American Spirit
Daughters of the American Revolution
November/December 2006

Ellis Island:
The Library of Congress: A Monument to Knowledge
America’s Forgotten Italian Patriots
Searching for Serapis
Art, Cynics and Old Lace
Recreating Washington’s Uniform

A Gateway to the Past
DO YOU HAVE A Revolutionary Patriot IN YOUR FAMILY TREE?

Consider membership in the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR), a volunteer women's service organization that honors and preserves the legacy of our Patriot ancestors. More than 200 years ago, American Patriots fought and sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy today. As a member of DAR, you can continue this legacy by actively promoting patriotism, preserving American history and securing America's future through better education for children.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR MEMBERSHIP?
Any woman 18 years or older, regardless of race, religion or ethnic background, who can prove lineal descent from a Patriot of the American Revolution is eligible for membership. DAR volunteers are willing to provide guidance and assistance with your first step into the world of genealogy.

HOW IS PATRIOT DEFINED?
DAR recognizes Patriots not only as soldiers, but as anyone who contributed to the cause of American freedom. To find out if your ancestor is recognized by the DAR as a Revolutionary Patriot, a request form is available online at www.dar.org by clicking on “Membership.”

HOW MANY MEMBERS DOES THE NATIONAL SOCIETY HAVE?
DAR has 168,000 members in nearly 3,000 chapters worldwide, including chapters in 11 foreign countries. Since its founding in 1890, DAR has admitted more than 800,000 members.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?
Go to www.dar.org and click on “Membership.” There you’ll find helpful instructions, advice on finding your lineage and a Prospective Member Information Request Form. Or call (202) 879-3205 for more information on joining the work of this vital, service-minded organization.
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From the President General

Our National Society has long had ties to Ellis Island. DAR members were there helping immigrants when Ellis Island served as a bustling processing station, and we were there when the island was in dire need of a restoration, donating more than $250,000 to the effort that aimed to connect the present to the past. Our feature tells the fascinating stories of today's genealogists who are using the current resources of Ellis Island to connect with their ancestors who passed through the gateway more than a century ago.

With nearly 128 million items on approximately 300 miles of bookshelves, the Library of Congress is the largest library in the world. However, its beginnings were humble, as our feature on the monument to learning shows. The Founding Fathers first envisioned the library as a resource for members of Congress to do the research required to run the country; but with the foresight of Americans like Thomas Jefferson, it grew into a symbol of America's power.

For readers who love to sew—or just love to read about the creative process of making garments—we feature three different looks at the history and preservation of needlecraft. Historians are still amazed by the industry of the women of Ipswich, Mass. From the 1750s to the 1840s, women throughout the town created and maintained the only lace making industry in America. Though several European towns produced lace on a commercial scale, Ipswich's handmade bobbin lace was a one-of-a-kind phenomenon in America.

“Nothing can be more beautiful than an item that has been passed from hand to hand,” says award-winning fashion designer Natalie Chanin. When she left New York in 2000, Chanin returned to her small-town roots to launch a successful fashion design company that would help preserve the traditional arts of quilting and embroidery. Our feature illustrates how she gives those time-honored techniques a contemporary context that has a real place in the world of design and fashion.

DAR member Dawn Fairchild embarked on a mission to recreate the uniform of George Washington during the time he lived at Rockingham, the general’s final Revolutionary War headquarters near Princeton, N.J. Her research skills and expertise in fine needlework resulted in a full-size, life-like figure of the commander-in-chief that welcomes visitors to Historic Rockingham, now a living history museum.

Nautical archaeologist Richard Swete’s vision was to locate the remains of the HMS Serapis, the vessel that John Paul Jones captured from the British during one of the most intense naval battles of the American Revolution. Inspired by Jones’ heroic feats, Swete assembled a team to recover the Serapis several years ago. Even after Swete’s untimely death, his team continues his efforts to recover the ruins.

All of our Daughters are special, but on this Veteran’s Day, American Spirit salutes a remarkable family of DAR members—and modern-day patriots. Patty Streeker is proud that her three daughters not only serve in the United States Army, but also join her as fellow Daughters in the Longs Peak Chapter in Longmont, Colo.
Answering the Call of Duty

When Patty Strecker wants to talk to her three daughters, sometimes she’s not able to get in touch with them. But it’s not because they don’t want to talk to her. Her three daughters—Sarah, Laura and Julie—have all committed to careers in the U.S. Army. And as Mrs. Strecker quickly learned, easy communication isn’t always possible.

Take Sarah, for instance. Stationed as an Army Captain for the past 14 months in Kuwait—thousands of miles from her parents in Longmont, Colo.—Sarah, a 2003 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and the 300 other members of her battalion are responsible for processing thousands of soldiers who fly into or out of the Middle East each day. She calls home about once a month, but relies mostly on e-mail—and the care packages her mother and sisters send regularly—to keep in touch with her family.

Mrs. Strecker is not complaining, though. She and her husband, Don, have always tried to instill in their daughters a profound sense of patriotism and love of country.

“My father was a great fan of Mark Twain, and one of his favorite quotes was ‘Patriotism is supporting your country all the time and your government when it deserves it.”

— LAURA STRECKER

“Until you gain an understanding of the world on your own, you can’t fully appreciate it. The more I learn about other cultures and other countries, the more I realize just how wonderful our own country is.”
Five questions every woman should ask herself.

- Do I have a signed will to protect my assets as well as my family and friends and is it stored in a safe place?

- Do I have any low-yielding stocks that I could reinvest in a charitable gift annuity or living trust for a better stream of income?

- Did I protect my family from the burden of high estate and income taxes due upon my death?

- Did I make arrangements in my estate plans to preserve the futures of the charitable organizations, like NSDAR, that I supported during my life?

- Did I take advantage of the new NSDAR gift planning program that is free with no obligation?

If you answered “no” to any of the questions above, you may benefit from speaking with a member of the Gift Planning staff in the Office of Development at the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. Simply complete the form and mail it to the address listed, or please call 1-800-449-1776 or e-mail giftplanning@dar.org to speak to someone about bequests, gift annuities, trusts or other estate planning tools.

I would like to receive more information about:

- General Estate Planning
- Life Income Gifts (Charitable Gift Annuities, Living Trusts, Pooled Income Funds)
- Wills and Bequests
- Gifts of Life Insurance or Retirement Plans
- Gifts of Personal Property or Real Estate

Name: ____________________________
Street Address: ____________________________
City: ____________________________ State: __________ Zip: __________
Telephone: ____________________________ Best Time To Call: __________
E-mail: ____________________________

Mail completed form to: NSDAR, Office of Development, 1776 O Street NW, Washington, DC 20006-5303 or fax to (202) 528-1993.
it.’ I was taught to support my country all the time, and that’s something I tried to teach my girls,” she says. “But maybe I overdid it a bit with the patriotism.”

Her daughters would disagree. Laura, a newly commissioned 2nd Lieutenant in the Army, serving as a nurse at the Brooke Army Medical Hospital in San Antonio, says growing up in a patriotic home helped spark the interest that led her into the military.

“My sisters and I grew up hearing that we live in a wonderful country, but you can’t really comprehend that as a child,” Laura says. “Until you gain an understanding of the world on your own, you can’t fully appreciate it. The more I learn about other cultures and other countries.

“I don’t have to apologize for being patriotic, and I don’t have to explain why my daughters chose a military career. The DAR ladies understand it.” — PATTY STRECKER

Outstanding Junior awards. The chapter also sends monthly care packages to Sarah’s battalion in Kuwait. Julie joined the chapter when she became eligible in 2004.

Even though they have little time to participate right now, the Strecker sisters say joining the DAR was still important. “It gives you an automatic bond with someone that you might not normally have,” says Julie, who recently found out that her ROTC Captain at school is a fellow Daughter. “I’ll always be a member. One day, I want to be a part of my own chapter, and when I have kids, I want to carry on the legacy, just as my mom did with us.”

That’s all Mrs. Strecker, an active Daughter herself, could ask for. “I love the DAR,” she says. “I love being in a group of ladies who are patriotic and are trying to foster true patriotism and love of country. I don’t have to apologize for being patriotic, and I don’t have to explain why my daughters chose a military career. The DAR ladies understand it.”

To nominate a Daughter for a future issue, e-mail a description to americanspirit@dar.org.
Christmas, Low-Country Style

Snow isn’t common on the coast of South Carolina any time of the year—even at Christmas. But that doesn’t stop the town of Beaufort, S.C., from pulling out all stops during its 21st annual Holiday Weekend celebration, which kicks off December 1.

Main Street Beaufort, USA, the organization hosting the event, will have activities all around town throughout the weekend. During Friday night’s opening celebration, the downtown area will be filled with local musical and dance performances, including a performance by the Parris Island Marine Corps Band. On Saturday, 30 tons of snow will be brought to the waterfront area of historic Bay Street, creating a winter wonderland for all to enjoy. The 2006 Holiday Weekend celebration concludes on Sunday with the traditional Christmas Parade, which pre-dates the weekend event by many years.

Beaufort (pronounced Byoo-fort) has a rich Colonial past. The house at 214 New Street is one of the oldest pre-Revolutionary homes in the town, built around 1750. While visiting Beaufort, be sure to notice the historic town plan—the streets between Bay and Duke are still laid out as they were in 1711. The site of the Battle of Gray’s Hill is also nearby.

For more information, visit www.downtownbeaufort.com.
Saluting New Jersey Patriots

FROM DECEMBER 26–31, the city of Trenton, N.J., will take a break from the holidays and pay tribute to its citizens’ contribution to winning America’s freedom during the Revolutionary War. Throughout the celebration, dubbed Patriots’ Week, the city will be hosting exhibits and events to honor both its 18th-century Patriots and the sense of patriotism prevalent today. Families, history buffs and re-enactors can enjoy the concerts, art exhibits and theatrical performances that will make Colonial Trenton come alive.

“It highlights the important role that New Jersey played in our Revolutionary War history,” says Nancy Byrne, New Jersey’s executive director of travel and tourism, citing local historical sites such as where Washington crossed the Delaware River and the Old Barracks in Trenton, where the general once slept. Tourists can also visit the site of the Battle of Princeton, where Washington’s soldiers were victorious over the British troops of General Cornwallis.

For more information and updates, visit www.patriotsweek.com.

Help USO-Metro Aid Our Troops

IN THIS SEASON OF GIVING, the USO of Metropolitan Washington, D.C., needs your help. A nonprofit organization serving one of the largest concentrations of United States military personnel in the world, the USO-Metro provides free services and programs to enhance the quality of life for members of the military community.

The USO-Metro’s Airport Assistance Centers need volunteers to assist military travelers with information and directions, and the Family Service Centers, which focus on helping young enlisted families, need help with special events. Volunteers can also attend stuffing parties for Operation USO Care Packages.

In addition to volunteers, USO-Metro also needs monetary and product donations. For more information, visit www.usometrodc.org.

November 4, 1845: Americans observe the first uniform Election Day.

November 18, 1883: Four standard time zones are introduced in the continental United States.

November 25, 1783: British troops leave New York.

November 28, 1775: The American Navy is established by Congress.

December 2, 1763: The Touro Synagogue, the first synagogue in what would become the United States, is dedicated in Newport, R.I.

December 6, 1884: Workers place the 3,300-pound marble capstone on the Washington Monument, completing construction that began in 1848.

