Sylvia’s Diary
Uncovering the Life of a 19th-century Everywoman

Let Them Play
Women and Musical Instruments in Early America

Grace Under Pressure
A Glimpse at the Smithsonian’s ‘First Ladies’ Exhibit

Paulsdale
Alice Paul’s Freethinking Refuge

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From the President General

Welcome to our second annual issue devoted to Women’s History Month. One of American Spirit’s ongoing goals is to look for creative ways to spotlight American history as it relates to women. In this issue, that goal is given a renewed emphasis.

George Washington’s essential role in the Revolution is well-documented, but what was Martha doing while her husband was away at war? She, too, was hard at work, playing the vital roles of morale booster at Valley Forge and other Revolutionary War encampments, administrator of Mount Vernon and nurturing caretaker for many family members.

Early American women who had the ability to play musical instruments were considered genteel, socially graceful ladies. However, such musical talents were largely constrained to the home; women’s options for showcasing their musical ability in public were greatly limited. Our feature charts how the musical fortunes of women evolved along with the republic.

Our commemoration of the War of 1812 continues with a little-known story about the Ursuline Sisters of New Orleans’ unlikely connection to the Battle of New Orleans. On January 7, 1812, the nuns began praying before the statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor that American soldiers’ lives would be spared in the upcoming battle. Every January since, the nuns hold a Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving for the miraculous victory.

DAR curator Alden O’Brien has spent a decade studying the 20-volume diary of Sylvia Lewis Tyler, an early 19th-century woman who lived in Connecticut and Ohio from 1785 to 1851. The diary concentrates on typical events in Sylvia’s life while illuminating her experiences on the Ohio frontier and revealing family history information found nowhere else. Read O’Brien’s story, then visit DAR Headquarters to see the Americana Collection’s exhibition based on the diaries.

Member readers will delight in this issue’s DAR connections. The Historic Homes department focuses on Paulsdale, the New Jersey home of DAR member and women’s rights activist Alice Paul. Promoting social justice was her lifelong mission, and an institute dedicated to her name continues that quest. We also profile Esther Damon, a woman whose youthful marriage to a Patriot earned her the mantle of the last Revolutionary War widow. She struggled financially for much of her life, but before she died in 1906, the Vermont DAR was instrumental in securing an increase in their fellow Daughter’s pension. In a story on the Titanic’s 100th anniversary, catch a glimpse of eight DAR members who survived the tragedy, and after reading our review of “The First Ladies” exhibit at the Smithsonian, wow your friends with the fact that 10 first ladies were DAR members.

I’m always thrilled when we can honor DAR members doing amazing work in their communities. Karen Clark Bernardo and Connie Boggs’ work helping children with special needs will inspire you. I hope these stories of accomplished women will encourage readers to follow their own dreams.

Merry Ann T. Wright

From the President General
Rock-a-bye

PERHAPS THE MOST UNUSUAL FEATURE about this rocking bench, probably made in the Mid-Atlantic region around 1840, is the removable rail at the front of the seat. With the rail, the rocking bench doubled as a cradle. It allowed a mother to sit beside and safely rock her baby while her hands were free to continue working on a daily chore like sewing or preparing food. Without the rail, more than one adult could sit on the bench.

Originally painted, the bench was made in the Windsor style out of a variety of woods such as pine, poplar and hickory. Windsor chairs were popular utilitarian forms originally imported from England and then manufactured in America beginning around 1745. By the early 19th century, hundreds of Windsor chair manufacturers, particularly in New England and the Mid-Atlantic regions, had produced the countless numbers that survive today. Windsor chairs were used throughout the household in kitchens, dining rooms and parlors as well as outdoors.
Karen Bernardo
Boosting confidence and cultivating friendships one swim practice at a time

In 1997, Karen Bernardo was disappointed with the lack of programs catering to children with special needs in her community of Wellesley, Mass. Her stepdaughter, Cassie, then a teenager, wanted to participate in activities and socialize with other kids, but there just weren’t many opportunities. So Mrs. Bernardo and her husband, Tom, created one.

That year, they launched Wellesley S.T.A.R.S. (www.wellesleystars.org), which offers a swim training and competition program for individuals with special needs ages 6 to adult. “As a parent of a child with special needs, you’re the best friend, the confidant, you’re everything,” she says. “For the typical kid with special needs, the phone never rings. We saw Wellesley S.T.A.R.S. as a way to help these kids develop social skills, raise their self-esteem and improve their confidence levels.”

Mrs. Bernardo volunteers as head coach for the program, which has grown from four athletes to 31 athletes. The program runs January through June and includes a weekly swim practice and about a dozen swim meets. While athletes aren’t required to compete, Mrs. Bernardo pushes her swimmers to overcome their fears. One of her proudest moments was watching one of her athletes, a girl who was blind, reach the other end of the pool in her very first swim meet. “Leading up to that moment, I got a lot of ‘I can’t do this,’” Mrs. Bernardo recalls. “Some parents said I was being too tough on her. At the competition, she was crying and told me she wasn’t going to participate. It came to her heat and all of a sudden she took off and did the most beautiful freestyle stroke. Everyone was in tears. It was just one of those moments I never thought would happen, but it did and it was beautiful.”

Over the years, Wellesley S.T.A.R.S. has had six athletes attend the Special Olympics National Games, and one competitor represented Team USA at the 2007 World Games in Shanghai, China. “She got the first gold medal for Team USA that year,” Mrs. Bernardo recalls. “She came home with three gold medals and a silver.” And the coach is not without...
her own accolades: Mrs. Bernardo was an 2008 inductee into the Massachusetts Special Olympics Hall of Fame.

The medals are wonderful, but Mrs. Bernardo points out that she’d be just as proud of her athletes if they never won one: “My philosophy is it’s not about the medals, but how you feel inside when you’re part of a team.”

Bernardo, a member of the Amos Mills-Lucy Jackson Chapter, Wellesley, Mass., currently serves as chapter treasurer. She has served on the state level as American Heritage Chairman and is currently serving as District Director. “I have met so many wonderful people in the DAR and truly enjoy my work for the organization,” she says.

Connie Gilkeson Boggess
Horses help special-needs kids develop life skills

Connie Gilkeson Boggess has loved horses for as long as she can remember. “In kindergarten I had a pretend friend—a horse named Princess,” she says. After graduate school, when most of her friends were getting their first apartments, Mrs. Boggess moved back home with her parents and bought a horse.

Today, Mrs. Boggess gets to pursue her lifelong love for horses by working with them at River Cities Therapy and Recreation Center (www.rctrc.org) located at her family farm in Milton, W.Va. The nonprofit program that she started in 1994 uses horses to help improve the social, emotional, cognitive and physical well-being of individuals with special needs.

The program operates seasonally, usually running from May until October. With the help of three carefully trained horses, a mule named Seven and several devoted volunteers, the program serves about 40 children per season. Students with muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, Down syndrome, autism, amputations, deafness and attention deficit disorder have benefited from the lessons.

“Students learn to ride the horses and also help take care of them. In turn, the horses help students improve their walking gait, learn vital life skills like self-grooming and give them a much-needed confidence boost. “It’s pretty empowering to get on something that weighs 1,500 pounds and be able to ride,” she says. “It’s just an unbelievable situation.”

During the day, Mrs. Boggess, a member of the Kanawha Valley Chapter, Milton, W.Va., works as an occupational therapist until it’s time to pick up her two children from school. (She also leads her chapter’s Conservation Committee and serves as the senior president of the Kanawha Salines Society C.A.R.) She and her kids head home for a few hours to make dinner and do homework before meeting their students at the center. They’re back at the house by 8:30 p.m., just in time to get ready for bed so they can wake up early and feed the horses the next morning.

Her passion to help children through riding is a sacrifice—both of time and money—for the entire family, but Mrs. Boggess says it’s worth it. “It absolutely makes your heart soar to see these kids light up around the horses,” she says. “You can actually see their confidence increase.”

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Connie Boggess (below in purple) helps children with special needs learn to ride horses and improve their emotional and physical well-being.
Adding to the Knowledge Bank

I went to a summer local history event in my home city of Utica, N.Y. One of the exhibitors was a member of the DAR dressed in period attire. This woman found out I was an American history teacher at the local high school and chatted with me about everything that was wonderful about DAR, mentioning your magazine, American Spirit.

