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Spirited Adventures

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By Amy Cates

Our Patriots

Unappreciated Patriot

One battle casts a shadow on the legacy of Arthur St. Clair, who proudly served 45 years as a military strategist and distinguished statesman.

By Dick Phillips
From the President General

Every March, Irish-Americans gather in cities across the country to celebrate their heritage with St. Patrick’s Day parades and festivities. Did you know that the first St. Patrick’s Day parade was held in New York City in 1762 by Irish soldiers serving in the British army? Irish-Americans have always been proud of their past, as we explore in our “Pride of the Irish” feature. From the Scots-Irish who helped settle the frontier to the Irish Catholics who fought for America’s independence and bolstered the democracy with the power of their votes, the influence of these immigrants from the Emerald Isle helped shape our republic, and continues to define our nation today.

In our cover feature titled “Revolutionary Hair,” we reveal how men and women’s obsession with their hair is far from a modern phenomenon. Our early American ancestors spent time and money on their hairstyles—whether importing wigs from Europe or forming their own distinctly American looks. Read on to learn more about big wigs, men in pigtails and the origin of the term “powder room.”

Revolutionary War officer and statesman Arthur St. Clair crossed the Delaware with Washington, served as the ninth president of Continental Congress, and became the first governor of the Northwest Territory. Unfortunately, this distinguished Patriot’s long list of contributions to our founding and growth as a nation was marred by a lost battle he was forced to fight late in life. The Our Patriots feature in this issue strives to give a more balanced view of St. Clair’s career.

The importance of Pittsburgh, Pa., as a 20th-century industrial powerhouse is well-known, but fewer know its Colonial and early American history. In our Spirited Adventures story, we discover how this rich area played a major role in America’s westward expansion. We also touch on the significance of sites like Fort Pitt and the Fort Pitt Blockhouse, maintained by the Fort Pitt Society and the Pittsburgh Chapter of DAR. In fact, the blockhouse preservation won the chapter first place in the NSDAR Historic Preservation Project Contest, an award presented by the Historic Preservation Committee at Continental Congress in 2009.

In this issue, you’ll also read about U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jennifer Minus, who worked around the clock to provide support to the families of the victims following the 2009 Fort Hood shooting. Today, Lt. Col. Minus is bravely serving her country on a yearlong deployment to Iraq, so please keep your fellow Daughter and her family—along with all of our deployed military personnel—in your thoughts.

Linda Gist Calvin

American Spirit • March/April 2010
The day after returning from a training mission last November, Army Lieutenant Colonel Jennifer Minus was scheduled to be immunized for her upcoming deployment to Iraq. But after being away from her post as the chief of plans and operations for the III Armored Corps G-1 at Fort Hood for 10 days, she was still catching up, so she postponed her appointment. That meant Lt. Col. Minus was not at the Soldier Readiness Processing Center on November 5, 2009, when an Army major opened fire, killing 13 and wounding 30 others.

One soldier from her unit was there, and he sent a text message to let everyone know he was OK but couldn’t leave the building. In fact, the entire base—one of the largest military bases in the world—was locked down for several hours after the attack. “There were thousands of cars at the gate waiting to get out, once it was safe,” she recalls.

Lt. Col. Minus was not among the people lined up to leave that night, however. Casualty support was one of the tasks she was trained to do, and her superiors needed her help in the emergency operations center.

“I got there about 2:30 p.m., and that began my all-nighter,” she says. “They relieved me about 8:30 the next morning.”

For the next week and a half, Lt. Col. Minus worked almost 18 hours a day, helping process requests for information from the commander and ensure that the families of the deceased and wounded were supported, from notification until after the memorial ceremony.

“I’ve been involved in different aspects of casualty operations for 16 years, and of course, it is always difficult,” she says, “but November 10, the day of the memorial ceremony, was overwhelming.”

On that day, Lt. Col. Minus was the escort for the families of the deceased. “I ensured they were welcomed, thanked for coming, made comfortable and had everything they needed while they spoke with senior military officials and President Obama and the first lady,” she says. “The time and attention that the first lady and president took with each family member was so impressive. A lot of grieving went on in those couple hours, and it meant so much for the families.”

Lt. Col. Minus has always risen to a challenge. When she was 16, she saw a newspaper article that ranked the United States Military Academy at West Point as the hardest school to get into. She couldn’t wait to apply. “By the time I got in, I had fallen in love with the ideals and campus of West Point,” she says.

After graduating in 1993 with a degree in American history, Lt. Col. Minus joined the Adjutant General’s
Corps, which handles human resources for the Army. She was stationed in Germany for three years, where she was in charge of routing the mail sent to soldiers deployed overseas. In Germany, she met and married her husband, Joe, but she was deployed to Bosnia soon after the wedding. “We didn’t get to see each other very much that first year of marriage,” she says.

Several years later, she found herself back at West Point, teaching American history to cadets and then coordinating personnel assignments for the academy. One of the fondest memories of her Army career is West Point graduation day—both her own and the ones she witnessed while working behind the scenes. “To see these young cadets who are knowingly going into an Army at war and to know that they’re willing to sacrifice everything for their country is an amazing thing to watch,” she says.

In July 2009, Lt. Col. Minus left West Point and arrived at Fort Hood for her latest assignment—deployment to Baghdad, where she’ll oversee human resources operations and planning for the U.S. Forces Iraq J-1.

Saying good-bye to her children Joseph, 11, and Juliana, 8, isn’t easy, she says, but almost daily phone calls and frequent care packages will make the distance between them feel shorter. Lt. Col. Minus also purchased dolls for each of them from HugaHero.com. “The doll has a picture of me on a big pillow,” she says. “They can hug them or sleep with them whenever they miss me.”

When she returns from her deployment next spring, Lt. Col. Minus, who currently serves as Regent of the Quassaick Chapter, Newburgh, N.Y., already has a long to-do list that includes all of the things she enjoys doing with her family—hiking, visiting historical sites and keeping her children involved in the Children of the American Revolution (C.A.R.). “They came with me to DAR Continental Congress last year,” says Lt. Col. Minus, who for many years has served as a page at New York’s state conferences and Continental Congress. “They got to see the C.A.R. room and displays, which they thought were really neat.”

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When David Mitchell graduated from college in 1990, he knew he wanted to teach history, but didn’t know the best way to make it happen—until he discovered the then brand-new Teach for America program.

Founded in 1990, Teach for America recruits top college graduates to teach in underfunded, low-income school districts. Mitchell was part of the program’s first group of graduates in 1990, and his first job was at an urban school near Baltimore. There he was inspired to work toward social change—particularly when it came to America’s education system.

“I use my history and sociology classes to show my students where social institutions break down—whom they are failing,” says Mitchell, now an American history and sociology teacher at Masconomet Regional High School in Topsfield, Mass. “One big issue I have is inequity in education. We need to rethink funding for public schools to improve education for all students.”

Thanks to his work with Teach for America and his drive to promote fairness among school districts, Mitchell was named the Gilder Lehrman History Teacher of the Year in 2008.

He works to bridge the education gap by teaching summer courses in low-income school districts in Baltimore and Mississippi. “We need to rethink our view of educators in America,” he says. “There are structural factors that keep talented teachers from spending a career in an urban school district. Those things have to change, but until then, I’m going to do what I can to reach out to those students.”

Mitchell is also devoted to guiding young teachers, working with local colleges to train them. “When I was doing Teach for America in Baltimore, I had a great mentor who was equal parts disciplinarian and caretaker,” he says. “Equity in education starts with good teachers.”

In his classroom, Mitchell doesn’t just lecture about the American Revolution. He assigns hands-on projects like scrapbooks. “Students take on the role of a member of the Revolution, and then put together a scrapbook of primary documents to record that person’s life,” he says.

Debates about the Revolution are held in a make-believe Colonial tavern where students take on the roles of loyalists and patriots. “They debate the pros and cons of a revolution,” he says. “The debate gets heated because some of the students play colonists who profited from the English system. Students learn that America was born on the idea of risking everything in hopes of something greater.”

Instead of relying on a textbook to compare the laws of different Colonies, Mitchell’s students form groups to create a marketing campaign for each Colony. By compiling brochures and tourist information, “they learn what each Colony had to offer,” he says. “They learn what each education system was like, what each farming region produced and what drew a family to settle in Virginia instead of Georgia.”

Mitchell’s variety of teaching experiences have kept him in the classroom for 19 years. “I have no desire to do anything else,” he says. “I still love bringing history alive for my students.”
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Thanks to its mild winters and dry summers, Portland, Ore., offers a fitting destination for viewing the first signs of spring. Dubbed the City of Roses, Portland houses some of the country’s finest gardens, including the International Rose Test Garden, the oldest continuously operated public garden in the United States. With more than 8,000 roses, the garden is maintained in part by the century-old Portland Rose Society, whose members help prune the roses and give advice and assistance to rose gardeners.

Portland also is home to two exotic gardens, the Classical Chinese Garden and the Japanese Garden. The Chinese Garden, designed in authentic Ming Dynasty style, blooms year-round. With covered walkways, bridges, open colonnades, pavilions and a rich landscape, no two views inside the park are the same. Encompassing five-and-a-half acres, the Japanese Garden is a tranquil haven within the city. It includes an authentic Japanese teahouse, views of Mount Hood and a composition of stone, water and plants influenced by Japanese culture.

Considered the Northwest’s premier display garden by some, the Oregon Garden is a perfect place to experience the region’s natural landscape. Visitors can walk or ride a tram through 80 acres and 20 specialty gardens. The park includes water features, conifer trees, a 400-year-old signature oak tree, wetlands and wildlife. In March and April, you can see a variety of flower species in bloom.

Once you’ve stopped to smell the roses, don’t miss other famous Portland sites like the Pittock House, the turn-of-the-century home of Henry Pittock, owner of the Oregonian newspaper and Powell’s City of Books, an independent bookstore that takes up an entire city block. The Portland Saturday Market features artisans as well as dozens of food booths offering everything from Thai cuisine to Portland favorites like kielbasa and cabbage rolls. For more information on Portland’s attractions, visit www.travelportland.com.

Did you know?

In March 1912, Juliette “Daisy” Gordon Low held the first Girl Scout meeting with 18 members from Savannah, Ga. Her mission was to bring girls out of isolated home environments and into their communities.
IN THE EARLY 1950s, librarian Dr. Mayme Avery Clayton started collecting rare, out-of-print books written by or about African-Americans. Before long, Dr. Clayton’s collection expanded to include important rare documents, films, music and other artifacts, and slowly grew to become the second-largest collection of African Americana.

