NO LABELS®

25 UNSUNG HEROES OF AMERICAN UNITY

BEYOND LINCOLN

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INTRO

Nothing about America's 250-year journey has been easy.

From the beginning, our country has wrestled with bitter internal divisions. Our founders themselves had fierce disagreements over which direction their new nation should take. Yet through war, depression, protest, scandal, and technological upheaval, we have endured to become the world's oldest continuous democracy.

How did we do it? Because in every period of turmoil, Americans have stepped forward to remind us that our differences are outweighed by what we hold in common.

We know the most iconic of them: Abraham Lincoln, who saved the Union. Martin Luther King Jr., who called it to its conscience. But for every household name, there are many others whose stories are less familiar.

This book is about them.

Inside, you will find 25 brief portraits of Americans who chose unity during moments of fracture—roughly one for each decade of our history. Some are politicians and legislators, others are activists, business leaders, or philanthropists.

We hope you take a few things away from this book.

First, that while our divisions today are intense and, at times, dispiriting, they are not entirely new. Yes, they differ from those of the past in some ways, but that has been true of every generation's struggles.

Second, it is within the power of all Americans to help the nation endure. These profiles demonstrate how anyone—not just political leaders—can play a role in binding the nation together. Not only is this our shared ability, it is our shared patriotic duty.

At No Labels, we believe the people who can guide America through the present moment are already among us. Our mission is to find and support the modern equivalents of the leaders in these pages.

That means identifying courageous political leaders and providing the resources they need to thrive. But it also means serving as a convening ground and a platform for you—the citizens, business leaders, and everyday Americans ready to make a difference in your own ways.

America has not had an easy run. But through it all, we have stayed together because ordinary people have called us to a shared purpose and shared destiny.

That is the story of this book. And it is the calling of our time.

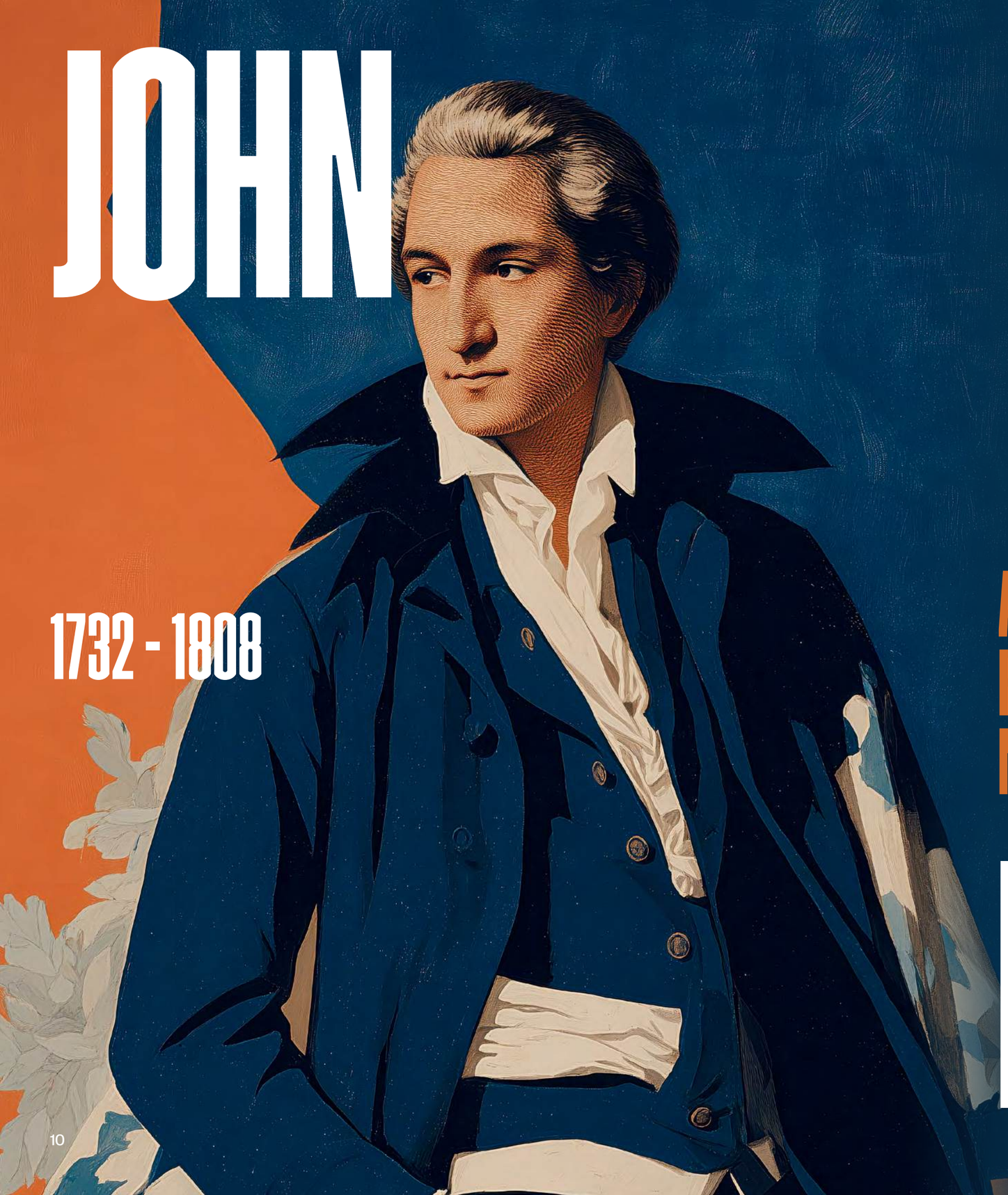
1770s – 1800s

OUT OF MANY, ONE

The American Revolution brought together farmers and merchants, idealists and pragmatists, northerners and southerners, all united in opposition to monarchy but deeply divided over what should come next. Would power rest with the states or a federal government? Who would count as “the people”? What balance could be struck between liberty and order? The answers were set to determine whether the new republic would hold together or fall apart before it even began.

JOHN

1732 - 1808



In the summer of 1775, the Continental Congress was in turmoil. The more radical delegates were calling for immediate war with Britain. Moderates favored a more diplomatic route. Into that breach stepped John Dickinson, a representative from Pennsylvania.

A BRIDGE BETWEEN RADICALS AND MODERATES

DICKINSON

PATIENT DIPLOMATIC BRAVE

A moderate but courageous legal thinker, Dickinson was also a gifted writer. His *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, published years earlier, made him famous throughout the colonies. They argued against taxation without representation, a revolutionary idea, in language that even cautious colonists could embrace.

As the push for full rebellion gained steam, Dickinson worried the colonies were rushing toward war before they had the unity or moral high ground to survive it. So, in July 1775, he drafted the Olive Branch Petition, a final plea to King George III for reconciliation. He also revised Thomas Jefferson's draft of the *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms*, softening its tone to keep moderates from bolting the coalition.

Dickinson believed that diplomacy and unity were the higher form of patriotism. But he wasn't afraid of war, either. After the king rejected his Olive Branch Petition, Dickinson took up arms with the Pennsylvania militia.

Later, he helped draft both the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution, earning the moniker "The Penman of the Revolution."

In the end, what defines Dickinson's legacy was not his fighting or even his writing.

It was the patient, early work of keeping the radicals and cautious moderates in the same room long enough to create something that could last. And in that, he succeeded in historic fashion.

ROGER

1721 - 1793

SHERMAN

ARCHITECT OF THE CONNECTICUT COMPROMISE

At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the most fraught disagreement was about representation. Delegates from larger states wanted voting power based on population. Smaller states insisted on equal representation, fearing they would be permanently outvoted. Both sides dug in, and the debate went on for weeks.

Enter Roger Sherman, a soft-spoken delegate from Connecticut. He proposed a simple but elegant solution: a bicameral legislature, with one chamber—the House of Representatives—based on population, and the other—the Senate—granting each state an equal voice.

Known as the Connecticut Compromise, Sherman's idea became the foundation of the American Congress. It preserved the principle of majority rule while protecting smaller states from political irrelevance.

A former shoemaker and self-taught lawyer, Sherman's ability to forge this deal came not from aggression but from quiet sensibility. He had respect and trust on both sides of the debate.

He also holds another distinction in American history. He is the only person to have signed all four of America's founding documents: the Continental Association, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution.

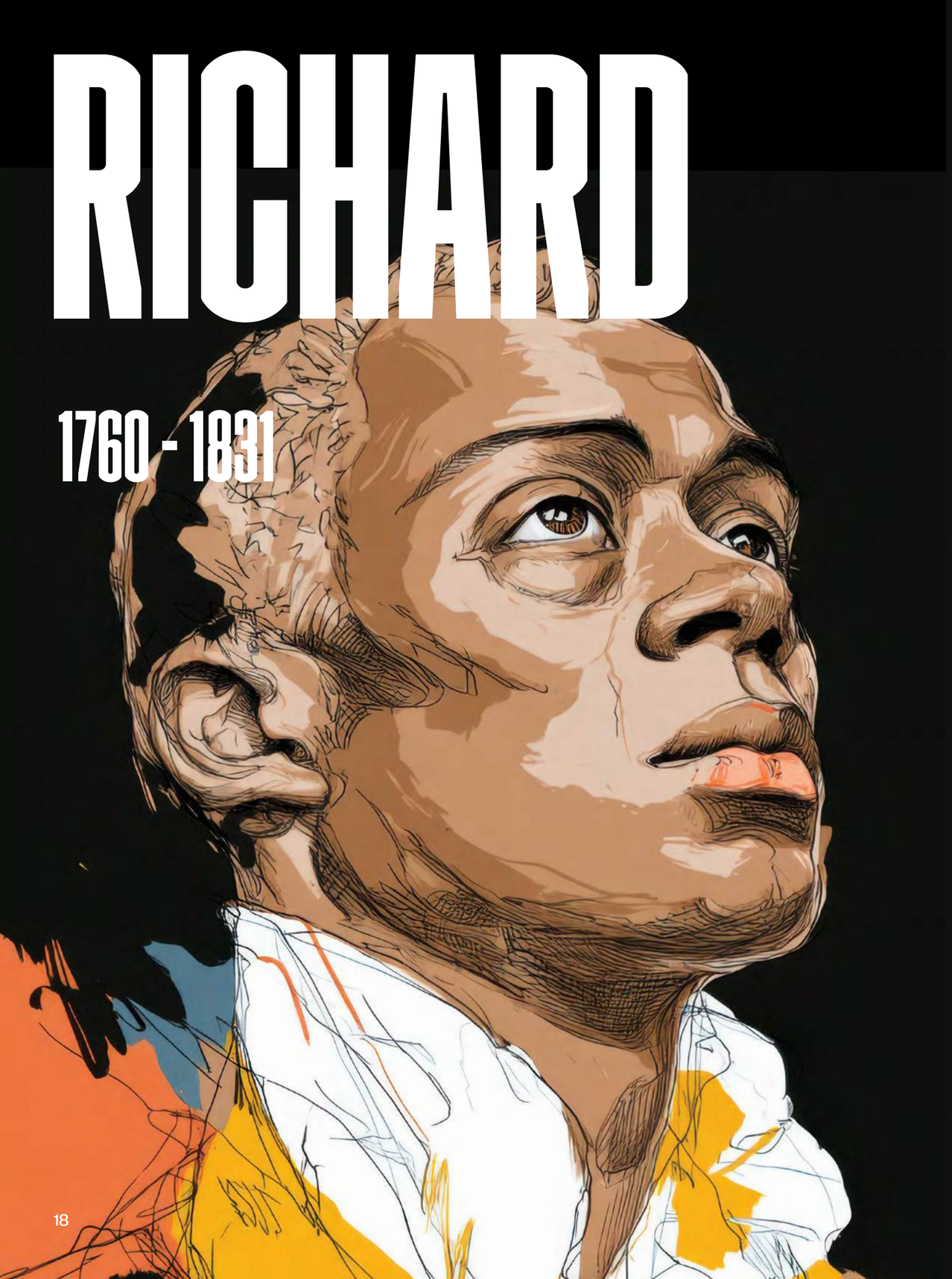
At one of the most critical impasses in American history, Sherman offered a structure that allowed very different states to move forward together.

RESPECTED SENSIBLE TRUSTED

That was enough to save the moment, and possibly the country.

RICHARD ALLEN

1760 - 1831



CIVIC LEADER ACROSS RACE AND CLASS

In 1787, while delegates met in Philadelphia to draft the U.S. Constitution, Richard Allen was organizing a different kind of founding.