What an amazing magazine! I have read nearly every article in the January/February issue thus far, and am literally taken in by the content. The story on Thaddeus Kosciuszko was especially interesting. What a genius! The stories on the Sibley House and Thomas Paine were interesting because each taught me more about subjects I knew little about. For Black History Month, I plan on introducing my students to Carter G. Woodson, someone your publication introduced me to.

So, thank you for producing such a fine, exquisite and affordable journal for the general public. It is dynamite!

Louis Parrotta
Utica, N.Y.

Editor’s Note: The DAR member mentioned above was Florence Roy, Oneida Chapter Regent, who was commemorating the first meeting of her chapter in 1893 in the home of Organizing Regent Julia Seymour Conkling. We thank Mrs. Roy for her promotion of American Spirit, and her fellow chapter members for the three gift subscriptions that they currently provide to local schools and libraries. Follow this chapter’s lead and encourage subscriptions to American Spirit in your community. There’s no better way to share your love for DAR and American history.

Reflection on a Sacred Space

I was taken by the photo of St. Paul’s Chapel on the cover of the September/October 2011 issue. My husband, Dennis Astarita, is a surgeon and member of the Orange County Urban Search and Rescue Team that was deployed to the World Trade Center after the attack. My husband and other rescue workers often went to the chapel for reflection, coffee and a chance to regroup.

Susan Astarita
Colonel William Cabell Chapter, Newport Beach, Calif.

Hart Connection

My fiancée, Christine Mack, is a member of the Ketewamoke DAR Chapter, Huntington, N.Y., and has a very interesting American story. Chrissy’s family came to America on the Winthrop Fleet in 1630. (Incidentally, her birthday is July 4th, and I take her to Philadelphia every year on that day.) I enjoy reading American Spirit and find the content to be inspiring. In these troubled times, it’s refreshing to believe in something as precious as our great country and her history.

Brian Coventry
Huntington, N.Y.

A Greater Lesson From a Great Old House

When an issue of American Spirit arrives, I usually read it in its entirety. Last night I was fascinated by a Whatnot article in the January/February 2012 issue about the 1720 Nathaniel Page Homestead in Bedford, Mass. I visited the website to watch and learn more about the restoration by “This Old House,” the PBS house improvement program.

What involving fun! In episode 12, great details were given by the craftsmen and a kitchen designer. This almost 300-year-old house is coming alive. The restoration has saved and reused the old, but modernized the house so that future generations will appreciate what went before.

Isn’t that how we combine and connect ourselves to our families and our history, but then strive on into the future? Thank you for your publication and for carefully teaching all of us, with wonderful stories and examples of history, of family, of patriotism.

Jane Shoemaker McGuigan
Fielding Lewis Chapter, Marietta, Ga.

Slighting the Society of the Cincinnati

I enjoy the quality of American Spirit. However, I was surprised to come across an error in the January/February 2012 article on Kosciuszko. Anthony J. Bajdek is quoted as saying, “Along with Lafayette, Kosciuszko was one of only two foreign officers who served in the American Revolution to be honored with membership in the Society of the Cincinnati.” Certainly even the most casual knowledge of the Cincinnati membership might have questioned the omission of Pierre L’Enfant, Louis Duportail and Baron von Steuben—to name only a very few.

Albert McJoynt
Alexandria, Va.

Editor’s Note: We regret the error. According to the Society of the Cincinnati, there were, in fact, hundreds of foreign officers who were original members of the Society. This includes the many volunteers who, like Kosciuszko, Lafayette and those listed by McJoynt, were directly commissioned into the American army, as well as those who served with the French army in America following the treaty of alliance in 1778. To learn more, visit http://societyofthecincinnati.org.

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FOR A CENTURY, springtime in Washington, D.C., has been synonymous with blooming cherry blossoms, but few know the story of those who brought the trees to the city.

A century after the Revolution, one of the least desirable locations in Washington was a disease-ridden swamp surrounding the Potomac River. A monumental civil engineering project in the late 19th century created the Tidal Basin and turned the mire into more than 700 acres of usable land, known today as East and West Potomac Park.

Washington resident Eliza Scidmore was the first to present the idea of adding blossoming cherry trees to this new area. A journalist and world traveler, Scidmore was taken with the trees while visiting Japan. The head of Washington’s parks rejected her idea in 1885, but she continued undeterred for more than two decades.

David Fairchild, a Department of Agriculture official, became entranced with the trees himself on a trip to Japan in 1902. He ordered some for his property and promoted them as the ideal addition to Washington. Fairchild organized an Arbor Day event in 1908 that provided a cherry tree to each school in Washington. The day before, Eliza Scidmore had discussed with him the idea of planting cherry trees in the Potomac Park area. Fairchild invited her to his event, where he gave the first public appeal for a “field of cherries” in Washington.

The timing was opportune because, in 1909, one of the new residents of the White House was interested in local beautification efforts. First lady Helen Taft was working on her own plan for developing the Potomac area. Encouraged by Fairchild and Scidmore, the government purchased 90 cherry trees from a company in Pennsylvania to plant along the road by the Potomac.

These efforts generated interest at diplomatic levels of government, and—a few months later—the city of Tokyo announced it would donate 2,000 cherry trees to the project as a gesture of friendship.

In 1910, the promised cherry trees arrived from Japan, but an inspection revealed a serious insect infestation. The trees had to be destroyed, so President William Howard Taft gave his permission to burn them. Fortunately, this incident never flared into a diplomatic disaster as letters from the secretary of state expressed the regret of all involved. Japan made plans to send more trees to the United States, but only after meticulous fumigation and preparation.

Visitors can usually catch Washington, D.C.’s cherry trees in peak bloom around April 4.
**Tap Into the National Archives’ Genealogy Know-How**

IF YOU’RE INTERESTED in expanding your genealogy toolkit, or helping a friend learn more about family history, check out the National Archives’ Introduction to Genealogy workshops on YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/ usnationalarchives). Recently posted videos include:

- “Military Research at the National Archives: Regular Service”
- “Immigration Records at the National Archives”
- “Census Records at the National Archives”

The National Archives’ channel also offers a fascinating look inside its collection, with more than 870 videos (and counting) in several playlists, including “Inside the Vault,” “Public Programs from the National Archives” and “Visit Our National Parks.” Dozens of two-minute clips on wide-ranging topics are posted from its Archival Research Catalog. The “Tracing World War II” playlist showcases the National Archives’ World War II film collection, covering the bombing of Pearl Harbor through D-Day and the peace of September 1945, with new footage posted every week. The site’s series of four brief, period films about the 1940 census will be useful to researchers in advance of the release of the 1940 census on April 2, 2012.

**A New DAR Member on the Front Lines**

DURING THE DECEMBER meeting of the Colonel Jethro Sumner DAR Chapter, Gallatin, Tenn., a new member was sworn in—from Afghanistan. Desiree Steffen Covington was deployed to Afghanistan last spring shortly after her wedding, but neither the distance nor her job stopped her from joining the chapter of her mother, Chapter Treasurer Lori Hanley. After establishing an internet connection, Chaplain Yvonne McCrary installed Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Covington with a roomful of members watching. “It was such a touching occasion that there was not a dry eye in the house,” Mrs. McCrary said.

---

On March 26, 1912, a shipment of 3,000 trees arrived in Washington and passed inspection. The next day, Mrs. Taft and the wife of the Japanese ambassador planted the first two trees in West Potomac Park in front of only a few people, including Eliza Scidmore. The remaining trees were planted mostly around the Tidal Basin and in East and West Potomac Park, where they continue to turn Washington into a cloud of pink each spring.

This living symbol of friendship between two countries is celebrated annually, and the 2012 National Cherry Blossom Festival will honor a legacy that no one could have ever imagined in 1912.

This year’s festival runs from March 20 until April 27, and it includes a street festival, kite festival, fireworks, public art displays and more. Plus, for the first time, virtually the entire city will be in bloom as buildings feature special pink lighting and blossom images. The blossoms’ actual peak bloom is often around April 4, but the exact date will not be known until 10 days beforehand.

For a complete list of events and activities, visit NationalCherryBlossomFestival.org.

