



Amelia BLOOMER

(1818 – 1894)

Amelia Bloomer was an American journalist and activist. She created one of the first newspapers dedicated to women, “The Lily”. She is also famous for campaigning for changes in women’s clothing that would allow them to be more active in their everyday activities. “Bloomers” are named after her.

Amelia’s Childhood

Amelia was born on May 27, 1818, in Homer, New York. She was one of the youngest children in a big family, with at least four daughters and two sons. The family was poor, and Amelia was home-schooled until she trained in a local school to become a teacher.

Teacher training and move to Seneca Falls

At the age of seventeen, after her teacher training, Amelia moved to Seneca Falls to teach in the village of Clyde. After some time spent teaching, she moved in with her sister Elvira in a nearby town, where for three years she worked as a nanny in Oren Chamberlain’s house. There she met and become engaged to Dexter Chamberlain Bloomer, a lawyer and editor of a newspaper called “The Seneca County Courier”.



Amelia Bloomer

Amelia the Journalist

After moving to Seneca Falls with Dexter, Amelia began writing for his newspaper, working on social and political articles. She also wrote short articles for another newspaper, “The Water Bucket”. In 1848, she went to the first Women’s Rights Convention and she decided to create a newspaper that

talked about feminism and women's rights. Called "The Lily", the newspaper was first published in 1849. The Lily newspaper was a great success and quickly built up its number of readers.

"Bloomers"

Amelia became involved in a campaign to call for clothing that would allow women to move around more freely. At the time, women wore tightly laced corsets, layers of petticoats and floor-length dresses that were heavy and very uncomfortable for daily activities.

Amelia argued that there should be more clothing available that would allow greater movement for women, so that they could do sports and other activities, such as riding bicycles.

Amelia followed the example of some women who wore a costume that consisted of loose trousers, with a short dress or tunic over the top. Amelia published articles in the newspaper about this costume, and more women started to wear these clothes.

This is why these trousers came to be called "Bloomers"; even though Amelia did not invent them, she played an important role in writing articles about them and helping to promote the idea.

Not everyone was so enthusiastic about this clothing style, though, and some people thought the trousers looked funny and ridiculous.



A woman wearing bloomers riding a bicycle

Amelia's Legacy

Amelia died at Council Bluffs in 1894.

Amelia is remembered mostly for a style of women's fashion, but she was also an important contributor to the women's rights movement.

In 1980, her home at Seneca Falls, New York, known as the Amelia Bloomer House, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

An annual feminist booklist: "The Amelia Bloomer Project" honours the top feminist books for young readers.

Photo Credits

- Amelia Bloomer: [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.
- A woman wearing bloomers riding a bicycle : [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons.