Revolutions in Upstate New York
Following the Women’s History Trail

Spy Heroes
Women in Revolutionary Espionage

Captain Molly
Establishing the True Identity of An American Military Heroine

Hawaii’s Gulick-Rowell House
Home of Real Daughter Malvina Rowell

Words of Solace

Early American Women’s Letters

March/April 2011

Special Issue devoted to Women’s History Month

If we surrender the right to speak to the public this year, we must surrender the right to petition next year and the right to write the year after and so on. My Duty to you, induced me once again to endeavour if possible, to kindle up that flame again. I prefer England to it, ’tis true, but think Carolina greatly preferable to the West Indies. If you are afraid pray own truth & come home & take care of your Children & I will be glad to come & take your place, & never will be called a Coward. From diffidence of my own merit I sometimes fear you will love me less after being so long from me.” The surrender of our right to speak is more painful to me and the women of my own country than the loss of all the other rights we have had. If next year you will Love me less after being so long from me, I prefer England to it, ’tis true, but think Carolina greatly preferable to the West Indies. If you are afraid pray own truth & come home & take care of your Children & I will be glad to come & take your place, & never will be Called a Coward.

Author’s Note

The story of Malvina Rowell is a testament to the courage and commitment of women during the American Revolution. Born in a time when women were largely excluded from public life, Malvina Rowell defied convention to support her husband, a prominent soldier, and assist him in military matters. Her actions were not without controversy, as her role was at times frowned upon by those who believed women should remain in the domestic sphere.

Rowell’s correspondence provides a valuable insight into daily life during the Revolution, particularly for women at home. Her letters reveal her concerns for her husband and family, as well as her strong patriotic sentiments. She expressed a desire to contribute to the cause, even if it meant leaving her comfort to assist her husband in his military duties.

Malvina Rowell’s story is one of many that highlight the significant roles women played in the Revolution. It serves as a reminder of the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the contributions of all individuals, regardless of gender, during times of national crisis.
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From the President General

One of American Spirit’s goals is to illuminate the lives of women in the Colonial and early American periods, and that priority is exhibited prominently in this special March/April issue dedicated to Women’s History Month.

Our cover is graced by the silhouette of Abigail Adams, whose diligence for writing left behind one of the best and most insightful records of what life was like for women in the pre- and post-Revolutionary periods. In early America, few people approved of women writing for publication, but letters, because of their private nature, were considered respectable. In our “Words of Solace” feature, we explore how the few letters surviving from the period show how women of all classes used the form not only to communicate information, but also express their inner thoughts.

We don’t know much about the women who participated in espionage work during the Revolutionary War, but the exploits of three of them—Lydia Darragh, Elizabeth Burgin and Anna Smith Strong—would make for a page-turning spy novel. Risking their lives to pass on crucial information, these women’s creative efforts contributed to the enemy’s defeat.

We salute the service of Margaret Cochran Corbin in the Our Patriots department. The first U.S. woman to receive a military pension, “Captain Molly” took over the cannon after her husband’s death at the Battle of Fort Washington. Despite her bravery, for more than a century, no one connected Corbin to an eccentric woman who was buried in the village just south of West Point. The New York State Organization (NYSO) of the DAR installed a marker at her grave at West Point Cemetery in 1926. And now each May, the New York State Officers Club sponsors Margaret Corbin Day to recall both the memory of Captain Molly and the role the NYSO played in honoring her historical significance.

This issue’s Historic Home has a DAR connection, too. The Gulick-Rowell House, believed to be the oldest residence in Kauai, was also the home of Real Daughter Malvina Rowell, who traveled to Hawaii with her missionary husband, the Reverend George B. Rowell, in 1846. The house, a classic example of the New England-style architecture that the missionaries introduced to Hawaii, is the only missionary residence remaining in the area.

Our Spirited Adventures department follows the Women’s History Trail in and near Seneca Falls, N.Y., where the first Woman’s Rights Convention was held in 1848. As we take a closer look at the upstate New York locations that formed the backdrop of this groundbreaking convention, we also explore the friendship between two of the most prominent activists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, a proud DAR member.

Merry Ann T. Wright

Merry Ann T. Wright
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To say that Mary Collins Landin, Ph.D., has a passion for genealogy would be an understatement. She’s been working on her own genealogy since she was a teenager, and she’s always willing to help someone find a lost ancestor—whether the searcher is in her home state of Mississippi or elsewhere.

Her favorite genealogy-related pastime is recording old cemeteries, which she and her son, now a space engineer with Lockheed Martin, would do on the weekends when he was a boy. “I record them because of their history,” says Dr. Landin, the Regent, past Registrar and longtime member of the Ashmead Chapter, Vicksburg, Miss. “Before 1850, census records didn’t list anyone except a head of household or widow, so cemetery records play a very important role in tracing one’s lineage.”

She spent four years researching and writing a book that lists more than 13,000 Mississippi cemeteries. That’s just one of more than a dozen genealogy books Dr. Landin has published since the 1960s.

“I find genealogy fascinating,” she says. “If you know something about your family, you can’t help but feel pride, even if you have a horse thief back there somewhere.”

But the sign that Dr. Landin is a die-hard genealogist? She gets as excited helping strangers trace their lineage as she does working on her own genealogy. “I get such a kick out of helping people make these connections to their past.”

With this impressive résumé, Dr. Landin sounds like a professional genealogist, but she’s actually a farmer, as well as a retired environmental scientist who worked for the federal government for more than 30 years. She spent most of her career at the Waterways Experiment Station and Engineering Research and Development Center. Based in Vicksburg, the station serves as the research facility for the Department of Defense (DOD)’s Army Corps of Engineers.

Dr. Landin’s job took her all over the world, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, England and Spain. “We designed wetlands, helped rehabilitate damaged areas that the Corps and DOD owned or managed, and did follow-up research,” she explains. Though she retired in 1997, Dr. Landin still does contract work for state and federal agencies. In 2005, she was called on to participate in a task force focused on the recovery of the Gulf Coast region in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Today, Dr. Landin is enjoying a busy retirement by tending to her farm in Utica, Miss., which occupies the same land her ancestors farmed when they settled in Mississippi in the early 19th century. While the farm has produced a variety of crops, today the focus is on cattle, hay and timber. “I’ve been involved in this my entire life,” she says. “I had three brothers, but none of them came home to farm after college, so I turned out to be the family farmer.”

Dr. Landin explains that a typical day on the family farm involves working from “can [see] to can’t [see],” or from dawn until well after dark, most days of the week. In the winter, she’s constantly feeding her cattle, putting out 21 tons of hay every three days to feed an estimated 300 mother cows, plus their calves, herd bulls and replacement heifers. Other times of the year she’s working the pastures and hayfields nonstop. “There’s always more than enough work to do on a farm,” she says. “You’d have to love it or you’d never survive!”

Between her farm and genealogy pursuits, it’s surprising that Dr. Landin has room in her day for much else, but she’s also an avid preservationist. She has restored two historic buildings in downtown Utica, both of which she saved from bulldozers. “It was definitely a spur-of-the-moment decision,” she says. “But I hate to see something so carefully constructed and holding so much history be destroyed. The buildings I saved aren’t beautiful, but it’s our history. I’m just trying to help save and make useful what’s left.”

History’s Protector

Meet a Daughter who has woven preservation through all facets of her life.

By LENA ANTHONY
Photo by MELANIE THORTIS
LYDIA RUSSELL’S silk embroidery is not only a beautiful example of schoolgirl art, but also a documentation of her family around 1809. Family records became popular in early-19th-century America in response to a growing reverence for home and family. Young ladies worked “the registers” either as samplers or as silk embroideries. They presented birth, marriage and death dates in a variety of formats and sometimes included alphabets, verses or architectural features, along with important family events. Some embroideries could be classified as memorials to a family or individual, while others are pictorial.

The daughter of Edward Russell and Lydia Adams of West Cambridge, Mass., Lydia Russell probably worked this tree-of-life design on silk and watercolor when she was about 18 years old. Children’s birth dates appear on the apples in orange for daughters and blue for sons. The tree is flanked by monuments topped by urns with beautiful spiraling vines running upward and tied with a Neoclassical bowknot. On the monument honoring her father, Lydia inscribed his birth, marriage and death dates. The other monument commemorates her mother’s birth and the death of 1-year-old Lydia, the sister for whom she was named. The undersized house, tiny animals and landscape beneath the towering tree add a touch of charming innocence to this young girl’s elegant masterpiece.
Spotlighting the achievements of Alice Paul, a leading activist for women's right to vote, is the focus of a new biography.

**Crusader for Equality**

Suffragette, political organizer, Ph.D., Quaker, DAR member—Alice Paul wore many hats throughout her 92 years. Often described as slender, almost frail, with piercing blue eyes, as a young woman she stepped from a rural upbringing onto the world stage to battle for women's right to vote in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

Yet Paul’s achievements are less well-known than they should be, says Mary Walton, author of *A Woman’s Crusade: Alice Paul and the Battle for the Ballot* (Palgrave McMillan, 2010). Drawing on Paul’s collected papers, oral histories taken of her and other members of the suffrage movement, as well as documents from various suffrage groups, Walton’s book fills in the gap and brings the era to life.

Crusading fervor apparently ran in Paul’s veins. As a Quaker, she inherited a tradition of staunch opposition to violence, military service and oppression of the downtrodden, including slaves in America. Her ancestors had been friends with Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister who helped Elizabeth Cady Stanton organize the 1848 Woman’s Rights Convention and led the early suffrage movement.

Still, Paul’s entry into the suffrage movement distressed her family. After graduating from Swarthmore College, she spent some time doing social work in the tenements of New York City. Deciding that social work merely treated the symptoms of a social issue without attempting to correct it, Paul returned to school to earn a master’s degree in sociology with a minor in political science and economics.

While on scholarship to study in Birmingham, England, she happened upon a speech delivered by Christabel Pankhurst, a leader of the women’s suffrage movement in England. Pankhurst was a firebrand—she had been jailed for her confrontational tactics—and her words ignited in Paul a desire to be part of the movement.

She joined the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) and before long found herself confronting politicians and police. WSPU members frequently engaged in vandalism, such as tossing petition-wrapped bricks through windows of politicians’ homes and government buildings, or slapping or spitting on police to provoke an arrest. Eventually, Paul and other suffragettes staged hunger strikes, which became notorious when jailers commenced force-feeding their charges.

She returned from England in 1910, several years before its suffrage battle was won, and joined the American version of the movement. Paul discovered she was a celebrity—suffrage groups and others around the country invited her to speak about her experiences, which had become international press fodder.

She soon joined the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), where she revolutionized strategy and tactics. Paul shifted away from a slow and uncertain state-by-state campaign to a push for a Constitutional amendment that would, at a stroke, enfranchise all eligible women. She also injected tactics learned in England that would generate maximum press coverage—as well as embarrassment for opponents.