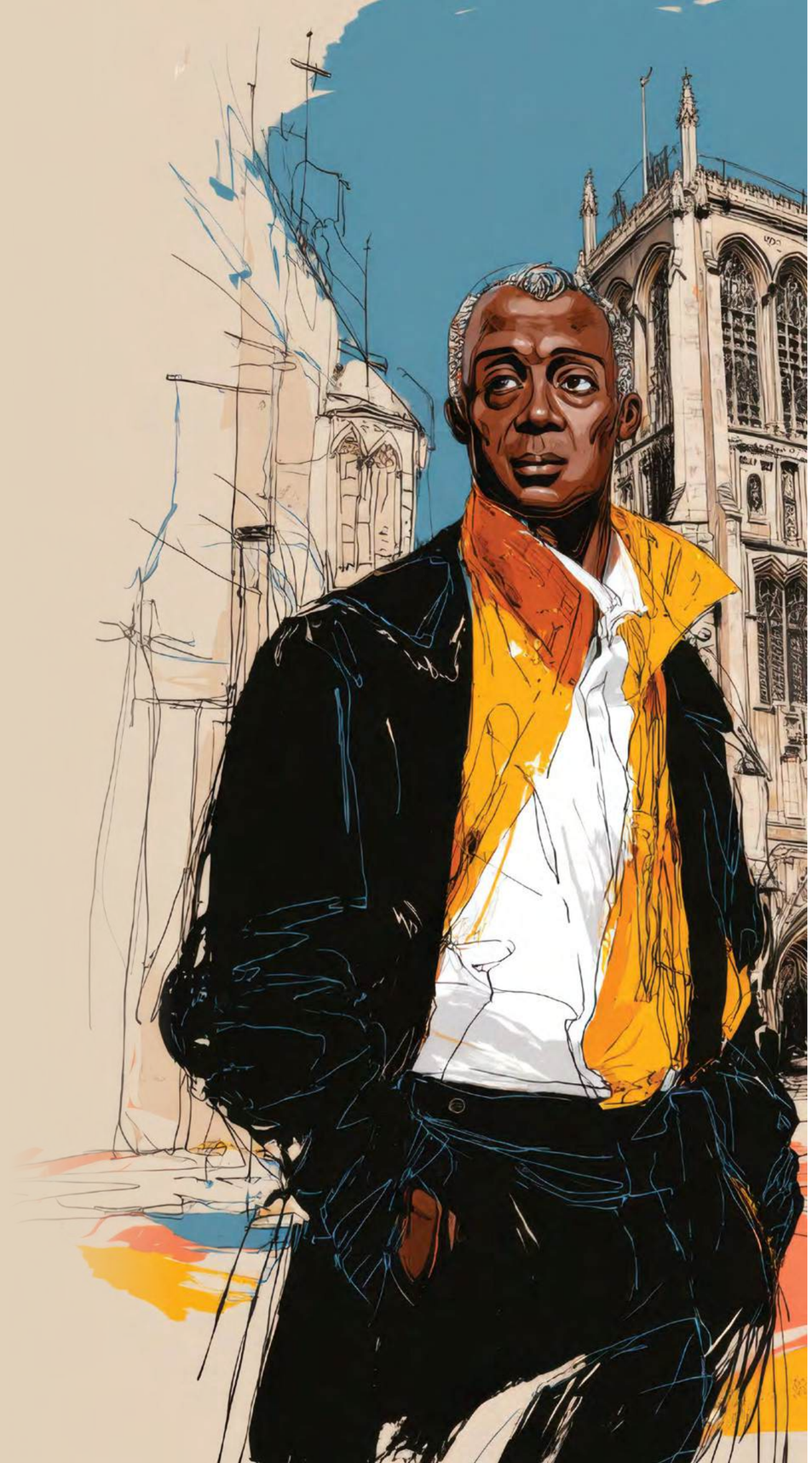
That same year, he and Absalom Jones co-founded the Free African Society, a mutual-aid organization created by and for free Black Philadelphians. It offered financial support, vocational training, and spiritual guidance for a growing population of working-class families, many of whom had no access to established institutions like churches, charities, or schools that served white Philadelphians.

In a city debating the future of national power, Allen was focused on building civic power.

Five years later, when yellow fever ravaged Philadelphia and much of the city evacuated, Allen's society stayed behind and cared for Black and white citizens alike. They nursed the sick, buried the dead, and provided hope during a difficult time. It was a profound act of citizenship from a community that had yet to be fully recognized as part of the nation.

Allen was also a notable faith leader of his day. In 1816, he founded the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the first independent Black denomination in the United States, and served as its first bishop. The AME Church would become a powerhouse of education, political organizing, and civil society throughout the 19th century.

Allen's genius was institution-building, and he put it to work for the benefit of the American experiment.



As he said, "This land, which we have watered with our tears and our blood, is now our 'mother country', and we are well satisfied to stay where wisdom abounds and the gospel is free."

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED PHILANTHROPIC

DOLLEY MADISON

1768 - 1849

BIPARTISAN SOCIAL ORGANIZER

In the earliest years of the republic, Federalists and Democratic-Republicans clashed constantly, often in a personal manner that bordered on hateful. There were few norms, no real playbook, and even less trust. In a city run entirely by men, it was a woman—first lady Dolley Madison—who found a way to ease the tension and get people talking.

Beginning in 1809, during her husband James Madison's presidency, Dolley hosted weekly bipartisan parties at the Executive Mansion known as "Wednesday squeezes." These informal salons brought together political rivals, cabinet members, foreign dignitaries, journalists, and everyday citizens into the same crowded drawing rooms.

It was there that Federalists and Republicans, who rarely crossed paths outside of debate chambers, encountered each other in a social setting for the first time, sometimes literally squeezed shoulder-to-shoulder where they were forced to talk.

By creating common ground in a divided capital, Dolley Madison helped grease the legislative wheels and ease tensions among early American leaders.

She is also credited by many historians as helping to shape the aesthetic style of early American political leadership. Her taste gave the young republic a sense of elegance that was elevated but not royal—a critical distinction for a country eager to feel both democratic and dignified.

UNIFYING CHARISMATIC ELEGANT

1810s – 1850s

A FRAGILE UNION

By the early 1800s, the American experiment had taken root but deep fault lines were forming. The most dangerous was slavery. At the same time, westward expansion was doubling the country in size and creating new questions about federalism. Tariffs, banking, and infrastructure also drove wedges between agrarian and industrial interests. Amidst these fissures, compromise in Congress became harder to find. Some even began whispering of war.

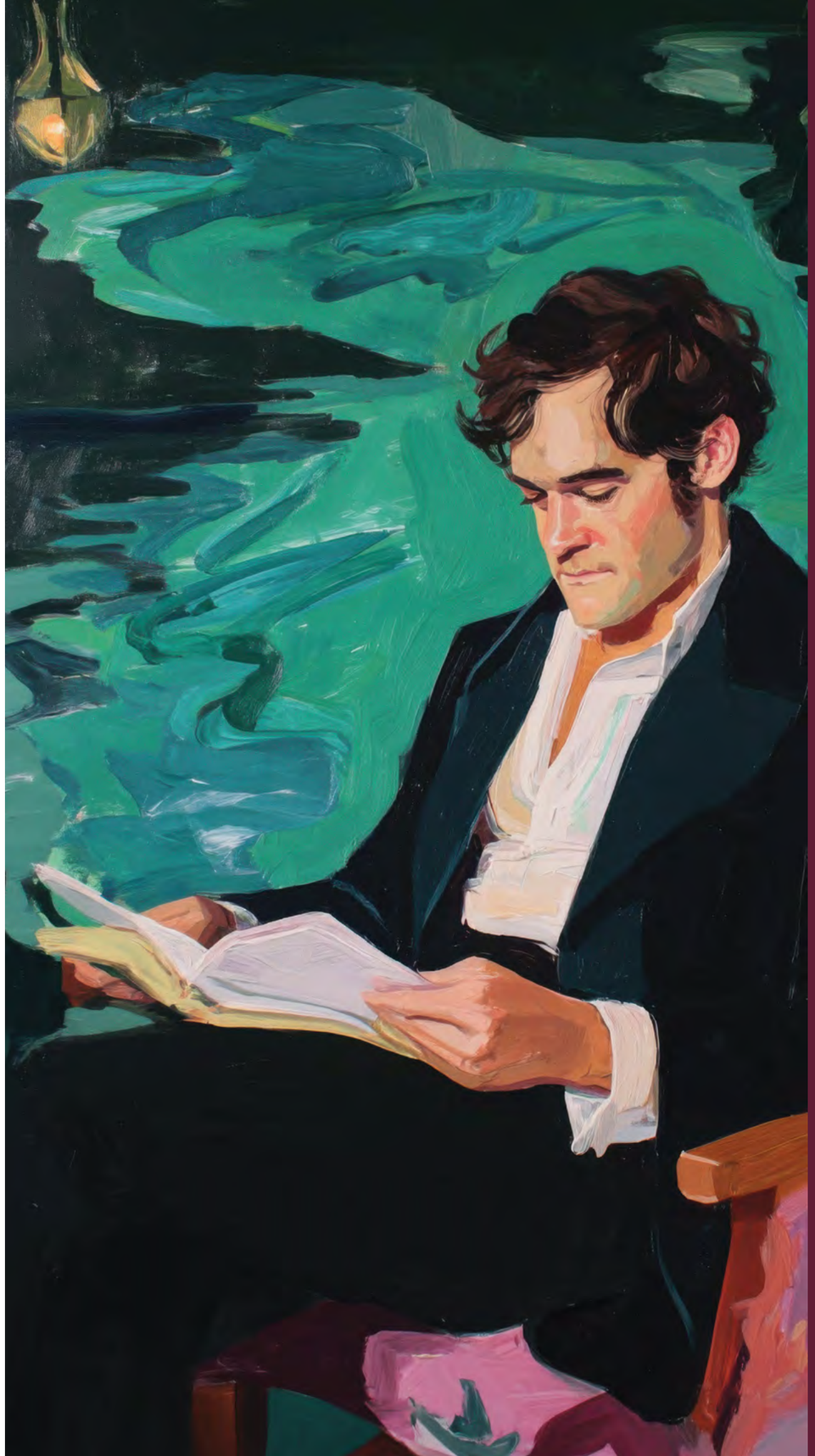
GEORGE TICKNOR

1791 - 1871

BUILDER OF SHARED CULTURE

As America expanded westward, one of the greatest challenges for the cause of unity was building a strong shared culture and national identity across such an expansive country.

George Ticknor thought we could, and that education was the key.



A Boston-based scholar and reformer, Ticknor believed the long-term strength of America depended on its libraries, classrooms, traditions, and culture.

He taught at Harvard, where he reformed the curriculum to solidify America's unique dialect and strengthen our literary image. He also aimed to bring a more rigorous, democratized approach to learning.

His most lasting contribution came in the 1840s, when Ticknor became the driving force behind the creation of the Boston Public Library, the first large free municipal library in America. His vision was radical for the time. Most libraries were private and catered to elites. Ticknor argued that books and education should be universally accessible in order to form a pillar of republican self-government.

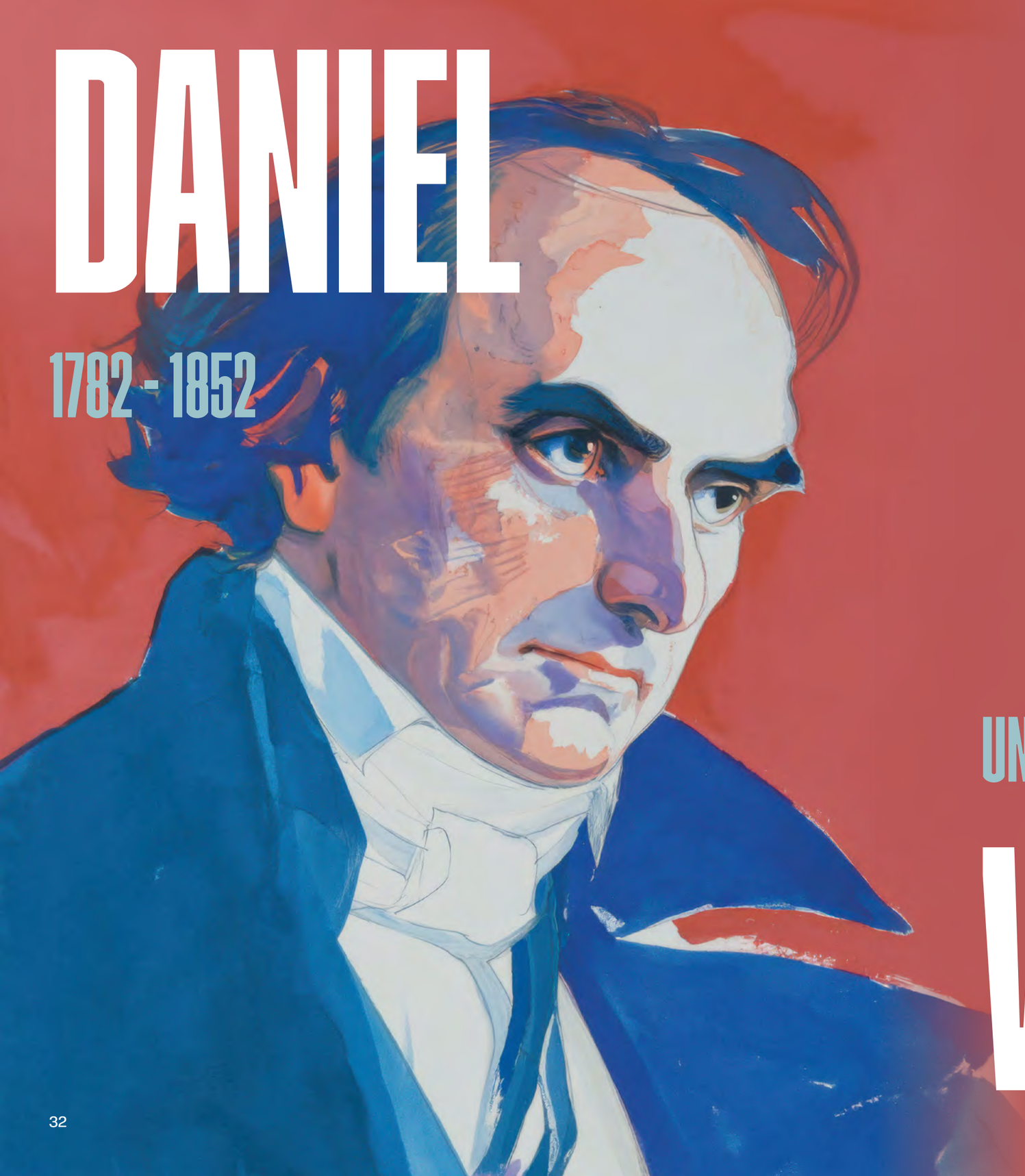
"In a republic," he argued, "knowledge is not merely a privilege of the few. It is the safety of the many."

George Ticknor worked persistently to shore up the intellectual and cultural soul of America at a time of rising conflict, knowing that no political union could last without it.