According to the Western States Black Research and Educational Center, when Dr. Clayton was asked what motivated her, she replied, “I wanted to be sure that children would know that black people have done great things, and at the time, I didn’t see anyone else saving the history.”

To honor her life’s work—and give the public a chance to view the collection—Dr. Clayton’s son, Avery Clayton, purchased a courthouse in Culver City, Calif., to house her collection in what will become the Mayme A. Clayton Library and Cultural Center. The courthouse was purchased days before Dr. Clayton’s death in October 2006, and in the three years following, Clayton dedicated himself to raising the funds needed to open the library-museum to the public.

Unfortunately, Clayton passed away in November 2009, without seeing his hard work come to fruition. While the museum’s founders are hoping to keep its soft opening deadline of spring 2010, interim CEO Cynthia Hudley says they cannot commit to that date.

For more information on the collection, visit **www.claytonmuseum.org**.
Mothers of America

Abigail Adams

While most of us know Abigail Adams as the wife of the second president and the mother of the sixth, others remember her for penning the famous “Remember the Ladies” letter to her husband during Continental Congress. Fewer are aware of her fight for gender equality in her home and in the public eye. Mining a trove of historical documents (including more than 2,000 letters Adams wrote in her lifetime), award-winning historian Woody Holton reveals a rarely seen portrait of the first lady in his new biography *Abigail Adams: A Life* (Free Press, 2009).

By showcasing Adams’ complex relationship with her husband—including their clashing views on religion and family—as well as her role in expanding the family’s finances, Holton draws back the curtain on this enterprising role model. For example, although laws prohibited married women from owning land well into the 19th century, thus keeping many women from accumulating personal wealth, Adams collected a substantial fortune by purchasing depreciated war bonds. After hiding her fortune from her husband for years, Adams eventually obtained his support.

In *Abigail Adams*, Holton sets personal anecdotes of Abigail’s life against the backdrop of a harsh political climate, bringing about a fuller understanding of one of the most fascinating characters on the country’s early political stage.

Dolley Madison

Born to humble circumstances, the life of Dolley Payne Todd Madison, wife of fourth president James Madison, is a remarkable American success story. The child of two financially insecure parents in North Carolina, Dolley rose out of the lower class when she married a successful young lawyer. After her first husband passed away, she married James Madison and later became the nation’s first lady.

In *The Selected Letters of Dolley Payne Madison* (University of Virginia Press, 2009), editors David B. Mattern and Holly C. Shulman use Madison’s letters to highlight the significance of her behind-the-scenes role in politics. Madison is often credited for setting the standard of involvement by which all political women in Washington should be measured, leading Washington, D.C., society during the eight years her husband was president.

Organized chronologically from her correspondence as a young adult through her letters written as a widow in the 1840s, *The Selected Letters of Dolley Payne Madison* gives readers a firsthand look into the thoughts and feelings of a pivotal societal figure.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

One of the foremost advocates for women’s rights in the late 1800s, Elizabeth Cady Stanton fought against limitations placed on women and wrote many influential works on women’s suffrage. Lori Ginzberg’s new biography, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* (Hill and Wang, 2009), tells the tale of this passionate leader.

A mother of seven and the wife of abolitionist Henry Brewster Stanton, Elizabeth considered women’s rights activism her life’s work. While she enjoyed the company of anti-slavery activists, Stanton found her own voice in the 1840s, when she proposed and led the first women’s rights convention, held in 1848 in Seneca Falls, N.Y., along with Lucretia Mott and close friend Susan B. Anthony.

While applauding Stanton’s strides in gender equality, Ginzberg doesn’t leave out the more complex parts of her personality. In the book’s first sentence, the author notes that Stanton was “brilliant, self-righteous, charismatic, self-indulgent, mischievous, intimidating and charming.” Her then-radical notions on human rights and penchant for making inflammatory public outbursts drew criticism and made some of her contemporaries uncomfortable. But her outspoken nature did much to propel women’s issues beyond voting rights. By including all facets of Stanton’s story, Ginzberg creates a vibrant portrait of this often misrepresented and overlooked figure.
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Honoring Lafayette: Contemporary Quilts from France and America
The DAR Museum, Washington, D.C.; April 16 through September 4, 2010

In honor of the Marquis de Lafayette’s service to our country during the American Revolution, the DAR Museum will present an exhibition of contemporary quilts made by French quilters and by Americans in formerly French Louisiana. The exhibit of loaned quilts includes one that commemorates Hurricane Katrina. Items from the DAR Museum collection, including souvenir plates and shoes worn by a woman who danced with the marquis, will also be on display to commemorate Lafayette’s triumphal visit to the United States.

Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America
S. Dilllon Ripley Center, International Gallery; Washington, D.C.; through April 25, 2010

From the time Catholic nuns arrived in America nearly 300 years ago, they have filled the role of nurses, teachers and social workers, building schools, hospitals, homeless shelters and more. This exhibit of rare artifacts and photographs from more than 400 communities examines the role of Catholic sisters in American life. For more information, visit www.si.edu/ripley.

Pounds, Pence and Pistareens: The Coins and Currency of Colonial America
The DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum; Williamsburg, Va.; ongoing

Learn about cobs, pistareens, farthings, doubloons and other types of Colonial currency, courtesy of the generosity of collectors Joseph R. and Ruth P. Lasser, who amassed a currency collection of several thousand pieces. Discover what types of currency our Colonial ancestors used, the significance of images engraved on coins, and the variety of shapes and colors of paper money. For more information, visit www.history.org.

Friends, Romans, Americans
A never-before-seen collection of artifacts from ancient Rome is now on display at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The marble sculptures, paintings, coins and ceramics displayed in the “Ancient Rome and America” exhibit draw striking comparisons between the two cultures. The collection includes more than 300 artifacts from Italy’s leading archaeological collections in Florence, Naples and Rome, in addition to 40 lending institutions in the United States. The exhibit will be on display through August 1, 2010.
What’s in a Name

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

At an early meeting of the Abraham Coryell Chapter, Vinita, Okla., each member related the service of her Revolutionary ancestor. The group then discussed which ancestor’s history was the most interesting and voted to name the chapter for Abraham Coryell, the ancestor of Mary Perrin Coppock. Coryell served in the militia as a private in Captain John Phillips’ Company Third Regiment, Hunterdon County, N.J. Legend has it that Coryell conveyed George Washington across the Delaware River through the ice at Coryell Ferry, and General Washington gave him a note for $2,500 to be paid by the United States for his services, provided the government became able to pay it. According to the story, the note was destroyed by fire.

The namesake of Ruth Floyd Woodhull Chapter, Freeport, N.Y., was the oldest of Nicoll and Tabitha Floyd’s nine children. Ruth married Nathaniel Woodhull. After 15 years of marriage that produced one daughter, Nathaniel left home to join the fight for independence. Wounded and taken prisoner, Nathaniel sent a message to Ruth, saying, “Bring goods and money to buy more. Our men lack comforts and are poorly fed.” Ruth, journeying swiftly through the enemy lines, reached Nathaniel shortly before he died of an infection. She then accompanied his body home. Ruth Floyd Woodhull went on to see her daughter marry and give her a granddaughter.

Sandy Springs Chapter, Sandy Springs, Ga., is named for a region whose history dates to 400 A.D. Inhabited by the Creek and Cherokee American Indians in the 1500s, the freshwater springs bubbling from the sandy ground sustained life for those early inhabitants. A heavily traveled site, Sandy Springs became an American Indian trading post and served as such until gold was discovered in the region and the Treaty of Indian Spring forced the American Indians to cede their land to the government. In 1821, with the onset of land lotteries, the area’s rich, fertile soil supported a farming community. Today the springs continue to produce 10 gallons of water per minute.

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The Bookshelf
New books aim the spotlight on women’s contributions at Valley Forge as well as their influence on the lives and careers of the Founders.

The Forgotten Women At Valley Forge

The title of Following the Drum: Women at the Valley Forge Encampment (Potomac Books, 2009) may prompt a reader to think “camp follower.” Author Nancy K. Loane immediately dispels that preconception by noting that the wives of many Continental Army officers, including Martha Washington, visited their husbands during winter encampments. A former seasonal ranger at Valley Forge National Historical Park, Loane spent numerous years researching journals, letters and official histories to develop a picture of the roles women played in the Continental Army’s long, often bitter deployment.

She divides the women into three major groups—the ladies whose husbands were generally high-ranking officers who could give their spouses at least some basic accommodations other than a tent; the women of the officers’ military “families,” who performed needed services such as cooking, cleaning, sewing and mending; and the more anonymous and amorphous group of camp followers—women who cooked, laundered and nursed their soldiers.

For the women, visiting their husbands generally meant long, uncomfortable and dangerous trips by carriage in winter—the time of year when little fighting took place. As the wife of the commander in chief, Martha Washington was often feted as she passed through major towns and cities. She and other officers’ ladies sometimes spent days as guests of friends or dignitaries, which helped break up the time spent in jolting, badly sprung carriages.

While their accommodations were anything but grand—usually a borrowed house or part of a house, which would also be occupied by aides and others in the military family—the ladies’ experience of camp was far different from that of other women. For instance, Valley Forge had theatrical performances for a time until Congress forbade the “frolic” in such grim times.

Other ladies at Valley Forge and other camps included Catherine Greene, the wife of General Nathanael Greene, and Lucy Knox, whose husband was General Henry Knox. Most of Lucy Knox’s family members were ardent Tories—they had opposed her marriage to the socially inferior Henry, and the Revolution rent her relationship with her family.

Naturally, these ladies did not cook and clean for their husbands. Their extended military family included both slave and nonslave servants who oversaw the households and performed domestic tasks. One of Washington’s servants, a slave named Hannah whose master lived in New York, earned enough in wages to buy her freedom; years later at the age of 102, she recounted her experiences to an interviewer. Loane notes that such women were not officially considered a part of officers’ military families, but that some, like Washington, regarded them in that light.

Camp followers occupied the bottom of the social ladder in camp—about 400 spent the winter of 1777–1778 at Valley Forge, and some carried children along with them. Many had followed a husband or relative in order to care for him and to earn food for themselves. Loane notes that following the army offered these destitute, mostly anonymous women at least some chance of survival.

They performed necessary services—as laundresses and seamstresses trying to help the soldiers measure up to Washington’s orders mandating clean uniforms, as nurses for the injured and the many who came down with fevers, dysentery and other illnesses; and as cooks. And a few—such as Deborah Sampson Gannett—also donned soldiers’ uniforms and fought alongside the men.