Walton notes that Paul’s Quaker upbringing, as well as her experiences in England, informed her nonviolent civil disobedience approach to demonstrations. Even the young Gandhi was deeply impressed by the women’s nonviolent approach and discipline, and took those lessons to heart in the struggle for Indian independence.

Paul displayed her talents for peaceful protest in March 1913, when she organized a huge NAWSA parade just before the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson. Soon an organization dubbed the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage announced a counterrally. A war of charges and rebuttals erupted.

Despite promises of police protection, the marchers were accosted by onlookers—mostly male. Marchers and observers alike charged that police were lackadaisical at best in trying to protect the parade participants. Accounts of injuries differed widely, as did press accounts of the event, but one thing was clear: Alice Paul and the suffrage movement had become front-page news. Seven years later, she and her fellow activists helped achieve the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

Walton’s account is written with the flair of a veteran journalist in charge of a complex story with colorful characters and inherent drama. Walton notes that while the ultimate goal—the vote—was vitally important, the strategies shaped the future of political movements, from civil rights to Vietnam and beyond. —Bill Hudgins
Amanda Odmark remembers watching her father hang tobacco when she was a child growing up in Asheville in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina. It’s in these faded memories of childhood that Odmark began her work as an artist. Her mixed media projects, with strong roots in the Americana and Folk Art genres, focus on found objects related to family history. When researching her lineage, Amanda sorted through family antiques looking for lost treasures and found them in various forms—wood from the barn, rusty pieces of hardware, broken plates, quilt pieces and a typewriter. Along with old photos, these household relics allowed her to discover lost stories in the process of tying family history and childhood memories into collage.

In her piece titled “I am not myself by myself,” a piece of barn wood with its faded, cracked and bruised China blue paint serves as the canvas for a photo of her uncle and his friend printed onto a piece of vintage fabric. The photo, affixed using nails from the barn, lies over a typewritten note listing the piece’s title, along with a button of her uncle’s and a decaying strap hinge reimagined as sculpture. The image depicts the pair walking and laughing, wearing almost comically matching orange knitted hats. It enabled Odmark to see them as young again—lighthearted and enthusiastic—invoking a deeper sense of a connection that had been previously shrouded by age.

The artist also made a number of amazing discoveries both personal and historic, such as photos of a woman her grandfather dated before meeting Odmark’s grandmother, as well as her grandfather playing guitar in a soldier’s camp in World War II. In the sifting, Odmark even stumbled upon a photo of Marilyn Monroe singing to the troops at a USO event in Europe.

Despite the deep nostalgic elements in the work, Odmark has never been tight-fisted with her family artifacts. She freely passes on the pieces and their stories to friends, family and even strangers as she sells or gives away her work. It’s in the process of creation that she finds the reconnection she first sought. “It’s been about a desire to connect,” Odmark says—to know her past, and not just in a sense of knowing where she came from. She wants to understand her family in new and beautiful ways, much as she does with the artifacts themselves.
Nashville, Tennessee-based artist **L.A. Bachman**, one of the few female abstract artists in Tennessee, has found herself creating in a genre historically dominated by men. This has made her voice in the field all the more valuable. Though abstract art is characteristically centered on non-pictorial, nonrepresentative images, Bachman often creates intricate works with glimpses of recognizable patterns found in nature. This balance allows the viewer to enjoy the work based first purely on color and form and then further reflect on it based on the images’ familiarity.

“I have found that alluding to natural shapes amid unrecognizable ones soothes people,” Bachman explains. “Recognition can be a powerful force when faced with an unknown. Therefore, I incorporate organic patterns, as an offering of comfort.”

In this careful balance between recognizable and unfamiliar elements in her work, Bachman’s life deeply informs each painting and finds its way into each work’s story. In her piece “Mother Fiber,” the artist constructs vertebral shapes and patterns as a reflection on her mother’s struggle with a series of back and nerve disorders.

In one of her current projects, “Chit Chat: Steps to Being Girly,” Bachman says she focuses on “the things girls put on and the things they try to put away.”

In watching her stepdaughter grow up, Bachman has noticed how what she refers to as “the exterior eye” has come into the picture—the young girl’s awareness of other people’s gaze. She remembers first meeting her stepdaughter, then 7, when she wore the same thing day after day without a second thought.

Now 11 years old, the girl’s growing awareness of herself brings with it both joy and newfound insecurities. These juxtaposing concepts are seen in the work through pearl- and jewel-like imagery complementing elements of perceived imperfection represented by moles and freckles.

Always experimenting, Bachman sought a delicate, new material relevant to the subject matter and began painting feminine detailing onto pillow cases, emphasizing her stepdaughter’s bedroom, a newly realized kingdom.

Bachman will be presenting four new series of works in 2011, including “Chit Chat.” She is represented by the Rymer Gallery in Nashville. To learn more about her work, visit [www.labachman.com](http://www.labachman.com) and [www.therymergallery.com](http://www.therymergallery.com).—Matt Ward
Eye Wonder:
Photography From the
Bank of America Collection
National Museum of Women in the Arts
Washington, D.C., through May 22, 2011

The NMWA’s new exhibit features artists who have selected offbeat subjects, intense close-ups, or focus and color manipulation to create dreamy and often haunting photographic images. The exhibition displays a rich diversity of subjects and styles, spanning photographs created from 1865 to the present. “Eye Wonder” features more than 100 works by a wide array of artists, including Margaret Bourke-White and Dorothea Lange.

For more information, visit www.nmwa.org.

Inspiration and Industry:
American Women on the Home Front
Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum
New York City, through March 31, 2011

A new exhibition that shows women’s roles in wartime efforts during World War I and World War II is now open at the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum in New York City, through March 31. “Inspiration and Industry: American Women on the Home Front” is composed of more than 20 posters issued during both wars, when posters were used to persuade Americans at home that they had a responsibility to support the war efforts. The posters’ depiction of women shows their changing roles, from modest participation in World War I to active service during World War II.

For more information, visit www.intrepidmuseum.org.

Nizhoni Shima’:
Master Weavers of the Toadlena/Two Grey Hills Region
Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian
Santa Fe, N.M., through April 17, 2011

The Wheelwright Museum’s new exhibit presents iconic textiles made by master weavers of the community surrounding the Toadlena and Two Grey Hills trading posts of New Mexico. During the first decade of the 20th century, weavers and traders from this region collaborated to develop a distinctive style of textile that has proven to be one of the most popular and enduring in the history of Navajo weaving. Featuring rugs and tapestries dating from circa 1910 to the present, the exhibition explores the meticulous technique and family connections that have fostered one of the world’s great craft traditions.

For more information, visit www.wheelwright.org.

Tennessee Samplers:
‘This My Name Shall Ever Have’: 19th-Century Samplers
Polk Presidential Hall
Columbia, Tenn., through April 10, 2011

An exhibit featuring 15 original samplers and other artifacts relating to early-19th-century female education and needlework is now open at Polk Presidential Hall in Columbia, Tenn. “Tennessee Samplers: ‘This My Name Shall Ever Have’” features embroidery by former first lady Sarah Childress Polk.

During the 1800s, Middle Tennessee was a center for female education, and young women from across the country came to the area for a classical education that included needlework. Serving as evidence of their work, the samplers on display come from private individuals as well as organizations such as the Tennessee State Museum, Rippavilla Plantation, the Sam Davis Home and Museum, and others.

For more information, visit www.jameskpolk.com or call (931) 388–2354.
If you read “The Battle of Kings Mountain” in the January/February issue, you might wonder just how many Americans opted to fight actively on the British side. *Tories: Fighting for the King in America’s First Civil War* by Thomas B. Allen (HarperCollins, 2010) doesn’t provide a precise answer, but it does delve deeply into why the American Revolution is also regarded as a civil war.

The cause of independence enjoyed ardent support from only a fraction of Americans. Others were lukewarm at best, while a sizable fraction actively opposed it, a number of whom took up arms as militia against the Patriot cause.

Allen writes that when General Nathanael Greene took command of the southern wing of the Continental Army in 1781, he reported to Alexander Hamilton, “The division among the people is much greater than I imagined and the Whigs [Patriots] and Tories persecute each other, with little less than savage fury. There is nothing but murders and devastation in every quarter.”

After the war, Allen notes, more than 80,000 Tories—who called themselves loyalists—fled America for Canada, Great Britain and elsewhere. Those who fled also included thousands of former slaves who had escaped from their masters seeking promised freedom behind British lines. Many others who had Tory sympathies, however, elected to stay behind and try to rebuild their lives, often in new places and under new identities. Tories who remained were considered pariahs; many moved away from home to resume life where their reputations were unknown.

*Tories* reveals often-surprising details of the anti-independence faction:

- Benjamin Franklin’s illegitimate son William, the last Colonial governor of New Jersey, led a Tory guerilla band that harassed Patriots and the Continental Army in that state.
- Divided loyalties pitted friends, neighbors and family members against one another in vicious skirmishes, as well as beatings, tar-and-featherings, arson attacks and lynchings.
- Immigrant Scottish Highlanders, who came to America to escape oppression, were induced to fight for the King by the promise of land grants.

*Tories* provides a comprehensive overview of a rarely glimpsed facet of the American Revolution and its consequences for many Americans.

originally, Cokie Roberts envisioned the inauguration of John Quincy Adams, the “moment when the era of the founding generation ended.” as the endpoint of *Founding Mothers*, her account of the key women of the Revolutionary period, but a growing page count led her to conclude during the presidency of his father, John Adams, instead. Luckily for readers, the extra material did not go to waste. Roberts turned it into *Ladies of Liberty* (Harper Perennial, 2008), a book “bookended by Adamses,” in the author’s words.

Much of the text in *Ladies of Liberty* comes from letters women wrote to each other or to their husbands, a brand of correspondence often more revealing than that of the male Revolutionary thinkers, who expected their words to be preserved as historical record. The women of the era devoured the latest political news, sometimes before their husbands learned of it, and the overlap between state and society in Washington, D.C., amplified their status. As early American journalist Margaret Bayard Smith observed, “The women here are taking a station in society which is not known elsewhere.” (See Women’s Letters feature on page 24.)

In addition to detailing the influence of Abigail Adams and Dolley Madison, *Ladies of Liberty* acknowledges pioneering females, including feminist essayist Judith Sargent Murray, writer Mercy Otis Warren, philanthropist Isabella Graham, women’s education advocates Elizabeth Seton and Rebecca Grantz, and first lady Elizabeth Kortright Monroe. The book also illuminates the close paternal relationships that Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, both widowers, forged with their respective daughters, Martha Jefferson Randolph and Theodosia Burr Alston.

From this cast of characters, Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams, wife of John Quincy Adams, emerges as the star of the book. Louisa evolves from young senator’s wife and mother struggling to contend with the country’s most formidable mother-in-law to determined diplomat’s spouse. From Russia to Paris amid international upheaval and then to adept political asset and first lady.

*Ladies of Liberty*, in supplying a wealth of contemporary female perspectives on the early years of the United States, serves as an invaluable contribution to the historic record.
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For more than 170 years, the town of Columbia, Tenn., has honored the humble mule, whose brawn and endurance made it an ideal draft animal for pulling plows, carriages and buggies, and also enabled it to serve as a riding animal.