SCHOLARLY
VISIONARY
FOUNDATIONAL

DANIEL

1782 - 1852

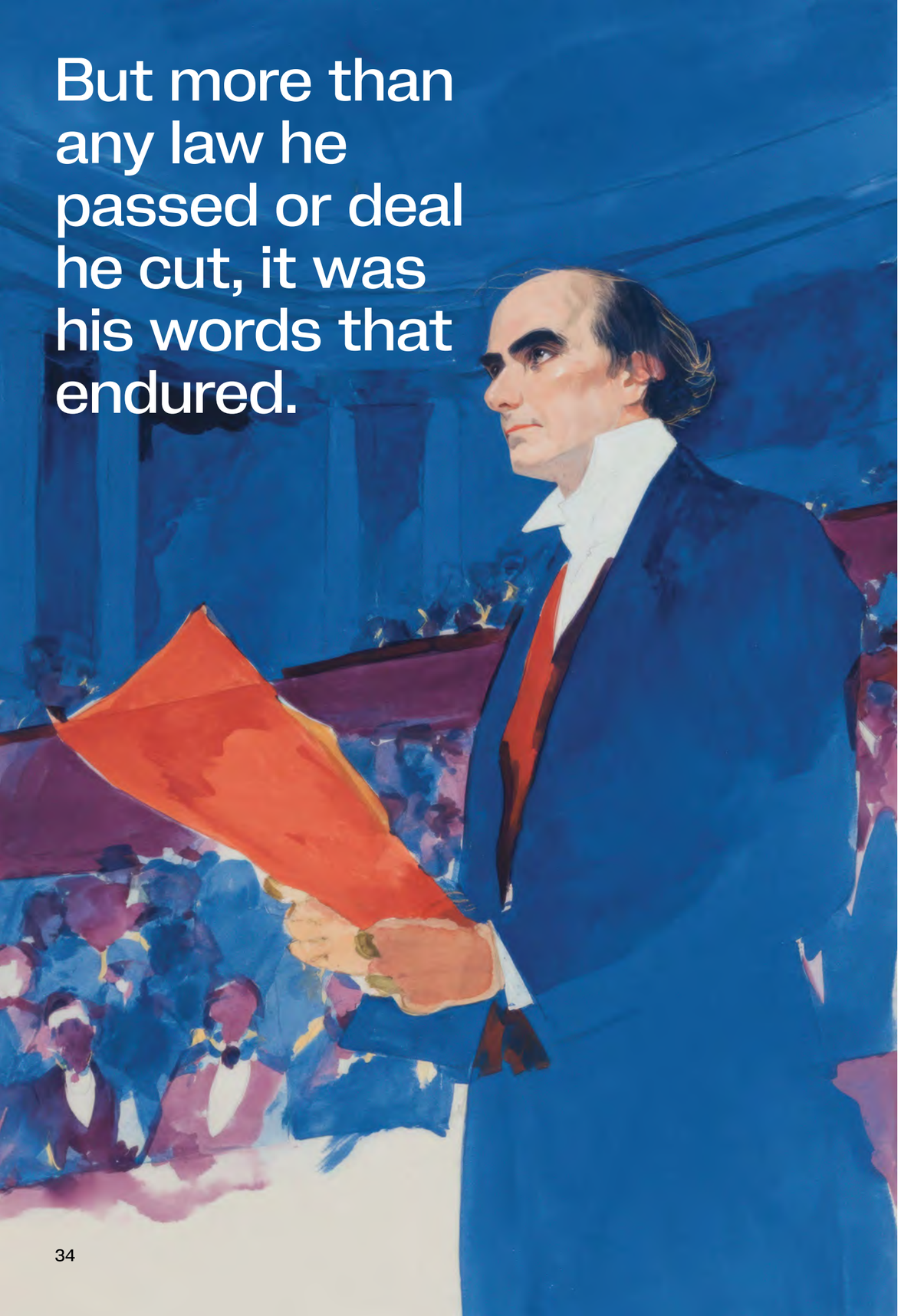


At a time when America was beginning to pull apart, Daniel Webster used the power of speech to try to hold it together.

Born in New Hampshire and trained as a lawyer, Webster became the foremost orator of his generation and one of the most influential figures in American politics during the antebellum period. He served in both the House and Senate, and twice as Secretary of State.

UNITY'S ORATOR

WEBSTER



ELOQUENT
INFLUENTIAL
SYMBOLIC

In his famous 1830 reply to Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina, who defended the right of states to nullify federal law, Webster offered a thunderous defense of the Constitution and the Union: “Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable.”

It was one of the most memorable lines ever spoken on the Senate floor, and a clear articulation of Webster’s belief that the nation was not a loose compact of states but a single, sovereign people.

Later, in a speech in 1837, he offered another memorable phrase: “One country, one Constitution, one destiny.”

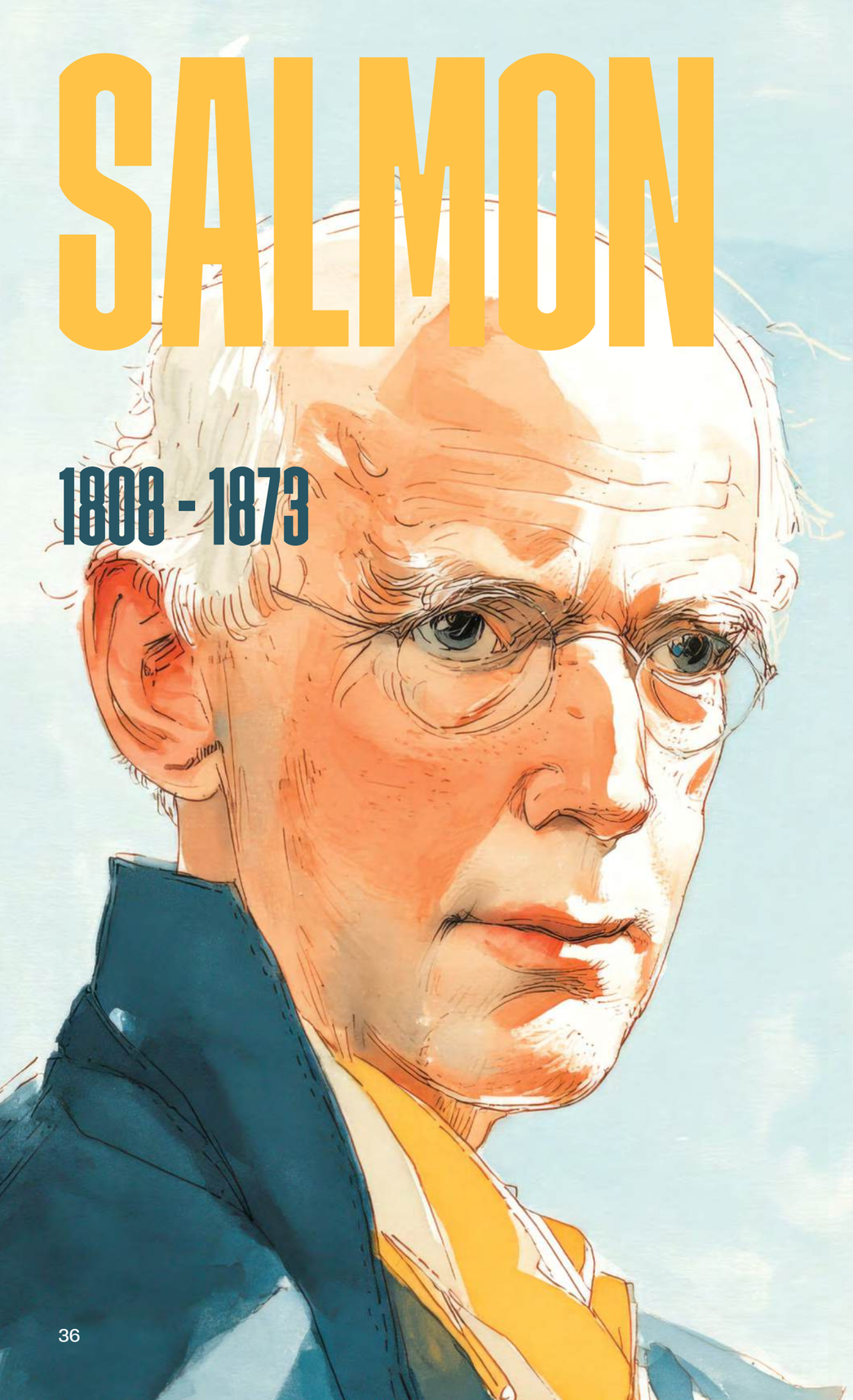
The words became widely quoted, especially among Unionists—and nearly three decades later, they would be stitched into the lining of Abraham Lincoln’s coat on the night he was assassinated. That symbolic link between Webster and Lincoln says it all: Webster gave voice to the Union before Lincoln died to save it.

Webster had his flaws. He made compromises that angered abolitionists, including his support for the Fugitive Slave Act.

But in the long arc of American history, he stands as a reminder that ideas expressed with moral clarity and rhetorical power can help bind a country together, even in its most fractious moments.

SALMON

1808 - 1873



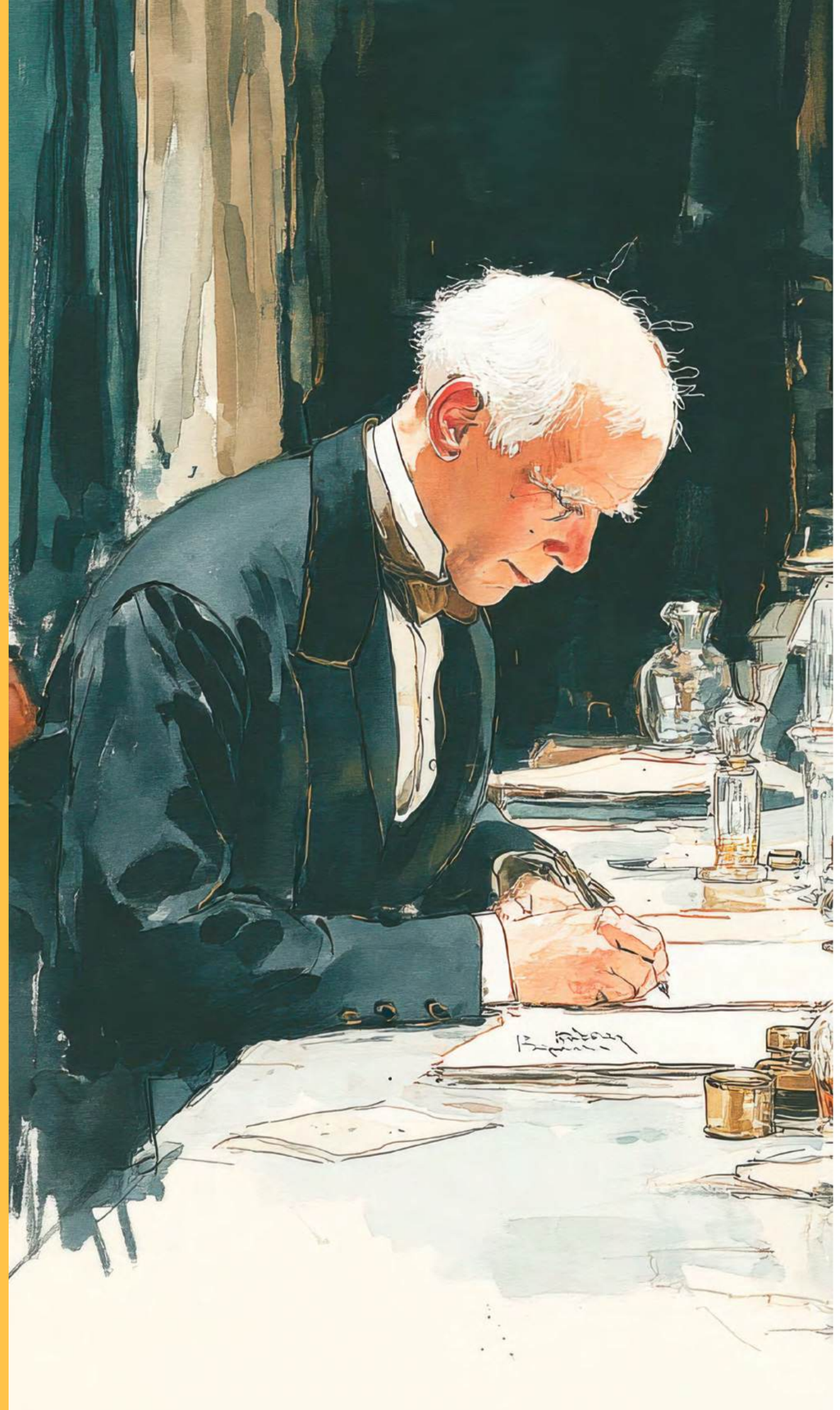
Before the Civil War, abolitionist sentiment in America was loud but scattered. Some radicals demanded immediate emancipation. Others sought slow reform. Most could not agree on strategy, and few could win elections.

CHASE

LEADER OF THE ANTI-SLAVERY CENTER

Salmon Chase saw a different path.

A gifted legal mind and principled opponent of slavery, he spent years weaving a “coalition of conscience.” As a senator from Ohio, he brought together Whigs, Free Soilers, anti-slavery Democrats, and members of the Liberty Party into a new political force: the Republican Party.



It was not a perfect union, but it was strong enough to elect Abraham Lincoln and hold the country’s center just as it was beginning to tear apart. Chase’s genius was not just moral, but organizational. He understood that ideas need institutions, and that political progress depends on binding diverse factions together around a common cause. He called slavery a “national sin,” but worked tirelessly to oppose it without shattering the Union in the process.

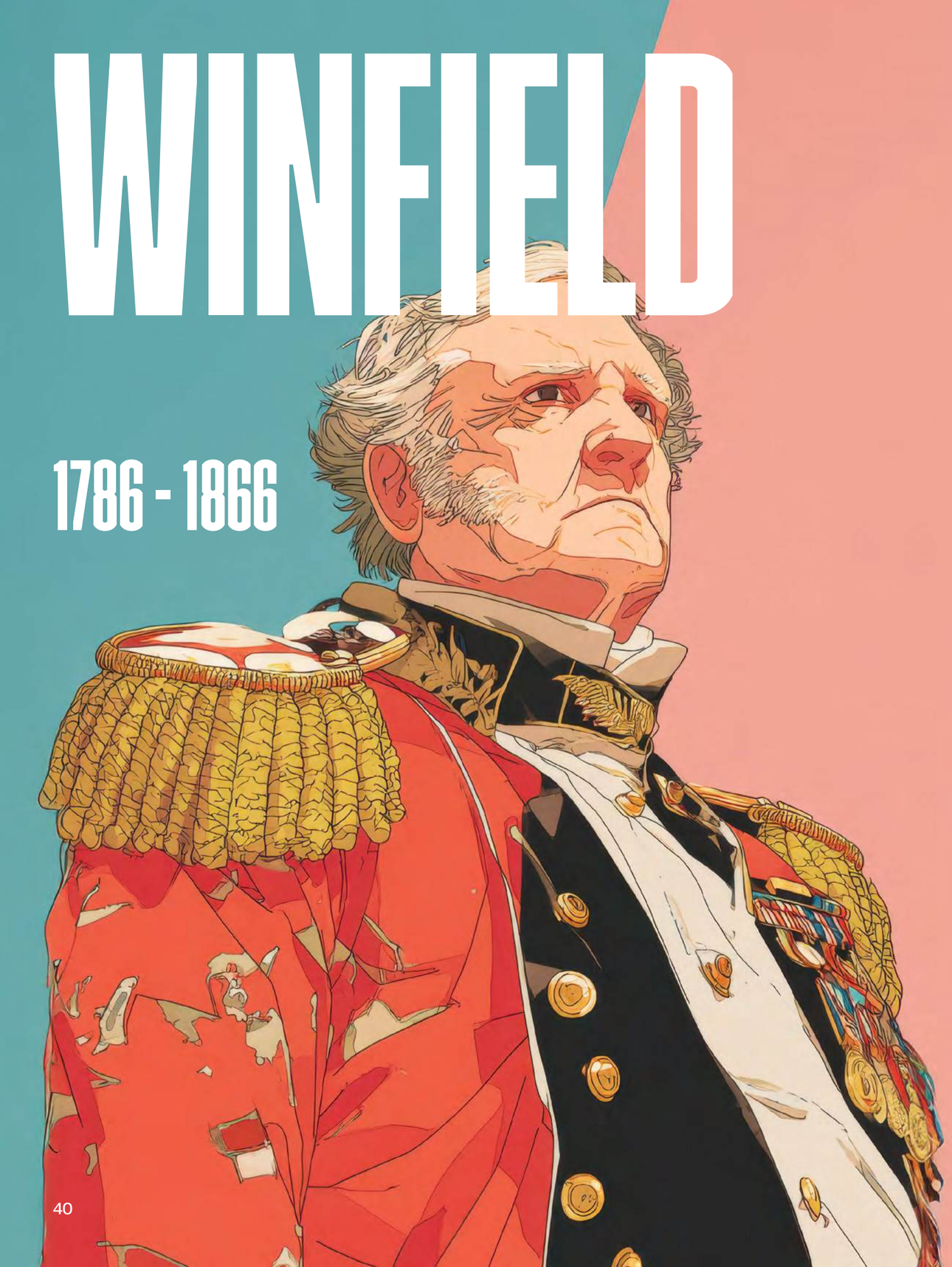
Once war broke out, Lincoln appointed him Secretary of the Treasury. There, Chase created the national banking system, introduced the greenback, and stabilized the economy, which laid the financial foundation for Union victory. Later, as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, he presided over landmark Reconstruction-era decisions.