December 16, 1776: Fearing a possible British attack, the Continental Congress abandons Philadelphia for Baltimore.

December 23, 1775: King George III issues a royal proclamation to take effect in March 1776 closing the American Colonies to all commerce and trade.

QuickQuiz

COLONIAL CHRISTMAS Today’s holiday celebrations are very different from those in the 18th century. Test your knowledge of Colonial Christmas traditions.

1. When was the popular Christmas carol “The Twelve Days of Christmas” first sung? 2. When did the Christmas season begin in Colonial times? 3. What common Christmas practice became popular in the 19th century? 4. Which early 19th-century American author helped transform Christmas into what it is today—a family-centered holiday? 5. What was the most prevalent Christmas decoration in the 18th century?

Answers on page 9.
Live From Colonial Williamsburg

No matter where you are, with the help of modern media, you can always stay on top of what’s happening at Colonial Williamsburg. Already offering photo slide shows, online exhibits and interactive tours to Web users, the world’s largest living history museum recently rolled out its newest method of reaching audiences around the world: podcasts.

Each week, Colonial Williamsburg creates a new audio program hosted by former NBC News correspondent Lloyd Dobyns, who takes you behind the scenes to meet interpreters, chefs, tradesmen, musicians, historians, curators and more. The audio program is then formatted into a podcast, a downloadable audio file that you can listen to on the computer or download to your portable music player.

What’s more, with a podcast and the right kind of software—an RSS reader—the weekly program can come to you via subscription.

Visit www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/media/podcasts.cfm to download this week’s podcast or search the archive of more than 50 podcasts on a variety of topics. The Web site also walks users through the steps of downloading the file and subscribing to the feed.

New Project Spotlights Black Patriots

AN ESTIMATED 5,000 BLACK MEN fought in the American Revolution, but their descendants’ membership in the Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution number only about 60. That’s something Henry Louis Gates Jr., a professor at Harvard University and a recent inductee into the S.A.R., wants to change.

Gates, director of Harvard’s W.E.B. DuBois Institute for African and African American Research, will collaborate with the S.A.R. in a project to identify blacks who fought in the American Revolution and their descendants. The institute’s project will bring increased awareness to an overlooked but important group of Revolutionary War soldiers.

Eyewitness Accounts

EVER WONDER what Thomas Jefferson was thinking at the onset of the French Revolution? Thanks to a new exhibit at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C., your questions can be answered. The ongoing exhibit, “Eyewitness: American Originals From the National Archives,” portrays American history through original accounts of the watershed events that shaped our nation. Highlights include an excerpt from Lady Bird Johnson’s diary describing the events of November 22, 1963, the day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

“Eyewitness” is free and open to the public and will remain on display at the National Archives until January 2007. Next spring, the exhibition will begin a nationwide tour through 2008. For an online sneak peak of the exhibit, visit www.archives.gov/exhibits/eyewitness.

What’s in a Name?

Discover the meanings behind some of the DAR chapters’ interesting names.

The Lovely Purchase Chapter, Bella Vista, Ark., was named for Major William Lovely, a veteran of the Continental Army of the Revolution. As assistant to the United States Agent to the Cherokees in 1816, he persuaded the Osage Indians to give up more than 3 million acres of their land to the Cherokees. The area included most of Northwest Arkansas, of which present-day Bella Vista is a part. It became known as the Lovely Purchase.

The Pilgrim Chapter, Iowa City, Iowa, doesn’t take its name from the early settlers of the Plymouth Colony. Instead, it was named in honor of the pioneers who left their homes in New England to settle in the uncharted territory of Iowa. New opportunities lay before them, and they prospered from their “pilgrimage.” In keeping with tradition, Pilgrim Chapter had 13 charter members, which represented the 13 original states in the union.

The namesake of the Winema Chapter, Corvallis, Ore., was the daughter of a Modoc chief. Winema, which means “brave heart,” was a heroine during the Modoc War, a war between the U.S. Army and the Modoc Indians in southern Oregon in the late 19th century. Winema, a mediator and interpreter during the war, was trusted by both whites and Native Americans.

Answers to the quiz on page 6: 1. It dates back to 16th-century England. 2. Unlike today, when the Christmas season begins the day after Thanksgiving, the holiday season in 18th-century America started on the night of December 25, the beginning of the 12 days of Christmas. 3. Giving gifts to children became popular in the 19th century as department stores opened their doors and the modern image of Santa Claus became ingrained in American culture. 4. In 1819, Washington Irving published The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, which featured “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle.” It also included a series of five stories about the celebration of Christmas at an English country manor. Shortly after, Charles Dickens published a similar tale in A Christmas Carol. 5. Large clusters of mistletoe, according to The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter.
Presents That Inspire Patriotism

Looking for the perfect holiday gift for a patriotic loved one? Take a peek into our shopping cart. We searched for presents that celebrate patriotism and history, but can also be put to practical use—and came up with some great buys. Whether you’re buying for a history buff who already has every book or a fashion plate with unique taste, our list offers something for everyone.

For Anyone who has ever dreamed of taking a cross-country trip, this "America" Page-A-Day calendar from Workman Publishing makes the perfect gift, allowing you to take the journey without leaving home. Masterful photography shows America in all its glory, from the humble barns of the rural Midwest and the quiet churches of New England to the majestic snow-capped Rockies and the luminous New York City skyline. With 313 pages of photos, the calendar is printed on coated paper to the exacting standards of a fine art book, making it a mini-gallery for your desk.

Cost: $15.95
Buying info: Visit www.workman.com to find local retailers that carry Workman products.

Who doesn’t love to curl up with a blanket, a good book and a cup of hot tea? The comfort seeker will love to spend a chilly afternoon wrapped up in this cozy afghan. The pre-washed, 100-percent cotton blanket comes in festive colors of cranberry, hunter green or Williamsburg blue, and at 50 by 65 inches, is long enough to keep anyone covered. Stitched across is the image of stately Memorial Continental Hall, a 100-year-old historical landmark fashioned in the classical style of the beaux arts and known as one of the most elegant buildings in the nation’s capital. Black and white marble coasters embossed with the hall’s image make a great conversation piece. A four-piece set comes with an oak tray.

Cost: $45 for the blanket and $15 for the coaster set
Buying info: Call The DAR Store toll-free at (888) 573-2732.
W
hat do you get for the
Daughter who has everything?
This cream scarf made of 100 percent silk will allow her to show off her style and patriotism at the same time. With the DAR initials embroidered in gold on each end, this 12-by-54-inch scarf is the perfect accessory to dress up an outfit or use as a wrap on a windy day.

Cost: $35
Buying info: Call The DAR Store toll-free at (888) 673-2732.

F
or those who love to mix patriotism with their holiday decorations, the 2006 U.S. Capitol commemorative ornament from the White House Collection is a treasure. A beautifully ornate gold frame complements this ornament, which features a turn-of-the-century painting of the Capitol on one side and an image from the Industrial Revolution on the other. This collectible not only captures a moment in White House history; but it also makes a beautiful decoration for years to come.

Cost: $28
Buying info: Visit www.whitehousechristmasornament.com to order online or call (301) 493-9273.

KNOW ANY MUSEUM BUFFS who can spend hours poring over exhibits and photographs? Bring the museum to them with illustrated books chock-full of Americana. A new book, Preserving the American Spirit in the DAR Museum, takes readers on a private tour of the museum’s hidden treasures with vivid pictures of ceramics, glass, furniture, paintings, quilts, toys and dolls accompanied by detailed descriptions. Readers can browse through 31 period rooms, where they will encounter objects like the Schnapshund—a dog-shaped vessel used to drink schnapps in the 18th century—and an ornate armchair that President James Monroe ordered for the Oval Room of the White House. For the modern art lover, Red, White & Blue in the USA offers a panorama of more than 350 pages of stunning photography depicting all types of flags and patriotic symbols. Taken by Esther Chao, a photographer who traveled for a year to document patriotism across the country, the images reflect the camaraderie that Americans everywhere share.

Cost: Museum book, $12, plus shipping; photography book, $29.90 for mail-in orders, plus free shipping.
Buying info: To order the museum book, call The DAR Museum Shop at (202) 879-3208 or send an e-mail to museumshop@dar.org. To order the photography book, call toll-free (866) 570-6724 or send an e-mail to palaripyalarbooks.com.
Have any young Patriots in your family? These books and toys will keep them entertained and educated about American history. The Journey of the One and Only Declaration of Independence, written by Judith St. George and illustrated by Will Hillenbrand, tells the story of America's greatest document through witty narrative and caricatures that testify to the grit and determination Americans through the centuries have shared. Presidents of the United States, written by the editors of Time For Kids, brings the legacies of each president into focus for young readers with fun facts and brief histories, along with portraits, engravings, campaign buttons and political cartoons. The American Story: 100 True Tales from American History, written by Jennifer Armstrong and illustrated by Roger Roth, offers a collection of lively stories about interesting Americans who usually don’t make the history books. For children who want something more interactive, check out map and floor puzzles of the United States by Lights, Camera, Interaction! Kids will have so much fun piecing together states that they’ll forget they’re learning.

**Cost:** Books range from $15 to $25; Puzzles, $15.

**Buying info:** Order books online at Amazon.com. Puzzles can be found at most local bookstores or toy stores.

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**Patriotic Music Lovers** who like to listen to their favorite tunes without having to constantly switch tapes or CDs won’t be able to get enough of “100 Favorite Patriotic Songs” produced by BCI Music and performed by various artists. This box set compilation features all of the great patriotic classics on four discs. From the rousing compositions of John Philip Sousa to the folksy tunes of Stephen Foster, listeners can enjoy a wide range of songs that celebrate the pride, unity and essence of America. The CD also includes tunes that may be hard to track down individually, such as “Hail to the Chief,” “Ballad of the Green Berets” and “My Old Kentucky Home,” to name just a few.

**Cost:** $9.99 at Tower Records

**Buying info:** Order the CD online at www.towerrecords.com or Amazon.com.
Heirloom High Chest

CROMWELL CHILD, a shipbuilder and sea captain from Warren, R.I., had this high chest made as a wedding present for his daughter Elizabeth in 1776 upon her marriage to Peter Turner, a surgeon serving in the American Revolution. Handed down from generation to generation on the maternal side, the high chest was donated to the DAR Museum by Mary Fales Masland Adams, a direct descendant of Child.

A costly piece of furniture with its carved shell, quarter-fluted columns and scrolled top embellished with carved rosettes and turned finials, this high chest was made in Rhode Island in the late baroque or Palladian style. Furniture in this robust architectural style had been popular in Rhode Island since the 1730s, and its popularity reached the West Indies, where many enterprising cabinetmakers from the Colony exported their products. During the 18th century, high chests were often paired with a matching dressing table and placed in the bedchamber where they stored clothing and other valuable textiles.

Though laws during the period limited what women could actually own, furniture made as part of a bride’s marriage rite could be of considerable value. In account books during the period, mahogany high chests were valued at between 50 and 100 pounds—more than a year’s salary for the average colonist. 📡
A Complex Community

In our cultural myths and popular history textbooks, the Pilgrims usually emerge as quaint, somewhat inept, naive exiles from England whom local Natives inexplicably take under their wings to help them survive famine and disease in this strange New World. Our knowledge of the Pilgrims quickly dims after the “First Thanksgiving” to a faint awareness that Plymouth Plantation endured and somehow became Massachusetts.

