



Laura Smith Haviland

In 1808 Laura Smith was born in Ontario to Quaker parents. Her father, a minister, and mother, a church elder, moved the family to New York in 1815.¹² Elizabeth was intellectually precocious as a girl. She grew bored with her schoolbooks and gravitated toward her father's personal library. She read about the history of the slave trade and became conscious of the exploitation of people of African descent in the United States. As a girl, she decided to enlist her "sympathies" with those "who were thus enslaved."¹³ In 1825 at the age of seventeen, Laura married Charles Haviland, a fellow Quaker. In 1829, when Laura was twenty-one, she relocated with her husband and two children to join their parents who had "removed to Michigan Territory." The Smith-Haviland families, together with neighbors, started the first Quaker church meeting in

Michigan.¹⁴ In 1832, Laura helped her neighbor, Elizabeth Chandler, organize the Logan Female Antislavery Society in Lenawee County.

In 1837, the year that Michigan became a state, Laura founded Raisin Institute with her husband and brother. Raisin Institute was a co-educational and interracial school and farm modeled after Oberlin College in Ohio and located near the Raisin River in southeastern Michigan. Boys and girls, blacks and whites could attend there together, a demonstration of principles of gender and racial equality that were radical at the time. On school grounds, Laura sheltered African Americans who had escaped from slavery in the South. Laura's school became known as a stop on the Underground Railroad, and she later accompanied many fugitive slaves on their journey from Ohio to Canada. Making this journey required knowing many of the natural features of the land, including the Ohio and Detroit Rivers as well as the woods and swamps in between. On multiple occasions Laura bravely "left [her] sweet home and the loved ones who still clustered around it" for the greater good of helping enslaved people take their freedom. In the 1840s-1860s, Laura also traveled around the Midwest lecturing about the moral wrong of slavery. Sojourner Truth, who lived in Harmonia, Michigan (west of Battle Creek), was also an antislavery lecturer in the region. The two women became friends after the Civil War when they worked for the Freedmen's Hospital in Washington D.C.

Because Laura believed that healthy foods sustained good health and learning, she paid close attention to the menu offered at Raisin Institute. She insisted that her students eat items made of the whole grain variety of flour recently invented by Sylvester Graham, a Presbyterian minister and dietary reformer. This flour was special because it used the wheat bran, germ, and endosperm in a ratio that was proportionate to those same elements in the wheat kernel itself. In 1829 Rev. Graham created "Graham Bread," which he believed was more wholesome and nutritious than breads that used chemical additives such as chlorine and alum to make bread whiter in color and more commercially appealing. When paired with a high-fiber, vegetarian diet that consisted primarily of fresh fruits and vegetables, Rev. Graham believed that this diet could be the foundation for optimal health. Due to Laura's preference for the flour, students affectionately nicknamed Raisin Institute "Graham Town."¹⁵

The ECO Girls research team did not uncover an original Laura Haviland recipe. However, we are pleased to reproduce historical graham flour recipes for Graham Bread and Graham Gems, two popular baked items that Laura might well have prepared. We found these recipes in *The Home Messenger Book of Tested Recipes*, which was first published in 1873.¹⁶ You will notice again that neither recipe contains oven temperatures or bake times. If you prefer a more modern graham flour recipe, see the following recipe for homemade graham crackers.

Graham flour is readily available at health food stores or may be ordered from online vendors.

Graham Bread

One quart of Graham Flour
¾ cup yeast
One quart warm water
One cup molasses

Let these ingredients rise overnight. Mix with wheat flour in the morning into a stiff loaf; let it rise a second time, afterwards put into loaves to rise for baking. Very good.

Note: The yeast called for here is not our modern granulated yeast, but rather an active starter made of yeast, flour, and water. It would have had a texture similar to a pancake batter.

Graham Gems

One pint milk
One cup wheat flour
One cup Graham flour
One egg
A little salt

Have the irons hot before using.

Note: This would have been baked in heavy "gem pans," similar to muffin tins but smaller, and often made of cast iron.¹⁷

Graham Crackers†

8 tablespoons (1 stick) butter
2/3 cup "raw" or brown sugar, firmly packed
2 cups graham flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ cup water

1. Cream butter and sugar well. Sift together dry ingredients and add to creamed mixture, alternating with the water. Mix well. Let stand for 30 minutes.
2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Oil a cookie sheet.
3. Roll out dough on floured board to 1/8 – inch thickness. Cut in squares or rounds, and bake for about 20 minutes, or until lightly browned.
4. Makes about three dozen.

"[As a young girl,] I wished to read every book that came within my reach. I read a few of father's books, designed for more mature minds. I became deeply interested in John Woolman's history of the slave-trade, of the capture and cruel middle passage of negroes, and of the thousands who died on their voyage and were thrown into the sea to be devoured by sharks, that followed the slave-ship day after day. The pictures of these crowded slave-ships, with the cruelties of the slave system after they were brought to our country, often affected me to tears; and I often read until the midnight hour, and could not rest until I had read it twice through. My sympathies became too deeply enlisted for the poor negroes who were thus enslaved for time to efface."

—Haviland, from memoir *A Woman's Life-Work*