But it may come as a surprise to those not steeped in mule lore to learn that the Father of Our Country is also regarded in many circles as the father of the American mule.

George Washington incessantly experimented with new farming techniques at his many farms, most notably at Mount Vernon. Seeking a more perfect draft animal, he decided to breed mules, which are the sterile offspring of a male donkey (jack) and a female horse (mare). Mules are stronger and more sure-footed and have better endurance than horses. They also eat less and can exist on harder fare. At the same time, its horse genes help make the mule more tractable than its even more determinedly stubborn sire.

In Washington’s day several breeds of large donkeys were used to breed mules. The best came from Spain, but they were rarely if ever made available to outsiders.

When King Charles III of Spain heard in 1785 that Washington was looking for superior breeding stock, however, he sent the retired general two superb Andalusian donkeys. One died on the voyage across the Atlantic. Washington named the surviving animal Royal Gift. Lafayette also gave Washington a smaller donkey named Knight of Malta.

According to Ron Chernow’s Washington: A Life, Washington was able to combine the bloodlines of the two donkeys to produce a jack named Compound. After some early reluctance to breed with the Virginia mares, the donkeys soon began siring outstanding mules. By the time Washington died in 1799, there were nearly 58 mules at Mount Vernon. The bloodlines of many of today’s mules run back to Royal Gift and Washington’s mares.

Mule Day 2011 events kick off March 26 and run through April 3. For more information, visit www.muleday.org.

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

The Maria Sanford Chapter, Minneapolis, Minn., is named after one of the first female professors in the United States and the first at the University of Minnesota, where she began teaching subjects including rhetoric, elocution, literature and art history in 1880. Prior to that post, Maria had taught history at Swarthmore College for nearly a decade. She championed women’s rights, supported education for blacks, pioneered the concept of adult education and participated in early parent-teacher organizations. Maria’s statue is in the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. It’s one of two statues representing important figures in Minnesota history in the National Statuary Hall collection. A DAR member, she later traveled the United States delivering patriotic speeches, the most famous being “An Apostrophe to the Flag,” delivered at the NSDAR Continental Congress in 1920 shortly before her death.

Elizabeth Gordon Bradley Chapter. Waco, Texas, shares the name of Organizing Regent Sara Evans’ ancestor, a patriot born May 4, 1730, in Williamsburg Township, S.C., who aided the Revolutionary cause by making clothing and furnishing food and supplies to soldiers. Her home was used as a back hospital for the wounded. Following the death of her husband, Samuel, Elizabeth continued to manage their large estate and carry on the patriotic activities they had begun together.

Abigail Bartholomew Chapter. Daytona Beach, Fla., bears the name of Organizing Regent Kathryn E. Thorp’s ancestor Abigail Patchen Bartholomew, who was born in the mid-1750s and married Benjamin Bartholomew on April 10, 1774, in New York. The couple had 11 children. On October 7, 1780, a party of British, Hessians, loyalists and American Indians attacked Middle Fort, N.Y., near the Bartholomew home, where local citizens and militiamen served as the only defense. When ammunition ran low, Abigail and other women who had taken refuge in the fort allegedly began gathering weapons to supply the defenders, helping to save the fort. Abigail died January 10, 1839, and is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Geneva, Ohio.

The namesake of Susannah Smith Elliott Chapter, Summerville, S.C., was a patriotic and courageous South Carolina native who once hid two Patriots in a secret room of her home and refused to disclose their location despite the threats of British soldiers pursuing them. Orphaned young and reared by another patriotic woman, her aunt Rebecca Motte, for whom a Charleston, S.C., DAR chapter is named, Susannah married Barnard Elliott, who served under William Moultrie. After the 1776 attack on Sullivan’s Island, Susannah presented Moultrie with two flags she had crafted and embroidered with the inscription “Liberty is more to be desired than Life.” Three years later Sergeant William Jasper, in planting them on the British lines at Savannah, Ga., was mortally wounded. According to tradition, in his last moments he said, “Tell Mrs. Elliott I lost my life supporting the colors she presented to our regiment.”
Russ Carey grew up much differently than most of his students at Penquis Valley High School in Milo, Maine. While his students are spending their formative years staring at televisions, computer screens and cell phones, Carey spent his listening to family members tell stories around his kitchen table. “I grew up in a family of storytellers,” he says. “We didn’t have television, or bother to turn on the radio. My parents would sit around after supper and talk, and I realized that it was neat to have all of these stories. I make every effort to share that with my students.”

Unfortunately, most students first arrive in his classroom without any knowledge about their past—until they complete Carey’s family tree project. In addition to researching their genealogy and creating a family tree, Carey expects his students to gather all of the information they can from grandparents and great-grandparents. While some students grumble about the project, in the end, nearly all of them are excited about the family memories they’ve uncovered.

For one family, Carey’s project helped preserve the stories and oral history of a grandfather who had served in World War II.

“I had the family’s oldest child in my class. He recorded an interview with his grandfather, and it was phenom-

enal. The man was so genuine when talking about his experiences. By the time the youngest son took my class, his grandfather had died—but he had this incredible interview recorded that he could keep forever,” Carey says.

Getting Involved in Civic Life

Carey prefers these kinds of interactive lessons—and not just when it comes to genealogy. During the election cycle, Carey asks candidates to speak to his students to encourage civic responsibility. On voting day, the entire class stops by the polls to watch their 18-year-old classmates cast their very first vote.

“After our students vote, the entire class gives them a round of applause,” Carey says. “Students who are still 16 or 17 get so excited to turn 18 and go to the polling place. They love it.”

In the small town of Milo, residents hold annual town meetings to discuss community matters. Carey’s students can be found in the balcony of each meeting, taking notes on the proceedings and getting a feel for how community matters work. Students who have turned 18 can speak up and offer their opinions at meetings, and Carey encourages them to do so.

“My class is all about getting involved—one way or another,” he says.

Connecting to Historic Places

One of his most popular tools for involvement is the Close Up program, which gives high-school students the opportunity to connect to democracy, historic places and civic events in Washington, D.C.

“I take as many kids as I can to the capital for a week, and give them the opportunity to participate in history and gov-

ernment,” Carey says. “We meet with our congressional delegation and lobbyists. Every kid who takes the trip wants to go back. For my students coming out of a small town in the middle of the woods, that’s a fantastic learning experience.”

Even after decades of teaching, Carey has no plans to retire yet, especially since he’s still eager to connect new generations to our nation’s history. He continues to empha-

size to his tech-obsessed students that personal connections can’t always be recreated on a computer screen.

“Talking to people one on one is so important,” he says. “You have to remember the stories. It’s nice to have them on a hard drive, but if the opportunity arises to tell the stories, you have to have them in your mind. That’s how history gets passed along.”

Engaging Students

A Maine history teacher emphasizes one-on-one participation in civic life

By MEGAN PACELLA  Photography by BILL KNIGHT

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Letters
Spirited comments from our readers

An S.A.R. Advocate
At the time of my mother’s acceptance into the Daughters of the American Revolution, I gave her a gift of *American Spirit*. My mother did not enjoy reading history until she started reading this magazine. I cannot emphasize enough my urging of every DAR member and my S.A.R. brothers who have not as yet been exposed to this magazine to do so. Not only are the traditional U.S. historical events and personages discussed, but also antiques, architecture, anthropology, archaeology and even science, as it relates to history, are featured. The libraries of public schools, colleges and universities should subscribe to this wonderful magazine.

Phyllis Conheady Stehm
Margaret Montgomery Chapter, Conroe, Texas

An Eagle Eye for Anthony’s Image
The recent salute to the 90th anniversary of the 19th Amendment (July/August 2010) had recognizable and well-known photos of all the women pictured except for Susan B. Anthony. As an Anthony researcher and volunteer genealogist/consultant to the Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester, N.Y., I was quite surprised to see this photo as depicting Anthony. Upon further research I learned that the chosen photo was a daguerreotype from the Southworth & Dawes collection, currently held by New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. I contacted the curator of photo collections with my concern about this photo, mainly its lack of resemblance to known photos of Susan B. Anthony in the early 1850s.

After reviewing donor information from 1937 and other well-known photos of Anthony, the curator agreed that the identification was likely faulty. They have removed this identification from their collections information.

On the other hand, Anthony, a DAR member herself, would surely approve of the recognition given the 90th anniversary of the 19th Amendment!

Phyllis Conheady Stehm
Margaret Montgomery Chapter, Conroe, Texas

Morgan v. Tarleton
Congratulations on the publication of the outstanding January/February 2011 issue of *American Spirit*. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. However, I did read some misinformation in “The Battle of Kings Mountain” in the first sentence of the last paragraph of the article: “He [General Greene] and Cornwallis clashed at the Battle of Cowpens…”

It is true that during this battle Greene was in charge of the southern portion of the Continental Army and General Cornwallis was in charge of Great Britain’s southern campaign against the Patriots. However, neither of these gentlemen was actually at the Battle of Cowpens. It was General Daniel Morgan who brilliantly led his troops to victory over the infamous Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton, who was lucky to have escaped with his life.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to reading all future issues of *American Spirit*.

Barbara Blauvelt
Mary Wooster Chapter, Danbury, Conn.

The Right Hambright
I was so excited to see the January/February 2011 article on the Battle of Kings Mountain, since my Patriot, Colonel Frederick Hambright, played such an important role in it. The Colonel Frederick Hambright Chapter in Kings Mountain, N.C., is named for him. I was disappointed when the article called him Joseph Hambright. This is incorrect. The man who fought so valiantly at Kings Mountain was Frederick Hambright. This is incorrect. The man who fought so valiantly at Kings Mountain was Frederick Hambright.

Sandra Toney, Treasurer
Olde Towne Fenton Chapter, Fenton, Mo.

On the Border
*American Spirit* is always very informative, but the Battle of Kings Mountain article in the January/February issue has an error. The Cowpens Battlefield is in Cherokee County, South Carolina, not in North Carolina. Living only 10 miles from...
Letters

Spirited comments from our readers

both Cowpens and Kings Mountain battlefields, we are proud to have them not only in our county but also our state. Keep up the great work at making history so interesting.

Jane Waters
Daniel Morgan Chapter, Gaffney, S.C.

Charge of the Light Horsemen

I enjoyed the November/December 2010 article on historical re-enactors. Here in Australia, there isn’t much call for Revolutionary War re-enactments, but I am an enthusiastic member of my local Light Horse Troop, which honors the deeds of the Australian Light Horse in World War I. The Light Horsemen were instrumental in the Middle East campaigns and are most well known for their charge to capture Beersheba from the Turks on October 31, 1917, known as the last great cavalry charge in history. I participate in uniform, with my Waler horse, Jamiesun, a descendent of the horses ridden by the Light Horseman. Historical re-enacting is great fun and a wonderful way to learn about your ancestors. Many of our troops are descended from actual Light Horsemen.

Chase Ellis
Captain Matthew Flinders Chapter, Melbourne, Australia

Keen on Greene

As a direct descendant of Nathanael Greene I was delighted to read the article in the November/December 2010 issue. My original application was approved using this line, as were those of my two daughters. We are extremely proud of our ancestor! My sincere appreciation to Dr. Daniel Marrone for an outstanding article.

Kathleen L. Deegan
Cameron Parish Chapter, Reston, Va.

A Copley Connection

I’m always pleased to read American Spirit. The November/December 2010 issue featured our vivacious chapter member Jill Knappenberger in Today’s Daughters. Another article, “A Colonist’s Best Friend,” was of special interest to me as my Connecticut Patriot, Thomas Copley (1743–1797), shares the same last name as the famous American artist John Singleton Copley, whose work was prominently featured in that article. My mom always said he was an ancestor, but I’ve not been able to verify that statement. What a delight it would be at some point to say my mom was correct and that we share the same lineage!

Sandra Bauman Santas, Regent
Alliance Chapter, Urbana-Champaign, Ill.

Send your letters to americanspirit@dar.org.
Many of the rights in the “Declaration of Sentiments” presented at the 1848 Woman’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, N.Y., are rights that today we take for granted, but in mid-19th-century America, these women’s demands were radical, and a revolution was sparked. Following the Women’s History Trail in and near Seneca Falls and Rochester in the Finger Lakes region provides an eye-opening look at the movement that revolutionized the lives of one-half of the population.

It’s the story of two very different women, close friends and colleagues who struggled most of their lives for women’s rights: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a wife and mother of seven in Seneca Falls, the driving force behind the 1848 convention, and Susan B. Anthony, a never-married Quaker in Rochester. Stanton wrote the fiery speeches of the early women’s movement. Anthony—an indefatigable lecturer and campaigner—delivered them.

“There is no women’s history without them. ...They created the movement. They gave it its vitality,” Kathleen Barry, a biographer and author of Susan B. Anthony (1st Books Library, 2000), said in Ken Burns’ 1999 documentary about the pair, “Not for Ourselves Alone.”

“The combination of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton is one of the great miracles in the history of our country,” adds Lynn Sherr, co-author of Susan

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal.”

— ELIZABETH CADY STANTON
The Birthplace of Women’s Rights
by Sharon McDonnell

Quaker and Anti-Slavery Connections
The Women’s Rights National Historical Park covers three sites in Seneca Falls: The Wesleyan Chapel, where the 1848 convention was held (renovation is under way); a visitor center next door, which offers the historical context for the women’s movement; and the Elizabeth Cady Stanton House. This national park also includes two homes in Waterloo, three miles away: the home of Richard and Jane Hunt, who hosted the 1848 tea party that spurred the convention, and the home of Thomas and Mary Ann M’Clintock, where Stanton wrote the “Declaration of Sentiments,” modeling it after the Declaration of Independence with key phrases, such as “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal.”

Why was central and western New York state the source of such extraordinary activism? In the mid-19th century, the area was already home to crusaders of the anti-slavery, temperance and education reform movements, issues all inextricably entwined with women’s rights. It was also home to many Quakers. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, believed men and women were equal, opposed slavery and favored changing society through social action. An especially progressive branch of Quakers who believed men and women should meet together in faith matters lived in and near Waterloo.

“Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing, never can bring about a reform.”
— SUSAN B. ANTHONY
When the Erie Canal opened in 1825 to link the Great Lakes to New York City via the Hudson River, it transformed the towns along the way, allowing for the cross-pollination of ideas and forging of business connections. Seneca Falls, home to the convention’s five women organizers—Hunt, M’Clintock, Stanton, Lucretia Mott and Martha Wright—was one such town. All of the organizers were wives, mothers and abolitionists, and all but one—Stanton, the youngest at age 33—were Quakers. Astoundingly ahead of her time, Stanton omitted the word “obey” from her vows in her 1840 wedding to an abolitionist, and kept her maiden name, calling herself Elizabeth Cady Stanton, instead of Mrs. Henry Stanton. She attended the first World Anti-Slavery Convention in London on her honeymoon.

At the London convention, she noticed the link between the oppression of slaves and women: Female delegates were forbidden to speak and were seated separately from the men, behind a screen. Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison sat with the women in protest, saying he could take no part in a convention that blatantly denied women’s free speech. It was the turning point in Stanton’s life: There she met Lucretia Mott, the Quaker founder of a women’s anti-slavery society in Philadelphia. Mott, who refused to wear cotton or serve sugar since both resulted from slave labor, was “an entire new revelation of womanhood,” Stanton said. The two agreed to convene a future meeting to discuss women’s rights.

‘My Long-Standing Discontent’

Born to wealth in the finest house in Johnstown, N.Y., Stanton’s maternal grandfather was a Revolutionary War hero; her father, Daniel Cady, was a judge whose approval continually eluded her. He often told the vivacious, brilliant Stanton that she wished she were a boy. “I will try to be all my brother was,” Stanton said after her four brothers died in childhood. She went on to graduate from Troy Female Seminary (renamed the Emma Willard School...
in 1895, in Troy, N.Y., an all-girls school that Emma Willard founded to offer women a rigorous curriculum.

In the Peterboro, N.Y., home of her cousin, Gerrit Smith, an abolitionist and advocate of American Indian rights, temperance and philanthropy, Stanton met escaped slaves—and her future husband. Soon after their marriage, the couple moved to Boston, where they belonged to a progressive literary and intellectual circle that included Garrison, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Bronson Alcott, the father of Louisa May Alcott.

In 1847 the couple and their children moved to Seneca Falls. There Stanton felt hemmed in by endless housework and child care—her husband traveled often, missing the births of his seven children—and chafed at small-town life. Missed the intellectual stimulation of Boston; she suffered from what she called “mental hunger.” At a July 9, 1848, tea party at Jane Hunt’s home attended by Mott and others, Stanton “poured out the torrent of my long-standing discontent,” which “impressed me with the strange feeling that some actions should be taken to remedy the wrongs ... of women,” she said later.

After the meeting, the group placed a notice to discuss the “social, civil and religious condition and rights of Woman” in the Seneca Courier. Stanton penned her “Declaration” in the home of two Philadelphia Quakers, Mary Ann and Thomas M’Clintock, who rented a house and store in Waterloo from Richard Hunt, Jane’s husband. The M’Clintocks founded an organization in Philadelphia that promoted a boycott of foods produced by slaves, and they continued this practice in their Waterloo store.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church was chosen as the site for the women’s convention because it often hosted anti-slavery, freethinker and other reform-minded events. In 1843, the year it was built, a woman was ex-communicated from the local Presbyterian church merely for asking her minister to announce an anti-slavery lecture, instead of allowing her husband to speak for her.

At the 1848 convention, Stanton created a stir when she proposed a resolution for women’s right to vote. Though the first 10 resolutions passed, this one did not. The resolution was considered so shockingly that even Mott protested, “Thou wilt make the convention ridiculous,” and Stanton’s own husband didn’t support it. But famed abolitionist Frederick Douglass rose to speak, his silver-tongued oratory urging that unless women had the vote, they were powerless to change the laws that oppressed them. On the next vote, the resolution passed.

Stanton lived in Seneca Falls, in a home she called the “Center of the Rebellion,” for 15 years before moving to New York City with her family. Anthony—called “Aunt Susan” by the children—often stopped by the house, sometimes helping with household chores. “Susan stirred the puddings, Elizabeth stirred up Susan, and then Susan stirred the world,” Stanton’s husband said.

Stanton’s family responsibilities largely kept her at home. But after her children were grown, she lectured nationwide on women’s issues for more than a decade. She co-authored the first three volumes of the History of Woman Suffrage with Matilda Joslyn Gage, a wife and mother of four from Fayetteville, N.Y., and one of the founding members of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA).

Stanton thought her best speech was “The Solitude of Self,” given at age 77 to the U.S. Congress Judiciary Committee. In it she notes, “In age ... men and women alike must fall back upon their own resources. If they can not find companionship in books, if they have no interest in the vital questions of the hour, no interest in watching the consumption of reforms, they soon pass into their dotage. The more fully the faculties of the mind are developed and kept in use, the longer the period of vigor and active interest in all around us continues.”

Stanton died in 1902 at 86, her dream of the women’s vote unrealized.

Neither Drudge Nor Doll

In contrast, Anthony, born in Adams, Mass., in 1820, had a Quaker father who believed strongly in equality and education for women. When a teacher said she couldn’t do long division with the boys, Anthony’s father began home-schooling all his children. Anthony later went to a Quaker boarding school near Philadelphia and became a teacher, one of few occupations then open to women. She learned to value her independence above all.

“When I was young,” Anthony said, “if a girl married poor, she became a housekeeper and a drudge. If she married wealthy, she became a pet and a doll. Just think, if I married at 20, I would have become a drudge or a doll for 55 years.” But at 29, after teaching 10 years, her future seemed narrow, so she returned to her family’s home, then in Rochester, to find it a meeting place for the reform movements sweeping western New York. Deciding to work as a reformer full-time, she chose temperance, which many felt was key to preventing domestic abuse of women and squandering family property, as her first cause. Abolition later became her cause; and, after a few months of rallying people and circulating flyers, Anthony was dubbed “Napoleon” for her leadership skills.

Though Anthony did not attend the Woman’s Rights Convention, she met Stanton at an 1851 Seneca Falls anti-slavery meeting. They were introduced by Amelia Bloomer, who published The Lily in Seneca Falls. It has been called the first newspaper to be edited entirely by a woman. Bloomer became famous for popularizing a dress style that freed women from tight corsets, multiple petticoats and long...
trailing skirts. Anthony knew Harriet Tubman through Douglass, who was living in Rochester. Tubman, who lived in Auburn, 10 miles from Seneca Falls, helped hundreds of slaves escape to freedom through the Underground Railroad.

Anthony “had to find a spark, and that spark was Stanton,” Ken Burns told The New York Times in an October 31, 1999, story about his film. “Stanton was the bomb thrower who needed Anthony’s pragmatism to sell her philosophy,” while she was tied to home and family responsibilities.

Stanton’s fiery attitude is evident in a 1852 letter she wrote to Anthony: “I am at the boiling point! If I do not find some day the use of my tongue on this question, I shall die of an intellectual repression, a woman’s rights convulsion! Oh, Susan! Susan! Susan! You must manage to spend a week with me before the Rochester convention, for I am afraid that I cannot attend it. How much I do long to be free from housekeeping and children, so as to have some time to read and think and write.”

The two friends didn’t agree on everything, though. Relentless in advocating for women’s right to vote, Anthony campaigned from the Northeast to the Oregon Territory and joked that she knew every train schedule in the United States. This single-mindedness often meant she was willing to compromise on some issues as a tactic to reach that goal. Despite her abolitionist views, she ignored the fact that some local chapters of her national suffrage association excluded black women in the 1890s. She felt winning the vote for most women trumped winning it for all.