In every role, Chase sought to hold the country together. He believed the republic could be both principled and united. And in one of the most divided chapters in American history, he proved it.

REFORMIST INSTITUTION-BUILDING

WINFIELD

1786 - 1866



THE GENERAL OPPOSED TO WAR

SCOTT

Few Americans served the nation longer or more faithfully than Winfield Scott. Over a military career that spanned half a century and three major wars, Scott was a respected public figure in the North and South alike. He had served under presidents from both parties, and saw himself less as a fighter and more as a protector—a job he preferred to do without violence.

As tensions between the two sides escalated in the 1850s, Scott was serving as General-in-Chief of the U.S. Army. When Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1860 and Southern states began to secede, Scott quietly advised caution and restraint. When secessionists tried to seize federal installations in Southern states during the transition between presidents, Scott refused to deploy troops recklessly. He believed that the military should not be used as a political instrument and that armed conflict should be a last resort.

Most famously, he urged Lincoln early on to avoid provoking the Confederacy and proposed a long-term strategy—later known as the “Anaconda Plan”—to subtly but steadily pressure the rebellion through a naval blockade and control of the Mississippi River.

Critics mocked the plan as weak, but it ultimately became the blueprint for Union victory after war broke out.

His actions did not stop the war, but his steady hand and credibility across the ideological spectrum helped buy time for the new Lincoln administration to take office and prepare. It is ironic that many of Scott’s contemporaries respected him primarily as a warrior, when in reality he was among the most prominent voices for peace and restraint.

PEACEFUL
STRATEGIC
PROTECTIVE

1860s–1890s

WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

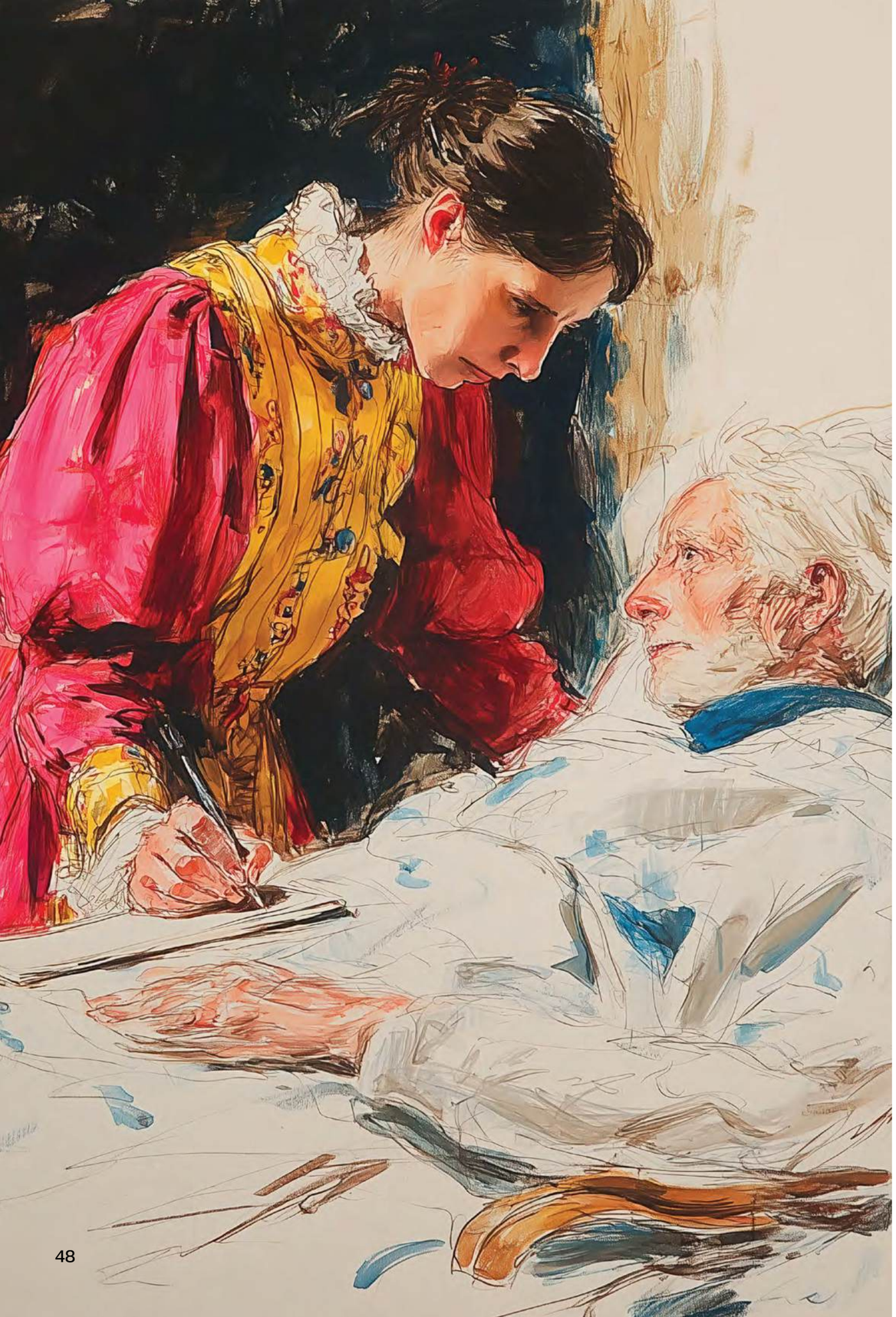
The Civil War shattered the Union, claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, and left deep scars on the national psyche. But it also paved the way for a second American founding. The Reconstruction era raised new questions about citizenship, justice, and the meaning of freedom. In these turbulent decades, many unsung heroes emerged to fight the war, broker its resolution, and reckon with its aftermath.

CLARA BARTON

1821 - 1912

HEALER ACROSS BATTLE LINES

In a war that divided the nation, Clara Barton focused on healing soldiers on both sides—and in doing so, she helped heal the nation itself.



COMPASSIONATE HUMANITARIAN

Barton was a former teacher and patent office clerk turned frontline humanitarian. She left Washington with wagon loads of supplies and crossed into Virginia in the summer of 1862 to care for the wounded at Cedar Mountain—and from that moment earned the nickname “Angel of the Battlefield.”

Her mission was simple but radical: to recognize the humanity in every soldier and save as many as she could.

She risked her life to bring supplies, food, and comfort to the front lines on both sides. “I have an almost complete disregard for precedent,” she once said. “I cannot afford the luxury of a closed mind.” To her, no cause was greater than the shared humanity of Americans—North and South—struggling through the nation’s greatest trauma.

After the war, Barton led the Office of Missing Soldiers, personally answering over 60,000 letters and helping reunite more than 22,000 families with news of lost or deceased loved ones. Then, in 1881, she founded the American Red Cross, devoting the rest of her life to disaster relief and civic service. She led it for 23 years, responding to floods, fires, famines, and wars at home and abroad with the same neutral compassion that defined her wartime work.

Clara Barton was not a soldier or a statesman. But she helped knit the country back together in ways few others could.

JOSHUA

1828 - 1914

SOLDIER WHO HONORED THE DEFEATED

Colonel Joshua Chamberlain made his name at Gettysburg, where his outnumbered regiment—the 20th Maine—held the Union line at Little Round Top in one of the most pivotal moments of the Civil War. A college professor with no formal military training, Chamberlain's leadership under fire earned him the Medal of Honor.

CHAMBERLAIN

COMPASSIONATE RESTRAINED

But his most extraordinary act came after the fighting stopped.

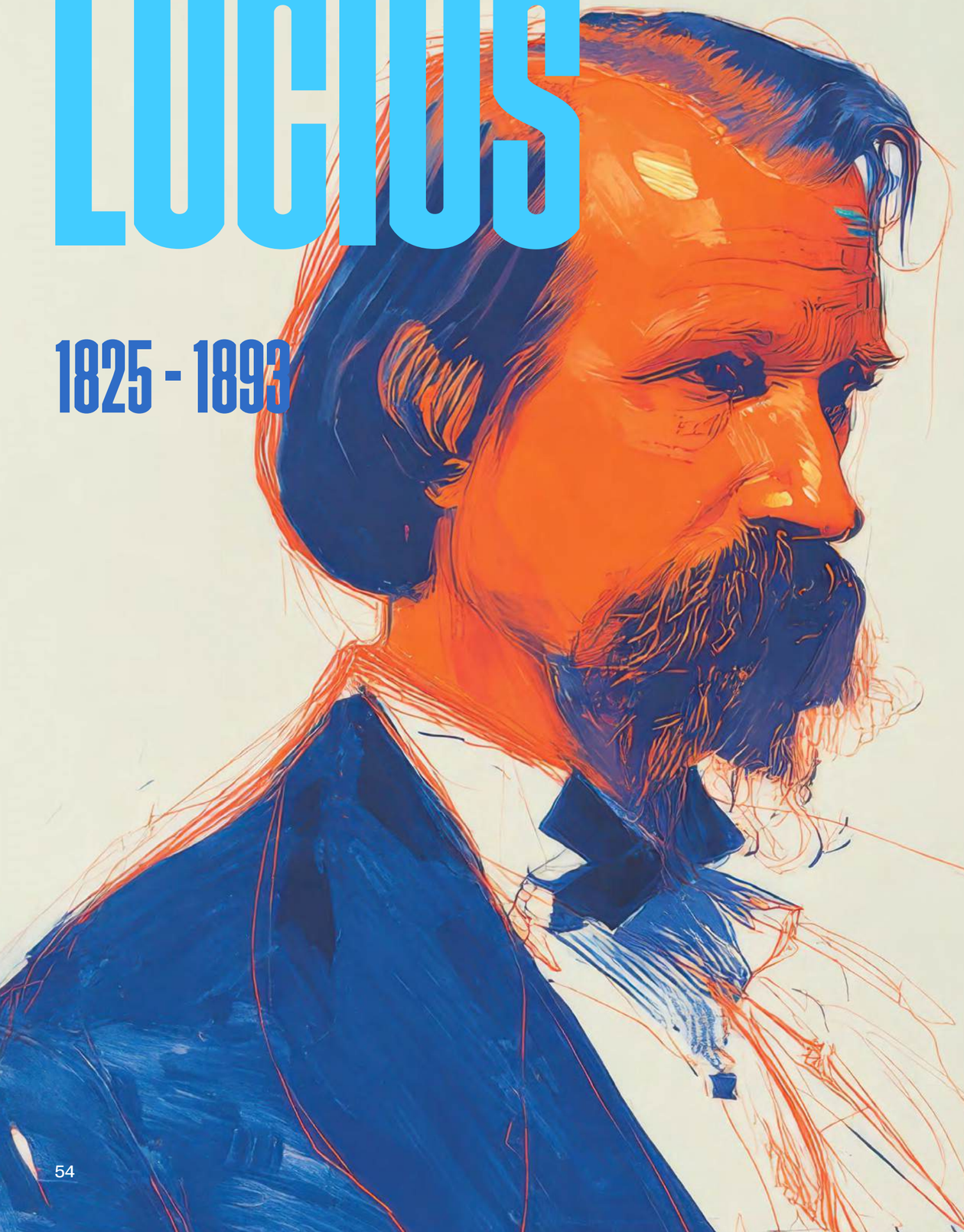
In April 1865, as the war drew to a close, Chamberlain was selected to oversee the formal surrender of Confederate troops at Appomattox. It was a high-stakes moment when the tone would be set for the post-war era. Chamberlain made a choice that would echo through history: as General John B. Gordon led the Confederate soldiers into surrender, Chamberlain ordered his men to salute their former enemies. Gordon, surprised and visibly moved, returned the salute.

In an instant, Chamberlain transformed what could have been a scene of humiliation into one of dignity and reconciliation. After the war, Chamberlain served four terms as governor of Maine and worked to promote veterans' welfare and national healing.

He never stopped believing that honor, compassion, and restraint were essential to rebuilding what war had broken.

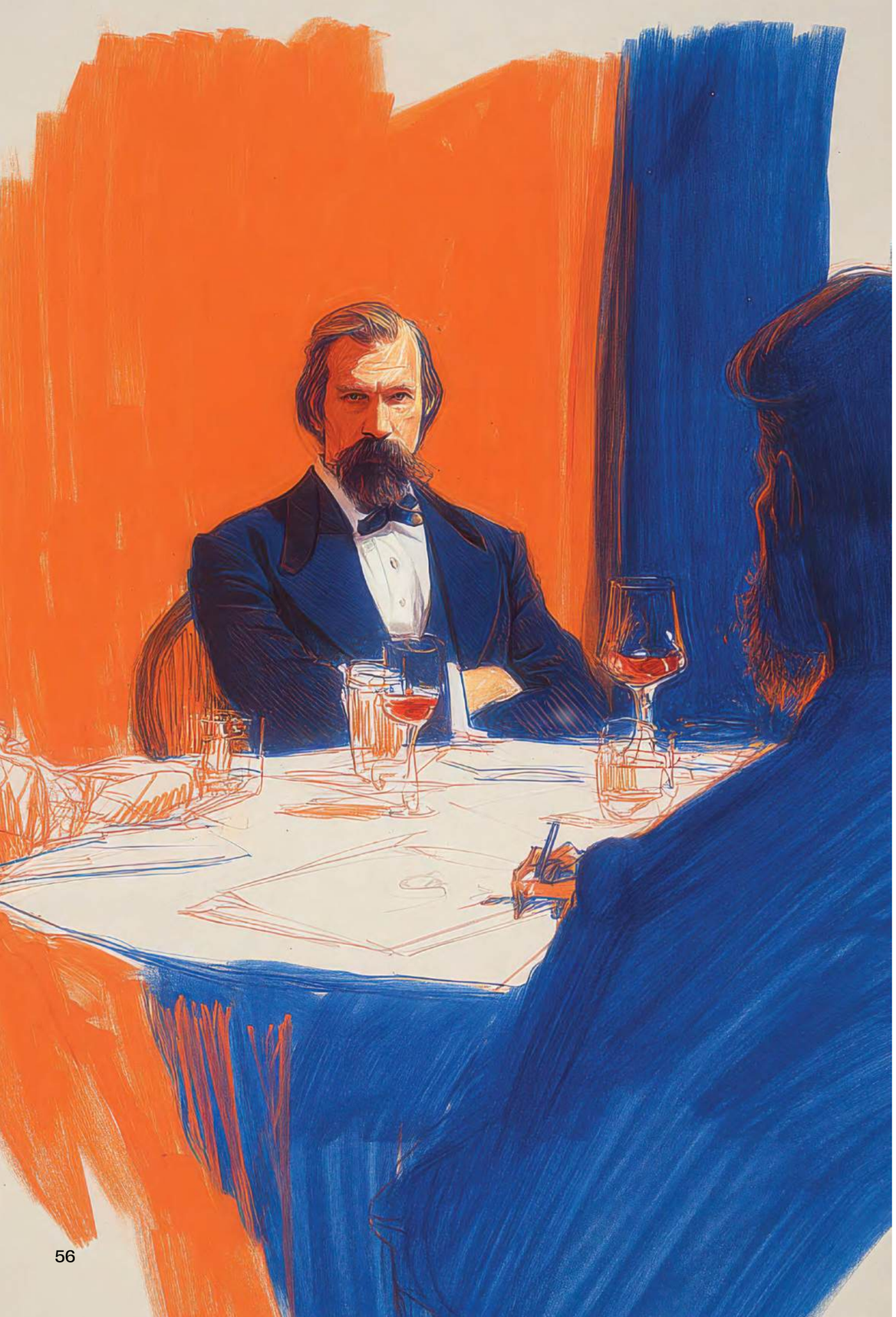
LUCIUS LAMAR

1825 - 1893



THE SOUTH'S VOICE FOR UNITY

In the aftermath of the Civil War, anger and bitterness permeated the defeated South, making the idea of reconciliation politically toxic. Lucius Lamar of Mississippi had the courage to call for better.



FORWARD-LOOKING MODERATING

A former Confederate officer and Mississippi statesman, Lamar returned to politics after the war with an unpopular message of national unity, constitutional order, and mutual respect. His most famous moment came in 1874, as a newly elected member of Congress, when he delivered a memorial speech for Charles Sumner, the radical Senate abolitionist from Massachusetts who had once been caned nearly to death on the Senate floor by a Southern congressman.

Sumner had been one of the most hated men in the South, and yet Lamar's eulogy honored him as a man of principle and conviction.

Among its greatest lines was: "My countrymen! Know one another, and you will love one another." The speech stunned the chamber into silence, then moved it to tears.

When Lamar finished, members from both parties rose in a rare, spontaneous standing ovation.

The moment became emblematic of Lamar's career. He would go on to serve as Secretary of the Interior under President Cleveland and later as a justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. Throughout, he urged his fellow Southerners to look forward, not back—to accept the end of slavery, rejoin the American project, and invest in a united future.

Lamar did not repudiate his past, but he did try to rise above it. At a moment when the South could have turned permanently inward, he helped open the door to national healing. In 1957, John F. Kennedy would single him out in his book *Profiles in Courage* as one of the great statesmen who put principle above popularity and country above party.

HORACE

1811 - 1872

NEWS EDITOR WHO PREACHED REUNION

GREELEY

Horace Greeley was a newspaperman and one of the most powerful media voices in 19th-century America. As founder and editor of the New York Tribune, Greeley was a fierce opponent of slavery, an early supporter of Abraham Lincoln, and a tireless promoter of the Union cause. But when the war ended, he surprised many by urging reconciliation and mercy.

"We cannot afford to keep open sores on the body politic," he famously wrote.

His belief in national healing was not just rhetorical. In 1867, Greeley posted bail for former Confederate president Jefferson Davis, securing his release from prison—a bold move that cost him politically but that he defended as essential to rebuilding the nation.

Greeley's advocacy for peace extended into politics. He became the Liberal Republican nominee for president in 1872, challenging Ulysses S. Grant on a platform of civil service reform, amnesty for former Confederates, and an end to the corruption and division he saw in postwar Washington. He lost in a landslide and died just weeks later, but his campaign left a lasting imprint on the national conversation.

A champion of both justice and mercy, Greeley understood that true unity meant loyalty to the nation over loyalty to your side. "I am the slave of principles," he once wrote, "and I will follow them wherever they may lead." Even into the arms of his former enemies, if that was where peace required him to go.

1900s–1930s

THE INDUSTRIAL DIVIDE

At the dawn of the 20th century, America was bursting with energy and tension. The industrial revolution produced new titans of the Gilded Age, but also economic strife and powerful labor bosses. Immigrants poured into cities faster than they could be absorbed. Then came the twin shocks of the era: World War I and the Great Depression, which tested the nation's social fabric. Yet out of these crises emerged leaders who sought to bridge divisions, steady the republic, and adapt it to the challenges of a new century.

CARTER GLASS

1858 - 1946

BROKER OF ECONOMIC CONSENSUS

Long before the Great Depression, Carter Glass—a conservative Democratic senator from Virginia—understood that America's financial system was dangerously outdated.

In an era of pitched battles between Wall Street bankers and Main Street laborers, Glass was determined to create a neutral economic body that could serve the interests of all. As chair of the House Banking Committee, he helped broker the bipartisan Federal Reserve Act of 1913, a landmark compromise that created a central banking system designed to be free from political pressure and responsive to the whole economy.

Two decades later, that structure was being tested as never before. The Great Depression had shattered public confidence in the banks. Conservatives feared Roosevelt's New Deal would usher in socialism. Reformers were demanding sweeping change. In this climate of fear and gridlock, Glass again stepped into the breach to save and reinforce the economic system.

Though deeply skeptical of many New Deal programs, Glass partnered with FDR's team to author the Banking Act of 1933, better known as Glass-Steagall. It established federal deposit insurance, restored trust in the banks, and separated commercial and investment banking to limit systemic risk. His reforms sanded down some of the most progressive impulses of his party and offered a middle path that reassured conservatives that capitalism would endure. Many were shocked that the bill earned broad bipartisan support.

Carter Glass succeeded as a dealmaker because he was not a firebrand or a populist.

He was a principled institutionalist who knew that in moments of crisis, durable progress requires unlikely coalitions. The foundation of the economic system we benefit from today was laid by his ability to compromise.

ANALYTICAL
BIPARTISAN
PROGRESSIVE

OWEN

1874 - 1962

AMERICA'S MULTIPURPOSE MEDIATOR

YOUNG

Owen Young was a leader who defied easy categorization. An industry titan respected by labor, a public servant trusted by both parties, and an international negotiator with credibility on both sides of the Atlantic, he bridged divides that others could not—or would not—cross.

As chairman of General Electric and co-founder of Radio Corporation of America, Young helped shape the future of American industry. Yet in an age of pitched battles between “robber barons” and labor, he earned the confidence of union leaders through fairness and restraint. So it is no surprise that Washington soon called on him to help bridge the country’s broader economic divide.

In 1921, President Calvin Coolidge tapped Young to chair the Conference on Unemployment, where he brought labor and business leaders to the table to find common ground at a time of high joblessness and public unrest. His cool-headed style, moral seriousness, and devotion to institutional integrity made him a rare and trusted figure in Washington.

The more problems he solved, the more the country called on him.

In 1929, President Hoover sought his help as a negotiator in the international arena. Young led the diplomatic effort to restructure Germany’s crushing war reparations, producing the Young Plan—a blueprint for economic reconciliation that calmed Europe’s postwar volatility, at least for a while.

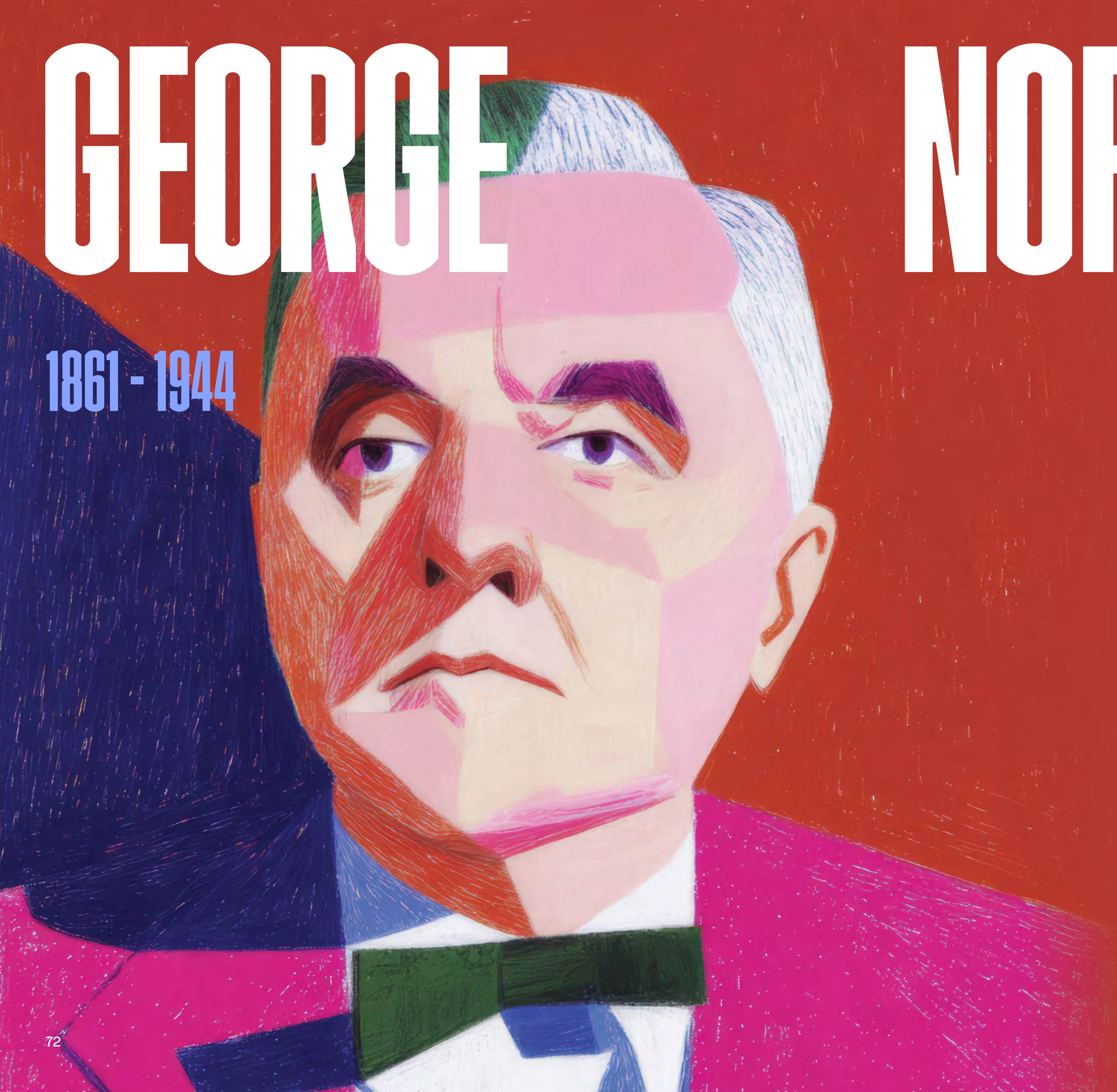
Young was twice considered for the presidency by opposing parties, a testament to how broadly he was respected and how deft he was at speaking to both sides.

It was a time of rising ideologies and clashing interests, but Owen Young showed that compromise and mutual respect could still move the economy and the nation forward.

RESPECTED
CREDIBLE
FAIR

GEORGE NORRIS

1861 - 1944



CONGRESSIONAL REFORMER AND PARTY MAVERICK

George Norris was a five-term Republican congressman turned maverick senator from Nebraska, who spent his career defying party orthodoxy in favor of principle and institutional reform.

His most lasting legacy began in 1910, when he led a historic revolt against his own party's House leadership. At the time, Republican Speaker Joseph Cannon wielded near-total control over the legislative process. Norris pushed through reforms that stripped the Speaker of his seat on the Rules Committee, opened committee chairmanships to election by the full House, and gave rank-and-file members more control over legislation. This ushered in a more coalition-friendly legislative process that dominated for decades, though future speakers have since clawed back much of their power.

In the Senate, Norris continued to buck his own party in service of reform. He championed public ownership of utilities, fought for labor rights, and pushed for constitutional amendments to establish the direct election of senators and reform lame-duck sessions. He was unique for his intense focus on institutional changes within the Congress.

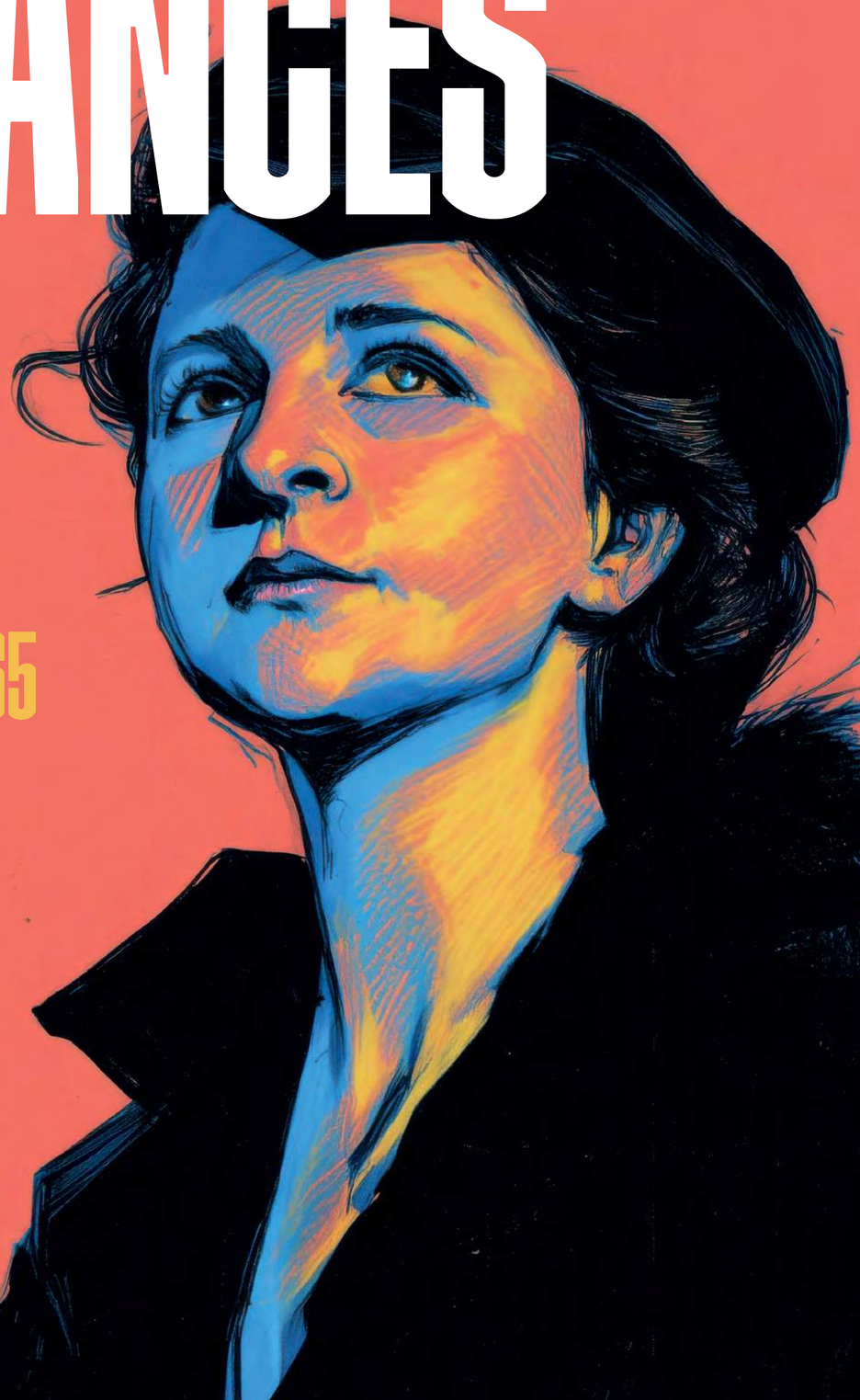
Despite his conservative upbringing, Norris also became an unlikely ally of FDR's New Deal, especially in rural electrification and the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority. His work helped bring light—literally and figuratively—to millions of Americans left behind by the Industrial Age.

By the end of his career, Norris had left the Republican Party entirely, declaring that principle was more important than party.

He stood for what he called "constructive, intelligent, unselfish work for the good of all the people."

REFORMIST
MAVERICK
DEMOCRATIZING

FRANCES



1880 - 1965

THE NEW DEAL'S DEALMAKER

PERKINS

Frances Perkins is well-remembered as a key player in the New Deal era and as the first woman to serve as a cabinet secretary, but many fail to recognize her for another of her gifts.

She was one of the most effective bridge-builders of her time.

As Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor, she was progressive in ideology but a pragmatist in execution. She worked tirelessly to forge consensus among business leaders, labor unions, and skeptical members of Congress, including conservative Southern Democrats who were wary of federal intervention. Her quiet diplomacy and mastery of the policy process helped turn the loftiest ideals of the New Deal into durable institutions.

Perkins led landmark reforms such as Social Security, the 40-hour workweek, and unemployment insurance. She also gave voice to immigrants and spearheaded an effort to rescue many Jews from Germany during Hitler's rise. She did it all by earning deep respect in a male-dominated arena. She refused to demonize her opponents and favored quiet work over personal fame.

Perkins bridged labor and capital, progressives and conservatives, and even men and women at a time of overwhelming strife and change. She also proved that ambitious reform did not have to come at the cost of consensus.

TRANSFORMATIONAL PRAGMATIC

1940s–1960s

RISE OF A GLOBAL SUPERPOWER

During and after World War II, America emerged as a global superpower, charged with leading the free world against tyranny abroad while confronting inequality and fear at home. Yet beneath the triumph ran deep divisions: between isolationists and internationalists, labor and management, segregationists and integrationists. The Cold War magnified these conflicts, testing not only America's strength but its character.

ARTHUR

1884 - 1951

As war raged in Europe and Asia in the 1930s, a bitter divide simmered at home. Many Americans—especially in Congress—wanted no part of another foreign entanglement after the trauma of the First World War. Chief among them was Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, a leading voice of Republican isolationism. He had spent years warning against alliances and foreign commitments.

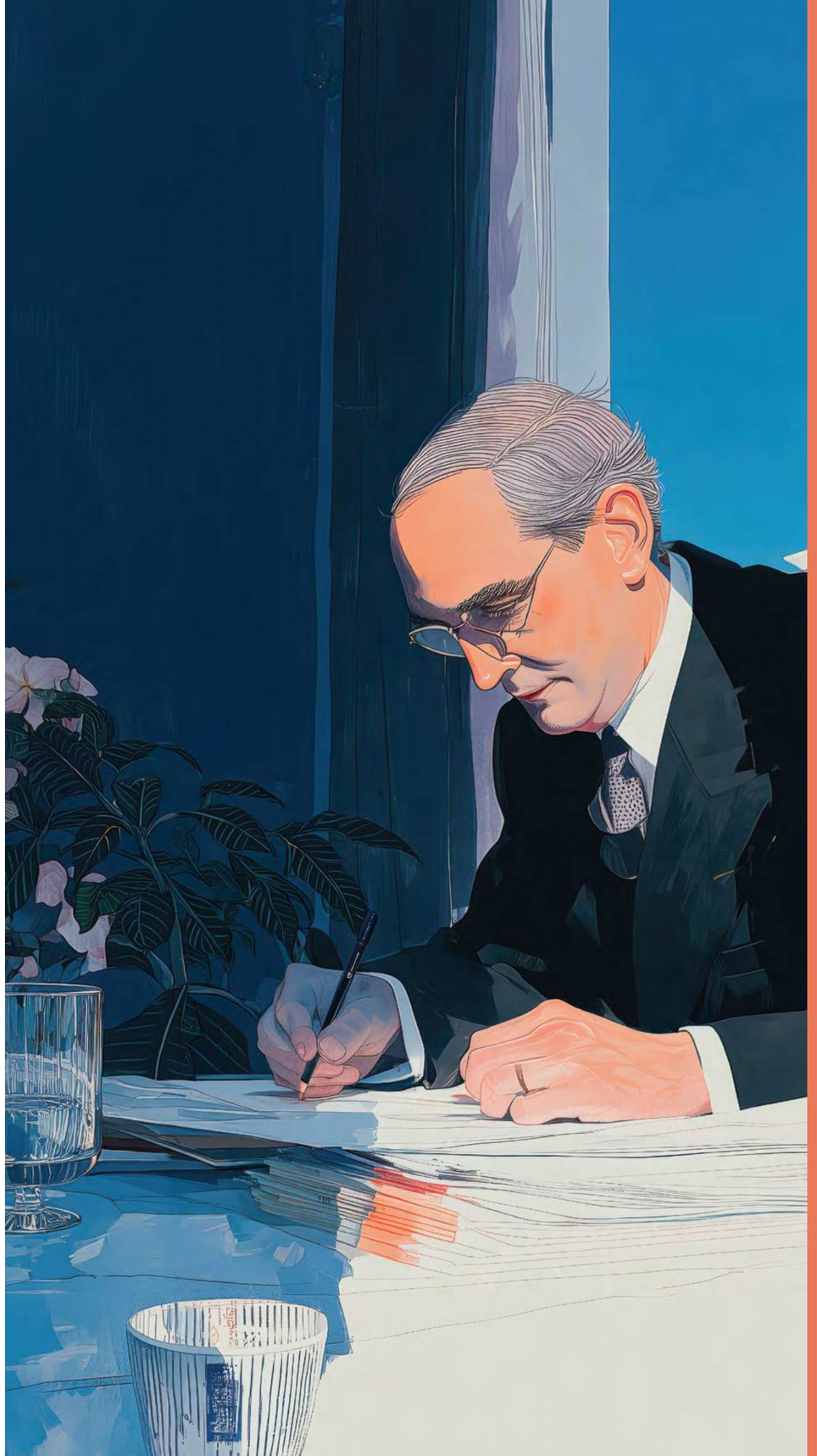
FOREIGN POLICY CONSENSUS BUILDER

VANDENBERG

But the attack on Pearl Harbor changed everything. Vandenberg immediately supported President Roosevelt's declaration of war and threw his weight behind the national mobilization effort.

Once the fighting began, he became a key bipartisan voice for unity on the home front.

COURAGEOUS ADAPTIVE REALIST



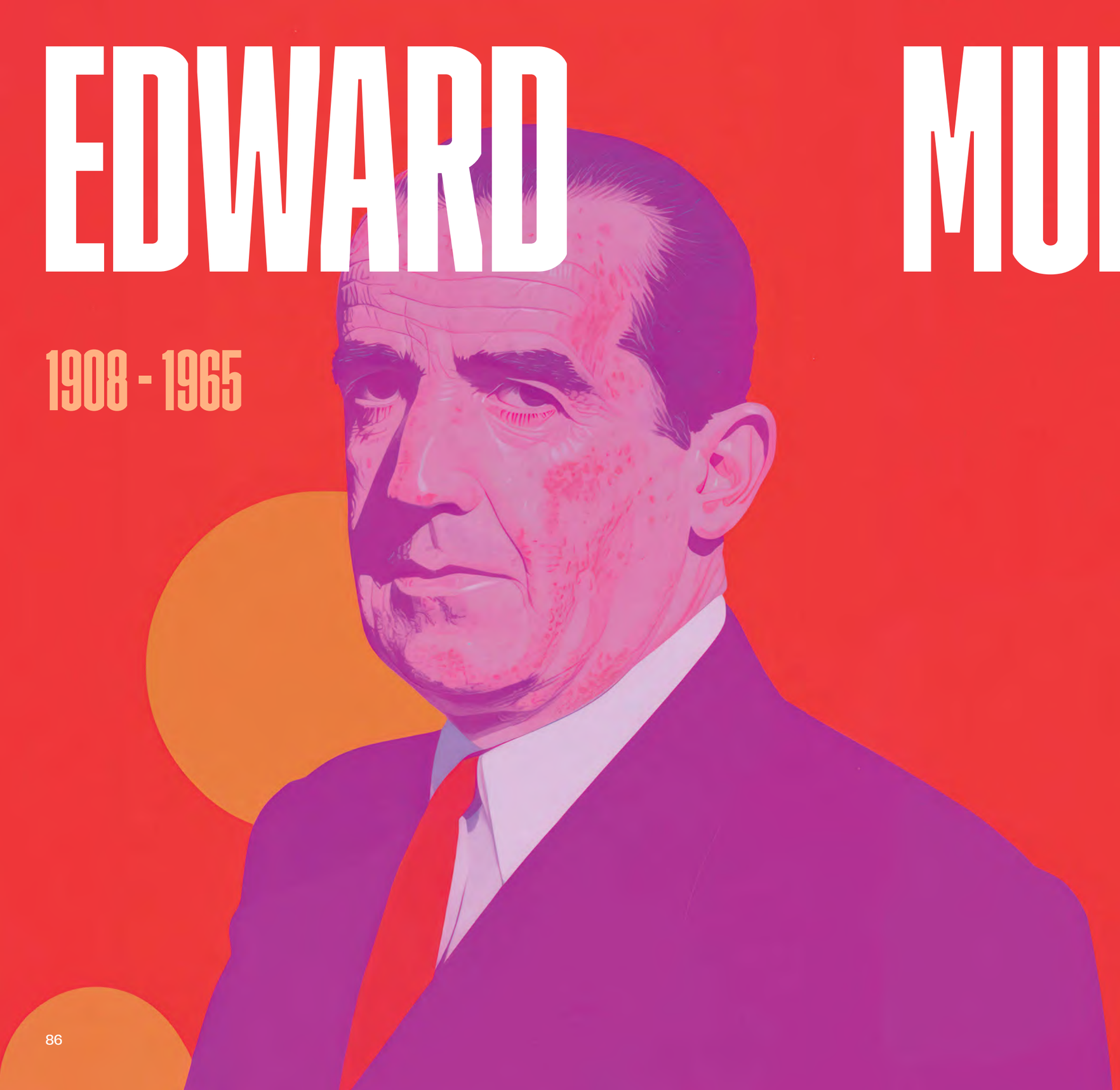
As the war progressed, Vandenberg underwent a deeper transformation. In 1945, he delivered a landmark Senate speech acknowledging that the United States could no longer "build peace in a vacuum." He called for a bipartisan foreign policy that recognized the world's interdependence and America's responsibility to lead.

Vandenberg put that conviction into action after the war was won. As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he became President Harry Truman's most important Republican ally in shaping the postwar order. He helped secure support for the United Nations, the Marshall Plan, and NATO, each requiring him to persuade skeptical conservatives that engagement abroad was essential to freedom at home.

"Politics," he famously declared, "stops at the water's edge." It was a statement of principle and a call for unity in a nation exhausted by war and wary of its new role in the world. Vandenberg's journey from isolationist critic to international statesman reflected America's own. He also showed that changing one's mind in light of new realities can be an act of courage.

EDWARD MURROW

1908 - 1965



BROADCASTER WHO REBUILT TRUST

The 1950s were a time of plenty, but also of paranoia. America's postwar confidence was shadowed by McCarthyism: the fear of communist infiltration and a wide-ranging suspicion that no one could be trusted. In that climate of accusation and fear, CBS broadcaster Edward Murrow became the voice of calm and a rebuilder of trust.

Murrow had already earned the public's trust during World War II, when his vivid radio dispatches brought the heroics of soldiers home to American living rooms. But it was a decade later that he made his most lasting mark. On his signature show, *See It Now*, Murrow and his team exposed the reckless demagoguery of Senator Joseph McCarthy, but they did so carefully, factually, and with moral restraint. "We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty," he told viewers.

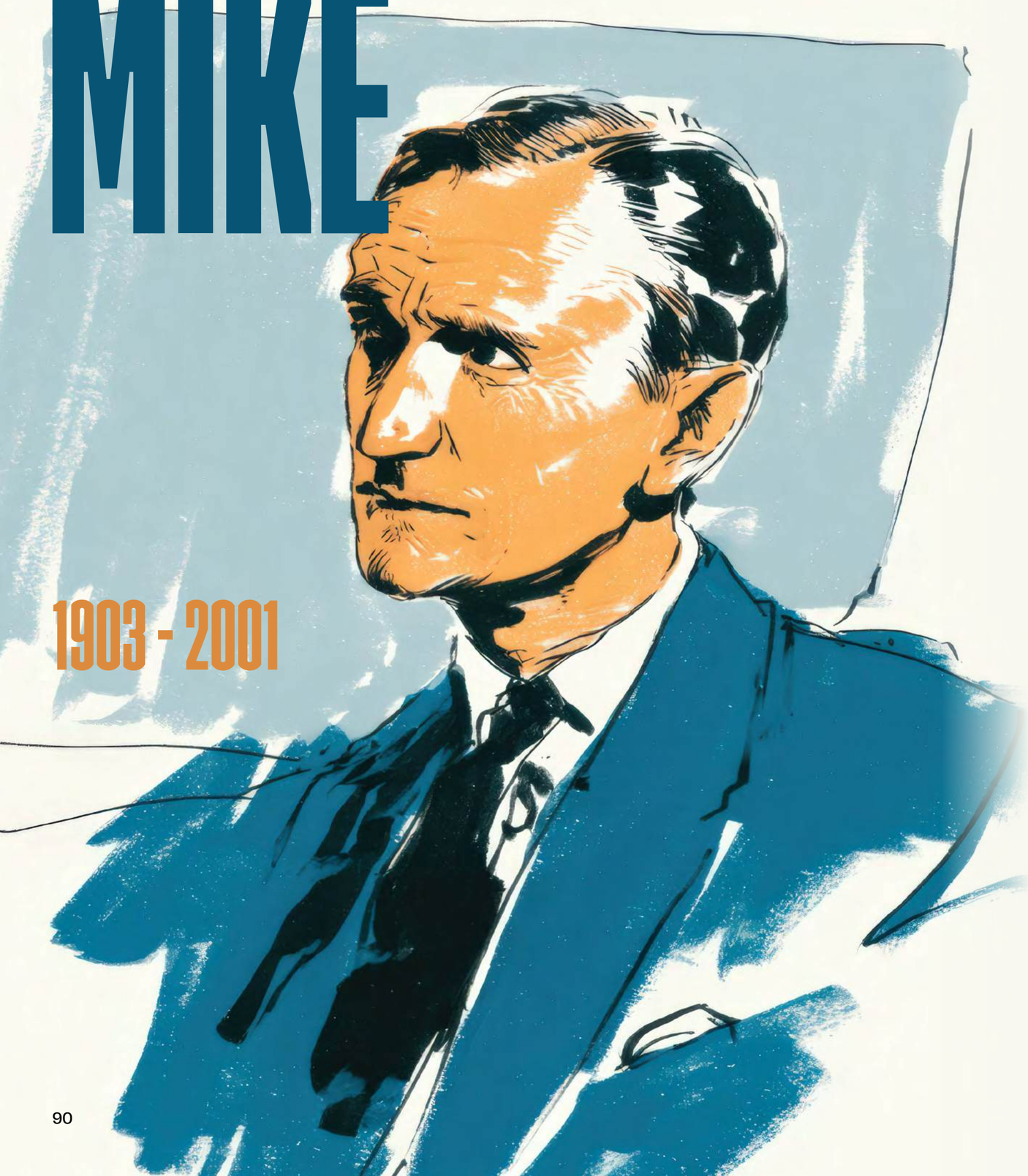
Murrow's broadcast did not end McCarthyism overnight, but it broke the spell of intimidation that had gripped the country. He did so at great personal risk, knowing that he too could be labeled a communist, and in doing so offered a model of courage rooted in civility. McCarthy did indeed attempt to smear him as a sympathizer, but Murrow refused to descend into insult.

He let the evidence speak for itself and maintained the American people's trust.

Murrow's story is also one of a new technology that threatened to amplify division, and how leaders of courage and principle can counter those forces. By laying out the facts and adhering to journalistic integrity, he kept his cool and led the nation to do the same.

TRUSTWORTHY
FACT-DRIVEN
CALM

MIKE



1903 - 2001

KEEPER OF CIVILITY IN AN AGE OF EXTREMES

MANSFIELD

The 1960s were a decade of rising political temperatures. On one side, the Democratic Party was splitting between Southern conservatives and a vocal liberal wing demanding faster change on civil rights and war. On the other, Republicans were struggling to define themselves between moderation and the emerging right led by Senator Barry Goldwater. In that mix, Democratic Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield became the steady hand who kept the country's governing center intact.

STEADY
FAIR-MINDED
STABILIZING

Mansfield worked tirelessly to temper his party's more radical impulses while ensuring that Republicans were treated as partners rather than opponents. "I am not the boss," he often said. "The Senate is." That philosophy earned him the trust of both sides and gave him the moral authority to guide the institution through years of turmoil.

When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 reached the Senate, Mansfield managed the floor with patience and procedural mastery, allowing debate without chaos and giving his Republican counterpart, Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen, equal standing in the process. While Dirksen delivered the speeches that broke the filibuster, it was Mansfield's even hand that made such a groundbreaking social and legal change possible.

His steady approach carried into the 1970s, through Vietnam and Watergate. Mansfield pressed for honesty from presidents of both parties, defended congressional oversight, and resisted the temptations of crass partisanship, even when it would have been easy. Mike Mansfield helped the nation maintain its balance through a period of social strife and political change.

1970s – 1990s

FROM UPHEAVAL TO RENEWAL

After Vietnam and Watergate, America entered an age of disillusionment. Public trust in institutions collapsed, partisan lines hardened, and new cultural and technological forces reshaped how people saw their country and each other. Yet a quieter current of renewal was at work. Across politics and culture, leaders emerged who rebuilt faith in decency, dialogue, and shared civic responsibility. They showed Americans that unity could be recaptured and balance restored.

FRED ROGERS

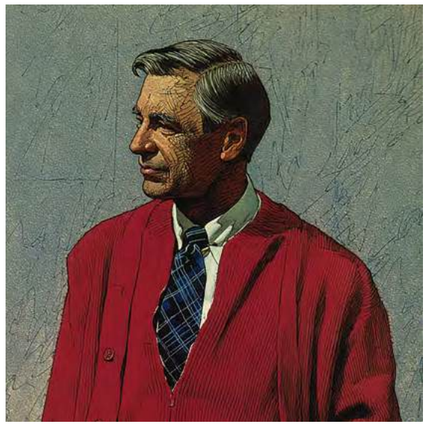
1928 - 2003

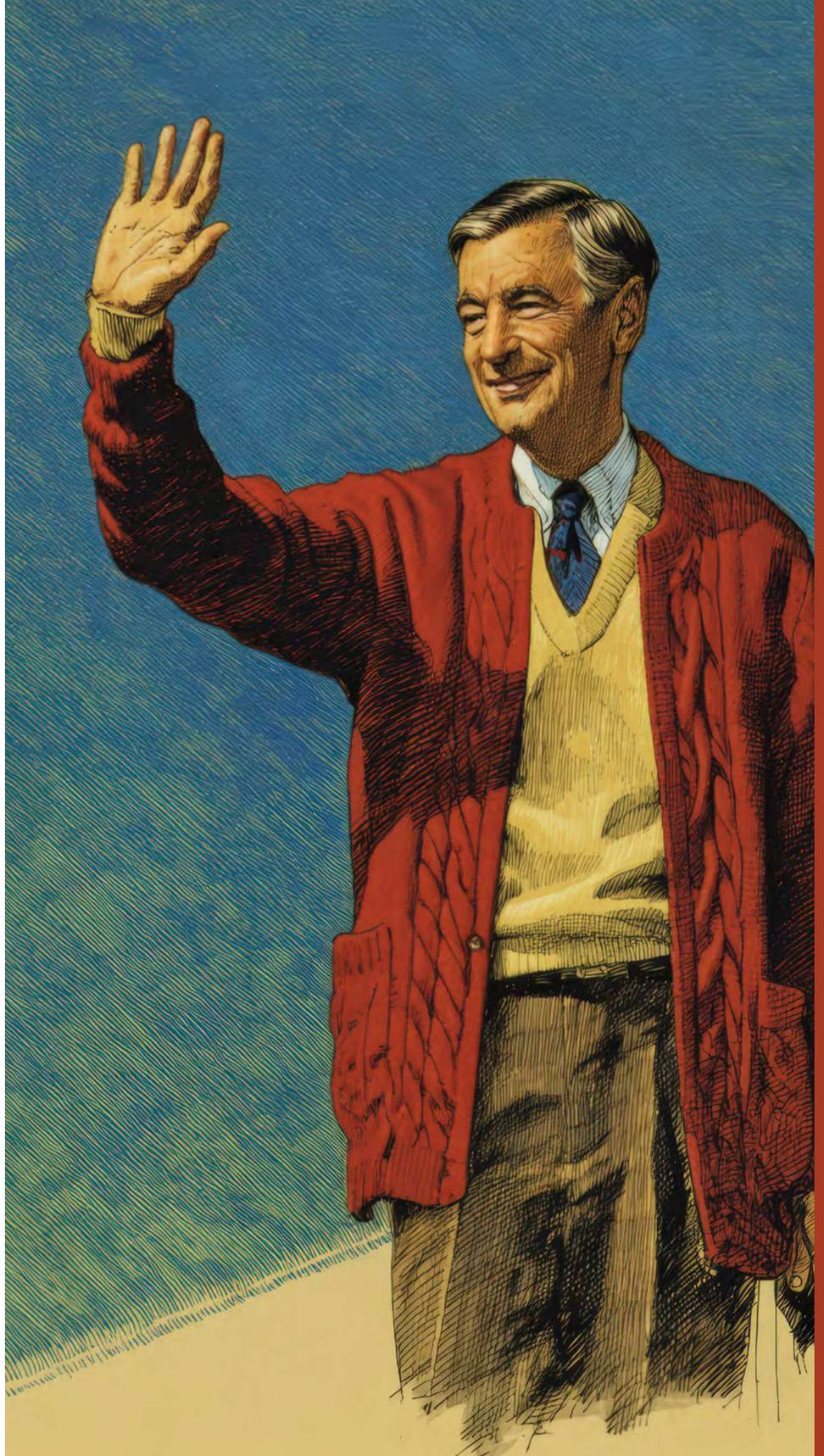
NEIGHBOR TO ALL

By the 1970s, America was exhausted by war and scandal. Television—once a unifying medium—had become a noisy arena of fear and cynicism. Enter a soft-spoken Presbyterian minister from Pittsburgh who became the moral voice and calming presence for a generation.

Fred Rogers prided himself on being a neighbor to all. On Mister Rogers' *Neighborhood*, which aired nationally from 1968 to 2001, he spoke directly to children—but also to the anxious, disillusioned adults in the room—about kindness, patience, and the dignity of every person.

He modeled the radical power of empathy.





Rogers never lectured about politics, yet his show was political in the truest sense: it was a civic and cultural force. He talked openly about topics from death, to divorce, to race. When he invited Officer Clemmons, a Black police officer played by François Clemmons, to soak his feet beside him in a small backyard pool in 1969, it was a quiet rebuke to segregation that needed no explanation.

When federal funding for public broadcasting came under threat, Rogers appeared before a Senate committee and, in gentle tones, won over its toughest skeptics. Instead of arguing policy, he described the emotional needs of children and reminded lawmakers why media could be a force for good.

Rogers helped rehumanize the public square when it was desperately needed. In his quiet way, he made America a little kinder, and in doing so, helped hold it together.

GENTLE
EMPATHETIC
ENDURING

SANDRA DAY

1930 - 2023

When Sandra Day O’Connor took her seat on the Supreme Court in 1981, America was at the height of the culture wars. Abortion, affirmative action, religion, and states’ rights would all land on her desk. Every decision risked deepening division, but O’Connor’s steady hand and instinct for balance helped avoid the worst of it, keeping the court and the country anchored to the middle.

DEFENDER OF BALANCE AND PRAGMATISM

O’CONNOR

PRAGMATIC WISE BALANCED

Appointed by President Reagan as the first woman to serve on the Court, O'Connor arrived as a lifelong conservative from Arizona's ranch country. But she rejected the notion that judicial philosophy should mean ideological loyalty.

She approached every case with meticulous pragmatism, weighing real-world consequences as carefully as constitutional theory.

Her opinions, often narrowly tailored and fact-based, frequently became the swing votes that defined the era.

On issues from abortion to affirmative action, she resisted extremes on both sides—insisting that the law must evolve thoughtfully, not reactively. "The freedom to differ is not limited to things that do not matter much," she wrote. "It also must be protected when the differences are most profound."

Sandra Day O'Connor proved to America that moderation is not weakness but wisdom. Without her steady hand, the country would look very different today.

AL FROM

B. 1943

FATHER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATS

By the late 1980s, Democrats were reeling from a string of landslide losses, trapped between an activist base and a public that no longer trusted them to govern. Republicans, ascendant under Reagan, were increasingly pulled toward ideological purity. Al From was a young political strategist who had a vision for bringing the Democrats back.

STRATEGIC
PERSISTENT
MODERATING

He believed every successful political coalition needed to build itself from the center out.

In 1985, he founded the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) to do exactly that, but faced resistance from all sides. The old guard accused him of selling out; the right dismissed him as naïve. But From persisted, building unlikely coalitions of governors, mayors, business leaders, and moderates who shared the conviction that government should empower rather than control.

He helped nurture a generation of “New Democrats,” most notably a young governor from Arkansas named Bill Clinton. The success of Clinton’s 1992 campaign, rooted in the DLC’s ideas, validated From’s long bet on pragmatic politics.

While the party and the country have since drifted from that unifying center, From’s leadership at the time is a powerful example of what is possible when moderation is paired with strong organizing, big ideas, and a compelling message—and messenger.

2000s–TODAY

TECHNOLOGY AND TURMOIL

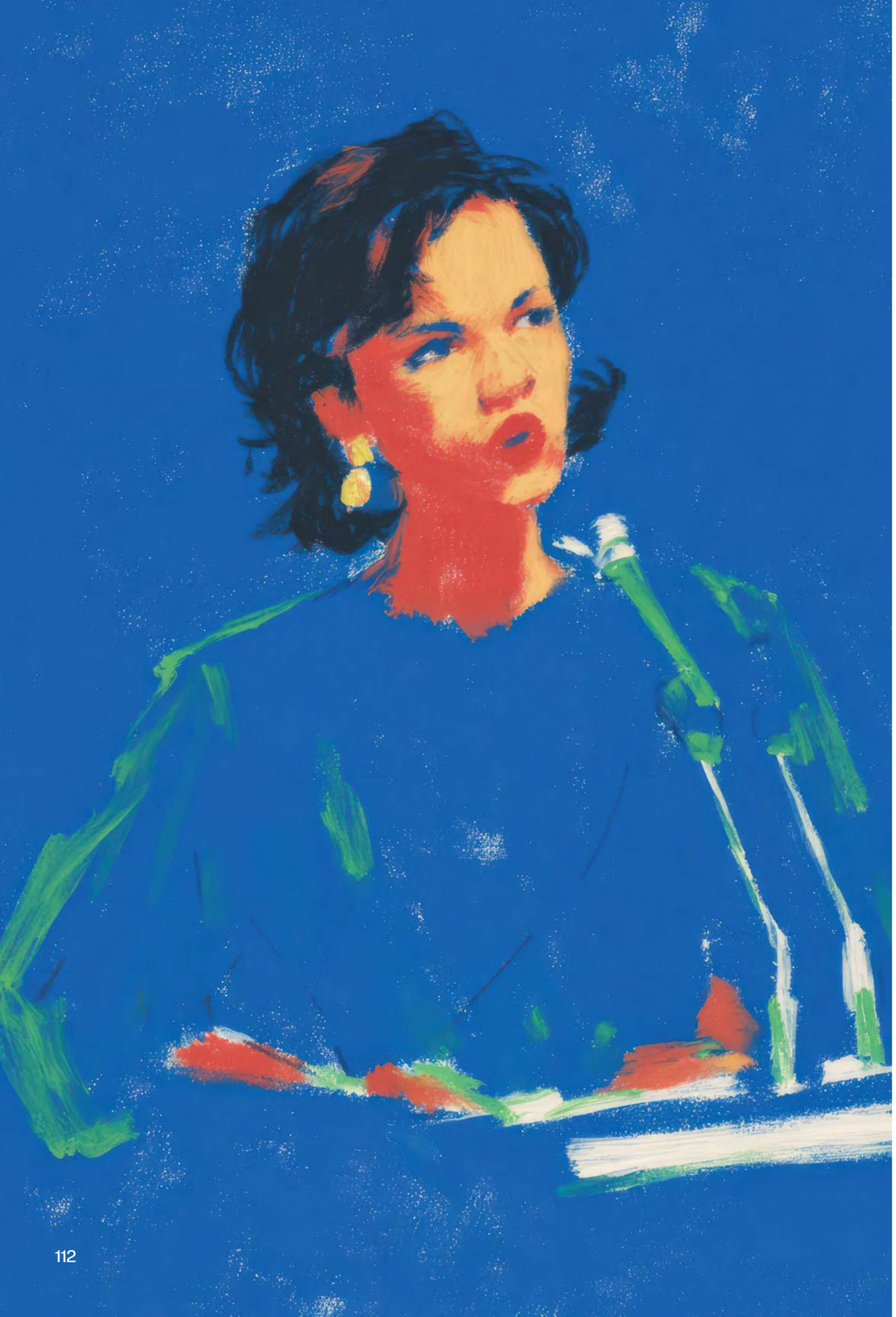
The 21st century has tested America's unity in new and unfamiliar ways. The shock of 9/11 shattered our sense of security. Two decades of war and a global financial crisis strained our trust in institutions. The digital revolution has changed how we work, communicate, and see one another. Politics has grown angrier, the media louder, and the pace of change more relentless. Yet beneath all the noise, the same America endures, and enough leaders have risen to remind us that courage, grace, and service to something larger can still hold the nation together.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE

B. 1954

STEADY VOICE IN A FEARFUL TIME

In the years after 9/11, Condoleezza Rice—the first and only Black woman to serve as either National Security Advisor or Secretary of State—represented America to the world with strength, unity, and grace. At the center of the Bush administration's most turbulent years, she became a voice of restraint and a symbol of steady patriotism.



INDEPENDENT CALM BIPARTISAN

Rice was, and remains, a moderate conservative in both temperament and worldview. She often clashed with hardline neoconservatives like Vice President Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, urging diplomacy and coalition-building over unilateral action. She worked to rebuild bridges to Europe after the early Iraq years and rejected the "clash of civilizations" framing popular on the right at the time, instead touting the moral universality of freedom.

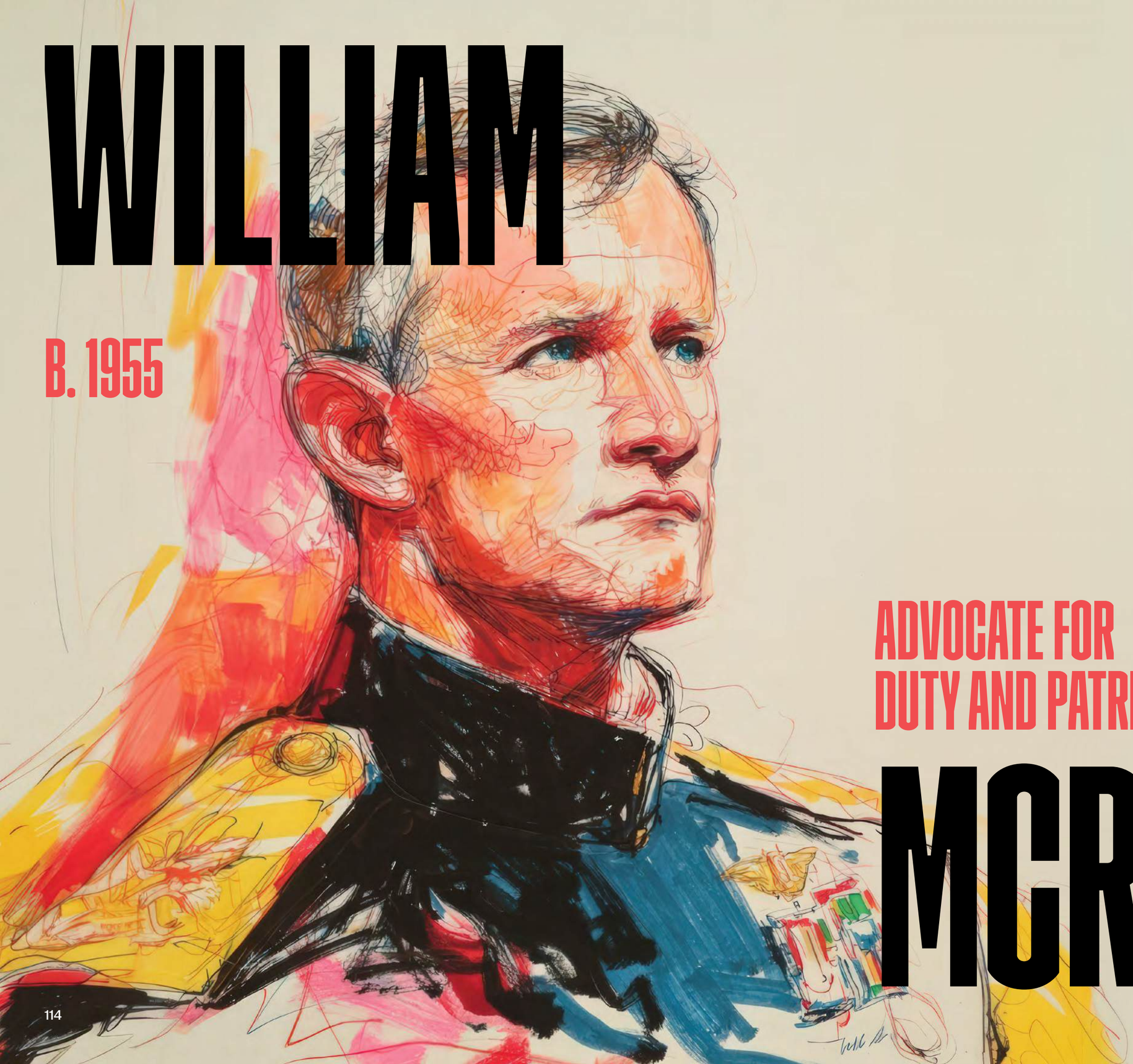
Her independence and calm won respect across party lines. Democratic senators like Joe Biden and Dianne Feinstein described her as a "serious, steady thinker" and "a professional, not a partisan." Even as the Iraq War grew unpopular, polls continued to rank her among the most trusted public officials in either party.

Her personal story deepened that credibility. The daughter of educators in segregated Birmingham, she had seen the nation at its most divided and unfair but never lost faith in its capacity to change. "We have a birth defect," she once said of America's struggle with race, "but it's not a fatal disease."

After leaving office, Rice turned her attention to education, reminding her students at Stanford that democracy depends on respect and level-headedness. Her public commentary in recent years steers clear of partisan debates and consistently promotes respectful discourse, education in citizenship, and service-oriented leadership.

WILLIAM

B. 1955



At a time when national service feels distant from most Americans, Admiral William McRaven likes to remind the country that patriotism and character still matter. A Navy SEAL turned four-star admiral, McRaven led the special operations team that captured Osama bin Laden in 2011, an act that briefly united a divided nation. Since then, his decency and humility have made him a strong, if subtle, cultural and political force.

ADVOCATE FOR DUTY AND PATRIOTISM

MCRAVEN

McRaven rose through the military ranks by calm discipline.

Those who served with him described a leader who listened first, spoke last, and never asked of others what he would not do himself. After retiring from the military, he became Chancellor of the University of Texas system, where he tried to bring an emphasis on civic purpose to one corner of our divisive higher education system.

His 2014 commencement address—better known as the "Make Your Bed" speech—became a viral anthem for personal responsibility and purposeful leadership. "If you can't do the little things right," he told graduates, "you'll never do the big things right." He turned that message into a bestselling book, and millions of Americans, from students to CEOs, have taken it to heart.

In recent years, McRaven has also delivered a calm but pointed defense of American institutions and democratic norms. Unlike most who criticize the Trump administration, his reads less as partisan and more as patriotic and constructive.

McRaven's quiet authority is one example of a stabilizing force in our society today. He is difficult to categorize politically, which gives his calls for decency, patriotism, and service all the more weight and impact.

JOSEPH LIEBERMAN

1942 - 2024

CONSCIENCE OF THE CENTER

Few leaders in modern American life embodied integrity and independence like Senator Joe Lieberman. First a Democrat, then an Independent, he often disagreed with both parties, but he found a way to bring them together and unite them around what mattered most.

INDEPENDENT EXEMPLARY RESPECTED

A Yale-educated lawyer from Connecticut, he was first elected to the Senate in 1988 and quickly became known for moral seriousness and civility. He helped pass major bipartisan laws that strengthened environmental protections, improved homeland security after 9/11, and expanded equality and opportunity. He became the first Jewish American nominated on a major party's presidential ticket when Al Gore chose him as his running mate in 2000.

But Lieberman's real legacy was his example. At a time when politics was hardening into tribal camps, he refused to treat opponents as enemies. His decency was disarming.

He often said that "compromise is not a dirty word—it's the oxygen of democracy." He lived by that creed, even when it cost him politically.

After leaving the Senate, Lieberman brought his experience and moral compass to No Labels as our founding chairman. He helped nurture our early coalitions in Congress. For a generation of younger leaders, he was a mentor and a model—proof that you could fight for your principles without losing your humility or your hope.

Joe Lieberman's passing left a void that cannot be filled. But his spirit endures in our work at No Labels, as well as in every effort to bridge divides, in every act of civility amid anger, and in every leader who still believes that country must come before party.

AFTER WORD

The people in this book did not know how history would judge them. They did not know whether their efforts would succeed, whether their choices would be rewarded, or whether the country would ultimately move in the direction they hoped. What they did know was what they believed to be right. They acted on that belief with courage, persistence, and at great personal cost.

That is how progress has always been made in America, and that is what our time demands as well. Ours is a moment of strain, distrust, and fragmentation. It is tempting to assume that everything will work itself out naturally, or that the right leadership will magically appear just in time to save us—the way Lincoln seems to have emerged out of thin air when the country hit a point of crisis. But in reality, that is never how it works.

As this book shows, Lincoln was preceded by figures such as Salmon Chase, who helped build the political coalition that carried him into office, and Winfield Scott, whose restraint helped delay catastrophe long enough for a new president to gain his footing. Their efforts were not glamorous, and at the time, they could not know where they would lead. They simply stayed the course.

That is the tradition of patriotic service that No Labels seeks to carry forward in our time. Our work is grounded in the understanding that the country does not provide advance notice before it needs leaders of courage. We exist to build a community of leaders and citizens today who can help confront a crisis and unite our people tomorrow. We are the only group engaged in this work across both parties.

Most Americans do not know the names profiled in this book, yet our nation would not have made it to its 250th year without them. To survive for decades or centuries longer as a country, we must carry the torch of unity in our time, and we must do so with patience and persistence.

Because the question is not whether the need will arise again for unifying leadership. It is whether we will have done the work, ahead of time, to be ready when it does.

America has not had an easy run. But through it all, we have stayed together because ordinary people have called us to a shared purpose and shared destiny. That is the story of this book. And it is the calling of our time.