There is some accuracy in this perception, but the whole story is far more complex and often darker than most realize, as Nathaniel Philbrick demonstrates in his newest popular history, *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community and War* (Viking, 2006). Covering the period from shortly before the *Mayflower*’s sailing in 1620 to the end of King Philip’s War in 1675, *Mayflower* reveals how two different cultures came to work out an extraordinary period of relative peace and cooperation that ended in a devastating conflict, the virtual genocide of Native peoples and the enslavement of many of those who survived.

During that time, the two cultures came to depend heavily on each other, not only for sustenance and trade, but also for political and military advantage.

For instance: The Native tribes of Southern New England had traditional rivalries and enmities that had resulted in a web of alliances and treaties as complicated as anything in Europe. They saw the strange Europeans as potential allies as well as rivals for resources. On their part, the Pilgrims began to understand the geography of this new political landscape, they, too, began to play tribes off of each other to gain trade advantages as well as security against attack.

It is a complex story rooted in the religious strife that roiled England and the rest of the Old World for centuries after the Reformation. The Separatists—Pilgrims—aboard the *Mayflower* had lived comfortably enough in the Netherlands and had been allowed to worship as they wished. But, Philbrick shows, they missed the insular, communal English village lifestyle, and they feared that their children were becoming too Dutch. The New World represented a chance to re-establish that familiar village life, this time on a firm theological foundation far from the interference of ecclesiastical authorities.

Using contemporary accounts, Philbrick paints a grim portrait of the harrowing Atlantic passage with its hunger, disease, seasickness and exposure to the elements. Prospects weren’t much more promising when the ship hove to off of Cape Cod. This flat sandy land lacked any visible sustenance for the famished seafarers, although an exploring party eventually found and raided a cache of corn hidden by the local Indians for the winter.

After more days of exploring the coast, they anchored at the site of Plymouth Plantation (Philbrick uses the modern spelling)—the famous Plymouth Rock being more a later legend than an actual solid landing site. The Pilgrims’ long and terrible first winter had begun, as had their education in the New World.

New England was far from a pristine, peaceful Eden when the Pilgrims arrived. Europeans had already visited the area, capturing some Natives and leaving behind plague that killed thousands. The various tribes had complex political relationships and vied with each other for resources and hegemony. The Pilgrims arrived at a particularly delicate time, and the establishment of a permanent colony added further complexity to the situation.

Although there were many players in this 17th-century “West Wing,” perhaps the most startling character is Squanto, known to generations of schoolchildren as the kindly Native who takes the hapless Pilgrims under his wing.

After spending five years in Europe, Squanto returned home in 1619 to find most of his people dead from plague. The disease killed members of other tribes as well, leaving something of a power vacuum in the area—and an opportunity for a warrior bold enough to seize it.

Squanto spoke English and would be a logical choice to deal with the foreigners. How would his fellow Indians know whether he spoke truthfully and not for his own gain? Philbrick notes that Squanto could claim some extraordinary spiritual powers: His full name, Tisquantum, was that of a powerful spirit “associated with death, the night and the bitter northeast wind ... By assuming the spirit’s name, Squanto was broadcasting his claim to an intimate relationship with an entity that the Pilgrims later equated with the devil.”

This spiritual power also gave him considerable leverage with the tribes. As the tale unfolds, Squanto manipulates both sides to increase his personal prestige and to make a grab for power amongst the tribes. His exploits read like a modern-day thriller, yet they are just one of a number of similar intrigues that Philbrick recounts.
With these intrigues as background, Philbrick never lets the reader forget how tenuous life was for the settlers. In their first few years, the colonists repeatedly saw their efforts to emerge from privation dashed by the untimely arrival of new colonists, disease or some new upheaval among the Natives.

Nevertheless, they survived and flourished. They developed and maintained a lengthy, relatively peaceful relationship with their Native neighbors, thanks to adroit leadership on both sides. But Philbrick shows how both sides unwittingly planted the seeds that led to the outbreak of King Philip’s War. He describes this sad, vicious, bloody conflict in great detail, demonstrating that it was probably inevitable yet possibly avoidable.

Philbrick is author of *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex; Sea of Glory: America’s Voyage of Discovery, the U.S. Exploring Expedition of 1838–1842; and Away Off Shore: Nantucket Island and Its People*. He began researching *Mayflower* while working on his book about Nantucket. (See the article on early American whaling in the July/August 2005 issue of *American Spirit*.)

Having grown up on our popular myths about the Pilgrims, Philbrick was startled to find that “the history of Plymouth Colony becomes something altogether new, rich, troubling, complex. Instead of the story we already know, it becomes the story we need to know.” Philbrick’s *Mayflower* enriches our understanding of our origins and gives us much to ponder about how we came to be who we are.

BILL HUDGINS

### A Flawed But Faithful Patriot

**Rear Admiral Joseph F. Callo**, USN (Ret.), examines the legendary career of John Paul Jones in *America’s First Sea Warrior* (Naval Institute Press, 2006). Some biographers idolize Jones and grant him mythical stature as a Revolutionary hero, while others downplay his courage as a naval officer and his significance as a key player in the Revolution. Callo, however, offers a balanced, objective portrayal of Jones that meticulously outlines the complex man’s personal and political conflicts—without diminishing Jones’ seaman-ship, genius or ignoring his contributions to the emerging American Navy.

The author doesn’t examine Jones’ military victories in isolation but in relation to the grand scheme of the larger story. For instance, Callo tells the thrilling narrative of the Battle of Flamborough Head, in which Jones won enduring fame, in the context of a larger naval expedition that Jones and his squadron conducted against the British. With his *Bonhomme Richard*, a sluggish 14-year-old converted merchant ship, Jones sailed around the coast of Ireland and Scotland, taking prizes and creating havoc on the coasts. He encountered the HMS *Serapis*, a powerful new ship of 44 rapid-fire guns commanded by battle-hardened Captain Richard Pearson. The long and deadly struggle ended with the *Bonhomme Richard* shot to pieces, but with Jones triumphantly striking colors on the *Serapis*. The author stresses that the victory itself was minor, but proved decisive because it signaled that the most powerful navy in the world could be defeated by a brave naval command and risk-everything strategy.

Jones is not spared scrutiny for his poor decisions or character flaws—numerous illicit relationships with married women, an alleged rape, disparagement of and violent behavior toward fellow seamen, unbridled ambition—all of which prevented him from reaching a higher rank and gaining greater respect in his lifetime. Yet, Callo gives Jones credit as the first American naval officer who foresaw the role that naval supremacy would play in the rise of the United States as a global power. It is this knowledge of naval tradition coupled with exhaustive research that make Callo’s three-dimensional biography of a flawed but faithful Patriot so inspirational.

GEORGE MILLER

See page 16 for a feature on the search for *Serapis*.

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On January 30, 1999, historian and nautical archaeologist Richard Swete embarked on an expedition to locate the remains of the HMS *Serapis*, a vessel that American naval hero John Paul Jones captured from the British during one of the bloodiest and most intense naval battles of the American Revolution. Inspired by Jones’ heroic feats, Swete assembled a team to recover the *Serapis* several years ago. Even Swete’s untimely death could not deter his team from fulfilling his quest.
On August 14, 1779, John Paul Jones set sail on the Bonhomme Richard from L'Orient, France, embarking on an historic mission to bring the Revolutionary fight to British waters. His intent was to circumnavigate the British Isles and raid her commerce. But a little more than a month after setting sail, John Paul Jones' cruise around the British Isles had yet to make significant captures of British shipping. His luck suddenly changed as he guided Bonhomme Richard southward through the cold, dark waters of the North Sea. During the early afternoon of September 23, 1779, he spotted the enemy off of Flamborough Head, a cape along England's Yorkshire coast.

The quarry he spotted was a large British convoy returning from the Baltic Sea with much needed supplies. The convoy was shepherded by the HMS Serapis, a newly commissioned frigate, and a smaller escort, the HMS Countess of Scarborough. Under the command of Captain Richard Pearson, the Serapis was on her maiden voyage. She was one of approximately 25 44-gun frigates first brought into service during the Revolution. Although a frigate did not fight in large battles, it was big enough to capture any vessel that it could not outrun. While frigate-type warships were usually single-decked, the Serapis was considered unique for carrying guns on two decks, making the sailing vessel powerful for its size. The Serapis also had a copper bottom, a novel feature that made her faster.

As soon as he spotted Bonhomme Richard, Capt. Pearson placed the Serapis on a parallel course. In order to close on his enemy, Jones flew British colors. When hailed and asked to identify his ship, Jones responded with a false name, then lowered the false colors and raised a red, white and blue-striped American ensign and opened fire. The British did likewise, and the battle began. After the exchange of a few broadsides, Jones realized that the Serapis' attacks were causing heavy casualties and substantial damage to his ship. Both vessels had attempted to board or rake the other, and at one point, the Bonhomme Richard became ensnared in the Serapis' rigging. Capt. Pearson inquired, "Has your ship struck?" According to lore, Jones reportedly said, "Sir, I have not yet begun to fight!"

British cannon fire focused on the hull of the American vessel, while American and French marines poured down musket fire from positions high in the masts, causing chaos on the Serapis' deck. Meanwhile the Bonhomme Richard was sinking due to the battering its hull was taking, but Jones would not strike or lower his flag. The fight was so desperate that several men begged Jones to strike the colors, at which Jones hurled his pistol at one of them.

At this point in the battle, a Scottish crewman climbed out onto the rigging and hurled grenades into the open hatchways of the Serapis. As the carnage increased on both sides, the British convoy escaped. With approximately 130 of his crew killed or wounded and his ship heavily damaged, Capt. Pearson struck his colors and surrendered. His own ship in sinking condition, Jones transferred his flag to the Serapis. Against impossible odds, the Bonhomme Richard, an old merchant vessel, had defeated and captured a brand-new Royal Navy frigate.

A Forgotten Hero

As 1779 had not yet been a successful year for the Patriot cause, news of Jones' victory electrified and re-enthused the American Army. Taking the war to British waters and defeating a Royal Navy vessel pierced the air of invincibility of King George III's navy. In honor of Jones' feat, the Continental Congress struck a medal, one of the few such medals authorized throughout the war.

Despite Jones' victory, France retained the Serapis and entered it on the rolls of the French Navy. After the American Revolution, Jones stayed in France to attempt to collect money owed to him and his crew.

Jones died, largely forgotten, in Paris on July 18, 1792. He wasn't accorded the respect due a naval hero, and the executor of his property even ordered that Jones be buried as cheaply as possible. Appalled at the thought that so distinguished a Patriot should be shunted off to a pauper's grave, a Paris commissioner ordered that Jones' corpse be placed in a lead coffin to be preserved for the day when America was ready to receive her hero. That day would be more than a century away.

The lead coffin was finally rediscovered and opened on April 7, 1905; Jones' remains, which had been immersed in alcohol, were well preserved. President Theodore Roosevelt, a great supporter of the Navy, assured that Jones' return would be a grand but solemn occasion. The flagship Brooklyn and accompanying cruisers were dispatched to carry his remains from France back to the United States, and Jones was finally laid to rest in 1906 in a specially constructed crypt in the chapel at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis.