In an appendix, Loane devotes some effort to debunking a number of myths about Martha Washington created by 19th-century writers who were intent on portraying the first first lady as a kind of Florence Nightingale, endlessly visiting the suffering soldiers at Valley Forge. Those accounts omit descriptions of Martha Washington enjoying elegant dinners and camp theater evenings, which are well-documented, and substitute undocumented and often sentimental events, Loane writes. As so often is the case, facts are more fascinating than fiction, and the author does a service to correct these myths.

— Bill Hudgins
The influence of the ones close to us often shapes the development of our attitudes, temperaments and worldviews. The same is true of our nation’s forefathers. In *The Intimate Lives of the Founding Fathers* (Smithsonian Books, 2009), Thomas Fleming examines the ways in which six of our nation’s early leaders—George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison—were affected by the women around them, including their mothers, spouses and lovers.

Much has been written about the strong partnerships forged by George and Martha Washington and John and Abigail Adams. Fleming presents evidence of those bonds in *Intimate Lives*, while also giving details about these two formidable women before they met their husbands.

Long before she became first lady, Martha Custis was Virginia’s wealthiest and most eligible widow. Martha’s fortune afforded her great freedom of choice in picking her next husband, and she attracted no shortage of suitors. Though as a first lady in her 60s Martha acquired a somewhat dowdy image, a 1757 portrait painted of her shows “an attractive young woman, with large hazel eyes and curly brown hair.” And, Fleming writes, “Very early in life, she revealed a startling capacity to charm the male sex.” Young Colonel George Washington did his best to charm Martha as well by doting on her children and generously tipping her servants.

If the Washingtons and Adamses established the standard for American political unions, James and Dolley Madison upheld that benchmark. Madison, a diminutive man at 5 feet 6 inches tall and less than 100 pounds, suffered from a lifetime of poor health and had a reputation for social awkwardness. In pursuing the vibrant Dolley Payne Todd, he enlisted everyone from Dolley’s cousin to Martha Washington to aid his cause. While Dolley may not have initially imagined their union as a love match, Fleming contends that, “The intensity of Madison’s feelings swiftly awoke a similar response in Dolley. Whatever ambivalence she felt about their marriage vanished forever.”

Marriage to Dolley made Madison “more open and conversant than I ever saw him before,” said one Federalist politician. When Madison became secretary of state and the couple moved to Washington, D.C., Dolley took over and maintained control of the social scene throughout her husband’s presidency, Fleming says, even as the White House was burned and Madison’s popularity plummeted during the unpopular War of 1812. Dolley used her social aptitude to Madison’s political advantage, charming foreign ministers, dispatching opponents and revolutionizing the role of the president’s wife.

By contrast, Alexander Hamilton, though he strove to avoid the domestic upheaval he witnessed during his childhood in the West Indies, seemed determined to sabotage his marriage to Elizabeth Schuyler. Hamilton’s mother, Rachel Lavien Hamilton, was a serial adulteress who abandoned or ran off two husbands before she died of yellow fever, leaving Hamilton and his brother orphaned. In choosing the agreeable Betsey, Hamilton set a course for a harmonious marriage. However, a prolonged flirtation with his sister-in-law Angelica and a notorious affair with a woman named Maria Reynolds made a happy marriage impossible.

The Hamiltons were certainly not the only founding family touched by scandal. A young Washington pined for the wife of a family friend, Benjamin Franklin maintained a “wife” on each side of the Atlantic Ocean, and James Madison retreated from the dating scene for a decade after his fiancée broke their engagement in favor of a medical student.

Another highlight of the book is Fleming’s explanation of some of the connections between these leaders, giving readers the impression of unrestricted access to a historic fraternity and sorority. For example, Hamilton once served as a trusted aide to Washington, who became a sometime father figure to him. Likewise, Betsey Hamilton used Martha Washington’s behavior as a model for her own. And Aaron Burr, dueling partner of Hamilton, once vied for Dolley Madison’s affections.

Analyzing history in the context of our Founders’ personal relationships makes for fascinating reading. The bulk of *Intimate Lives* remains focused on the men, but it is refreshing to view those lives with consideration to the remarkable women who accompanied them on their quest to build a nation.

— Courtney Peter
Middle-class American women of the mid-1800s spent mornings in an outfit like this: a fitted dressing gown whose skirt opened over an elaborately decorated petticoat, embroidered "en tablier" (apron style) in a triangular panel at the front, the only place where it would be seen.

While the dressing gown was considered an informal at-home garment, and its wearer might not be as tightly corseted as she would be later in the day, it is by no means loose. Darts and bones in the bodice’s front provide shaping and structure.

Brown and blue was a popular color combination in the 1850s. Ombré, or shaded, silk adds interest to the dressing gown’s blue-and-black silk check. Three decorative “buttons” on the bodice front are made of black silk pleated around a blue pom-pom, with dangling tassels. The skirt’s pockets have matching buttons and tassels.

The dome-shaped skirt is knife-pleated into a one-inch waistband of brown taffeta, which is also used in ruched trim throughout the gown. The ruching is designed to give an illusion of a small waist by curving down from the arms and narrowing toward the waist, and then widening from the waist to the hem.

Additional ruching trims the hem, pockets and the wide “pagoda” sleeves popular in the 1850s. The neckline, back bodice seams and even the skirt’s seams between panels are piped with brown taffeta. Although the sewing machine was coming into use at the time this gown was made, the dress was entirely hand-sewn.
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George Washington described southwestern Pennsylvania this way: "Nature has well contrived this place." His words were fitting for the site where Pittsburgh was born more than 250 years ago—the spot where the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers converge to form the Ohio. By Amy Cates

By Amy Cates

American Spirit • March/April 2010

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust

The City of Pittsburgh

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JEFF GREENBERG, SHARON DOMIN, TOMASZ PIETRYZK, BEN THOMAS/ISTOCKPHOTO
According to the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, Colonial settlers in the Northeast regarded the Pittsburgh area as the nation’s earliest “gateway to the West.”

The winding, scenic waterways allowed the settlers to explore the new land and stretch the young nation’s boundaries. Probably the greatest impact the rivers had on Pittsburgh’s early history is that they provided access to the Great Lakes, New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico and, later, the Louisiana Territory. These rivers proved to be a major factor in Pittsburgh’s growth.

Known best for its steel heritage and its role in modern industrialization, Pittsburgh is also the birthplace of the Big Mac and home of the first cable suspension bridge. It was here that Jonas Salk developed a vaccine for polio, and where listeners tuned in to hear the first broadcast from a commercial radio station—the results of the Harding-Cox presidential election. Home of Steelers football, Pirates baseball and Penguins hockey, Pittsburgh has been a catalyst for rapid change, industry and modernization since its birth more than 250 years ago.

**Before Iron and Steel**

Pittsburgh owes much of its notable heritage to its location and landscape, which was highly valued by British and French forces in the mid-18th century. The French wanted the region so they could use it as a corridor to connect Canada with the Louisiana Territory, and also to gain access to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. The British already had a stake in the East and wanted more Colonial real estate.

In 1754, in an early battle of the French and Indian War, Colonel George Washington surrendered to the French at Fort Necessity in Uniontown, Pa. One year later, he and Major General Edward Braddock and the British army failed to push out the French and were defeated again at the Battle of the Monongahela.

Late that year, the defeated French destroyed an already crippled Fort Duquesne. Forbes wrote to British Prime Minister William Pitt that a fort, and ultimately a city, would be named for him. Fort Pitt was built the following year and was the largest of the British frontier fortifications.

In May 1763, as American Indians began attacks on Pittsburgh, settlers were ordered into the fort for safety. The siege continued through August, when Bouquet defeated the American Indians at the Battle of Bushy Run, thereby ending the attack on Fort Pitt. The Fort Pitt Blockhouse, which still stands today, was built in 1764 as a redoubt.

The Pittsburgh Chapter of DAR saved the blockhouse from demolition and has owned and preserved it since 1894. Visitors to Point State Park can tour the blockhouse, rebuilt sections of Fort Pitt and a museum.

The geography of the region required residents to be self-sufficient, as the Allegheny Mountains posed an obstacle for trading and shipping. The small number of settlers living...
in southwestern Pennsylvania in the late 18th century honed their skills as artisans and tradesmen so that their products could be sent downriver. Among the city’s first commercial developments was the glass industry, launched by James O’Hara and Isaac Craig in 1795. Their successful glass factory inspired other craftsmen to adopt the trade, which ultimately became Pittsburgh’s second-largest industry. By 1816—13 years after Meriwether Lewis and William Clark launched the keelboat Discovery from what is now Mon Wharf and Liberty Bridge—Pittsburgh was incorporated.

**Pittsburgh Today**

Pittsburgh became a major steel producer in 1875, when Andrew Carnegie founded what eventually became the enormously successful Carnegie Steel Company. In 1901, J.P. Morgan merged Carnegie Steel and National Steel to found the U.S. Steel Corporation, at one time the largest corporation in the world. Pittsburgh’s population exploded in the early part of the 20th century, with steel jobs luring immigrants from Europe.

Like other industrial cities in Pennsylvania and Ohio, Pittsburgh suffered a huge financial blow when the steel industry collapsed in the 1980s—but it was one of the few cities to reinvent itself after losing thousands of jobs. The city’s rich arts culture, endowed decades earlier by the wealthy local business owners of the 19th and 20th centuries, now supports a symphony and an opera, a ballet theater and dozens of extensive art museums. A plan to rebuild riverfronts and repurpose abandoned factory space—a program called the “Renaissance”—helped preserve Pittsburgh’s industrial history, as well as its melting pot of Italian, German, Polish and Irish neighborhoods.

The Strip District, which in the 1820s and 1830s was home to iron mills, foundries and glass factories—and the immigrants who worked there—is one of the neighborhoods that has been revitalized. In addition to factories, the Strip District’s proximity to rail lines made it the perfect location for the city’s wholesale produce and food industry. From the late 1800s through World War II, city restaurant owners shopped the district’s markets for cheese, seafood and produce. Many family-owned specialty stores, including Italian markets, remain today, in addition to restaurants, bakeries and coffee shops that celebrate the city’s ethnic flavors.

City officials also enacted a green movement that has resulted in a resurgence of outdoor and sportsmen’s activities. The city’s rivers are popular among kayakers and anglers, and a bike trail that extends from Washington, D.C., to Pittsburgh is among the longest in the country. The trail, called the Great Allegheny Passage, actually follows George Washington’s original path north to Fort LeBoeuf in 1753.

