

## John Faucheraud Grimké, 1752-1819

John Faucheraud Grimké was born in Charleston in 1752 to John Paul Grimké and Mary Faucheraud. He attended Princeton University and later studied law at Trinity College at the University of Oxford in England. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, Grimké returned to America to take up arms against the British. He fought in many decisive battles during the war including the battles of Eutaw Springs and Yorktown. He ultimately rose to the rank of colonel.

In the post-war years, Grimké focused on building his law practice and bolstering his family's wealth through investments and the acquisition of real estate. In 1782, he entered politics as a representative of St. Philip's and St. Michael's parishes in the South Carolina State Legislature, a position he held until 1790. In his time with the legislature, Grimké served as Speaker of the House from 1785-1786 and was a member of the South Carolina Constitutional Convention in 1788.

From 1783 until his death in 1819, Grimké served in the South Carolina Court of Common Pleas as an associate justice and senior associate justice starting in 1799. In 1811, several Upstate lawmakers unsuccessfully attempted to remove Grimké from the bench through impeachment. The charges amounted to an argument over Grimké's perceived interference in Upstate affairs. On the first charge "for illegally imprisoning David Peterson, William Gary, Gabriel McCool, and John Taylor" of Newberry County in October 1807, lawmakers voted 50 to 45 to dismiss the charges. On the second charge for "ordering John Grist to be stricken [*sic*] off the roll of Constables in Spartanburg court" in November 1806, lawmakers voted 66 to 28 to dismiss the charges. While Grimké's detractors did not have the two-thirds majority needed to remove him, the large number of votes in favor of impeachment indicates a significant divide between Upstate and Lowcountry lawmakers at that time. Despite his near-impeachment, Grimké contributed greatly to the foundations of the judiciary in South Carolina through the publications of several law books including *The South Carolina Justice of Peace* (1784) and *The Public Laws of the State of South Carolina* (1790).<sup>1</sup>

From 1786 to 1788, Grimké served two terms as intendant of the City of Charleston. Grimké's administration focused on strengthening the foundations of civic society in Charleston. The establishment of the Commissioners of Charleston Harbor in 1786 allowed for better regulation of pilotage. Moreover, a 1778 ordinance expanded fire protection in the City by providing for the election of nine fire-masters to maintain fire engines and oversee a crew of volunteers.<sup>2</sup>

Grimké married Mary Smith in 1784. They had fourteen children including the noted suffragists and abolitionists, Sarah and Angelina Grimké. The Grimké family owned several plantations, including Quarter Plantation and Belmont Plantation in Union County, and held a large enslaved population. While evidence

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<sup>1</sup> "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings," *Charleston Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), December 5, 1811, 3. Perry, Mark, *Lift Up Thy Voice: The Grimké Family's Journey from Slaveholders to Civil Rights Leaders*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2001), 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings," *Charleston Morning Post* (Charleston, South Carolina), November 27, 1786, 4. "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings," *Charleston Morning Post* (Charleston, South Carolina), March 10, 1787, 2-3.

suggests that Grimké questioned the elitist justifications behind the enslavement of Africans, he ultimately viewed slavery as a necessary institution that he actively worked to uphold.<sup>3</sup>

Grimké also held staunchly conservative views on the subjugation of women and only approved of his daughters receiving a rudimentary education. Despite their father's lack of support, Sarah and Angelina taught themselves through self-study and religious education. The sisters' embrace of religious study and abhorrence of the mistreatment of slaves resulted in a hatred of slavery that led to a lifetime of abolitionist activism.<sup>4</sup>

### Timeline

1752	Born in Charleston to John Paul Grimké and Mary Faucheraud
1774	Graduated from Trinity College at the University of Oxford
1776	Returned to America and entered the Regiment of Artillery where he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel
1782-1790	Served in the South Carolina State Legislature representing St. Philip's and St. Michael's parishes
1783-1819	Served in the South Carolina Court of Common Pleas as both an associate justice and senior associate justice starting in 1799
1785-1786	Speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives
1784	Married Mary "Peggy" Smith with whom he had fourteen children including Sarah and Angelina Grimké
1786-1788	Served two terms as intendant of the City of Charleston
1788	Member of the South Carolina Constitutional Convention
1819	Died in Long Branch, N.J.

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<sup>3</sup> Perry, *Lift Up Thy Voice*, 43-44.

<sup>4</sup> Lerner, Gerda, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Woman's Rights and Abolition*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 17-29, 68-74.