

Emma Willard

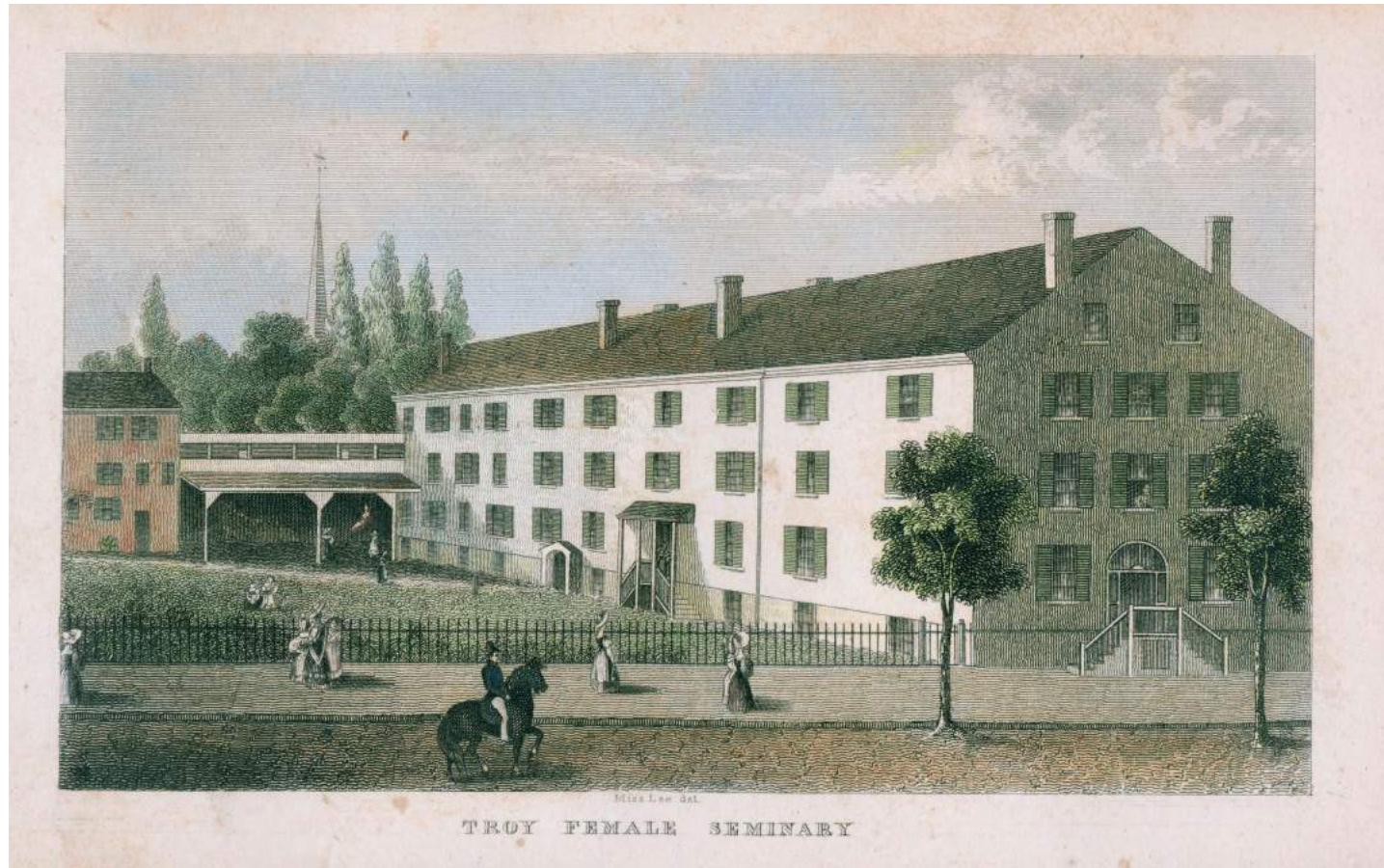
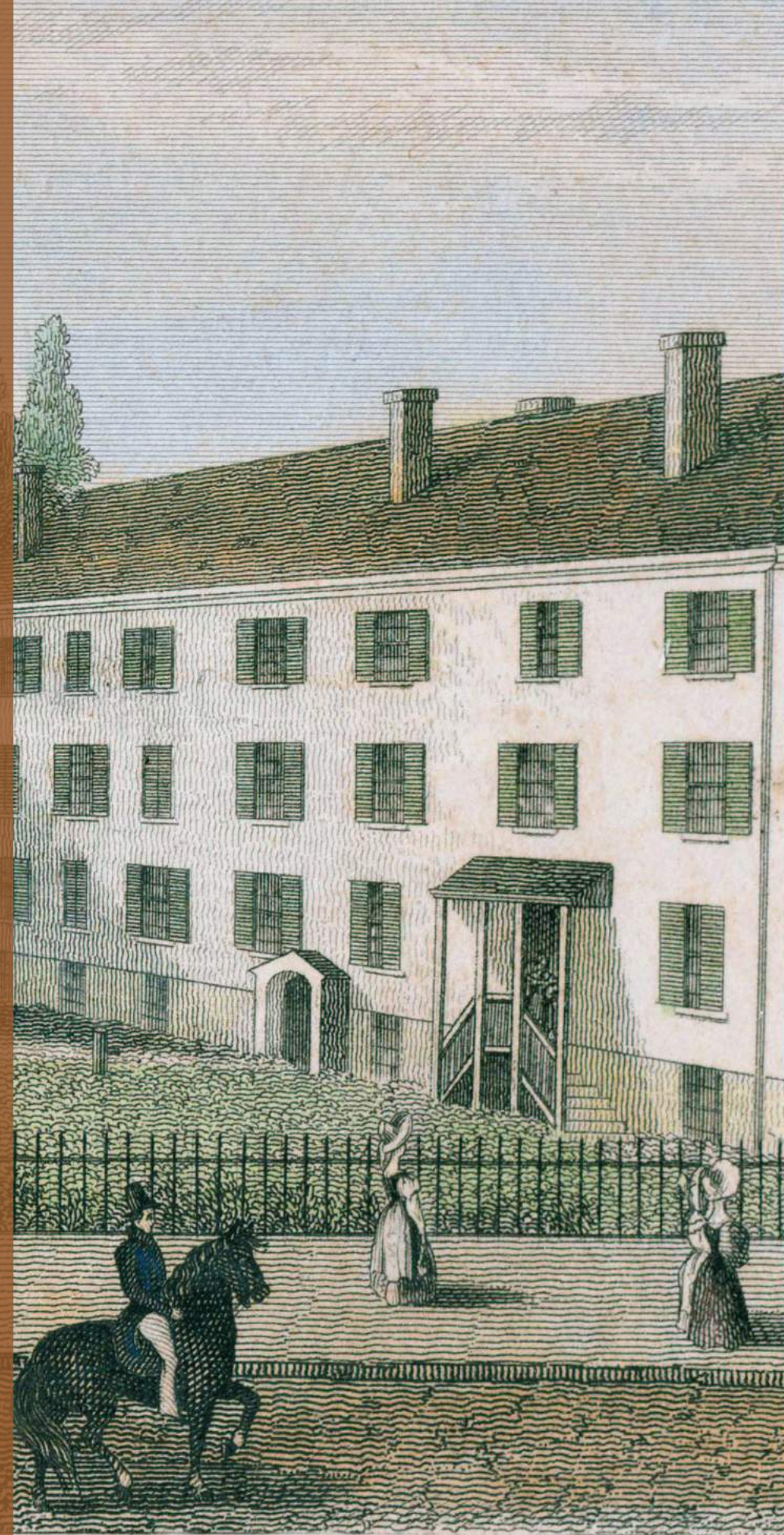