**Underground Railroad Ties**

Western Pennsylvania served as a major thoroughfare of the Underground Railroad, as fugitive slaves followed paths and trails that cut through mountainous regions and along rivers. Several sites throughout the Pittsburgh area highlight the region’s role in African-American history.
Cycling enthusiasts will find no shortage of trails in and around Pittsburgh. The 37-mile Three Rivers Heritage Trail System runs along the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers and connects downtown to outlying areas. The development of the Steel Valley Trail will connect the Three Rivers Heritage Trail System with other routes, adding an additional 19 miles to this metropolitan bike trail.

Bigham House on Mount Washington was built in 1849 and was a stop along the Underground Railroad. A black family nurse living in the Bigham home reportedly stood watch from the tower, searching for runaway slaves.

The history of the Gibson House is full of legend. Owner Dr. William Gibson and Mark Twain traveled to Russia, and their travels were documented in Twain’s *Innocents Abroad*. The Gibson home, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is thought to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Freedom Road Cemetery sits across from Stoneboro Fairgrounds and serves as the only remains of the fugitive slave town of Liberia, which was established by the Travis family, a family of free African-Americans.

275,000-square-foot museum is also home to the Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum and the Library and Archives. The August Wilson Center for African American Culture is a nonprofit cultural center that presents performances and programs celebrating the contributions of western Pennsylvania’s African-Americans.

Andrew Carnegie founded the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in 1895, and today it ranks among the top five natural history museums in the country. The Carnegie Science Center, next to the football and baseball stadiums, is also a prominent resource for students.

The Westmoreland Museum of American Art features works by Winslow Homer, Mary Cassatt, Louis Comfort Tiffany and other celebrated American artists. The museum is located in Greensburg, 35 miles east of Pittsburgh.

The Andy Warhol Museum stands as the largest American art museum devoted to a single artist. More than 12,000 pieces are on exhibit and archived in honor of one of the country’s most influential artists.

The Frick Art and Historical Center, located in Pittsburgh’s East End, showcases artifacts of the Gilded Age and the private art collection of Helen Clay Frick.

The Fort Pitt Blockhouse, the oldest authentic building in western Pennsylvania, is the area’s last British structure and is now a historic landmark.

At St. Anthony’s Chapel in Troy Hill, more than 4,200 religious artifacts are on display, including stone from the Jerusalem’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The chapel is open to the public.

Mount Washington cable cars are a tourist favorite, as the cars travel up a 300-foot bluff. The Duquesne Incline is a “working monument” historic structure, and the Monongahela Incline dates back to 1870.

The 629-acre Hartwood Acres is an equestrian estate park, and the Hartwood Mansion features 16th-century design.

Explore a pre-Civil War industrial village at West Overton Museum and a 19th-century religious communal society at the Old Economy Village, which commemorates the history of the Harmony Society. Another similar nearby site, Meadowcroft Village in Avella, Pa., includes a 17th-century American Indian village and a 19th-century village intended as an example of rural life.

A nod to the city’s industrial history is found at the Rivers of Steel Heritage Area in the Bost Building. At this site of American labor history’s most dramatic episode, visitors can learn more about the 1892 Homestead Lockout and Strike.

Amy Cates explored Mackinac Island, Mich., for the July/August issue.
With Irish Blessings in Your Heart, find love, luck and happiness

FOREVER FAITHFUL are the Irish and Irish at heart who trust in God for love and happiness. Now you can wear a sparkling reminder of Ireland’s rich blessings of faith with the "Emerald Isle Blessings Crystal Pendant," an exclusive design from The Bradford Exchange.

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1492, history records that Christopher Columbus discovered America—but that’s not how the Irish tell it. According to Irish legend, Saint Brendan, a missionary who left his homeland in the sixth century to spread Christianity, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and discovered America long before either Columbus or the Vikings ever stepped foot on its shores.

Saint Brendan’s journey may have been fictitious, but Irish folklore has always included tales of adventures across a western ocean and stories of the mythical lands that lay on the other side. It would be centuries before history would document the names of Irish explorers who arrived with the crews of Columbus and Sir Walter Raleigh or record the waves of 18th-century Irish immigrants who made the perilous journey across the Atlantic. But a new world where every individual could set the course of his life was always a hope of Irishmen. Just as the Irish seemed destined for America, America seemed destined for the Irish.

“In such a country, a man is most conscious of his value,” wrote John Francis Maguire in his 1868 book, *The Irish in America*. “He is the architect of his country’s greatness, the author of her civilization, the miracle worker by whom all has been and can be accomplished.”

By the time Maguire, a former Irish politician, arrived in America in the mid-19th century, emigration to the New World had become a way of life in Ireland. To his countrymen back home, Maguire described the lives of immigrants against the backdrop of the new world versus the old. It was the difference between “stagnation, retrogression, if not actual decay” and “life, movement, progress,” he wrote, and the disparity between “depression, want of confidence, dark apprehension of the future” and “energy, self-reliance and a perpetual looking forward.”

Since the earliest records of Irish immigration in the 1600s to present day, more than 7 million Irish have traveled to America in search of a better life. Their backgrounds and reasons for coming have varied, but one characteristic always bound them: pride. Despite being scarred by centuries of poverty and religious oppression, the Irish have embraced their heritage, passing stories, songs and lessons of the past to their descendants.

From the ferociously independent Scots-Irish Presbyterians, who fled religious and political oppression in Northern Ireland to become the settlers and frontiersmen of Appalachia, to the poor Irish Catholics, who left their homes to escape starvation and banded together in America’s cities to become a force for change, all have been part of forming the American character.

“We wouldn’t be the country we are today if not for the presence of the Irish Protestants and Catholics,” says Peter Quinn, author of *Looking for Jimmy: A Search for Irish America* (Overlook, 2007) and other books on Irish-American history. “They helped mold, make and shape the republic of the United States. They were an important part of its politics, economics and culture. They’re integral to America’s story of itself.”

Though these two groups of immigrants were very different, “both tended to be against aristocracy and inherited privilege and helped shape the values of independence and the love of freedom that America prides itself on,” Quinn continues. “They helped make the democracy what it is.”

Most sectors of American culture today bear some mark of Irish influence, from religion and politics to pop culture, sports and entertainment.

This isn’t surprising considering that 36.5 million Americans claim Irish heritage, according to census records, making it the second most frequently reported ancestry next to German. That number accounts for 12 percent of the U.S. population and exceeds the population of Ireland by eight times. In every state but New Mexico and Hawaii, Irish is among the top five ancestries, with the percentage highest in Delaware, New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Irish-Americans continue to celebrate their heritage today with hundreds of St. Patrick’s Day parades.

**IRISH BY THE NUMBERS**

- **3**
  - Irish-born signers of the Declaration of Independence

- **6**
  - Irish-born generals in George Washington’s Continental Army

- **15**
  - U.S. presidents with confirmed Irish ancestry

- **17**
  - Irish-born men who gave their lives at the Battle of the Alamo

- **147**
  - Medals of Honor earned by Irish-born men out of the first 200 awarded

Source: The Irish-American Museum of Washington, D.C.
across the country, a tradition that dates back to March 17, 1762, when Irish soldiers serving in the British army held the first St. Patrick’s Day parade in New York City to honor their roots and connect with their countrymen.

“Whether they were urban or rural, poor or middle-class, Protestant or Catholic, the Irish helped give America its diversity,” Quinn says. “Both groups stayed true to themselves and their traditions, and brought those with them and made them part of America.”

And the freedom they enjoyed in America ultimately allowed the Irish to heal parts of their own tumultuous past.

“As long as they lived in Ireland, the Catholics and Protestants were at each other’s throats, but thanks to the resiliency of democracy, they learned to live together, and both made the country stronger and better,” Quinn says.

**Life in the Old Land**

The tension between Ireland’s two religious groups stemmed from a conflict that began in the 17th century, when England gained control of West Ireland and started bringing in Protestant settlers to displace Catholics from their land. In a migration organized by the British Crown, hoards of immigrants from the Scottish lowlands settled into the northern county of Ulster, lured by promises of cheap land and low rents.

Catholics were relegated to the lowest rung of the tradition-bound society, and penal laws prevented them from voting, owning land, getting an education or pursuing a skilled trade. The religious oppression extended to other groups as well. Though the Scots-Irish settlers in Ulster received more privileges than the native Irish, many were practicing Presbyterians, which made them “dissenters” in the eyes of the Anglican government and reduced them to second-class citizens. They were excluded from political and military offices, and their weddings and religious rituals received no official sanction. The British were so threatened by Ulster’s burgeoning linen trade that they passed laws limiting the county’s freedom to export goods.

Under harsh British dictatorship, most Irishmen, despite their religion, had little hope of advancing in society. When Benjamin Franklin visited Ireland in 1771, he noted that the “poorest farmer in North America was better off than the average Irish farmer.”

“If you were born a tenant farmer, you died one,” Quinn says. “The idea that there was a place where you could be something different from what you were born, that you could give your children a better life, you couldn’t find that in a society like Ireland, but the possibilities were immense in the United States.”

Disillusioned by religious conflict, lack of political autonomy and economic hardship, the Scots-Irish of Ulster were the first to turn their eyes to what their Presbyterian ministers called “the land of Canaan.” More than three-fourths of the Irish immigrants who arrived in America during the 18th and early 19th century came from Ulster. Many were so desperate to get out of Ireland that they agreed to work as indentured servants for a few years in exchange for passage to America.

Often the immigrants were skilled workers and artisans who sent most of their earnings back to Ireland to bring
family and friends over. "Once they were liberated, they were quite ambitious," Quinn says. Though they initially settled near their ports of debarkation in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, many grew tired of living under elites in those cities and found themselves more at home in the backcountry of Virginia, Georgia and the Carolinas.

"They followed the frontier, where the land was free, society was fluid, and you could start fresh and make yourself into somebody else," Quinn says.

The Scots-Irish were used to defending land. Officials in Pennsylvania and other Colonies encouraged them to come to the frontier to keep American Indian tribes at bay and push the borders westward. Many of these settlers traveled down the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, the main route for settling the interior southern Colonies, which carried them through Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, and south into the Piedmont region of the Carolinas.

At the end of long, backbreaking days in the fields, families would get together, pull out their instruments and play and sing songs from the old country. The culture they brought to America was portable and grounded in life experiences—music and dance that eventually led to the evolution of clogging and bluegrass and country music.