Anthony didn’t support Stanton’s controversial views favoring divorce and criticizing women’s role in the Bible because she felt they were also tangential to the goal of winning the vote. Stanton, who viewed marriage as a legal contract, not a union blessed by God, believed “this marriage question” was fundamental to women’s independence. Her views were even censured by the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), which she once led as president. [NAWSA was a merger of NWSA, the organization Stanton, Anthony and Gage founded, and the competing American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), led by Lucy Stone.]

But both Anthony and Stanton were outraged in 1869 when women were left out of the 15th Amendment that granted black men the vote, an amendment championed by Douglass. Despite his support for women’s rights, Douglass believed black men’s right to vote was more important than that of women. After Stanton made unkind remarks about this and Douglass bristled, Anthony sharply said Douglass would be unwilling to trade his status as a black for that of a woman.

The Susan B. Anthony House in Rochester, a National Historic Landmark, was Anthony’s home for 40 years. The red-brick gabled house features the parlor where Anthony met and strategized with Stanton and other allies, as well as the bedroom where she died and a black silk brocade dress that was a gift from Mormon women in Utah. The group was grateful for her help in getting women’s right to vote included in the Utah Constitution when it became a state in 1896. (Wyoming, Colorado and Idaho also won the vote for women in the late 19th century, decades before women won it nationally.) The home’s gift shop sells books on women’s history, a contemporary version of Anthony’s trademark alligator purse, and replicas of the “Votes for Women” china used during teas promoting women’s rights.

Anthony’s house is full of fascinating historical anecdotes: As the headquarters of NAWSA, women’s rights volunteers often slept on the floor and on every available sofa. It’s also where Anthony was arrested for voting in 1872. She was whisked away by a deputy U.S. marshal on a streetcar, and she tartly told its conductor when asked for her fare, “I’m traveling at the expense of the government.” After a trial, she was fined $100, which she refused to pay—and never did. She became a member of the Irondequoit DAR Chapter, Rochester, N.Y., in 1898.

She shared her home with her sister Mary, one of Rochester’s first female school principals. Mary accepted the job on the condition that her salary must be the same as a man would receive, not a quarter or half, which was common at the time.

“Failure is impossible” were the ringing words in Anthony’s last speech in 1906, the year she died at 86. Fourteen years later, the 19th Amendment finally gave American women the right to vote.
What to See

Women’s Rights National Historical Park
136 Fall St.
Seneca Falls, NY 13148
www.nps.gov/wori
(315) 568–0024
Visitor Center open daily, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton House
32 Washington St.
Seneca Falls, NY 13148
www.nps.gov/wori
Reopens March 2011
Tours offered daily during the spring, summer and fall seasons

M’Clintock House
14 E. Williams St.
Waterloo, NY 13165
www.nps.gov/wori
Reopens May 27, 2011
Open Memorial Day weekend–Labor Day, Friday–Monday

National Women’s Hall of Fame
Honors more than 200 women of achievement, including Emily Dickinson and Sojourner Truth.
76 Fall St.
Seneca Falls, NY 13148
www.greatwomen.org
(315) 568–8060
Open November–April: Wednesday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
May–October: daily, 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

Susan B. Anthony House
17 Madison St.
Rochester, NY 14608
www.susanathanonyhouse.org
(585) 235–6124
Open daily except Monday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation
210 E. Genesee St.
Fayetteville, NY 13066
www.matildajoslyngage.org
(315) 637–9511

Seneca County Tourism
www.fingerlakescentral.com
(800) 732–1848

What to See
If I prefer England to it, 'tis true, but think Carolina greatly preferable to the public this year, we must surrender the right to petition next year. I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children & I will be glad to come & take your place & your children 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“There are particular (sic) times when I feel such a sense of uneasiness, such a restlessness as neither company, Books, family Cares or any other thing will remove, my Pen is my only pleasure, and writing to you the composure of my mind.”

A Adams

When Abigail Adams wrote these words to her husband, John, she was a Massachusetts housewife left alone with the burden of raising four children during a tumultuous time in our nation’s history. She longed for her confidant and “dear friend,” as she referred to her husband in letters, but his service in the Continental Congress in Philadelphia kept him away and required her sacrifice. Writing to John, whom she would see only sporadically in the years to come, was her refuge when the reality of their situation and the uncertainty of their lives consumed her.

Abigail called the words in the voluminous letters she wrote to family and friends her “first thoughts,” and they reflect a spontaneous, natural style of expression just coming into vogue in the Colonies. A departure from the stiff, pretentious prose of the Old World, this form of letter writing was just starting to gain status as a more typical kind of conversation. Given her modernity, it’s no surprise that Abigail was one of the first to embrace it.

“Had Abigail lived at a later time, she might have become a writer, a novelist perhaps or more likely a historian, travel writer, essayist or journalist,” writes Edith B. Gelles in Abigail Adams: A Writing Life (Routledge, 2002). “She possessed literary talents; she expressed herself in writing as a unique and forceful voice. She also had a need to write.”

By the time she was first lady, writing had become such an escape that Abigail rose before dawn each morning to put her thoughts, ideas and experiences on paper for recipients, most within her inner circle.

“I find the best time for writing, is to rise about an hour earlier than the rest of my family; go into the President’s Room, and apply myself to pen,” she wrote.

Abigail’s diligence for writing left behind one of the best and most insightful records of what life was like for women in the pre- and post-Revolutionary periods. And though letter writing was more common among society’s elite, it evolved into an outlet that women of all classes used not only to communicate, but also to express themselves.

In early America, few people approved of women writing for publication, but letters, because of their private nature, “were the one respectable outlet for women’s expression,” Gelles writes.

Letters gave women the license to express their ideas and emotions without fear of judgment or retribution. While women’s letters during this period contain everything from commentary on pivotal historical events to the earliest articulation of women’s rights, they also tell stories about enduring topics like marriage, motherhood, heartbreak, healing and friendship.

“By writing, these women created something tangible—a record of their thoughts or interpretations of their experiences—out of something intangible—their personal experiences,” writes Amy L. Wink in She Left Nothing in Particular: The Autobiographical Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Women’s Diaries (University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

Window to a New World

For women who had emigrated from Europe to the New World, letters were the last remaining link to the homelands and families they would never see again. Their correspondence captured both the hardships and freedom of early American life.

In 1756, Elizabeth Springs, an indentured servant in Maryland, sent an impassioned plea to her estranged father, begging forgiveness for leaving London without his permission and asking for money to buy clothing. “Well knowing I had offended in the highest Degree, put a tie to my tongue and pen, for fear I should be extinct from your good Graces and add further Trouble to you,” Springs wrote, “but too well knowing your care and tenderness for me so long as I retaind (sic) my Duty to you, induced me once again to endeavour if possible, to kindle up that flame again.”

For Eliza Lucas (who later became Eliza Pinckney, featured in the January/February 2008 issue), the teenage daughter of a British landowner and officer, life was much happier. She had taken charge of her father’s rice plantations while he was fighting a trade-motivated war in Antigua between England and Spain. She reveled in her independence in the rugged Carolinas. “I like this part of the world,” she confided to a friend in England in a 1740 letter. “I prefer England to it, ’tis true, but think Carolina greatly preferable to the West Indies.”

As stirrings of revolt against the British spread across the continent, letters from America took on an
ominous tone. In a letter to a friend in Liverpool just days after the April 18, 1775, battles of Lexington and Concord, loyalist Anne Hulton detailed the terror of the Revolutionary War’s beginning and her outrage at news of His Majesty’s troops being attacked. “The Lord preserve us all & grant us an happy Issue out of these troubles,” she wrote.

**Wartime Correspondence**

As villages and farms became battlegrounds, and troops from both sides took over towns and cities, families scattered, and letters became the conduit that connected them during the chaotic years of the Revolutionary War. With their husbands off to war and their children sometimes sent away to safe areas with relatives, Colonial women contended with the enemy on the home front. Their letters recount many courageous acts: how they challenged Redcoats who invaded their homes, slipped through enemy lines to deliver dispatches, and risked their lives to aid the Patriot cause.

When Abigail Grant got word of the attempted desertion of her husband, Azariah, during the Battle of Bunker Hill, she sent him a scathing letter, offering to take his place on the battlefield. “And if you are afraid pray own truth & come home & take care of our Children & I will be Glad to Come & take your place. & never will be Called a Coward, neither will I throw away one Cartridge but exert myself bravely in so good a Cause,” Grant wrote.

While most women expressed confidence in their men and encouraged them in letters, many of them, especially young brides, also revealed their fears. Lucy Knox wrote these words in 1777 to her husband, General Henry Knox: “My dearest friend, I wrote you a line by last post just to let you know I was alive, which ... was all I could then say with propriety for I had serious thoughts that I never should see you again.”

Wed for only three years at the time, Knox expressed her concern that the couple’s long separation would harm their marriage, writing that “from diffidence of my own merit I sometimes fear you will Love me less after being so long from me.”

**First Lady of Letters**

Many times in her life, Abigail Adams turned to letters for comfort and inspiration. Letter writing preserved her sanity when she struggled with her husband’s absence during the Revolutionary War and fought an outbreak of smallpox in her home. It eased her isolation from family and familiarity during a five-year stay in Europe, while John Adams negotiated the Treaty of Paris and served as ambassador to England. It sustained her spirit during his sharply criticized presidential term, a period she referred to as “splendid misery.”

Most of all, it helped her form opinions apart from those espoused by her husband. Perhaps Abigail’s best-known

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**Friday, December 16:**

“Having no one to whom I may breathe one word about my loneliness and cheerless situation it is still something to be able to come to this book and transfer however feebly and imperfectly some of the feelings that I fear will one day make me commit some act of rashness of which I may repent afterwards.”

**Dispatches of Diaries**

**WOMEN’S JOURNAL WRITING IN EARLY AMERICA***

Until the early 1800s, most journals were kept by ministers, lawyers or other men of status who described experiences of public life. In most cases, historians say, they were written to be read, such as Richard Mather’s account of his deadly crossing over the Atlantic or minister Jonathan Edwards’ detailed logs of his spiritual struggles and triumphs.

Female diarists in the Colonial period were rare, mostly due to the widespread lack of literacy among women, but a few made their mark. Jemima Condict of New Jersey kept a sporadic diary that included observations of Revolutionary War battles near her home. From 1785 until 1812, Martha Ballard...
letter is her admonition in 1776 on the subject of women’s rights. Upon learning of her husband’s appointment to a committee drafting the Declaration of Independence, she urged him to “Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands.”

Pressing her point further, she wrote, “If particular (sic) care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion (sic), and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.”

The statesman discounted her reprimand with a dismissive “As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh.” But her words resonated with him. A few days later, he wrote a letter to Massachusetts representative John Sullivan exploring what status a democracy should extend to women and other disenfranchised Americans.

Ultimately, the issue of women’s rights proved too radical to gain consideration at the time, but Abigail continued to crusade for women’s rights, taking up education as another cause and writing, “If we mean to have Heroes, Statesmen and Philosophers, we should have learned women.”

Realm of Expression

About half of the women in Colonial society didn’t possess the skills to write a letter, much less sign their names. The enlightenment of the new republic brought the establishment of public schools for boys, and by the early 1800s, girls were attending, too. Female literacy skyrocketed, though higher education remained unavailable to most women, except those from the wealthiest families. Even for students who attended female academies, courses consisted mostly of embroidery, painting, singing, French and harpsichord. History, science, Latin, Greek and other academic disciplines weren’t considered practical for women whose lives were relegated to the home.

Judith Sargent Murray, the self-taught daughter of a wealthy merchant and wife of a minister, set out to change this through her letters to influential lawmakers on women’s intellectual equality with men. Massachusetts schoolteacher of Massachusetts logged thousands of entries in her journal, which chronicled her life as a midwife. Still, their writing dwelled mostly on facts, with few thoughts, feelings or aspirations expressed.

That changed in the 1830s with the publication of diaries by notable authors such as British actress Fanny Kemble, who wrote about her travels across the United States. Journal writing became popular for women, and with the centers of production moving from farm to factory, the home was becoming more of a female domain. Diaries penned by women took an introspective tone, reflecting a record of inner life.

Just a few months after the publication of Kemble’s diary, the Selma Plantation governess started hers, opening with a confession: “I have been very angry today.” She wrote consistently throughout her tenure at the home, except for a few lapses that were followed by profuse apologies for neglect.

Her habit of referring to people by their first initials only, interspersing poetry with prose and mingling introspection and observation, as if an audience were listening in, shows Kemble’s influence, writes Michael O’Brien in An Evening When Alone: Four Journals of Single Women in the South, 1827–1867 (University of Virginia Press, 1997).

“To confess an admiration for Fanny Kemble was to say something about being a woman, something modern, something bold, something independent of men,” O’Brien notes.

The governess vacillates between melancholy and hopefulness in her writing, comparing life to the “entertainment of shifting scenes, the instruments still getting tuned, our spirits getting ready for enjoyment, but the concert will never commence.” She uses the journal to mark the passage of time—one day ruminating on her loneliness; the next, expressing her hopes for the future, as in this springtime post:

“I must have some of these seeds and try to make it climb on some of the trees that are to shade my future Cottage! heavens! will that airy Castle ever be realized?”

Through good and bad days, the peace of mind journaling gave her is palpable, as reflected by one of her final entries:

“Good night little Journal, you have been the source of more comfort than I should ever have imagined such an insignificant repository could have afforded.”

—E.M.
Mary Lyons, founder of Mount Holyoke Seminary, also expressed her passion for this cause in letters outlining her plan to establish a teacher’s academy for women.

“What permanent female seminaries are now in existence?” Lyons wrote in a fundraising letter to a male donor in 1832. “What one in New England of a high character is necessarily, from its plan, destined to outlive its present teachers? Ought this be so?”

Throughout the early 19th century, letters provided a pulpit for budding female activists. When abolitionist Angelina Grimke and her sister, Sarah, were chastised by the ministry for lecturing to mixed groups of men and women in 1837, Grimke responded to the accusations in a letter:

“If we surrender the right to speak to the public this year, we must surrender the right to petition next year and the right to write the year after and so on. What then can a woman do for the slave when she is herself under the feet of man and shamed into silence?”

History shows that at least one of the ministers addressed in the letter, Theodore Weld, was persuaded by her words—a year later, Weld married Grimke.

Intimate Exchanges

As women embraced letter writing in the decades after the Revolution, the contents of their letters grew more intimate. Some letters offered a poignant peek at historical moments.

Witnessing the 1801 inauguration of Thomas Jefferson, Margaret Bayard Smith, writer, journalist and chronicler of early Washington life, wrote with awe about an event we take for granted today: “The changes of administration, which in every government and in every age have most generally been epochs of confusion, villainy and bloodshed, in this our happy country take place without any species of distraction, or disorder.”

Dolley Madison’s escape from the White House was an important historical moment immortalized in a letter to her sister, Anna Cutts. As the British invaded Washington, D.C., during the War of 1812, Madison described a friend who was helping her escape the White House as being in “very bad humor with me because I insist on waiting until the large picture of Gen. Washington is secured, and it requires to be unscrewed from the wall.”

Other letters marked events that were less monumental but just as pivotal to the women who recounted them: the first winter experienced by a pioneer family on the Kentucky frontier; a Lowell, Mass., millworker’s first few months away from home; a young woman’s transition from wife to widow.

Letters contain everything from observations of a solar eclipse to mention of a “brush for the teeth made of fine, stiff, white bristles set in a back of mother of pearl,” as 21-year-old Juliana Smith of Connecticut described a new invention—the toothbrush—in 1782. Some of the most touching letters sought to bestow advice or pass along words of wisdom between generations.

Writing to her niece, Maria, who fretted over the lasting effects of smallpox on her complexion, one woman wrote, “You have only lost early, what the laws of Nature forbid you to keep long ... rise at once from your dream of melancholy ... you will find that there are other charms than those of beauty, and other joys than the praise of fools.”

Just before she died of yellow fever while nursing soldiers on a Charleston, S.C., prison ship in 1781, Elizabeth Jackson wrote parting words to her son, Andrew, that he would later quote as president of the United States: “If I should not see you again I wish you to remember and treasure up some things I have already said to you. In this world you will have to make your own way. To do that you must have friends.”

In a letter to John Quincy Adams written during his first trip away from home, Abigail Adams urged her son to remember that “great learning and superior abilities, should you ever possess them will be of little value and small estimation unless virtue, honor, truth and integrity are added to them.”

Like many women who wrote in such a private and transparent nature, Abigail never imagined that her letters would be made public, much less published by her grandson, Charles Francis Adams, decades later or serve as a voice for women’s rights in the centuries ahead.

“Pray burn this letter” was her characteristic disclaimer when she felt she shared more than she should have. Thankfully, her letters survived, and today they, along with those of other women in early America, are part of a rare and valuable collection of correspondence that allows us to peek inside the inner chamber of their lives and experience their world.

Emily McMackin covered the history of hats for the July/August 2010 issue.
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Lydia Darragh gives news of British troop movements to Col. Thomas Craig, one of Gen. George Washington’s aides, near Philadelphia, December 3, 1777.
During the Revolutionary War, ordinary women found themselves helping the effort in an extraordinary way: espionage. Some may have gone looking for “spy” opportunities, but most simply took advantage of the situations in which they found themselves, says Holly A. Mayer, chair of the department of history at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pa. “If an enemy occupied their area, they could gather information and report it to the other side.”

What’s interesting about these women is that many of the techniques they used are similar to what we consider modern-day spy tradecraft, notes Cynthia Clampitt, a writer and historian and a member of Eli Skinner Chapter, Arlington Heights, Ill. “Invisible ink, codes, spy names—it was all there,” she says.

We’ll never know about all of the women who participated in spy efforts, but we do know of three women—Lydia Darragh, Elizabeth Burgin and Anna Smith Strong—who risked their lives to pass along significant information. Their espionage work, which often included the use of secret signals, helped the Patriots learn of upcoming attacks, escape from prison ships and, ultimately, defeat the enemy.
When the British occupied Philadelphia in September 1777, Lydia Darragh lived on Second Street. Shortly after, Major John André, the spymaster who would eventually recruit Benedict Arnold to the British side, knocked on Darragh’s door. He ordered her to move out of the house so he could commandeer it for the use of British officers.

Darragh, a Quaker and housewife, pleaded for permission to stay. She had two children still at home to care for and nowhere to go. To obtain approval, Darragh decided to appeal to British General William Howe, who had set up his headquarters across the street. On her way to see him, she ran into her second cousin, Captain Barrington, from Ireland. Barrington intervened on Darragh’s behalf, and she was able to remain in her home, provided she kept a room available where British officers could hold meetings.

On December 2, 1777, the British held a meeting of top officers at Darragh’s home. During the meeting, Howe revealed the detailed plans to carry out a major offensive at Whitemarsh, where George Washington was stationed with his troops, on December 4.

Darragh listened in on the meeting, possibly through a keyhole or linen closet. Even though the Peace Testimony of the Society of Friends forbade Quakers to take sides in the Revolutionary War, some historians—including Sharon Creedon, author of In Full Bloom: Tales of Women in Their Prime (August House, 1999)—believe that Darragh’s son, Charles, was a Free Quaker. These “fighting” Quakers were disowned by their faith for supporting the Patriot cause. Evidence suggests he joined the 2nd Pennsylvania Regiment and served with Washington at Whitemarsh, though this hasn’t been unequivocally proven.

As the meeting drew to a close, Darragh sneaked back to bed. In order to deflect suspicion, she pretended to be asleep when André rapped on the door. Finally, after repeated knocks, she opened the door. André informed her that the officers had finished the meeting. With only two days to warn Washington of the attack, Darragh devised a plan. She went to Howe’s headquarters and asked for a pass to leave the city to get flour at a mill in Frankford. Her request didn’t sound any alarms, and the pass was granted.

Early on December 3, Darragh headed out with an empty flour sack. According to her daughter’s account, Darragh traveled to the Rising Sun Tavern, which was located north of Philadelphia. Shortly before she reached her destination, she ran into Colonel Thomas Craig, a member of the Pennsylvania militia and an acquaintance of her son. She passed the news on to Craig, who promised to relay it to Washington himself.

When the British attacked on December 4, they encountered a well-prepared American army. It was obvious that someone had leaked the information. Several suspects, including Darragh, were questioned.

On December 9, André again knocked on Darragh’s door. When he asked if anyone had been up on the evening of December 2, Darragh said everyone had been asleep. He left saying, “One thing is certain—the enemy had notice of our coming, were prepared for us, and we marched back like a parcel of fools. The walls must have ears.”

During the Revolutionary War, the British held thousands of Americans on prison ships. Life on these floating jails was horrible: The vessels were often packed with prisoners who were given very little food and water. “The British saw very little reason to feed them,” Ms. Clampitt notes. Diseases such as smallpox and yellow fever spread easily through the quarters. Conditions were so dire that more military men died in prison ships than on the battlefield during the war. (See the story on Revolutionary Prisoners of War in the May/June 2010 issue of American Spirit.)

The British permitted a few female visitors aboard the prison ships, perhaps thinking that the women weren’t participants...
Anna Smith Strong

Anna Smith Strong was married to Selah Strong, a leading Patriot judge. The family controlled a large manor on Strong’s Neck, a peninsula on the north shore of Setauket, N.Y. In 1778, Judge Strong, accused by British forces of having “surreptitious correspondence with the enemy,” was captured and placed on a prison ship in New York Harbor.

Anna Strong received permission to take food to her husband while he was imprisoned. She then appealed to her Tory relatives and obtained her husband’s release. After being freed, however, Judge Strong remained in danger. For safety reasons, he took the couple’s children and spent the remainder of the war in Connecticut.