Image: **Troy Female Seminary**, engraved after a drawing by Thirza Lee, alumna and teacher of drawing and painting at the Troy Female Seminary c. 1830, colored engraving on paper, courtesy of the Rensselaer County Historical Society



Object: **Emma Willard's Desk** c. 1800, stained maple, poplar, mahogany, brass hardware, courtesy of the Emma Willard School Archives

The Capital Region in 50 Objects

Emma Willard

Born on February 23, 1787, in Berlin, Connecticut, the sixteenth of seventeen children in her family, Emma Hart Willard is remembered for her trailblazing efforts on behalf of women's education. Although her father recognized her abilities and encouraged her studies, there was only a limited amount of formal education available for girls in the early years of the nineteenth century. Emma attended school near her home until the age of twelve and spent years teaching herself subjects like geometry that were usually taught only to boys. At age 15 she entered the Berlin Academy and began teaching there in 1804. In 1807, she left home to run a female academy near Middlebury, Vermont, and two years later married the town physician, John Willard, a widower with four young children.

She left her teaching position at the Middlebury Academy, had a son of her own, and in 1814, opened a girls' school in her home to help with family finances. Five years later, Willard wrote an address to the public proposing *A Plan for Improving Female Education*. She published the plan and sent copies to Thomas Jefferson and John Adams intending to win national public support for girls' schools advocating equal education for young women through the academy level.

In September of 1819, with the encouragement of Governor DeWitt Clinton, Emma Willard moved to New York and opened a school in Waterford. After two years, she moved to Troy and opened the Troy Female Seminary. Thousands of young women passed through the Troy school during her lifetime. Her husband's death in 1825 did not limit her achievements. Emma Willard became financially successful, both from the profits of her school and from the best-selling textbooks that she authored.

Emma Willard left daily management of the school to her son and daughter-in-law in 1838, the year she remarried. She spent the last thirty years of her life traveling and writing, although the Female Seminary and Troy remained her home base until her death in 1870. The school was renamed in her honor in 1895.

Vocabulary

Academy - a place of study or training in a special field

Advocate - a person who argues for or supports a cause or policy

Archives - a collection of historical documents, records, and objects providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

Proposal - something (such as a plan or suggestion) that is presented to a person or group of people to consider

Seminary - an institution of secondary or higher education

Trail blazer - someone who does something in a new way

Emma Willard

Name _____ Date _____

Directions

Use the depiction of the object, image, and corresponding text to answer the following questions.

1. What is the name of the object? _____

2. What materials was it made from? _____

3. Where did Emma Willard originally establish her school? _____

4. Why might Emma Willard have decided to move her school from Waterford to Troy in 1821? _____

5. What is the name of the image? _____

6. How many years had the Troy Female Seminary been open when this image was made? _____

7. Who made this image and what was her relationship to the Female Seminary? _____

8. What was unusual, for the time, in what Emma Willard advocated and created? _____

9. Why did Willard publish *A Plan for Improving Female Education*? Who did she send copies to? _____

10. In what ways did her influence extend beyond Troy, NY? _____

11. Why do you think the school has kept her desk in their archives? _____