"They didn't have the cultural institutions that Europeans had like museums, universities and orchestras; they carried the culture with them in music, storytelling and dance," Quinn says. "That sense of popular culture that we have today is right out of Irish culture."

Irish Catholics made up a smaller portion of the Irish who emigrated during the Colonial era. Those who came tended to be wealthier and less devout than the millions who arrived during Ireland’s Great Potato Famine in the 1840s. One of the most prominent immigrants of the early American period was Charles Carroll, who settled in Maryland in 1688, and whose grandson would become the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Most of the earliest Irish immigrants assimilated into their adopted country and its culture. If I could design a country, this would be the one I would design."

Like Shanahan, millions of Irish immigrants have been coming to the United States as adventurers, laborers and entrepreneurs since the 1700s. Through their tenacity and ingenuity, they not only created the kind of life they were seeking, but they also helped make the American dream possible for others. For the past two years, Shanahan and a group of other Irish-Americans have been planning a national museum in Washington, D.C., to honor their legacy.

"Many people, including Irish-Americans, don't realize the contributions we have made to this country," says Jim Dougherty, whose great-great-grandfather, Felix, was among the influx of immigrants who came to America during Ireland’s Great Potato Famine in the 1840s. "The Irish were here from the beginning and have been involved and active in every aspect of American life, from finance and politics to the arts and sports."

Fronting forward, to the Irish-American presidents, vaudeville writers and sports figures, "we want to tell the whole story from beginning to end," says Patrick Sean Flaherty, who boasts a rich lineage of Irish ancestors on both sides of his family.

"The story of America is the story of the Irish-American," Shanahan says. "We have grown with America. We have found opportunity here. We are part and parcel of the country and its culture. If I could design a country, this would be the one I would design."

Like Shanahan, millions of Irish immigrants have been coming to the United States as adventurers, laborers and entrepreneurs since the 1700s. Through their tenacity and ingenuity, they not only created the kind of life they were seeking, but they also helped make the American dream possible for others. For the past two years, Shanahan and a group of other Irish-Americans have been planning a national museum in Washington, D.C., to honor their legacy.

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From Scots-Irish heroes like Davy Crockett, who pushed the American frontier forward, to the Irish-American presidents, vaudeville writers and sports figures, “we want to tell the whole story from beginning to end,” says Patrick Sean Flaherty, who boasts a rich lineage of Irish ancestors on both sides of his family.

Through the Irish-American community is vast and diverse, the group hopes to make the museum a home for all those of Irish and Scots-Irish descent. “We felt the best way to get broad support was to put the museum in the nation’s capital where everyone can feel it’s something they are part of,” Dougherty says.

Since promoting the idea, Shanahan, Dougherty and Flaherty have garnered support from Irish-American associations and universities with Irish study programs, and they hope to eventually assemble a national board to spearhead the effort. With the size of the Irish-American population, “we hope to be able to fund the museum without relying on the government for support,” Shanahan adds.

Not only will the museum include exhibits about Irish-Americans and their role in helping found, fight for and shape the nation, it will also hold a research and genealogical center, as well as an auditorium to showcase Irish-influenced dance, music, films, plays and other cultural events. Dougherty hopes that patrons will walk away with a deeper appreciation for the contributions of the Irish and a greater sense of pride in their ancestry.

“As we all become more and more assimilated into America, it’s easy to lose touch with our roots,” Dougherty says. “Everywhere there are stories that need to be told. If we don’t record them now, they will be lost to future generations.”

For more information, visit www.irishamericanmuseumdc.org.
homeland easily, in part because of their independent nature and their Protestant background. Assimilation was harder for Irish Catholics, who were in the minority and, in some Puritan-dominated areas, ostracized for their beliefs. These immigrants, who were raised in small tight-knit communities in Ireland, tended to stick closer to the coastline, congregating in large cities where they could attend church together. Later, they championed the nation’s first social programs, building schools and forming “Irish Aid” societies to help immigrants who followed.

But for both groups, immigration brought a sense of finality that helped them let go of their old life and embrace the new. “For those who came during the 18th and 19th centuries, there was no going back,” Quinn says. “When someone got ready to leave for America, their family and friends would hold a wake the night before because they knew they would never see that person again.”

**ON THE FRONT LINES**

As stirrings of a revolution spread across the land, the Irish—Catholics and Protestants alike—were one of the few ethnic groups united in their opposition to the British Crown and among the first to volunteer to fight.

“We weren’t fighting for liberty we didn’t have; we were fighting to defend liberty that already existed,” says Thomas Fleming, Irish-American, Revolutionary War historian and author of *George Washington’s Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge* (Smithsonian, 2005).

“To the Irish, that liberty meant something more precious because they had seen what had happened when they were deprived of it.”

The Irish knew what it meant to live under an established church and desired a different reality for their descendants. Many Irish-Americans risked their lives launching the initial acts of defiance against the British. They formed militias, plotted ambushes and captured enemy supplies and ships—all before the first shot was fired.

Though the English-American aristocracy framed the intellectual arguments for the movement toward independence, “it was the Scots-Irish who would bring the fire of the revolution to the pulpits of almost every frontier church and also provide a disproportionate share of guns and soldiers to the battlefield once the war broke out,” writes James Webb in *Born Fighting: How the Scots-Irish Shaped America* (Broadway, 2004).

In New England regiments, up to 20 percent of the men had Irish surnames; in the middle states where most of the Irish had settled, it ran as high as 70 percent. The First Pennsylvania Brigade boasted so many Irish-born men it was called “The Line of Ireland,” a group that became known “not only for their battlefield tenacity, but also for their loyalty during the brutal winter of 1777 at Valley Forge, where they remained steadfast while large numbers of soldiers deserted George Washington,” Webb writes.

First- and second-generation Irishmen played a crucial role at the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. Commanded by Irish-American John Stark, who later became a colonel in Washington’s army, the group smashed a column of light infantry sent to quell the rebellion, forcing the small British unit into a bloody frontal assault.

“Without the Irish at Bunker Hill, we wouldn’t have won that first battle,” Fleming says. Stark went on to organize local militiamen in New Hampshire and lead an attack on Hessians at the Battle of Bennington, weakening General John Burgoyne’s invading army.

In South Carolina, Scots-Irish regiments, commanded by the “Swamp Fox” Francis Marion, defended the Southern theater. A band of Tennessee and North Carolina frontiersmen won a decisive victory over the British at the Battle of King’s Mountain—a victory that hastened the end of the war.

Top: Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans in January 8, 1815. Jackson was the first in a long line of presidents with Irish ancestry. 1910 oil painting by E. Percy Moran.

Above: An 1861 Civil War recruiting poster appeals to Irish immigrants in Philadelphia, encouraging them to enlist in a company to be attached to the Irish Brigade of the 69th Regiment of the New York State Militia.
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From the publisher of History Magazine

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The fervor of these soldiers prompted one Hessian captain to remark, “Call this war by whatever name you may, only call it not an American rebellion; it is nothing more than a Scotch-Irish [sic] Presbyterian rebellion.”

Bolstering the Republic

With the birth of the republic, Irish involvement in America grew stronger. In 1800, the Irish turned out in huge numbers to vote for Thomas Jefferson, who introduced a Republican style of government.

Though political differences later divided them, Irish Protestants and Catholics “loved the idea of a republic where every man was the equal of the other, and together they determined the nature of the government,” Fleming says.

“Both groups had lived under a government where they felt they weren’t represented and didn’t have a say, so they had a real enthusiasm for a democracy where everyone could vote and everyone’s vote counted,” he adds.

Elected in 1828, Andrew Jackson, the first in a long line of presidents with Irish lineage, championed the values his ancestors fought so hard to attain. While the Scots-Irish advanced Republicanism, the Irish Catholics promoted the philosophy of social welfare and government that served the people.

“They formed the democratic organization we now know as the ‘machine,’ which brought another dimension to politics in America,” Fleming says. “They may not have had the resources other immigrants did, but they had numbers and the vote—and they learned how to use it.”

Irish immigration halted during the Napoleonic wars, but picked back up as soon as they ended. As Ireland grew more destitute, Irish-Catholic immigrants poured into the United States. Whole families arrived to escape starvation, but many lacked the skills and resources of the Irish who came before.

This wave of immigrants found their salvation in the “rough, rude work of building America,” Fleming says. Between 1817 and 1825, 50,000 of them helped dig the Erie Canal, while others laid the first railroad tracks, toiled in coal mines and helped build the infrastructure of the United States. Others filled the ranks of the nation’s policemen and firefighters. By the mid-1800s, three-fourths of New York City’s policemen were Irish, according to Maguire.

Whatever hardships Irish immigrants faced when they arrived and during later chapters of the nation’s history, nothing could stop them from reaching the American dream that had consumed their imagination for so many years.

Each generation sacrificed to bolster the next one and, today, Irish-Americans are one of the country’s wealthiest ethnic groups, according to census reports. As the issue of immigration continues to consume our national discourse, there is much we could learn from the experience of the Irish, according to Quinn.

“For every group that came in as outsiders, it has been a struggle to adapt, but that’s what makes us Americans,” he says. “We all come from different traditions, but at the core we are coming here and building something new, different, and better with the things we bring.”


NOTABLE NAMES

Irish men and women who shaped U.S. history

Patrick Maguire
First member of Christopher Columbus’ crew to step foot on North American soil.

Patrick Carr
Fifth and final victim killed during the Boston Massacre.

John Sullivan
Led one of the first acts of defiance against the British in 1774, organizing a raid on a regiment stationed at Fort William and Mary in Portsmouth, N.H., and confiscating 100 barrels of gunpowder, later used by patriots at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Margaret Corbin
Fought beside her husband, John, in 1776, to defend Fort Washington in northern Manhattan from attacking Hessians under British command. When her husband was killed, she took over for him, firing his cannon until she was wounded.

Richard Montgomery
Considered by some historians to be the first American general killed during the Revolutionary War. Montgomery, a brigadier general and Dublin native, was killed in the Battle of Quebec during the 1775 invasion of Canada.

James Hoban
Irish native who studied architecture in Dublin and won a competition in 1792 to design the nation’s presidential mansion, later known as the White House.

John Barry
Known as the “father of the U.S. Navy,” this County Wexford emigrant and his crew fought and won the final naval battle of the American Revolution off the coast of Cape Canaveral on March 10, 1783.

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Almost a century before Thomas Edison received the first copyright for a motion picture film in 1894, panoramic painting enthralled Europe and America with “wide-screen” depictions of faraway lands, scenic wonders, urban vistas and thrilling battles.