“Nancy” Strong, as she was called by friends and neighbors, stayed on at Strong’s Neck to look after the family home. While living there, she became the only woman believed to have been involved in the Culper Spy Ring. This ring, which began operations in 1778 under Washington’s orders, collected information about the British in New York City and passed it along to Washington’s headquarters.

The Culper Spy Ring was headed by Benjamin Tallmadge, who recruited other members whom he could trust from the Setauket area. Abraham Woodhull, a farmer from Setauket, ran the day-to-day operations of the ring on Long Island. Woodhull passed along messages to Caleb Brewster, who commanded a fleet of whaleboats that patrolled Long Island Sound against British and Tory shipping vessels.

Strong’s ingenious method of relaying messages involved hanging laundry in various coded ways, notes Theodore P. Savas, co-author of *The New American Revolution Handbook* (Savas Beatie, 2010). A black petticoat signaled to Woodhull that Brewster had arrived in town in his whaleboat. She would then hang a certain number of handkerchiefs among the other garments to reveal the place where Brewster was located. Each of Brewster’s six hiding places was identified by a number.

The information passed through the spy ring led to some remarkable results, and it was considered one of Washington’s best intelligence sources. The ring has been credited with discovering Benedict Arnold’s plot to hand West Point over to the British.

After the war, Strong was reunited with her husband. Their home survived the war, and the Strong family once again settled in the large manor. They named a child George Washington Strong. Anna Smith Strong died in 1812 and is buried in a graveyard on Strong’s Neck. The Anna Smith Strong Chapter, Setauket, N.Y., is named in her honor.

in the war—a terrible mistake on their part, notes Carol Berkin, professor of history at Baruch College and the City University of New York Graduate Center.

Elizabeth Burgin, a resident of New York, frequently visited the prison ships in New York Harbor to bring the prisoners much-needed food. One evening when she arrived home after such a visit, an American officer asked Burgin to meet with him. He requested her help in a plan that would allow some of the American prisoners to escape. Since the officer could not step onto the ship himself, he asked Burgin to notify the prisoners of the plan.

Burgin agreed. During the next several weeks, she passed messages to the soldiers during her regular food deliveries. She helped direct the prisoners to certain spots on the ship at specific times. In all, Burgin helped more than 200 prisoners escape.

The British picked up on Burgin’s plotting and were furious. In response, they offered a reward of 200 pounds for her capture—an amount equal to 20 years’ pay for a British soldier. According to William G. Shade’s *Revisioning the British Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (Associated University Presses, 1998), Burgin’s friends smuggled her out to Long Island and then to Philadelphia in a whaleboat.

After safely reaching rebel lines, she wrote to Washington, telling him that the British had taken all of her possessions and asking for help. Washington, in turn, wrote the following to the Continental Congress concerning Burgin’s actions [from Diane Jarrett-Silcox’s *Heroines of the American Revolution: America’s Founding Mother* (Green Angel Press, 1998)]:

“Regarding Elizabeth Burgin, recently an inhabitant of New York. From the testimony of our own (escaped) officers ... it would appear that she has been indefatigable for the relief of the prisoners, and for the facilitation of their escape. For this conduct she incurred the suspicion of the British, and was forced to make her escape under disturbing circumstances.”

In 1781, Continental Congress granted Burgin a pension for her role in helping the prisoners escape.

Rachel Hartman is a freelance writer in El Paso, Texas.
the Long Fight for Married Women’s Property Rights

By Cherilyn Crowe
Married women in Colonial America faced numerous societal and legal roadblocks to equality, including a lack of property rights. After traversing the ocean, women still remained subservient to the oppressive policies inherent in British common law. Despite their key roles in settlement and society during the Colonial period, married women had little, if any, right to their own property. Gradual yet steady reforms after the Revolution began to bring change, and the fight for married women’s property rights became a key element in the movement for other women’s rights.
The Colonies’ legal system was strongly influenced by English law, which essentially considered married women as nonentities.

English common law declared that a husband and wife were legally one person: the husband. One element of the law, called coverture, mandated the absorption of a married woman’s property into her husband’s control. Any personal property a wife brought into marriage became her husband’s, allowing him to spend that money or sell that property however he wished. However, unmarried women in 18th-century England enjoyed a little more freedom. “The history of England demonstrates occasions where femme (or feme) soles, which included spinsters as well as divorced and widowed women, had most of the rights of men, including the right to enter into contracts, own and convey property, hold their own manorial courts, and sue in the Royal courts,” writes Yvette Joy Liebesman in “No Guarantees: Lessons From the Property Rights Gained and Lost by Married Women in Two American Colonies” (Women’s Rights Law Reporter, Summer 2006).

While generalizations can be made about the laws regarding married women’s property rights across the Colonies, there are notable exceptions. The Quaker founders of Pennsylvania wanted to allow individual liberties not permitted in England and were more skeptical of the need to follow British law. Those attitudes led to the Pennsylvania Femme Sole Trader Act of 1718, which allowed a subset of married women some of the same rights as femme soles. The act allowed married women who had no husband at home—either because of abandonment or prolonged absence—to be characterized as femme sole traders so they could take care of themselves and their children.

It is also noteworthy that a number of women actually had more property rights in the early Colonies than after statehood. New Netherland’s statutes were originally based on Dutch law. Unlike their English counterparts, Dutch women had more options in marriage contracts and could legally retain ownership of the property they brought into marriage, although the husband became the administrator of the property. After the English took permanent control of New Netherland in 1674, however, women lost many of their property rights as the Dutch legal traditions were replaced with codes based on the English law.

Coming to America did not mean a new status for women; despite the colonists’ disdain for elements of the English legal system, the impact of British common law on America was (and is to this day) considerable, especially in laws regarding marriage.

In Women and the Law of Property in Early America (University of North Carolina Press, 1986), Marylynn Salmon observes, “My inquiry into the property rights of American women revealed above all else a picture of their enforced dependence, both before and after the Revolution.” While unmarried women could function on a legal par with men in the realm of property rights, married women were not given any legal ability to act independently with regard to property.

The Revolution brought new rules and responsibilities for women, but not enhanced property rights. As men left their communities for military service, many women found themselves taking over the management of their family’s property. Even though their rights remained largely unchanged, women were given a taste of greater autonomy during this time.

Despite the Revolution’s opposition to legally oppressive systems, the war’s end left women out of the political arena and left laws such as coverture in place. Even so, some legal dividing lines began to be drawn between husband and wife. Massachusetts, for example, allowed abandoned wives to become traders without a special
petition to the county court, while other statutes decreased the length of time before a missing husband could be presumed dead.

Many of these new laws were intended simply to take care of women who were otherwise a potential burden to the community. True legal reform of common law traditions was still more than a generation away, but the Revolution and its ideas gave women new hope. As Linda Kerber writes in *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (University of North Carolina Press, 1986), “It is possible to read the subsequent polit-
cal history of women in America as the story of women’s efforts to accomplish for themselves what the Revolution had failed to do.”

As American industrialization brought job opportunities and families became more egalitarian, women’s roles slowly began to expand. While most wives remained in the domestic realm, others began working in textile mills and factories, serving as teachers, or even becoming advocates for women’s rights. These transformations—coupled with the work of women reformers in New York—gave rise to a series of statutes specifically related to married women’s property in the 19th century.

Mississippi enacted the first married women’s property statute in 1839, allowing married women to retain ownership of property they brought with them into marriage or were given after marriage, according to Norma Basch in *In the Eyes of the Law: Women, Marriage and Property in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Cornell University Press, 1982). “The Mississippi statute further stipulated that slaves owned by the wife at the time of marriage or acquired afterward should be her property, but their control and management, along with the profits from their labor, were reserved to the husband,” she writes.

Across the nation other statutes were passed, including an 1844 law in Michigan that exempted a wife’s property from her husband’s debts.

Organizing to improve married women’s property rights provided a natural bridge to campaigns for other rights, and reform leaders in New York, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Ernestine Rose, organized their first political efforts in this arena.

By the summer of 1848, 12 northern and seven southern states had passed some legislation on married women’s property rights, Basch notes. Even though it was not the first, the New York Married Woman’s Property Act of 1848—which came just a few months before the groundbreaking Woman’s Rights Convention at Seneca Falls—was more comprehensive and made a distinctive impact.

Basch notes that the timing of the statute relative to the beginning of the women’s movement reflects its influence: “Feminists celebrated that statute and singled out New York as the ‘first State to emancipate wives from the slavery of the old common law of England and to secure to them equal property rights.’” A New York state assemblyman also delivered an address on the statute at the Seneca Falls convention.

The women’s rights movement continued to gain momentum after 1848, and the focus on equal property rights remained a key component, especially as a foundation for future efforts. In 1853, Susan B. Anthony noted that women still depended on men for reform movements. She wrote, “Woman must have a purse of her own, and how can this be so long as the law denies to the wife all right to both the individual and the joint earnings? Reflections like these convince me that there is no true freedom for woman without the possession of equal property rights, and that these can be obtained only through legislation.”

Advocates’ work for women’s property rights continued, including a landmark 1860 New York law that allowed married women to keep their own wages as part of a separate estate and gave them the right to sue and be sued.

The fight for married women’s property rights was an evolutionary process instead of a revolutionary one. Reform began slowly and with piecemeal legislation. But as awareness heightened—and as reformers embraced married women’s property rights as the avenue toward all equal rights—women gradually gained the legal rights and recognition denied to them in the past. New statutes continued to be passed into the 20th century, picking away at the old laws and ushering in sweeping reforms. 😊

Cherilyn Crowe is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C.
Historic Home

KAUAI’S GULICK-ROWELL HOUSE

AT THE EDGE of the WORLD

BY TRACY E. ROBINSON

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Provided courtesy of Kauai Historical Society

Daughters of the American Revolution
IN the modern imagination, Hawaii is an exotic, tropical vacation destination, but to the New England missionaries who sailed there in the 1840s, it was isolated, foreign and very far from home. Faced with the task of establishing residence in the unfamiliar island environment, the newcomers displayed patience and courage.

THE GULICK-ROWELL HOUSE is believed to be the oldest residence on Kauai, the westernmost and oldest of the main islands in the Hawaiian chain. Kauai boasts uncommon natural beauty in its abundant flora, the vast Waimea Canyon and the stunning Napali Coast. On the west side of the island in the town of Waimea, the Gulick-Rowell House sits on Huakai Road as the only missionary residence remaining in an area once called Missionary Row. It is a classic example of the New England-style architecture that missionaries introduced to Hawaii. Until about five years ago, the home had been continuously occupied since 1846, beginning with the arrival of Real Daughter Malvina Rowell, who traveled to Hawaii with her missionary husband, the Reverend George Berkeley Rowell.

The Builder Missionaries

In 1828, several new missionaries arrived to join the missionary station in Waimea. Among them was the Reverend Peter J. Gulick, who was initially provided with a native-style house featuring pole construction, a thatched roof and a wood floor. He wanted a more substantial home for his family, so he began building a new house within a year of arrival. Gulick used coral limestone hauled from the shore by oxen, and he paid his workers with goats, Bibles and other books. The family moved into the house as soon as possible, even as work on it continued.

Gulick was transferred from Waimea in 1835, so responsibility for completing the home fell to Rowell, who arrived at the mission in 1846 with his new wife, Malvina. Mrs. Rowell was a Real Daughter—a DAR member whose father contributed to America’s fight for independence. (She became a member of Reprisal DAR Chapter in Newport, N.H., in 1897.) During the sea voyage to Hawaii, she kept a journal recording her experiences, including her impressions of the wildlife she observed, the harbor towns she visited and her first glimpse of the Hawaiian Islands “by moonlight.”

The years that the house had been unoccupied since the Gulicks’ departure had taken their toll. The Rowells found that the house they had inherited from their predecessor was not fit for habitation. There were no doors or windows, and the structure was in a state of general disrepair. Rowell immediately began extensive repairs to the home, as well as an expansion of the second story. After installing doors and windows in one room to protect his family’s privacy, Rowell practically rebuilt the house, adding to it as his growing family required. The Rowells had seven children. Their youngest daughter, Mary Adelaide, was born in the home in 1853.

Perseverance and Adaptation

Unable to obtain a carpenter’s services, Rowell relied on his own skills to make the furniture his family needed. He ordered tools and other supplies from Honolulu and constructed a small carpenter’s shop on his property. Although there is no evidence that Rowell was trained
Clockwise from top: The Rowell family at Waimea, Kauai, in 1874. • The Gulick-Rowell House today. • George Rowell’s tool chest shows five sliding trays with subdivided compartments to keep tools separate. • George Rowell is buried on the property. • This painting of the home is by Chris Fayé, curator at the Kauai Museum. • In 1828 Rev. Peter J. Gulick and his wife, Fanny, arrived in Waimea.
as a carpenter, he was obviously talented. A few pieces of Rowell’s furniture remained in the house into the 20th century. Among the surviving items from the home’s missionary days are several pieces on display at Kauai Museum in Lihue, Kauai, including a four-poster bed and a bench, both made by Rowell using koa, a hardwood tree indigenous to Hawaii. The furniture shows Rowell’s distinctive, vigorous turning style.

Rowell worked for more than two years to finish the house before going on to build two churches in Waimea. He also constructed a barn, where Mrs. Rowell taught classes to Hawaiian women, near the home. His April 1848 station report is quoted by Irving Jenkins in his book *Hawaiian Furniture and Hawaii’s Cabinetmakers, 1820–1940* (The Daughters of Hawaii, 1983): “Not being able to secure a carpenter, I was obliged to do most of the joiner’s work with my own hands. My time and strength being thus divided between my pastoral duties and the labor on the house—the former were but partially performed, while the latter has been protracted to a great length, and is not even yet finished.”

Conditions in Waimea remained so rudimentary that the Rowells’ situation was described as one of great isolation even after they had lived there for 18 years. Rowell’s ministry jurisdiction stretched about 26 miles along the coast and included isolated settlements that could be reached only by canoe. Rowell persevered and eventually created a comfortable life for his family in spite of the challenging conditions. He planted fruit trees and kept both chickens and turkeys. The family also ate taro root and sweet potatoes provided by their Native Hawaiian parishioners.

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Jenkins quotes the Rowells’ son, William, on family life in mid-19th-century Waimea: “Father was something of a doctor, for all missionaries had to take a short course in medicine and simple surgery. ... He was a scholar also, and always read from his Greek testament at family prayers. He was a musician too, and soon mastered the Hawaiian language. We all rode horses of course. And every night father took us down to the sea to bathe.”

George Rowell died in 1884 and is buried on the property. An obituary described him as “one of the few Hawaiian missionaries who acquired rightly the idioms and pronunciation of the Hawaiian language.” Malvina Rowell remained in Hawaii for several years after her husband’s death. She moved to California before 1900 to live with one of her daughters. She died in 1901 and is buried in San Bernadino County, Calif.

Architectural and Historic Significance

At the time that the Gulick-Rowell House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1978, it was described as a two-story structure with cut limestone walls 24 inches thick. Deep, original window ledges echo the thickness of the walls. A partial basement also features cut limestone floor and walls, and the house includes an attic as well. Wraparound porches surround the first and second floors on three sides.

The interior layout is rectilinear, with the first floor occupied by a living and dining area in addition to the kitchen, which houses a large cooking fireplace and baking oven that has been bricked in. Plaster covers the stone fireplace structure. A unique feature of the cooking facility is that it is built on the interior side of the wall rather than projecting from the exterior, which was the ordinary practice of the day.

The house is simple and functional, yet finely crafted and well-proportioned. It is “important as an example of the adaptation of traditional New England building practices adapted to the Hawaiian climate, and the utilization of local materials,” notes the NRHP nomination form. Its historic value rests on the fact that the house “is one of the oldest surviving structures of its type anywhere in the state of Hawaii.” In early photographs the home appears to be painted white, but its hue has evolved into a yellowish-tan color.

Today, the Gulick-Rowell House is unmistakable to spot from the street not only because of the gigantic monkey pod tree that adorns the front yard, but also because of its desolate appearance and overgrown landscaping. The house is privately owned and currently unoccupied. It has quickly deteriorated in the few years it has been uninhabited, and tours are not available. Efforts to save the home are under way, although its future remains uncertain.

To learn more about the renovation of the Gulick-Rowell House, contact Chris Fayé, curator at the Kauai Museum in Lihue, Kauai. See www.kauaimuseum.org.

Tracy E. Robinson is the NSDAR Director of Archives and History and one of two compilers of the book My Father Was a Soldier: The Real Daughters of the American Revolution.
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Captain Molly

Establishing the True Identity of an American Military Heroine

By Megan Pacella
is considered one of the first wartime American heroines. At the West Point Cemetery, a granite memorial depicting a woman firing a cannon proclaims her great accomplishments: Once known as “Captain Molly,” Corbin manned a cannon after her husband was killed in the Battle of Fort Washington. She was badly wounded in the battle and became the first woman to receive a military pension.

Despite her bravery, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Corbin’s final resting place was unknown and unrecognized. For nearly 125 years, no one connected Corbin to an eccentric woman buried in an unmarked grave at an estate in Highland Falls, N.Y.

Around 1925, a man named Amos D. Faurot relayed a family history about his grandfather having buried Margaret Corbin and referred to her as Captain Molly. Under the direction of State Regent Mary Frances Tupper Nash, the New York State Organization (NYSO) of the Daughters of the American Revolution formed a committee dedicated to researching the connection between Margaret Corbin and Captain Molly. An article published in the June 1926 issue of Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine reports on the efforts by the NYSO to identify and reinter Corbin’s remains with full military honors at West Point Cemetery.

Today, Margaret Cochran Corbin is considered one of the first wartime American heroines. At the West Point Cemetery, a granite memorial depicting a woman firing a cannon proclaims her great accomplishments: Once known as “Captain Molly,” Corbin manned a cannon after her husband was killed in the Battle of Fort Washington. She was badly wounded in the battle and became the first woman to receive a military pension.

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to document Corbin’s wartime service and to confirm that the remains were indeed hers. Her story has long fascinated historians: Reginald P. Bolton wrote of Corbin in his *Washington Heights Manhattan, Its Eventful Past* (Dyckman Institute, 1924). The American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society published Edward Hall’s version of the events, *Margaret Corbin, Heroine of the Battle of Fort Washington*, in 1943.

**Early Tragedies**

Born in Pennsylvania on November 12, 1751, Margaret Cochran was orphaned at age 5. In 1756, her father, Robert Cochran, was killed during an American Indian raid, and her mother was carried into captivity. An uncle raised her until 1772, when she married John Corbin of Virginia. In 1775, after hostilities broke out with Britain, her husband signed on with the 1st Company of Pennsylvania Artillery. "Camp followers," as the thousands of wives and women who followed the Continental Army were called, traveled with the soldiers seeking safety, shelter and food. Corbin was one of the many women tasked with cooking, mending clothing, fetching water, and nursing the sick and wounded. At some point she learned to clean, load and fire a cannon—a skill that would prove valuable during the Battle of Fort Washington, where

Margaret Corbin learned to clean, load and fire a cannon—a skill that would prove valuable during the Battle of Fort Washington on November 16, 1776. During the fierce fight that killed her husband, Margaret took his place at the cannon and shot it until she was wounded.

3,000 Americans faced a force of 13,000 British and Hessian soldiers. A spy, William Demont, had provided the British with plans for the fort, and the enemy was well aware of its many weaknesses. Although Washington wanted to abandon the fort before fighting began, he decided to stay based on the counsel of General Nathanael Greene.

During the fierce fight on November 16, 1776, John Corbin was killed while firing a cannon. Margaret took her husband’s place and continued to load and fire the cannon until enemy grapeshot hit her three times, with one shot severely wounding her shoulder. Washington, watching the battle...
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across the river, is said to have wept at the sight of the surviving prisoners being marched out and murdered by the Hessians. The loss of Fort Washington was not only a demoralizing defeat for Patriot troops, but it also forced Washington to admit his mistake in trying to retain control of New York and retreat to New Jersey.

The First Female Pensioner

Corbin was taken prisoner at the Battle of Fort Washington and transported across the Hudson River to Fort Lee. According to Joe Lieberman’s article in the February 1999 issue of Military History, “With one arm permanently disabled, Corbin served as a guard in the Corps of Invalids at West Point until it was permanently mustered out in April 1783. There were 286 names listed in that unit, Margaret Corbin’s being the only woman’s name.”

The new U.S. government also recognized Corbin’s courage. A record printed in the Journals of Congress on July 6, 1779, confirmed that Corbin was wounded and disabled in the attack and would receive one-half of the pay drawn by a soldier in the United States and a complete suit of new clothes. This made her the first female pensioner of the U.S. Army.

Several letters written from Commissary William Price to Major General Henry Knox, the secretary of war, reveal Corbin’s unusual character. Legend has it that she became an angry and disagreeable woman over time. According to Lieberman, “She became an eccentric, hard-drinking, bad-tempered individual—hardly surprising given the hard life she had to live.”

In a letter written on January 31, 1786, Price admits that he is at a loss about what to do with her. “She is such an offensive person that people are unwilling to take her charge,” he wrote. “If you should think proper to extend one or two rations to her, it will be better than money and may induce persons to keep her.”

Honoring a Patriot

On March 16, 1926, Margaret Corbin’s remains were moved to the West Point Cemetery. When the body was unearthed, a surgeon examined the remains to confirm her identity: He found that her left shoulder and chest had been badly injured, proving Captain Molly was, in fact, Margaret Cochran Corbin.

The grave site was dedicated to Corbin on April 14, 1926, complete with full military honors. Her memory is invoked by the Captain Molly Corbin Chapter, Grapevine, Texas, and Major Molly Chapter, Hamilton, Mo. And her legacy lives on in tribute to the female members of today’s military: The DAR annually presents the Margaret Cochran Corbin Award to a distinguished female member of the armed forces.
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