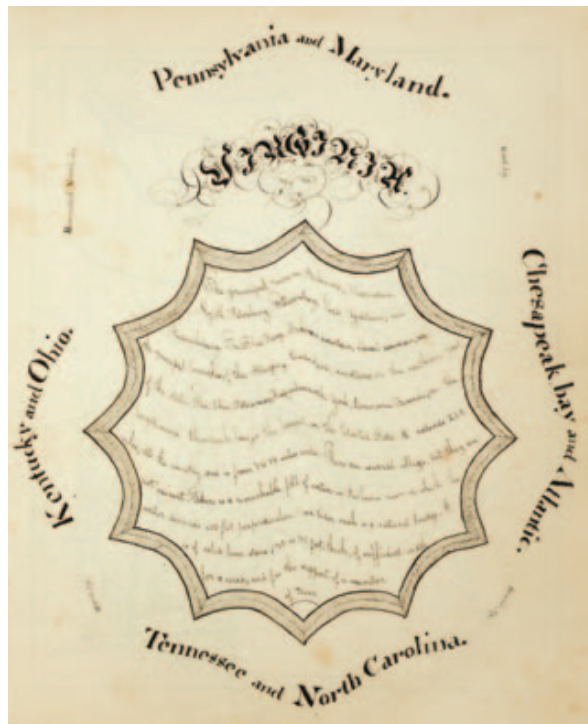
Among the most intriguing and useful aspects of Draper's journal is its unfinished quality. Several of her incomplete geographic and word maps remind us that she was engaged in a lengthy and demanding project. For instance, consider the map of Tennessee. The map thoroughly documents the complex river systems and incorporates topographic information for the southern Appalachian system and Cumberland Plateau. But it lacks a few final elements, which indicates that she most likely began her maps by drawing state boundaries and natural features before turning to the internal boundaries and decorative elements, including coloration and the cartouche. Such complicated exercises also required sustained patience and self-discipline. One can only imagine how long it took Draper to create such a comprehensive atlas of her home country. And with such obvious attention to artistic execution, it is not surprising that her maps—like many others of that era—bear spelling and other errors. On her map of the United States, for example, we see creative spellings of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, no doubt casualties of her focus on artistry.



The maps made by young women—and a few men—in the early republic constitute a distinct period of American education. In an era when female education remained relatively limited, reading geography and drawing maps were among the most common school practices. Students spent entire terms developing and perfecting their maps. Often judged for their merits in schoolwide competitions, they became prized family heirlooms thereafter. With the rise of coeducation—as well as new printing techniques—such exercises began to seem less relevant. After all, students could inexpensively acquire school atlases of their own, or trace maps on ready-made templates widely available by the 1840s. Intriguingly, Emily Draper's journal is one of six that I have located with strikingly similar structure: these books of "penmanship" or "maps" begin with pages of calligraphy and narrative lessons followed by geographic maps and word maps.³ Throughout, we find elaborate artistic elements such as floral motifs. All of these journals were undertaken at schools in Massachusetts and Vermont between 1818 and 1823. Yet no known published template guided these journals: instead, the format seems to have been spread by one or a few teachers exchanging models, such as Emily Draper's. As more of these maps and journals surface in archives and at auction, we can deepen our knowledge of the explosion of formalized education for young women in the early republic, especially in the Connecticut River Valley.

ENDNOTES

1. On visual learning in this era see Susan Schulten, *Emma Willard: Maps of History* (Visionary Press, 2022). Eleazer Huntington's textbook was *An Introduction to the Art of Penmanship* (Hartford, CT: 1816).
2. For more on this tradition of schoolgirl maps and map journals, see Susan Schulten, "Map Drawing, Graphic Literacy, and Pedagogy in the Early Republic," *History of Education Quarterly* vol. 57 no. 2 (May 2017): 185–220.
3. Among these journals are Catharine Cook's of 1818 (Osher Map Library, Portland, ME); Harriet Baker and Frances Henshaw's of 1819 and 1823, respectively (David Rumsey Map Collection, Stanford University); Susan Chipman's of 1823 (Sheldon Museum, Middlebury, VT), and Jane Burt's of 1825 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA).



Following each geographic map, Draper created a "word map" that gave her another way to showcase her talents. The text at the center described the geography of Virginia, while she experimented with using different patterns to practice drawing skills in a way that almost resembles contemporary quilt work. The entire page is an exercise in geography, for the Virginia description at the center is "bounded north by Pennsylvania and Maryland," "east by Chesapeak bay and Atlantic," and so on.



Draper's unfinished map of Tennessee appeared toward the end of the journal. She thoroughly mapped the mountains and river systems, but did not include the county divisions, county names, decorative cartouche, and overall coloration shown on her other maps. This absence reveals how she worked: first laying down the broad outlines of the state, then filling in the natural features, then incorporating the county divisions and finally establishing the coloration and decorative elements. Note her reference to the new territory of Alabama, created out of the Mississippi Territory in 1817. This indicates she was working with a very recent published atlas.