Whether painted on vast stationary canvases mounted in circular rotundas or, later on, created on lengthy canvas sheets that could be unrolled scroll-like to spellbound viewers, panoramas enjoyed two substantial periods of popularity in the 19th century. Art historians have described them as the “silver screen” of the 1800s.

The advent of photography and then of motion pictures ended the interest in panoramas. Few have survived; the medium was inherently fragile and vulnerable to changes in temperature and humidity, rough handling and, in the case of the specially designed rotundas themselves, fire and weather damage.

But in their heyday, hundreds if not thousands of panoramas flourished, serving as entertainment, moral instruction, political propaganda and newsreels. Ironically enough, the credit for inventing this massive art form belongs to a self-taught artist who specialized in painting miniatures.

On June 17, 1787, Irishman Robert Barker was granted a patent for a method of painting scenes on large curved expanses of canvas; the word “panorama” was coined later. As a self-taught artist, he had developed his own system of perspective, according to Stephen Oettermann in *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium* (Zone Books, 1997).

There are a number of anecdotes about how the idea came to Barker; what is certain is that it took several attempts before he figured out how to adjust perspective so the view appeared lifelike. While Robert Barker tinkered with the technique, his son, Henry, did the actual painting.

Their first successful work in 1788 showed a view of Edinburgh, Scotland, as seen from an observatory atop
Calton Hill outside the city. Compared with later panoramas, it was tiny—just 25 feet in diameter. The work drew only modest interest, but encouraged the Barkers to attempt a bigger work. At a specially designed, though ultimately temporary, rotunda in London’s Leicester Square in January 1792, they opened their “Panorama of London” as seen from the Albion Steam Flour Mills near Blackfriars Bridge.

Originally painted as only a half-circle, the spectacle was a smash hit. The Barkers subsequently expanded it to a full circle, and visitors paid as much as a shilling each to marvel at it. The audience cut across economic, educational and class lines, making the panorama a true mass medium from the beginning, Oettermann wrote.

Just as Hollywood loves a sequel, the Barkers immediately began working on a bigger, bolder project. Across Leicester Square, they built a permanent, two-level rotunda that could show two panoramas at the same time—a smaller one in the upper level and a bigger one below. A large central column helped support the roof, which featured a double set of skylights to illuminate both panoramas.

On September 5, 1793, the rotunda opened to display the 10,000-square-foot “Grand Fleet at Spithead in 1791,” a view of the Russian fleet off the entrance to this harbor on the English Channel. Viewers stood upon a platform that resembled the poop deck of a frigate, further enhancing the reality of the scene. England’s King George III and Queen Charlotte inspected the panorama in May 1794; the queen was reported to have felt seasick from seeing so much water.

This triumph secured the Barkers’ position and fortune, and they went on to produce many others. The art form quickly crossed the English Channel and, after Barker’s patent lapsed in 1802, a panorama craze swept Europe.

**NOT JUST PAINT ON CANVAS**

In *The Painted Panorama* (Abrams, 2000) author Bernard Comment defines the art form as “a continuous circular representation hung on the walls of a rotunda specifically constructed to contain it. Panoramas had to be so true to life that they could be confused with reality.”

The design of the building and the setting of the exhibit itself also contributed to the illusion. The
artist wanted to create the sensation of being immersed in a scene that was created in an enclosed space but nonetheless conveyed the illusion of openness and broad vistas, Comment wrote. The painting, the building and the exhibit space had to work in harmony to divest the viewer of outside distractions and focus attention on the surroundings.

Early rotundas tended to be relatively small buildings, according to Oettermann, so the illusion of moving large distances at each step made some viewers dizzy. As a result, rotundas got larger, until by the 1830s, most new ones measured about 100 feet in diameter and 45 to 50 feet in height. The rotunda and the work intended for it were inextricably linked. Depending on the venue, panoramas could stretch more than 300 feet in circumference and 40 to 60 feet in height. The bare canvas could weigh 4 tons; the finished work might weigh twice that, after all the paint had been applied.

Rotundas had skylights for natural illumination and a central viewing platform positioned so the view appeared natural and in proper perspective. Visitors typically walked down a darkened hallway from the entrance to the viewing platform; this helped them to forget the outside world and adjust to the lighting.

Many consider panoramas, and especially moving panoramas, as precursors to film, notes Phil Wickham, curator of the Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture at the University of Exeter in England.

The link to cinema is, firstly, that they were often used as transforming images through movement or light," Wickham says, "and secondly, that when looking at a panorama, the intention is that you are subsumed into the image in the same way that the cinema audience is only conscious of the world on the screen and not what is around them."

As visitors stepped out onto the platform, they confronted a scene that appeared to vanish to a faraway horizon. The skylights and roof above them were concealed by a canopy or similarly suspended "ceiling" that extended to the top of the painting. Below the platform, the panoramist used natural objects such as soil, plants and other materials to blend with and tie into the image on the wall.

For instance, in Edouard Castres' winter panorama of a defeated French army surrendering its arms at the Swiss border during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, artificial snow covers the space, and mannequin soldiers huddle around a small fire, just as their painted counterparts do. A real split-rail fence runs from below the platform to the wall, where it meets a painted fence that disappears into the distance.

Barker's London panorama included platforms and other architectural embellishments to the walkways; besides the poop-deck viewing platform, his Spithead panorama showcased other nautical and seaside elements.
A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

However elaborate the foreground, the painting was of paramount importance, and by far, the most difficult and complex creation. Oettermann described the laborious process of preparing and painting the canvas:

“The painting was composed of separate canvas panels sewn into a continuous strip that was then tightly rolled up and then slowly unrolled, stretched and secured at the top to a wood rail under the skylights. The bottom edge was secured, and weights hung at intervals to keep it taut. The canvas was moistened and then painted with a base coat and allowed to dry. It shrank as it dried, and as it did, it bowed out in the center to create a tight surface that was as much as 3 feet closer to the observation platform than either the top or bottom. The canvas was thus curved both vertically and horizontally.”

Barker’s genius lay in figuring out a method of transferring images on flat paper to curved surfaces. The process started with picking out a vantage point and creating detailed sketches of the scenes around it out to the horizon. The vantage point was usually elevated, which further complicated the perspective. Part of the solution was to impose a grid on the sketches and the canvas.

After application of another base coat, the entire surface was divided into a grid. Workers rolled a scaffold around the circumference of the canvas while assistants traced horizontal lines with charcoal. This was tiring, tedious and finicky work, as the curve of the canvas had to be factored in so to observers on the central platform, the lines appeared equidistant from each other. Workers made vertical lines by pressing plumb lines darkened with charcoal against the canvas.

Artists used grid coordinates on their flat sketches to transfer the design to the double-curved canvas surface.

PANORAMIC APPEAL

Panoramas became popular during a time of widespread social and political upheaval. Democratic fervor ran high: The United States had achieved independence and was in the process of creating its Constitution, while France remained in the throes of its own revolution. Science, rationalism and the early stages of the Industrial Revolution were transforming ways of thinking. Propelled by industrialization, towns became cities, and cities became sprawling giants.

Urban scenes such as those of London or Edinburgh were favorite themes. Comment asserts in his book that panoramas became popular because, with the explosive growth of cities, neither a city’s longtime residents nor its new arrivals truly knew what their city looked like. By providing easily grasped overviews of the rapidly
expanding urban landscape, panoramas restored a sense of control—a grasp of their surroundings—that the viewers felt they had lost.

Urbanites also had begun to feel closed in, and by affording them a broad vista, panoramas metaphorically let them get away from it all. Viewers also developed an appetite for war and battle scenes, especially those that showed their nation’s successes, as well as for scenes of distant lands and cities. Comment argues that both these subjects helped foster national pride during an era of military turmoil and imperial ambitions.

The new art form appealed to, and could be grasped by, all classes. It wasn’t fine art, but more of an illustration on a grand scale, with a premium on bright, bold colors. The amount of detail alone was so staggering that it overwhelmed the senses.

The subject matter sometimes made it impossible to devote time and talent to fine details. Panoramas often served as the 19th-century equivalent of newsreels in describing distant battles or momentous events. Panorama painters had to keep up with current events, so exhibits changed regularly. Some artists even painted over old panoramas hung in circular studios while their most recent work hung in a rotunda.

Finally, Wickham notes that most everyone loves a spectacle, and panoramas were spectacular. “Viewers were surrounded by these huge images. Panoramas also were a way of bringing the world to the audience—many depicted places that people would never have seen or current events they wished to learn about.”

MOVING PANORAMAS

Although stationary panoramas required specially built exhibit spaces and were difficult to move, it was not uncommon for artists to sell their work to another exhibitor after the initial run ended. The Barkers, for instance, sold their London and Spithead panoramas, which were exhibited on the Continent in temporary display rotundas.

But the sheer size of panoramas and the difficulty of preventing damage to the canvases limited the ability to take these shows on the road. The moving panorama provided a solution to this problem.

Moving panoramas did not require specially built buildings or display halls, and because the surface was flat, the artist didn’t need to create unusual perspectives. Though bulky, they were also far easier to transport and stage than traditional panoramas, wrote Tom Hardiman, former curator at the Saco Museum in Saco, Maine, in an essay for the catalogue “The Moving Panorama of Pilgrim’s Progress,” which accompanied a 1999 exhibition of the same title at the Montclair, N.J., Art Museum.

Moving panoramas were particularly popular in America, starting with John Banvard’s moving panorama of a voyage down the Mississippi River that toured in America starting in 1846, and then in England in 1848, Hardiman wrote. His success launched a flood of moving panorama shows.

Although many were produced, only a few survive today in museums, and those are far too fragile to show as originally designed. Two of the best examples are the “The Grand Moving Panorama of Pilgrim’s Progress,” also known as the “Bunyan Tableaux,” in the Saco Museum, and “Panorama of a Whaling Voyage Round the World” at the New Bedford, Mass., Whaling Museum.
According to the Saco Museum’s Web site, the 800-foot-long Pilgrim’s Progress panorama was thought lost for 100 years. It was the brainchild of two members of the National Academy of Design, Edward Harrison May and Joseph Kyle, who in 1848 decided to capitalize on the immense popularity of moving panoramas and John Bunyan’s allegory.

“In the religious revival of the time, John Bunyan’s 1678 allegory of a spiritual pilgrimage experienced its own revival. In the fine arts circles familiar to May and Kyle, Pilgrim’s Progress became a popular subject for formal academic paintings,” according to the Web site.

