



0. ELIZABETH and THEOPHILUS PACKARD -
BACKGROUND - Story Preface

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Elizabeth Packard as she appeared in a family photo album once owned by Peninah Jane Beedy Trask, daughter of one of the jurors (Daniel A. Beedy of Manteno, Illinois) who served on Elizabeth Packard's jury. Image online via Find-A-Grave.

In 1864, Elizabeth was married to a man who thought his wife was "slightly insane." Illinois law, at the time, required evidence of insanity - in all cases - before a person could be committed to a mental institution. In all cases, that is, except when a *husband* wanted to send his *wife* to an insane asylum.

The same law existed in many other states.

How did such a law impact Elizabeth Packard? Why did Theophilus think his wife was insane?

To learn more about it, let's step back in time to the year 1860 (when the American South still had a plantation-based, slave-owning economy). The Packard family was living in Illinois where another Illinois resident - a man named Abraham Lincoln - was trying to become President of the United States.

The Packards' home was located in the village of Manteno, in the northeastern part of the state (not far south of Chicago). Elizabeth attended a Bible-study class at her church, led by a deacon - Abijah Dole - who allowed everyone to share their viewpoints. He hoped such exchanges would help his class to grow, since only six people - all men - were attending.

Mrs. Packard - to this point - had a reasonable home life. A mother of six children (five boys and one girl) - and the wife of a pastor (whose views she did not always share) - she was encouraged by her class teacher to speak her mind.

Flourishing in the open-study environment, Elizabeth talked about her views. She had lots of ideas and enjoyed the free exchange.

Word-of-mouth about the class began to spread. Soon forty-six people were participating.

Then ... everything changed.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ELIZABETH-and-THEOPHILUS-PACKARD-BACKGROUND-Packard-Elizabeth-Civil-Rights-Advocate>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ELIZABETH-and-THEOPHILUS-PACKARD-BACKGROUND-Packard-Elizabeth-Civil-Rights-Advocate>



Elizabeth Packard

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