The Fate of the Serapis

What became of the Serapis? Ironically, the prize of Jones' greatest battle suffered a similar fate as the man. After the Serapis was enrolled in the French Navy, she was sent to the Indian Ocean to counteract British influence in that sphere. Under the command of Lieutenant de Vaisseau Roché, the Serapis was moored off Isle St. Marie off the northeast coast of Madagascar en route to India. While the ship was anchored in the harbor of Ambodifotatra in 1781, a crew member on board dropped a lantern, which caused
The quest to find the remains of the Serapis was the brainchild of nautical archaeologist Richard “Dick” Swete. Research indicated that no other copper-bottomed ship had sunk in the harbor. The Serapis had been found.

Sadly, during the 2000 field season to delineate the wreck site, Swete contracted a virulent strain of malaria and died on November 4. Archaeological investigations were temporarily halted. With support from his family and archaeological colleagues, however, the project Swete spearheaded has continued. In May 2004, a small group of archaeologists returned to relocate the site, where research continues. In memory of Swete and as a tribute to the archaeologists, historians and divers from the United States, France and Madagascar who assisted in the Serapis Project, plans for a museum are underway. In addition to Serapis-related artifacts, exhibits will focus on local maritime traditions and culture.

To learn more or to support the Serapis Project, visit www.serapisproject.org.

Continental Congress struck a medal in honor of John Paul Jones’ victory over the Serapis.

a fire. As the fire approached the powder magazine, someone gave the command to abandon ship. The Serapis blew up and sank, and its remains laid forgotten for more than 218 years.

The quest to find the remains of the Serapis was the brainchild of nautical archaeologist Richard “Dick” Swete. A veteran of the Vietnam War, Swete was intrigued by the stories of Jones’ exploits. Through research conducted in the French archives, Swete traced the Serapis to the harbor at Ambodifotatra off Isle St. Marie, Madagascar, where he conducted an initial assessment and reconnaissance mission in January 1999. He also convinced the University d’Antananarivo to assist with the project. Initial conversations with the local island population didn’t uncover a collective memory of the vessel being lost in the harbor, so Swete’s next step was to locate a wreck site that would have corresponded to the sinking of the Serapis.

In November 1999, a second expedition to Isle St. Marie was conducted to complete archaeological investigations of the harbor bed. There, researchers found artifacts from the remains of a vessel that had been badly burned. One of the most significant artifacts recovered was a piece of copper bottom sheathing with nail holes, a common material used by ship builders from about 1761 to 1830. The naval records indicate that Serapis was one of the earliest vessels with a copper bottom, and further

Michael Tuttle is executive director and Dr. David Switzer is a board member of the Serapis Project.

Above: A diver examines Serapis’ copper-bottom sheathing along the seabed of Ambodidifotatra Harbor. One of the most significant artifacts recovered, the sheathing was a common material used by ship builders from about 1761 to 1830. Below: Through research in French archives, Dick Swete traced the Serapis to a harbor off Isle St. Marie, Madagascar. A rainbow inspires researchers on the island’s Vohilava Beach.
Stepping Into

THE CORPS

The National Museum of the Marine Corps shows visitors what it means to be a Marine

Most museums capture only the past. Opening on November 10, the National Museum of the Marine Corps will attempt to do something far different and more difficult: to impart to non-Marines a sense of the living tradition of the Corps. That goal is engraved above the museum's entrance, which invites visitors to "Enter and Experience What It Means to be a Marine."
The museum will use artifacts, videos, displays and other means to tell the history of America's unique fighting force. The finest museum technology and multimedia effects in its exhibitions re-create pivotal moments in history, such as the Marine landing on Iwo Jima in 1945. Thousands of artifacts, including the flag raised over Iwo Jima, pay witness to the Corps' contribution to our nation's security.

The museum has chosen a fitting slogan: “Expect to live it.” Visitors should take this at face value, since every aspect of the museum has been designed with its visual, physical and emotional impact in mind.

After viewing a short film that focuses on the process of becoming a Marine, visitors will pass through a bus and be confronted by a long row of yellow footprints—the first thing a new recruit sees when he or she arrives at boot camp—and the voice of a drill instructor. Before leaving the gallery, they will have experienced a hint of boot camp.

Later in the tour, the rear half of a Navy CH-46D Sea Knight helicopter that saw duty in Vietnam will serve as an entryway to a realistic Vietnam War “immersion exhibit” depicting events in the 1968 Battle of Khe Sahn. Fans will simulate airflow created by a rotating propeller as visitors exit the chopper into a highly realistic presentation of the sights, sounds and chaos of battle.

“While most Americans know something about the U.S. Marine Corps, most don’t know what it actually means to be a Marine,” says Lieutenant General Ronald Christmas. “That’s where we differ from other military museums: Every decision is driven by our wish to share the experience of life as a U.S. Marine—its monumental challenges and unparalleled rewards.”

Totaling some 230,000 square feet, the museum is located on a 135-acre site next to the U.S. Marine Corps Base at Quantico, Va. It serves as the centerpiece of the Marine Corps Heritage Center, a complex of facilities that includes the museum, a memorial park, parade grounds, artifact restoration facilities and an on-site conference center and hotel.

The building features a 210-foot tilted mast clad in stainless steel that soars above a glass atrium, a design invoking the immortal image of Marines raising the flag over Mount Suribachi at Iwo Jima. The atrium houses a huge Leatherneck Gallery festooned with aircraft, such as a Curtis Jenny JN-4-HG biplane and a Korean War-era Sikorsky helicopter, as well as various other large artifacts suspended above a terrazzo floor.

Three era galleries—World War II, The Korean War and Vietnam War—surround the main gallery and take visitors through the history of the Marines, including its pivotal battles and other vital contributions to the preservation of America’s freedom.

Each era gallery has an immersion exhibit, including one about Iwo Jima in which visitors ride a simulated amphibious tractor, and another of Korea’s Toktong Pass, where darkness falls and the temperature drops as Marines hold the pass during the 1950 breakout from the Chosin Reservoir.

The second floor of the museum features the mess hall, kitchen and a replica of Tun Tavern, Pa., where the Marine Corps was born. Other museum facilities include a restaurant, gift shop, classrooms and office spaces. A large-screen state-of-the-art theater is also being planned.

The museum and Heritage Center together will make Quantico the foremost center for the study of the Marine Corps, its role through history and its influence on our uniquely American understanding of the values of freedom, discipline, courage and sacrifice.

Bill Hudgins detailed the history of the Erie Canal for the September/October 2006 issue.
They Were Young Once, And Brave; And They Followed Washington

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These samples of black lace patterns were made in Ipswich between 1750 and 1840. These images are collected in Marta Cotterell Raffel’s 2003 book, *The Laces of Ipswich: The Art and Economics of an Early American Industry*.
From the 1750s to the 1840s, business came first for the women of Ipswich, Mass. For close to a century, these independent artisans turned the beautiful craft of handmade lace into a profitable, sustainable enterprise.
The women of Ipswich, Mass., rose early and worked late, juggling the washing, cooking and childrearing like all the other women in all the other Colonial towns in the 1700s. Life in the seaport town was tied to the water: When 13 colonists settled Ipswich in 1633, they saw the promise of the Ipswich River from the beginning. And as the American Revolution approached, the women of the town went about their business surrounded by salt marshes, the rising steeple of the meetinghouse and the arches of stone bridges.

It was their business that set them apart from other women. From the mid-1750s to the 1840s, women throughout the town created and maintained the only lace-making industry in America. Though plenty of European towns produced lace on a commercial scale, Ipswich and its handmade bobbin lace was a one-of-a-kind phenomenon in America.

And while lace made the town, women made the lace ... and marketed and sold it.

Ipswich thrived for a century as a seaport until sands shifted and shrunk the opening of the river in the 1740s. With the harbor closed to larger cargo ships, the town’s survival seemed questionable. Just as the economic base of Ipswich crumbled, the Colonies themselves shook with political and economic tension. In the midst of the chaos, around 1750, Ipswich women began trying their hands at lace.

Colonists traditionally bought imported French, Flemish, Belgian or English lace, but taxes and embargoes—from the Sugar Act of 1764 to the Tea Act of 1773—put a serious crimp in the import business. That put Ipswich women in a unique—and desirable—position after the Colonies won their independence.

By 1776, the lace-making industry ensured that “unlike other areas, the residents were poised to meet the demand for domestic lace” forced by war and its aftereffects, writes Marta Cotterell Raffel in *The Laces of Ipswich: The Art and Economics of an Early American Industry, 1750–1840* (University Press of New England, 2003).

A 1797 issue of the *American Gazetter* mentioned that the town’s “silk and thread lace, of an elegant texture, are manufactured here by women and
George Washington himself visited Ipswich in 1789 to support the domestic industry. A section of Ipswich lace was discovered in a black silk shawl worn by Martha Washington.

A SERENDIPITOUS INDUSTRY

The lace-making trend began with a handful of women supplementing their families’ income. The interest in the craft was born of necessity.

“We define people now as having this occupation or that occupation, but then people were more likely to take whatever skills they had and do what they could, so these women were probably doing other things, too,” says Marla Miller, director of the public history program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

“The lacemakers were housewives who worked at home after they had finished their other chores,” writes Raffel in a 1997 article. “Each woman averaged seven inches of bobbin lace a day, which is a surprisingly large amount considering the intricacy of the procedure. It can easily take several hours to produce an inch or two of lace.”

It was not an organized industry; no clear hierarchy or coordination shaped the efforts of the businesswomen.

Reverend Joseph Dana, a pastor in Ipswich from 1765 until his death in 1827, wrote about the lace-making industry in his personal letters. He reported that between August 1789 and August 1790, 600 lace makers produced nearly 42,000 yards of lace. He also included lace samples, and 21 are with his original letters in the Library of Congress.

Before Rev. Dana compiled his account, he grappled with the scattered nature of the town’s lace industry. In one letter he called lace making “a dispersed Situation; there being in the different parts of this town, probably not less than 600 persons who do more or less in it ... and all independent of each other,” noting that to accurately estimate total quantity and value was difficult.

No agent sold the town’s lace, and the merchants who took the lace to other towns to be sold were women, most of whom either made the lace themselves or were the daughters of lace makers. Sarah Lakeman, born in Ipswich in 1850, wrote that her great-grandmother, who was born in 1736, made enough lace to buy silk for dresses for each of her five daughters. One of those daughters was the lace merchant who carried the lace to Salem.

A COMMUNITY CRAFT

But why lace? And why did this particular port town turn into the epicenter of American lace making? No one has managed to find an answer that completely explains the novelty of Ipswich.

“Though certainly the convergence of several commercial crises would have given Ipswich women every reason to look for alternate sources of income, the same was of course true for women in communities across New England,” writes Miller in a review of Raffel’s book.

In part, the explanation rests on the heritage of the townspeople. In Notes on Laces of the American Colonists (William Helburn Inc., 1926), Frances Morris explained that the town was settled by “colonists of English stock from the Midland counties of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire—traditional centers of lacemaking.”

But most Ipswich lace was made in the European style (with the sewing edge to the left of the lace) as opposed to the English style (with the edge to the right), suggesting the women weren’t English immigrants at all. Cotterell suggests a hybrid of the two styles.

Regardless of the origin, the knowledge of lace making and the emphasis on passing that knowledge to the next generation was crucial.

“It was unusual to see a community-wide craft,” said Miller, who recently released her book, The Needle’s Eye: Women and Work in the Age of Revolution (University
of Massachusetts Press, 2006). “In every community, clothing was produced by a series of professionals—dressmakers, tailors, seamstresses. Being devoted to a single aspect of the industry was atypical. Ipswich specialized in lace because it had a community of people who could teach the skill and pass it along.”

MORE THAN FRILLS
A steady, high-quality output of lace could mean the difference between poverty and comfort for a family. The women focusing on lace were working for daily needs as much as any extras. Merchants would collect the lace and make weekly trips to Newburyport, Salem and Boston, where the lace would be traded for necessities like butter or luxuries like silk and snuff.

With a shortage of currency following the Revolution, trade often took the place of payment. One dry goods merchant in Ipswich recorded a 1768 transaction where he bought chintz in exchange for lace. He was given five weeks to return with the lace, probably because the women of the house needed that long to make it.

Descendants tell the story of one woman charging 10 cents for each pattern she pricked, then another traveling by stagecoach between Ipswich and Boston trading lace in the farming districts for butter, cheese and eggs.

While her husband was imprisoned for refusing to swear allegiance to King George III, one Ipswich lace maker supported a family of five children for more than three years. (When he was paraded out every six months to take a measure of his loyalty, her husband reportedly would reply, “Damn your king and Parliament too!”)

Fashion, even in the midst of a war and in an infant nation, proved a powerful market force.

“Difficult as it may be to realize that so delicate and luxurious a fabric as lace could in any way have found a place in the rugged life of the American colonists... treasured apparel enriched with lace and passements marked the social position of the owner to a far greater degree than it is easy to appreciate today,” Morris writes.

Strictly Business
As much as the lace makers might have been artisans as well as businesswomen, business came first, and the lace itself—what’s left of it—proves the women’s priorities.

Lace tended to be sold off the pillows where it had been woven, and much of the lace was taken to market and traded. The hundreds of surviving Ipswich prickings frequently show the same patterns over and over again. The sharp, clear lines of the prickings have been blurred and mangled from overuse and hurried production.

The bobbins that have survived also show the business focus of the craftswomen.

“They are not the finely carved treasures in the English style, which were hung with mementos and spangles and passed from mother to daughter,” Raffel writes. “The Ipswich bobbins are simple and roughly carved and clearly for commercial use. More than a thousand survive, a few with the initials of the lace maker, but more often plain and well-worn from years of use.”

END OF AN ERA
Machine-made lace strangled the cottage industry in Ipswich, with machine-based companies coming to Ipswich in the 1820s. The commercial operations setting up camp in Ipswich and elsewhere changed the face of the industry, and by 1840, the handmade lace business was in utter decline. But clothing industries, including shoemaking, machine knitting and hosiery making, continued as the town’s economic base.

 Gin Phillips’ last feature for American Spirit was “Founding Fathers and Their Love of the Land” in the March/April 2006 issue.
Stitching History
Fashion-forward designs meet traditional craftsmanship

By Nancy Mann Jackson
Quilting, embroidery and other forms of hand stitching have a long history in America. While Colonial life offered little time for nonessential tasks, quilting was a necessity, and Colonial women often used embroidery to hide multiple repairs to a garment. The art of hand stitching, passed down for generations, has gradually become uncommon and, in some parts of the country, practically extinct. But in a small corner of the fashion industry, designer Natalie Chanin is not only reviving the art of hand stitching, but also renewing the public’s interest in and appreciation for the art by making authentic, hand-stitched products accessible to the world.

PRESERVING A HERITAGE

Chanin spent two decades working in the fashion design industry in Europe and New York. But when she launched her own fashion label, she left the modern temples of design and went back to her roots, returning to her small hometown of Florence, Ala., and the traditional needle arts she learned as a girl. The result is Project Alabama, a highly successful fashion label that sells garments at high-end stores all over the world. Each garment is uniquely American, designed by Chanin and hand stitched by seamstresses in her Alabama hometown, many of whom learned their crafts from mothers and grandmothers who have stitched for generations.

The hand stitching that goes into every Project Alabama garment seems to be a dying art—and Chanin believes it is worth preserving. “We hear a lot about sustainable design, and we’re all trying so hard to save the environment,” Chanin says. “But part of our responsibility is also sustaining our heritage.”

“My grandmother can tell the weather by looking at the clouds, but I would just go to weather.com,” Chanin continues. “These are all dying traditions, predicting the weather from the clouds, hand stitching, gardening. They’re all traditions that we’re not passing on to our children. But they are traditions worth carrying on.”

CRAFTING A COMPANY

Although she learned to quilt as a girl, Chanin never planned to launch a fashion label based on the stitches of her memories. While working in New York, Chanin found herself in search of something
special to wear to an event. She deconstructed a T-shirt and then hand stitched it back together with the seams on the outside and appliqués on the front. The shirt was a hit, and Chanin began taking orders for similar designs from friends. When she could no longer keep up with demand, Chanin began searching for a New York manufacturer to produce the garments for her. Because every piece was an original, no factory could produce them cost-effectively.

"I had an epiphany moment," Chanin says. "I had been sewing these shirts, thinking I had come up with something new, and then I realized [the stitch I was using] looked like a quilting stitch. I realized it wasn't something new; it was the same type of stitching my grandmother had been doing all her life."

Chanin returned to her Alabama hometown and went to talk to the women she knew would be quilting at the community center. Most of them were elderly and uninterested in a paying job, but they thought other area seamstresses could do the work. She ran a simple ad in the local newspaper.

CONSTRUCTING FASHION

Natalie Chanin returned to her roots to start her own fashion label, Project Alabama, which consists of garments sewn by hand by seamstresses in Chanin's hometown of Florence, Ala. The fashion-forward designs, including embroidered, quilt-like garments, are sold in boutiques around the world.
for part-time hand stitchers and quilters. She got 60 responses. About 20 of the women had the skills necessary to create Chanin's designs—and the work began.

When Chanin took the first set of garments to a New York buyers' show, she didn't just sell the completed pieces, but also took orders for dozens more like them. The Alabama seamstresses agreed to fill the orders, and a company was born. Five years later, Project Alabama operates out of a home-turned-office in Chanin's hometown and has employed up to 150 stitchers ranging in age from 18 to 88. The company produces a line of fall and spring fashions each year and sells its garments in boutiques across Europe, Asia, Australia and North America.

CONTINUING THE TRADITION

Project Alabama has given new life to the old traditions of handmade needlework, as its garments have been featured in fashion magazines, including Vanity Fair, Marie Claire and InStyle. Chanin attributes her label's popularity to the heritage that it recalls. "Our garments spark some memory for the wearers, and that's why people are drawn to them," she says. "And it's apparent that each piece is made with love; if a seamstress doesn't love what she's doing, she won't do our work because it's very hard work. Each piece is made by hand, numbered and initialed by the seamstress, so each one has an artisan quality."

Because each garment is handmade, some taking weeks to complete, Project Alabama clothing is expensive. But Chanin is committed to sharing the tradition of hand stitching with people of all economic backgrounds, so she's finding other ways to make her designs accessible. For instance, the company's Web site (www.projectalabama.com) includes a "Journal" section, where readers can download patterns and instructions for making Project Alabama garments. And Chanin is writing a book to be published next year by Stewart, Tabori and Chang, which discusses the importance of preserving traditions and includes stencils for 20 Project Alabama garments that readers can make.

"These are heirloom pieces, and I'd love for people to make them for their sons or daughters and pass the tradition on," Chanin says. "The domestic arts are just that, arts. We've spent so many years buying and consuming that we've forgotten that there's nothing better than a home-cooked meal or a handmade garment."

Contributing writer Nancy Mann Jackson explored the historic Sue Silliman House for the March/April 2006 issue.
The Image of a Hero
Recreating Washington’s Revolutionary War Uniform

BY DAWN FAIRCHILD

IN the summer and autumn of 1783, George and Martha Washington lived at Rockingham, the general’s final Revolutionary War headquarters near Princeton, N.J. While at Rockingham, Washington received confirmation of the Treaty of Paris, and he wrote his Farewell Orders to the Armies of the United States in the home’s Blue Room. Despite its witness to history, Rockingham faced an uncertain future until local citizens rescued it in 1897. The state of New Jersey later took over stewardship of the house.

SINCE THAT TIME, Historic Rockingham, built around 1710, has undergone a restoration to preserve it as it was during the months the Washingtons lived there. In 2004, it reopened its doors as a living history museum, where visitors are greeted by docents in full Revolutionary War uniform—as well as a full-size, lifelike figure of the first commander in chief in the same blue and buff uniform, differentiated by insignia of rank. I was privileged to spearhead this project, in consultation with then-Rockingham historian and curator Margaret Carlsen. Some believe this replica, a product of six years of research, construction and installation, is the most exact reproduction ever constructed of Washington’s military uniform. Here’s how we put it together.

The Perfect Model
Since Washington’s military uniform was one of the most celebrated and documented uniforms in American history, we had many sources to reference, including paintings, letters and other written documents and surviving garments. In fact, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., houses the waistcoat and breeches worn by Washington when he resigned his commission just six weeks after leaving Rockingham.

Beginning in 1999, we started by studying these garments, paying close attention to the construction techniques and interior finishes. We did this by inspecting photographs of the garments, as well as visiting the museum and looking at the garments firsthand.

For a more-than-200-year-old uniform, the waistcoat and breeches are in amazingly good condition. Blue is often an unstable dye, but Washington’s coat has retained its inky, nearly black color. The incredibly fine and detailed workmanship of the 93 buttonholes also has withstood the test of time. Washington’s mannequin was striking as well. The breeches were obviously cut for the thick, muscled legs of a horseman,
but unlike a broad-torsoed 21st-century athlete. Washington was slim-chested and narrow-shouldered.

An Exhaustive Search

Inspired by the Smithsonian model, we started our search for materials for three uniforms (one for the Washington figure and two for museum docents), which took almost two years to complete. First, we compared color samples to the original garments until we found a satisfactory match. With the proper colors in hand, the next challenge was finding the right fabric. Months passed as we contacted dozens of fabric stores throughout the United States and abroad.

We finally tracked down a bolt of buff wool, though the store was only able to locate a single, incomplete bolt. Considering the length required for a 6-foot, 2-inch model, we knew that it would be a close cut. The wool also had a somewhat lighter weight than desired, but shrinking helped tighten the weave.

Tracking down buttons proved to be another challenge. Washington’s coat buttons were plain, gold-plate and at more than an inch in diameter, larger than any button referenced in the reproduction patterns. We envisioned polished brass as an acceptable substitute for gold, and if that didn’t work, we considered painting or jewelry-plating the buttons. We finally located a New England company that has produced buttons for the U.S. military for more than a century.

While explaining to the store manager why the buttons had to be a certain size, with plain faces and no domes, she asked, “Are you talking about Washington’s uniform at the Smithsonian?” She had just what we needed: buttons that were 1 1/8 inch in diameter, gold-plate and hand-polished. The smaller buttons for the waistcoat and breeches were available from the same firm.

Construction Begins

With the components of the garment assembled, construction began in September 2000, starting with three shirts, then the breeches and finally the waistcoats and overcoats. By building uniforms from the body out, we could properly fit each garment over those worn beneath. We would leave the buttons and buttonholes until the end.

Like all garments of the day, the 18th-century man’s shirt was sewn by hand with very little waste—the pieces are all straight-edged and fit together neatly. The tails are long and strengthened by gussets, allowing the shirt to be tucked between the legs without ripping the side seams. The shirt is worn with cuff buttons and white neck stock.

Once the shirts were finished, we moved on to the breeches, which proved to be the most difficult to construct. Low in front, high in back, tight through the knee, snug in the thigh and very baggy in the seat, these are unlike anything men wear today. Even the assertion by noted 18th-century clothing historian J.P. Ryan that “regardless of how they feel ... they will not fall off” was small reassurance to the men who modeled for this project.

Men constantly in the saddle often used deerskin for breeches because of its durability. Washington, an outstanding horseman, did at times choose leather breeches rather than cloth. While researching we found a pair of 18th-
century buckskin breeches that matched the buff color of the coat, so perhaps Washington selected his staff colors knowing that he could wear his buff-and-blue coat with his standard riding breeches and still appear in full uniform.

When it became apparent that the buff wool would not stretch to three uniforms, we spent time re-canvasing fabric stores before determining that it might be easier to find a skilled spinner or hand weaver to create a custom dye. An inquiry in England located a manufacturer in business for more than 200 years who promptly supplied nearly 100 samples of wool in a variety of weights, weaves and colors. There was some irony in locating the fabric in England. During the war, Washington forbade any of his personal goods to come from Britain. But we felt a unique connection to this English woolen mill, which first opened for business in 1783, the year the president resided at Rockingham. It delivered the wool on February 22, Washington’s birthday.

Once the excitement of finding the buttons, constructing the breeches and searching for additional fabric ended, construction of the waistcoats and overcoats seemed almost anticlimactic. Unlike contemporary jackets and coats, uniform coats had no shoulder pads or other internal shapings, so they were not as difficult as anticipated. The coat fit smoothly, almost snugly, across the upper back, drawing the shoulders down and back—typical of Colonial clothing.

In July 2001, we started the hand-finishing process. Buttonholes—93 openings in all—were outlined by machine and overworked by hand to provide additional strength at stress points and an appropriate hand-finished appearance.

Bringing the Uniform to Life

After finishing the fabric pieces of the uniform, we searched for a full-size, 6-foot, 2-inch mannequin on which to display it. The initial plan was to put the uniform on a form with a blank head. But like other aspects of the project, our plan expanded when we found a firm that manufactures full-size, lifelike sculptures. We decided to create an image of Washington as he was while residing at Rockingham—an active man of 51. Selecting facial features that best reflected the written and painted record, our image includes faint scars from a smallpox attack in his youth. Prosthetic eyes were selected from nearly a dozen different shades of blue.

As for the mannequin’s hair, we considered the fact that Washington did not like wigs and did not wear one. Most of us are familiar with portraits showing him in what looks like a white wig, but he powdered his hair for formal occasions. Usually he simply tied his hair back in the prevailing style of the day. Descriptions of Washington from 1783 call him “graying,” but hair samples taken at his death 16 years later are not completely void of color. The manufacturer spent hours blending reddish-brown and white hair, then individually implanting strands into the scalp of the figure.

His boots proved to be another challenge. Washington’s Continental black boots with brown cuffs look like fox hunt boots, which are generally readily available in Britain. Unfortunately, our search coincided with an outbreak of hoof-and-mouth disease in the United Kingdom. Cattle were being destroyed, with no leather left for shoes and boots. We eventually located a boot in the United States that could be cut down and the cuff dyed appropriately.

A finishing touch was Washington’s military insignia. As commander in chief, Washington held the rank of lieutenant general. His shoulder boards (called epaulets today) were gold, with three silver stars on each shoulder. Our research led us to a London company that has been creating military gold work for nearly 250 years. Representatives offered valuable insight into the history and construction of period pieces.

Fewer than 24 hours before finalizing specifications for the shoulder boards, we located a pair of epaulets in Massachusetts that had been worn by Washington in 1783. He gave these shoulder boards to David Humphreys, one of three aides who served at Rockingham. Although the stars had been removed from the Massachusetts epaulets, the pieces provided measurement information and confirmation of the proper gold lace pattern.

We also contacted Mount Vernon staff and military historians at the Smithsonian and West Point for information on appropriate stars. Based on portraits by Charles Willson Peale and Washington’s personal standard, six-pointed stars with spangles were selected, befitting the general’s rank.

Today, in the second floor study of George Washington’s final Revolutionary War headquarters, the commander in chief welcomes visitors to Rockingham just as he might have during the summer and autumn of 1783.

Dawn Fairchild, former vice president of the Rockingham Association, is a member of the Princeton Chapter, Princeton, N.J.
The Library of Congress
A Symbol of Knowledge, a Monument to American
Designed to be a utilitarian repository of knowledge for an inexperienced government, the Library of Congress became a symbol of America's ascendancy and now maintains one of the world's most important cultural collections.

During the Continental Congress of 1783, James Madison headed a committee charged with developing a wish list of printed resources for the nation's new legislators. The double-column pages he wrote out—a handwritten outline that survives today—included suggestions such as Grotius' *Law of Nature and Nations*, *Admiralty Laws of G. Britain* and Bushing's *Universal Geography*. There were, however, clearly more pressing matters for the young nation to consider. It wasn't until John Adams' administration in 1800 that the legislature got around to self-appropriating $5,000 for "such books as may be necessary for the use of Congress." With a slow start and a relatively short list, the Library of Congress came to life. It would become the nation's oldest federal cultural institution and one of the world's most significant storehouses.

"It's become a world library," says Dr. John Y. Cole Jr., director of the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress and the author of a number of books about the institution.

It is America's knowledge-based beanstalk—from a few hundred volumes sprouted a behemoth of learning. There are many superlatives to describe the institution sometimes known simply as the LOC, but perhaps most significantly, it is the largest library in the world. The cast of supporting facts is dizzying. Its collection occupies some 530 miles of bookshelves. Every working day the library currently adds about 10,000 items—a huge sum on its own, but a nominal amount next to its total holdings that stand at more than 130 million.

"It's fair to say that the founders never envisioned a library on the scope of what it is now," says Dr. Gerard W. Gawalt, a historian at the Library of Congress who focuses on early American history.
In addition to books, today's library holds a variety of other materials such as recordings, photographs and manuscripts. Of course, the depth and breadth is understandable given the LOC's very ambitious mission, clarified in the 1990s, to make its resources available and useful to Congress and the American people and to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations.

But the library's goals were not always so lofty. In the early days of the republic, it was to be a utilitarian reference room for the nation's lawmakers to consult on matters of state and the day-to-day running of a country. In this regard, the library was playing a familiar governmental role. After all, the idea goes back almost as far as the written word. The Sumerians stored cuneiform tablets. The legendary library of Alexandria in Egypt claimed nearly a half million volumes in the 3rd century B.C., and the Greeks and Romans also collected their prodigious writings. In later centuries, European monarchs had their own private libraries.

While the nation's government resided in Philadelphia from 1790 to 1800, leaders met the need for a reference room by using the private, preexisting Library Company of Philadelphia. In 1731, the always-enterprising Benjamin Franklin founded the self-serving organization with a group of men who shared some commonalities: They wanted to read, but they lacked the money to buy their own private collections. Franklin's scheme allowed the cost of books to be shared among members who purchased a yearly subscription of 40 shillings. The Library Company served the needs of curious congressmen in Philadelphia, but when the government moved south to Washington, D.C., the Library Company did not.

In addition to the considerable number of outside works it holds, the library also collects its own history, including its first set of "charge records"—a list of which items were checked out by which congressmen—from 1800–1802. Looking through the neatly lettered volume done in the script of John Beckley, the first librarian of Congress, one sees that many members of Congress didn't borrow a single item in that time; many checked out only one or two. The records show a predictable pattern: those charged with drafting the nation's new laws consulted reference books, presumably on topics related to the legislation they were considering. Legal tomes and maps were particularly in demand.

Yet Dr. Gawalt notes that there is another pattern of requests: volumes that expanded congressional minds and experiences during a time when access to books was not widespread. Travel books were notably popular because for most legislators in the nascent statute-making body, the District of Columbia was likely the farthest journey they'd ever made.

"In the beginning, you had very provincial people of limited experience who were members of Congress and then they have the opportunity in this library, [to get] international views."

Dr. Gawalt says that the congressional collection played a role in spreading knowledge beyond the nation's capital and a few elected officials. Congressmen saw the value of having written material on hand, and many returned home hoping to replicate, to some degree, the fledgling library. In some cases, congressmen brought home reports that would hardly excite today's constituents, but were a valued commodity in the days when there was a dearth of reference material. Other legislators went a bit further for their districts. Congressman William Plumber unapologetically writes in his diary—kept in the library's expansive stacks alongside papers from personages like George Washington and Thurgood Marshall—of borrowing congressional books in Washington, D.C., and resettling them in his home state of New Hampshire.

The collection, housed in the Capitol building, continued to grow and sustain congressional queries on topics from military affairs to agriculture. However, the collection of 3,000 volumes went up in smoke in 1814. It was no accident; the library was destroyed by the invading British who set fire to the Capitol during the War of 1812.

**CHAPTER TWO**

With the help of Thomas Jefferson, the library's second chapter rose phoenix-like from the ashes of the British immolation. Not surprisingly, the well-read

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This 1880s wood engraving shows the massive stacks of the congressional library collection originally housed at the Capitol.

This watercolor by W. Bergough, published in the February 27, 1897, issue of Harper's Weekly, shows crowded conditions in the Capitol that made a new Library of Congress building necessary. Librarian Allenworth Rand Spottof stands at the far right.
Jefferson, whose personal library was among the largest in the United States, was a strong proponent of the Library of Congress from the start. In 1814, Jefferson was five years into his post-White House retirement and was facing financial difficulties. With the LOC’s empty shelves he saw a double opportunity; he could reseed the legislators’ reference materials with his cache at Monticello and make some cash for himself.

However, he knew that his wide-ranging works—many not in English—which covered philosophy, science and literature might be a hard sell because they were not the standard fare that would assist a governing body. Or so the thinking went.

Writing about his collection, he said, “I do not know that it contains any branch of science which Congress would wish to exclude from their collection; there is, in fact, no subject to which a Member of Congress may not have occasion to refer.”

Buying the argument, Congress accepted the former president’s offer in 1815, appropriating $23,950 for his 6,487 books.

Jefferson’s new guiding philosophy of well-rounded reading meant that what was once considered abstract and esoteric was now deemed relevant and germane. Attempting to cover all knowledge opened the library’s floodgates, greatly expanding the holdings. Today, approximately half of the book and serial holdings are in foreign languages.

“Jefferson’s collection changed our mission because it forever expanded it,” Dr. Cole says.

Not only did Jefferson push for a larger scope, but because he believed in “having educated citizens as the basis for a democracy,” Cole says, it ultimately meant that the stewards of the collection—Congress—were, in turn, obligated to share the knowledge with more common citizens and open the library to the electorate. That mission, largely facilitated by online access, has now grown to encompass the world.

Thanks to a 12-year, $815 million restoration effort that concluded in 1997 and included both the Jefferson and Adams Buildings, visitors today have the same view as those who first saw the dazzling $6 million structure (approximately $140 million at current rates, according to Samuel H. Williamson’s online relative value calculator) at its public unveiling on November 1, 1897. Far from a drab monument to bureaucracy as many public buildings are, the 1897 building is awash in color and ornamentation. Inspired by the Italian Renaissance—the Western world’s explosion of learning—the huge structure has highly detailed mosaic floors and ceilings, giant murals and intricate stone sculptures. Reminiscent of St. Peter’s in Vatican City or the Duomo in Florence, the pièce de résistance is the soaring dome over the principal reading room that measures 165 feet high and 100 feet wide. Over and over, covertly and overtly, a few themes are repeated: the transformative power of education and the value of knowledge. The three bronze doors that led into the building (now closed for security reasons but still visible) highlight the ways in which knowledge is passed on: the written word, the printed word and...
electric light inside and out. And next to history's thought leaders were placed notable Americans: Robert Fulton of steam-ship fame stands next to Christopher Columbus, while James Fenimore Cooper gets a billing alongside Dante, Homer and Aristotle. The country's boundless optimism is particularly evident in the fact that the names of many notable Americans of the day were enshrined in the building, although they do not merit a mention in history books today.

"The overall result was great national pride in the building and then what it represented," Dr. Cole says.

It was clear to the architects and designers that America's contributions would grow, its thinkers would continue to populate the pantheon of greats and would be admired for generations to come. Indeed, America had arrived, and the great library was its testament. One didn't need to read about America's prowess in a book; just seeing the monument that represented millennia of human achievement was believing. What the eyes beheld was clear: Here was a country writing its own bold history, an uncontainable history that would fill miles of shelves—yet a history that was still being written.

Lee Gimpel's story on Jamestown was featured in the September/October 2006 issue.

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**Lost and Found**

In preparation for its 200th anniversary in 2000, the Library of Congress announced its Bicentennial Gifts to the Nation Project, a quest to add rare and important materials to the holdings. In conjunction with the larger project, the library announced plans to replace books lost in an 1851 fire that destroyed approximately 35,000 of the 55,000 volumes, including nearly two-thirds of the Jefferson collection. The library has purchased hundreds of titles—some costing as little as $200 while one commanded $50,000—and received some as donations, such as a 1796 copy of Constantin-François Volney's *The Ruins: Or a Survey of the Revolutions of Empire* provided by the University of Virginia. Hundreds of titles remain to complete Jefferson's collection. Outside of the Jeffersonian subset, the library's bicentennial brought in other significant works, such as six rare manuscript maps drafted by Marquis de Lafayette's aide-de-camp, Michel Capitaine du Chesnoy. Only 18 are known to exist. Hand-colored and described as pristine, the maps provide insight into a number of military actions, including the 1781 Virginia Campaign. Capitaine du Chesnoy was considered to be among the finest cartographers of his time, and his work illustrates some of the country's formative moments.

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**Check out the LOC**

Docent-led public tours are offered four to five times each day, Monday through Saturday. The hour-long public tours meet in the Thomas Jefferson Building and are limited to 50 people.

The Library of Congress
101 Independence Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20540

Visitors’ Information
www.loc.gov/loc/visit
(202) 707-8000

Can't make it to D.C.? Try a virtual tour: www.loc.gov/jefftour

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The Main Reading Room of the Thomas Jefferson Building. 1987 photo by Reid Baker

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The oral tradition. Bronzes and busts of famous thinkers abound, including the likes of Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Herodotus and Newton. Gutenberg is celebrated like a deity on high. A torch of knowledge crowns the dome.

On the other hand, beyond the books and the symbolism of learning, the message of the radiant new structure was: "Check out this library; check out this country!" Less than a century after it acquired its first volumes—not many years after the nation's founding—the edifice billed as the largest and costliest library building in the world was a confident declaration of America's emergent status at the turn of the 20th century.

The fine workmanship was largely the result of dozens of homegrown sculptors, painters and mosaic artists who contributed their talents. Aluminum was newly discovered when the building was erected, and the metallic leaf was used to coat some of the silvery ceiling fronds in the 75-foot-high Great Hall—a feat that impressed the crowds of the 1890s, says library docent Gene Rowe. The library was the first building in Washington, D.C., to use
A Gateway for Immigrants Becomes a Gold Mine for Genealogists

ELLISLAND
How the Ellis Island Passenger Database Revolutionized Genealogy
All Beverly Schwemlein knew about her grandfather was that he came to the United States from Germany sometime in the early 1900s. She also knew that he was only a teenager—about 19 years old—when he ventured away from home and arrived in America. She didn't even know what port he sailed to, but she suspected that Baltimore, the Port of New York and St. Lawrence in Connecticut were good possibilities. **BY LENA BASHA**

ARMED WITH FEW CLUES, SHE STARTED HER RESEARCH the only way she knew how—by sending request forms from her home in Chillicothe, Ohio, to the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, which stored passenger arrival records from U.S. ports on microfilm, in Washington, D.C. After sending in the forms, it would take two months for her to hear that the government had no information on her grandfather’s arrival. Because she was only able to submit three port requests at a time, figuring out when and where her grandfather arrived in the United States became a long and tedious process.

“I’d pick three ports, send them away, a couple of months would pass, and I’d get my three pink forms saying, ‘No record,’” Schwemlein remembers. “And I’d repeat the process, picking three more ports.”

In 2001, just as she was ready to give up her years-long search, Schwemlein tried a new tool: the Statue of Liberty—Ellis Island Foundation’s newly launched online database of passenger arrival lists for the years 1892–1924. The new tool was a long shot, she figured, especially since she didn’t even know if her grandfather had entered the country through Ellis Island.

“It was 1 or 2 in the morning, and I was on a roll doing a lot of other genealogy research,” Schwemlein recalls. “I typed my grandfather’s name—Planinsek—in the passenger search window and pushed the “Start Search” button. It felt a little bit like playing a slot machine, hoping that three cherries would show up on your window.”

Within seconds, she realized she had hit the jackpot.

“All of a sudden, there it was: his name, the date he arrived, his age, the ship name. I couldn’t believe it,” she says.

That night at her computer, Schwemlein learned that her grandfather, originating in Austria, departed Bremen, Germany, on January 19, 1909, on the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse with two traveling companions. He arrived at Ellis Island a week later, on January 26, with $18. He and his companions were the last three people to board the ship, a fact she deduced from seeing their names at the very end of the manifest.

“There is no other way anyone would have remembered some of these details,” she says. “That’s what is priceless about this database. And to learn the very particular fact that this young man had $18 dollars in his pocket. It’s incredible to have that picture of him fleshed out in detail like that. The image of my grandfather at 6'1" is a neat visual image, and the only source of it is this manifest. It really popped off the page at me.”

**BETWEEN 1892 AND 1954, ELLIS ISLAND welcomed more than 12 million immigrants who traveled in third class or steerage—their first and second-class counterparts were not required to undergo inspection—looking to start a new life in America. A regular inspection took anywhere from three to five hours, during which immigrants underwent a brief medical exam and a cross examination by an Ellis Island immigration officer, who used the original ship manifest—which was filled out at the port of departure—to verify the passenger’s full name, address of final destination, how much money the passenger was carrying, their height, eye and hair color and health status. In 1907, during the height of the immigration wave, Ellis Island inspectors processed more than 1.25 million immigrants in a single year.**

Due to a strict quota act passed in 1924, Ellis Island immigrant processing dropped significantly, so for the next 30 years the facilities were used mostly for holding detainees and refugees. In 1954, Ellis Island officially closed its doors and its buildings were considered “excess” federal property, ready to be repurposed. But that never happened. Instead, Ellis Island began a quick downward spiral, succumbing to rot and vandalism so severe that government officials considered demolishing what symbolized the beginning of a new life for millions of Americans.
In 1907, during the height of the immigration wave, Ellis Island inspectors processed more than 1.25 million immigrants in a single year.

In 1965, Ellis Island became part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument, which is managed by the National Park Service, but since Congress allocated no money for upkeep of the monument, the building was left alone for almost 20 more years.

In 1982, President Ronald Reagan asked Lee Iacocca, then chairman of the Chrysler Corporation and whose own parents both arrived at the Port of New York from Italy, to lead a private-sector effort to restore both the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Iacocca and the American people came through, raising in excess of $550 million.

In the largest historic restoration project in U.S. history—costing $160 million and taking six years to complete—the Main Registry Building on Ellis Island reopened in 1990. The new Ellis Island Immigration Museum attracted an average of 2 million visitors annually, many of whom wanted to search for records of their ancestors who passed through the immigration station.

"But there was one problem: [The records] weren't there," says Stephen Briganti, president and chief executive officer of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation. Instead, the ship manifests were stored on microfilm at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

It had long been a goal of the foundation to make those arrival records readily accessible to Ellis Island visitors, but it lacked the financial backing and necessary technology, which made the venture more of a dream than a reality.

"We priced it out in the late 1980s and again a few years later," Briganti says. "It would have cost way beyond the amount of money we could have possibly raised and still open the museum. But in 1996, the time had finally come. The prices of putting together an enormous database like this had gone down, and the technology had gotten better."

Ellis Island teamed up with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which boasts one of the largest collections of genealogy records in the world, to create the American Family Immigration History Center. At first, Briganti says, the database was only going to be available to people visiting Ellis Island, "but by 1998, the board said we're missing something if we don't make it available on the Web."

The first step was to electronically archive the records of the millions of individuals who passed through the Port of New York and Ellis Island between 1892 and 1924. Approximately 12,000 church volunteers worked 5.6 million hours inputting more than 275 million pieces of information about the 25 million individual arrivals into a database. The foundation also found images of about 90 percent of the ships that came through the Port of New York and added those 800 images to the database, Briganti says. Six years later, free of charge to immigrants who passed through Ellis Island. No longer in print, the manual is available online at www.dar.org under the "Education" section.

Given its long history with Ellis Island, when discussions of restoration plans began, NSDAR was quick to get involved. In all, the DAR has raised more than $700,000 toward the restoration, preservation and upkeep of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty.

Today, the Ellis Island Museum includes an NSDAR-sponsored room chronicling the contributions Daughters made to the service of immigrants passing through New York Harbor.

Ellis Island and the DAR

Most immigrants processed at Ellis Island entered America seamlessly, but for millions of others who were denied admission, what should have been a brief stop on Ellis Island turned into an extended stay. Detainees were segregated by sex, separating family members and allowing "fear, bewilderment, mental strain and idleness" to set in, according to Ann Arnold Hunter in A Century of Service: The Story of the DAR (NSDAR, 1991).

In 1923, the DAR created an occupational work program in the Women's Detention Room at Ellis Island, giving the detained women a chance to pass the time by making clothes. The following year, the program was expanded to include men, giving them the necessary instructions and materials to create clothing, accessories and home wares.

After Ellis Island closed as a regular immigration station, the DAR conducted occupational therapy at the Marine Hospital, where chronically ill detainees and others received treatment until the facility closed in 1951. After 1920, the DAR published the "DAR Manual for Citizenship," and distributed it
Approximately 12,000 church volunteers worked 5.6 million hours inputting more than 275 million pieces of information about the 25 million individual arrivals into a database.

on April 17, 2001, the long-awaited passenger search tool launched.

The American Family Immigration History Center welcomes more than 100,000 visitors each year, and since 2001, the website (www.ellisisland.org) has received more than 9 billion hits.

"There were 27,000 hits per second in the first couple of days," Briganti says. "We knew people were waiting for it, but we had no idea. The response was absolutely overwhelming."

AN ESTIMATED 40 PERCENT OF Americans have ancestors who arrived in the United States through Ellis Island. Contrary to common myth, these immigrants weren't just Europeans, Briganti says. Many also came from the Middle East and the Caribbean. But having a hunch that one of your ancestors may have passed through Ellis Island probably won't be enough to find what you're looking for.

"While the database has simplified the search for the genealogist by 99 percent, there is some information you must have before you start," Briganti says. "You have to know the name of the person you're looking for—and you have to have some patience."

Even Briganti had to try several combinations before locating the manifest record of his grandfather, Domenico Briganti, who came from Italy.

Sharon DeBartolo Carmack, a member of the foundation's advisory board and author of The Family Tree Guide to Finding Your Ellis Island Ancestors (Family Tree Books, 2005), says knowing your ancestor's approximate date of birth, approximate date of arrival and, to a lesser extent, place of birth and the names of any travel companions can also make your database search easier and more successful. Her book also dispels two more Ellis Island myths that may prevent Americans from locating their ancestors' arrivals records.

"It is so much more romantic to have an ancestor who came to America as a stowaway on a ship rather than a paying passenger," she says. "While some people actually did sneak aboard ships, this was not an overly common practice."

Even so, she says, if stowaways were discovered, they were either recorded on the passenger lists, usually at the end, or listed as a crew member, "if the stowaway was discovered en route and put to work to earn his passage."

Another myth claims that Ellis Island immigration officers changed the names of immigrants, giving them more American spellings. "This is one of the most persistent myths in genealogy," DeBartolo Carmack says. "The name your ancestor gave when purchasing the ticket to America will be the name that will be recorded on the list. But just like any document, the name could have been accidentally misspelled." Conversely, the volunteer who recorded the records in the database may have had a difficult time deciphering the handwriting on the manifest. As a result, the way you think your ancestor's name was spelled may not be the way it appears in the passenger search—so don't give up if your first—or tenth—search is unsuccessful.

DAN LYNCH NEVER GAVE UP EAGER TO FIND THE passenger records of his grandparents, whom he knew arrived at Ellis Island and later moved to his hometown of Waterbury, Conn. Lynch had always hit a brick wall in his many previous searches. "It was like trying to find a needle in a haystack," he says. "I lost track of how many hours I spent looking for them."

Then Ellis Island launched its database. "I was one of those crazy people who stayed online in the middle of the night waiting for it to launch," he recalls. "Within 10 minutes, I found both of them, after having looked for years."

Lynch, a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, recognizes the impact the Internet has had on genealogy. "The Internet opened up genealogy to a much wider audience—to people like me who work during the day or have kids. We want to pursue genealogy, but can't always find the time."

Lynch recently traveled to Campobasso, Italy, to meet extended family he wouldn't have even known existed without his genealogical research.

"Hearing the names in this little village in Italy is like reading my high-school yearbook," he says. "A big portion of this village, entire families at a time, resettled in Connecticut. My wife thought I was crazy for going, but I had to go. Otherwise, it would haunt me, because I know every single piece of information I find is going to lead me to the next question about my ancestors."

Contributing editor Lena Basha writes the Today's Daughters column.
Most American students know about the assistance France gave to the American Colonies during the Revolutionary War. Some may even have learned of Spain’s contribution.

But few ever realize the role Italians played in America’s fight for freedom.
Although the Italian states remained neutral in the Revolution, helping to maintain a peaceful Europe, many Italian individuals contributed to the cause for American independence. To understand their role, it’s important to first understand Italian history. For much of the first half of the 18th century, the peninsula was a battlefield on which Austrian Hapsburgs and the Spanish and French Bourbons vied for control of the strategically important region. After the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ended the War of Austrian Succession in 1748, a fragile peace ensued, though the peninsula remained largely divided between states allied with Austria and those allied with France and Spain. Each of the Italian states had its own government and rulers. This détente was in effect at the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775.

**Vow of Neutrality**

In July 1777, Continental Congress appointed Ralph Izard, a South Carolinian living in Paris, as the American Commissioner to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in hopes of obtaining much-needed funding from the Italian states for the Patriots. This appointment was revoked in 1779 because Izard was never able to assume his post in Florence. Leopold I, who ruled Tuscany, refused to receive Izard or any other American representative. Politically, he was in a precarious position. The son of Francis I and Maria Theresa of Austria, Leopold was a Hapsburg, and Austria was the traditional ally of England. But his sister was Marie-Antoinette, wife of King Louis XVI of
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To avoid alienating himself from the French or the Austrians, Leopold kept Tuscany neutral. As a result, the Grand Duchy did not offer any assistance to the Colonies in their struggle for independence.

The American rebels did receive a more favorable response from the kingdom of Naples. By the terms of the Treaty of Vienna in 1738, Austria transferred control of the kingdom of Naples—which included Sicily—to Spain. One of the conditions of the treaty was that Naples could never be united permanently with the Spanish Crown. Carlos, son of Philip V of Spain, became Charles IV of Naples, remaining on the Neapolitan throne until the 1759 death of his brother. He went on to assume control of the Spanish throne as Carlos IIII, while his son, Ferdinand, succeeded him to the throne of Naples. In 1778, after Spain had declared war on Great Britain, Ferdinand opened Naples' and Sicily's ports to American ships.

In October 1778, the Neapolitan ambassador to France asked the American commissioners in Paris for a description of their flag so American ships could be easily recognized on their approach to Neapolitan waters. Although American ships were allowed safe harbor in Neapolitan ports, Ferdinand did not recognize American independence until the Treaty of Paris was signed, officially ending the war. Like Tuscany, Naples was one of the neutral states that agreed not to take sides in the Revolution, but its neutrality, along with that of other Italian states, may have indirectly contributed to American independence.

**Precarious Peace**

The entry of France and Spain into the American war for independence caused concern for Europe as a whole. The devastating Seven Years' War, which ended in 1763, was still fresh in the minds of the European monarchs. A network of complex alliances helped maintain peace in Europe. Once France and Spain declared war on Great Britain, other European powers, such as Austria, Prussia and Russia, feared their allies would drag them into a new European conflict. Great Britain, isolated from the rest of Europe by the English Channel and the North Sea, was not as threatened by the prospect of another continental war. France, with its long border with the German and Italian states, was in far more danger. Maintaining peace on the continent was a prime concern for France, and Britain's failure to bring other European nations, such as Russia and Austria, into the war on its side, was a relief. By not getting involved in the American conflict, the Italian states helped maintain a peaceful, neutral Europe throughout the American Revolution. Meanwhile, Britain stood alone against the Americans, French and Spanish—and it was only through those combined military forces that America gained its freedom.

**Eager Patriots**

Although the Italian states remained neutral, many Italian individuals contributed to the cause of American independence. Francis Vigo was one prominent name.

Vigo was born in Mondovi in 1747. Prior to the Revolution, he had migrated to New Orleans where he served with the Spanish militia. In 1772, he moved to St. Louis where he became a successful trader with the Indians. It was Vigo who loaned George Rogers Clark the funds he needed to pay for his troops and their supplies during their campaign against the British and Indian forces in the Ohio Valley. After the war, he petitioned Congress on several occasions for reimbursement for his loans to Clark. Eventually the matter was referred to the state of Virginia in 1835. Letters of support from Generals William Henry Harrison, Anthony Wayne and Clark
himself were presented to the state’s Commissioner for Revolutionary Claims. Although his claim was eventually approved, Vigo died before receiving any government compensation. It was not until a Supreme Court decision in 1876 that America’s debt to Vigo was finally repaid. Having no descendants of his own, his wife’s heirs received the money.

Financial support wasn’t the only way Vigo expressed his support for the Patriots. As a well-established trader in St. Louis, his knowledge of the Native Americans and his acquaintance with the French population in the Ohio Valley made him invaluable to Clark. In December 1778, Clark received word that Post Vincennes, under the command of Captain Helm of Virginia, needed supplies desperately. Because of Vigo’s knowledge of the region, Clark sent him with the supplies. Just outside the post, a party of Indians under the command of a British officer captured Vigo. Governor Hamilton, who had retaken the post, released him on the condition that he would do nothing to injure the British cause during his journey home.

In accordance with the letter, if not the spirit, of the agreement, Vigo returned directly to St. Louis—and then traveled to the captured British post at Kaskaskia where he told Clark about the observations he had made of the British garrison at Vincennes. Armed with this information, Clark then proceeded to Vincennes and retook the post for the last time, helping ensure America’s control of what would become the Northwest Territory. Vigo became a citizen of the new United States and eventually settled in Vincennes, where he died in 1836. Indiana named a county for him and erected a statue in his honor at the George Rogers Clark Memorial in Vincennes.

Supporting the Cause

Another Italian-born Patriot was Philip Mazzei. Born in 1730 in the village of Poggio a Caiano in Tuscany, Mazzei spent his early life studying surgery and practicing medicine in Florence and Leghorn. Eventually he abandoned that career and went to London where he established himself as an importer of cheese and other Mediterranean products. While in London, he met Thomas Adams of Virginia and Benjamin Franklin. They encouraged him to come to America, which he did in 1773 with the intention of establishing a wine industry in Virginia. He settled in Albemarle County on a farm adjacent to Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello. The men quickly became friends, and once the Revolution began, Mazzei devoted himself to the American cause.

His writings supporting American separation from Great Britain appeared in Virginia newspapers. Mazzei expressed the idea that “all men are by nature equally free and independent.” As much for his continued support of the American cause as well as for his European connections, Virginia appointed him its agent to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany with hopes that he could help obtain much needed money and supplies. In 1779, he left Virginia for Tuscany where he was received as a returning Tuscan citizen, not an American representative. In spite of Mazzei’s efforts, Leopold I never agreed to supply the Americans with provisions or money. Mazzei returned to America briefly after the war, then went back to Europe where he remained until his death in 1816.

Antonio Giannini was one of a handful of Italians who accompanied Mazzei to Albemarle County from Italy. While Mazzei turned his attention to political matters after the war’s outbreak, Giannini obtained work at Monticello as a gardener and served a tour of duty in Captain Benjamin Harris’ company of the Albemarle County militia. Jefferson noted Giannini’s return to Monticello in his account book. The Italian died in 1825 in Albemarle County.

Buried Legacy

The Italian contribution to American independence wasn’t limited to those already living in North America. When France joined the fight in 1778, its armies included men from all over Europe. Three regiments—the Royal Italien, the Piedmont and the Perche—are believed to have been composed largely of Italians. A return of the officers of the Royal Italien Regiment, which fought in America in 1780 and 1781, serves as confirmation, at least in part, of this assumption. This return (see sidebar) consists of the Gallicized names of soldiers from all over Italy, as well as other European countries.

From the frontier outposts of St. Louis and Vincennes to Europe, Italians helped the United States gain its independence from Great Britain in many ways. Vigo, Mazzei and Giannini are but a few. The names of many more remain buried in European and American archives, waiting to be rediscovered. Both Italians and Americans can be proud of these Italian Patriots, who risked their lives fighting for American freedom.

Darryl Lickliter works in the DAR Library’s Document Management Office, specifically on the President General’s Project.
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