Written in 1678, Pilgrim’s Progress became enormously popular in the 19th century. The story of Christian and Christina’s flight from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City contains vivid imagery, ideal for translating from the page to canvas. May and Kyle recruited fellow National Academicians to assist in drawing or designing some of the scenes, which adds considerably to its value to art historians.

When displayed before an audience, it was unwound from one enormous wooden spool across the stage to the other spool, while a narrator described the action, and music played in the background.

The original work comprised 54 scenes on a 1,200-foot-long, 8-foot-high length of canvas. It opened at Washington Hall in New York in November 1850 to critical and popular acclaim, and grossed nearly $100,000 in its first six months.

Realizing they had a hit on their hands, May and Kyle immediately began work on a second version that was completed in April 1851. It was about 400 feet shorter than the original and contained some revised scenes. It was exhibited around the country for the next 45 years until being donated to the Saco Museum in 1896.

Incredible as it may seem, the huge “scroll” was misplaced at some point in the early 20th century. Museum officials rediscovered it in 1996 in a storage vault and began a partial conservation and exhibition before returning it to storage.

In December 2009, the museum received one of 44 Save America’s Treasures grants awarded by the National Park Service. The $51,940 grant will be used to create a full-size functional replica suitable for performance, says Leslie Rounds, executive director of the Dyer Library and Saco Museum. A video will also be produced, complete with a voice narration and music, to be used as an interactive program in the galleries and also on the museum’s Web site.

The Pilgrim’s Progress panorama is valuable not only because of the caliber of artists who contributed to its creation, but also, the museum’s site says, because it is “a missing link to one of the rare moments in American history when the divergent worlds of formal academic art, popular commercial entertainment, religious thought and literature came together in a single object.”

**Whale of a Work**

“Panorama of a Whaling Voyage Round the World” was created by Benjamin Russell, who had served as cooper on the whaleship Kutusoff and had compiled a sketchbook full of scenes from his voyage, and Caleb Purrington, a sign painter in New Bedford. Starting in 1845, they created a moving panorama 1,300 feet long and 8-and-a-half feet high.

The voyage started from New Bedford, then the preeminent American whaling port. It took viewers to the tip of South America and around Cape Horn to the Pacific, and to exotic ports of call such as Honolulu, before returning. It played to packed houses in New
Bedford, of course, and also had a hugely successful road tour.

One scene showed a scandalous episode in U.S. whaling history: the November 1842 mutiny aboard the whaleship Sharon. In her history of that ill-fated voyage, In the Wake of Madness (Algonquin, 2003), Joan Druett notes the panorama prominently features the actions of the Sharon’s third mate, Benjamin Clough. The artists drew upon a newspaper article based on Clough’s account of the mutiny and his self-described role in ultimately recapturing the ship. It’s unknown whether Clough and other crew members saw the exhibition when it was in New Bedford, though it’s possible. It’s also possible, but unknown, that Herman Melville saw the show because he was in New Bedford during its run.

Unlike the Pilgrim’s Progress panorama, the whaling saga enjoyed only a few years of success. After opening in December 1848, it toured until 1851, when Russell put it into storage. It was briefly shown again after he died in 1885, then sold. It was donated in 1918 to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society and later acquired by the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

CIRCLE’S END

Panoramas enjoyed great popularity in the early 19th century, and then declined before enjoying a second round later on, helped in part by the advent of moving panoramas. But the development of photography, magic lantern shows and ultimately movies turned the once-popular medium into a quaint novelty.

The United States has a few static panoramas, including the Gettysburg Cyclorama (www.gettysburgfoundation.org) in Pennsylvania and the Atlanta Cyclorama (www.atlantacyclorama.org), depicting the Civil War’s Battle of Atlanta, in Georgia. The Velaslavasay Panorama in Los Angeles presents contemporary 360-degree works in a renovated theater in homage to the older art form. Its Web site, www.panoramaonview.org, includes a list of extant panoramas around the world.

Two other moving panoramas also survive in the United States. One, the “Garibaldi Panorama” at Brown University, depicts the life of the Italian hero and is being digitized for future generations to enjoy. The other, known as the “Mormon Panorama,” is housed at Brigham Young University’s Museum of Art in Utah. Its panels have been separated and framed.

Bill Hudgins wrote about the Quasi-War for the January/February 2010 issue.
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“Fashion is not concerned with comfort, health or intelligence. One often has to sacrifice for the sake of being fashionable,” says Betty Myers, supervisor of the Colonial Williamsburg’s Wig Shop. Men and women on all levels of 18th-century society were willing to sacrifice for their hairstyles. Starting in the courts of England and France in the 1600s, wigs and elaborate hairdressing entered their fashion zenith in the 18th century, making their trek across the Atlantic and becoming more accessible to greater numbers of people by the mid-century. While some colonists embraced the European fashion of elaborately designed wigs, others ushered in more distinctively American hairstyles.
BIG WIGS

A king’s early onset of male pattern baldness is credited with starting the mania for wigs. Louis XIII of France began wearing wigs in 1624 to cover up his lack of hair. Out of respect to the king, other men followed suit. Soon the style spread to England, where long, curly-locked wigs became de rigueur for anyone who could afford one. These large hairpieces are the root of the term “bigwig.”

France boasted another 18th-century trendsetter: Marie Antoinette, a fashion icon on both sides of the Atlantic. Her extremely high updo decorated with ornamentation was imitated by “ladies” and aspired to by “women,” according to their class. Ladies were defined as females “who came from money, married money or buried money,” while women were “working class,” Myers explains. While most ladies wore wigs or dressed their natural hair, women usually wore their hair under a cap or bought a set of curls, similar to a hairpiece.

Marie Antoinette’s followers continued to take her style upward. Some ladies wore their hair so tall that they couldn’t fit it into carriages or through house doorways, forcing them to sit in open-roofed conveyances or enter dwellings on their knees. These styles required a professional hairstylist and a lot more hair than a person naturally possessed.

HAIR ART

Until the 17th century, men dressed male hair and women dressed female hair, but a man named Champagne changed that tradition, creating a legacy of male-dominated professional hairdressers. He was followed by fellow Frenchman Legros de Rumigny, who turned from culinary pursuits to the more profitable field of hairdressing and published a five-volume book on dressing hair called L’Art de la Coëffure des Dames Françoises. Englishman James Stephen Cox translated the French Monsieur Garsault’s guide to wigs, publishing it as the Dictionary of Hairdressing and Wigmaking in 1768.

Hairdressers like Champagne and de Rumigny created works of art out of hair. In a process that could take as long as six hours, hairdressers arranged a combination of natural and false hair over a wire frame. Peasant women sold their hair to support this industry, but false hair could also be derived from animals such as goats, yaks or horses. To achieve the heights and widths of these styles, hairdressers used a variety of substances such as hair, wool and straw. In The Long and Short of It (David McKay Company, 1971), Bill Severn mentions that Marie Antoinette’s followers actually hung vegetables in their hair because she tended a garden. To hold the hair, frame and stuffing together, stylists applied grease. In order to maintain their styles, women slept with their heads on supports, which might have included wooden blocks. An article in London Magazine mentioned that these styles “at once shine and stink.” As a result, perfumers found ready customers for their wares.

These extreme hairstyles featured elaborate ornamentation, from literary scenes to battlefields to even odder items like glass animals and gravestones. Caricature artists drew comical sketches of these bizarre styles. English ladies and their male counterparts followed the French standard. By the 18th century, most English men and boys over the age of 7 owned a wig.

DOWN A NOTCH

Unlike England and France, where young and old, rich and poor wore wigs, only about 5 percent of the population of the Colonies regularly wore them. In Virginia, only a small percentage of gentry adopted wigs and elaborate hairdressing. Most men in the Colonies were clean-shaven with long hair.

Thomas Jefferson began wearing a short, brown, bobbed wig in 1773 when he was elected to the Virginia House
of Burgesses and a powdered wig when he served as ambassador to France in the 1780s. Similarly, John Adams wore a wig for years, but both he and Jefferson eventually gave up the style in favor of their natural hair. George Washington powdered his own hair rather than wear a wig. There are various theories on why he didn’t wear one, with some asserting that he wanted to be seen as a common man.

Because they were expensive, wigs were associated with the wealthy. A tradesman who wanted to move his son ahead socially could buy a ready-made wig for him to help improve his prospects. Men wore full wigs in various styles or naturally long hair powdered to appear wig-like. It was common to pay a yearly fee to a barber for wig maintenance and facial shaving.

It wasn’t just men who bought expensive custom-made wigs; ladies did, too. Wig makers created custom wigs by measuring a customer’s shaved head and carving a wooden blockhead, complete with indentations present on the buyer’s head, to use as a mold. Another option was to buy a ready-made wig. A customer would crop his hair, then visit the wig shop to see what was on hand and what would fit his head. Wigs came in standard sizes for men, women and children. The most expensive wigs were made of human hair, but less expensive wool or animal hairpieces were also available.

Colonial newspapers contained notices for wig makers seeking experienced boys to work in their shops and advertisements for English and French hairdressers’ shops. In the Boston Post-Boy of January 15, 1770, Kelly (no surname), a haircutter and peruke (or wig) maker from London, announced his shop in Boston: “He dresses Hair in any form in the neatest manner.” In 1769 in Colonial Williamsburg there were at least eight wig makers.

POWDER AND PIGTAILS

Both men and women powdered their hair. In Europe, stylists applied the powder in a room specially set aside for that purpose, providing the origin of the term “powder room.” Clients’ hair was greased and their clothes were covered with special wraps. Their noses and mouths were protected with a cone so they wouldn’t inhale the substance. Those individuals with less income could copy the more affluent style by using flour as powder. Since powdering often wore off, customers would make frequent visits to the powder room.

Long hairstyles, whether natural or wigs, were preferred by both men and women. Unlike the short, high and tight military cut favored today, early American soldiers also wore their hair long. Many styled their locks in pigtails, wrapped, braided or covered with a substance like tar. Some wore wigs with detachable queues, or pigtails, made from wood, bone or leather, while officers usually sported full wigs. When George Washington saw his troops wearing their hair in various styles, however, he decided a uniform style should be adapted, ordering them to be clean-shaven with powdered hair.
In the popular 18th-century song “Yankee Doodle,” the gentleman “stuck a feather in his cap, and called it macaroni.” The verse referred to young, unsophisticated American men who toured Europe and returned aspiring to be as fashionable as English men called “macaroni.” These dandies were known for wearing their hair in an extreme style and dressing outrageously.

Throughout the Revolutionary period, wealthy men and ladies and those in certain trades continued to wear wigs or dress their hair. The Daughters of Liberty vowed to boycott false hair, but once the Colonies allied with France, high hairstyles returned to vogue. By the end of the 18th century, the French Revolution, economic factors and a new generation of fashion considerations contributed to the popularity of a new look. Powdered wigs became associated with royalty, causing some to dispense with them. With the general populace starving due to a lack of wheat, flour was needed to feed people rather than decorate hair. In England, William Pitt taxed those who powdered their hair one guinea. Some accounts say he raised more than £200,000 in the first year.

Whether to wear a wig was often a matter decided by a person’s generation rather than wealth or politics. At the end of the 18th century, some young men cut their hair short on the top and styled it into a central curl, resembling ancient Romans. But “wigs never went out of style,” Myers says. “It’s one of the most misunderstood concepts relating to hair.” In mid- to late-18th-century America, a person’s politics didn’t determine all of his choices, at least where freedom in hairstyle was concerned.

Arthur St. Clair

An Unappreciated Patriot

The career of Arthur St. Clair—American military strategist, a president of the Continental Congress and first governor of the Northwest Territory—began in Pennsylvania, continued in New Jersey, New York and Ohio, and spanned 45 years of military, government and political service. He gave up British position and wealth to help the patriots achieve victory in the Revolutionary War and dedicated himself to a lifelong pursuit of America’s freedom and democracy. Still, the choices made in one bloody battle in 1791 haunted him until his death. Because of it, he remains one of the most unappreciated public figures in our nation’s history.

By Dick Phillips
St. Clair's warrior roots ran deep. Born in a castle in Thurso, Caithness, Scotland, in 1734 (some historians say 1736 or 1737), his descendents trace a direct lineage to the 16th-century Earl of Caithness. Descended from the Sinclairs of the 12th and 13th centuries, the St. Clairs built Rosslyn Castle and Rosslyn Church featured in the novels by best-selling author Dan Brown. A recent feature on the History Channel revealed evidence of a first exploration of America by a team of Vikings, Templars and Sinclairs in 1306.

After studying medicine at Edinburgh University and completing an internship in London, young Arthur followed in the footsteps of his warrior ancestors and joined the British army. He saw action in the French and Indian War as captain and commandant of Pennsylvania's Fort Ligonier. In 1762, he retired and settled in the Ligonier Valley with his family.

St. Clair's career as a government official began in Bedford, Pa., as a surveyor for the Penn family. He served as Governor Penn's assistant, and Penn then named him a Westmoreland County justice. In 1774, he became county magistrate. While serving as magistrate, he heard that Virginia Governor Lord Dunmore was seeking to expand his lands by claiming Fort Pitt (now part of Pittsburgh) and its surrounding lands for Virginia. The governor sent out agents, whom St. Clair tracked down, brought to his court and jailed. Dunmore demanded that Governor Penn dismiss St. Clair, but he refused. As a result of the courage he showed in dealing with lawlessness, St. Clair's influence in western Pennsylvania grew.

LIFE-CHANGING DECISION

After a decade as a Pennsylvania country squire, St. Clair became increasingly outspoken about the king's excessive taxes and the brutal treatment of the colonists by British officials like Dunmore, who was raiding towns and brutalizing the families of colonists away at war. In 1775, John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, offered St. Clair a commission as colonel in the Continental Army. St. Clair immediately said yes, making a life-changing decision to take up his adopted country's cause for freedom.

Said St. Clair in a letter to a close friend, "I hold that no man has a right to withhold his services when his country needs them. Be the sacrifice ever so great, it must be yielded on the altar of patriotism." This decision committed the next 30 years of St. Clair's life in service to America. Ironically, the choice also eventually cost St. Clair, one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Pennsylvania, his entire fortune.

SOLDIER AND PATRIOT

Colonel St. Clair’s first assignment for the Continental Army was to raise a regiment of six companies to cover the retreat of the Americans, who were being overrun by the British near Quebec. He accomplished this goal in two months. Hancock then sent St. Clair, newly promoted to brigadier general, to organize the New Jersey militia and join General Washington's troops. Upon arrival in November 1776, he found the army starving and facing freezing conditions. Retention, let alone recruitment, had become impossible, especially with the men's enlistments about to run out. Washington appealed to St. Clair, who used his own personal funds to feed and clothe the men.

St. Clair is also credited with planning a three-pronged strategy in New Jersey, which included the famous crossing of the Delaware on Christmas night, 1776. Capturing the Hessians and British prior to the successful battles of Trenton and Princeton helped turn the tide of the war. The victory startled the British high command, which had been routinely defeating Washington in battle. This victory showed Washington to be a crafty strategist, and he swiftly promoted St. Clair to major general. (St. Clair remained a close friend of Washington for more than 20 years, and he was among nine Freemasons invited to stand with him at his inauguration.)

Next dispatched to Fort Ticonderoga in New York, St. Clair faced another challenge when he found the fort in disrepair and his men suffering from poor health. Outnumbered by the British 5-to-1 and with neither supplies nor munitions, St. Clair ordered the troops to make a strategic retreat under cover of darkness. Although he was court-martialed for the retreat, his action saved most of the 1,000 men. He was eventually exonerated and
commended when his decision proved fortuitous. By leaving Fort Ticonderoga when they did, the Americans compelled General Burgoyne to commit one-third of his force, around 7,800 troops, to rebuilding and defending the fort at a crucial time in the war when they were needed elsewhere. The Continental Army eventually returned to retake Fort Ticonderoga with a larger force.

STATESMAN

After the Revolutionary War, St. Clair served in the Continental Congress from 1785 to 1787 as a delegate from his home state of Pennsylvania. In February 1787, he was elected the body’s ninth president. Also that year, Congress enacted the Northwest Ordinance, and on October 5, 1787, St. Clair left the presidency to begin a 15-year career as the first governor of the Northwest Territory. With his appointment recommended by Washington and approved by Congress, St. Clair took on the huge responsibility of overseeing an area that was to become the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan, along with parts of Wisconsin and Minnesota.

St. Clair’s work was an example for later territorial governors. In July 1788 he published the new territory’s compact, or governing covenant, and commissioned three judges. The first of the 10 Ohio counties he established was named for his friend Washington, and by September he had created his first territorial court. While governor, St. Clair made his headquarters in Cincinnati, a city he named after the Society of the Cincinnati, a fraternal organization of Revolutionary War officers.

Despite St. Clair’s embrace of America, he couldn’t entirely escape his Scottish birth and British military training. Some complained about his aristocratic bearing, and he resisted attempts by members of Congress to interfere with his work. His uncompromising nature came off as arrogance, a quality that caused him enemies, especially in Congress.
FAMILY LIFE
In the midst of such a busy career, St. Clair leaned heavily on his wife, Phoebe. St. Clair had met Phoebe Bayard, the niece of Massachusetts Governor James Bowdoin, in 1758 in Boston. Married in 1760, they used her dowry and his British army retirement stipend to acquire thousands of acres for their estate in the Ligonier Valley. They had seven children, six of whom survived to adulthood. During the decade that St. Clair was building his wealth and judicial career in Westmoreland County, Phoebe, who had grown up in Boston's social circles, tried to adjust to life in the wilderness. It became even more difficult after her husband took up America's cause of freedom.

Though less visible, Phoebe's sacrifice was no less patriotic than her husband's. The Phoebe Bayard DAR Chapter, Greensburg, Pa., proudly bears her name. Not only did she run their large estate amid the constant demands of managing estate business and satisfying creditors, but she also was responsible for raising their family. Although St. Clair wrote Phoebe often and sent her everything he earned, his personal visits were infrequent. A trip on horseback from his Cincinnati headquarters to Philadelphia, with a stop at his Ligonier home, took more than a month, so he was barely able to return twice a year. Some historians suggest that loneliness caused Phoebe serious mental distress. Eventually, when St. Clair became governor of the Northwest Territory, he established their western residence in Marietta, Ohio, and their family life improved.

DISAPPOINTED BUT DIGNIFIED
Being named the first governor of a territory the size of the original 13 Colonies appeared at first to be a great honor. But St. Clair lacked the resources to do his job properly. Legislators seldom matched funds with their orders to St. Clair, so he would use his own funds or write IOUs on behalf of his country to complete each task.

In 1791, several hundred of American General Josiah Harmar's troops died at the hands of the British-trained army of Confederated Indian Tribes of the Maumee Valley, part of the Northwest Territory. Congress was incensed that any Indian force could defeat the American army, and officials demanded quick retaliation and victory. The 57-year-old Arthur St. Clair, ailing from gout and considered an old man for the time, was immersed in his job as territorial governor. Yet Congress ordered him back to military service, forcing him to rebuild a defeated and demoralized army in very little time.

He went on to lose twice as many troops as Harmar within the same year. Despite the inevitable failure of its ill-formed plan, Congress made St. Clair the scapegoat and allowed Major General Anthony Wayne three years to prepare troops for victory. St. Clair resigned from the army at the request of President Washington, but he served as the Northwest Territory governor until 1802. He was left to carry the heavy burden of reliving this tragedy for the rest of his life.

Many historians agree that St. Clair's lifetime of exemplary statesmanship and military leadership should not be overshadowed by this one battle. St. Clair had to have known that coming out of retirement too quickly with unprepared, ill-equipped soldiers was a formula for disaster. It didn't help that Congress ordered him to cut a trail through the forest and build several forts along the 100 miles to battle. And according to Richard Battin in “Early America's Bloodiest Battle,” a 1994 story in the Fort Wayne, Ind., News-Sentinel, Secretary of War Henry Knox had appointed his friend, New York financier William Duer, to supply the troops. The unscrupulous Duer lost the money on land speculation.

Upon his return home, St. Clair found his wealth eroded. He had run up personal debts to carry out 14 years of unfunded assignments as governor, and Congress would not vote for reimbursement of those expenses. His debtors won a personal court judgment, and his land and holdings were sold, forcing him into poverty until his death on August 31, 1818. Phoebe died 18 days later. Both are buried at St. Clair Park in Greensburg, Pa.

Those who knew St. Clair during his last years said he never lost his dignity. Fifty years later, Congress finally voted a “substantial sum” to reimburse St. Clair's heirs.

A former national press agent, Dick Phillips now writes and speaks about 18th- and 19th-century historical figures from his home in St. Clairsville, Ohio. Reach him at phillphx@aol.com.
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