— Cherilyn Crowe
The Unsinkable Eight

Remembering the DAR Survivors of the Titanic

April 15 will mark the 100th anniversary of the Titanic disaster. Of the approximately 2,220 passengers onboard the “unsinkable” ship, eight were DAR members. An estimated 1,500 people died when the ship went down after hitting an iceberg. All DAR members, who happened to be first-class passengers, survived, though one suffered the death of a child and three the deaths of their husbands. Here are details about those who were saved:

Kornelia Theodosia Andrews, of the Hendrick Hudson DAR Chapter, Hudson, N.Y., was rescued on boat 10 along with her sister, Anna Hogeboom, and her niece, Gretchen Fiske Longley. “The discipline on the Titanic, in a way, was good,” Mrs. Hogeboom said in an April 20, 1912, New York Times article. “No one hurried and no one crowded. We waited for the fourth boat and were slowly lowered 75 feet to the water. The men made no effort to get into the boat. As we pulled away, we saw them all standing in an unbroken line on the deck.” Miss Andrews died less than two years after the disaster. Her niece, Gretchen Longley Leopold, died August 12, 1965, aboard the S.S. Constitution in the Mediterranean.

Olive Potter Earnshaw Crolius, of the Philadelphia DAR Chapter, Philadelphia, Pa., was rescued on boat 7 along with her mother, Lily A. Wilson Potter, and school friend, Margaret Bechstein Hays. Olive’s mother planned the trip to help get her daughter’s mind off her dissolving marriage. After the tragedy, Olive divorced her husband and began lifelong volunteer work for the American Red Cross. In 1920, she married Allen P. Crolius, and the couple had two sons, Thomas and Allen. Despite the tragedy, she never stopped traveling; she visited Spain with her husband and sons and sailed to Bermuda several times.

Alice Munger Silvey, of the Daughters of Liberty DAR Chapter, Duluth, Minn., was rescued on boat 11. Her husband, William Baird Silvey, died in the tragedy.

Anna S. Atkinson Warren, of Portland DAR Chapter, Portland, Ore., was rescued on boat 5. Her husband, Frank Manley Warren, died in the disaster. She was an active volunteer with her church and the Young Women’s Christian Association until her death in 1925.

Ella Holmes White, New York City DAR Chapter, New York, N.Y., was rescued on boat 8 along with her maid, Amelia Bissette. Mrs. White was unimpressed by the untrained crew, as she later related to a Senate investigation committee: "Before we cut loose from the ship two of the seamen with us ...
took out cigarettes and lighted them on an occasion like that! ... All of those men escaped under the pretense of being oarsmen. The man who rowed me took his oar and rowed all over the boat, in every direction. I said to him, ‘Why don’t you put the oar in the oarlock?’ He said, ‘Do you put it in that hole?’ I said, ‘Certainly.’ He said, ‘I never had an oar in my hand before.’ I spoke to the other man and he said; ‘I have never had an oar in my hand before, but I think I can row.’ Those were the men that we were put to sea with at night—with all these magnificent fellows left on board, who would have been such a protection to us. Those were the kind of men with whom we were put out to sea that night.”

Eleanor Elkins Widener, another Philadelphia DAR Chapter member, escaped on boat 4. Her husband George Widener and 27-year-old son Harry Elkins Widener went down with the Titanic. After their deaths, she gave $2 million to Harvard University for the construction of a building that would house her son’s book collection. In 1915 the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library was dedicated.

More information on all passengers, including photographs and newspaper articles from the days after the disaster, can be found at www.encyclopedia-titanica.org.

Sending Out an SOS

Special events are taking place in April to honor the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic:

> Two cruises will honor the doomed ship’s voyage:

The M.S. Balmoral will depart from Southampton, England, on April 8. This Titanic Memorial Cruise will follow the exact route the Titanic would have followed to New York. The passengers on board the Balmoral will include relatives and passengers of those who were on the Titanic.

Another ship, the Amazara Journey, will depart April 10 from New York, exactly 100 years after Titanic sailed from Southampton. The cruise will feature lectures on various Titanic-related topics and menu items that were prepared on the Titanic. The Amazara Journey will meet up with the Balmoral on April 15 for a 2:20 a.m. memorial service at the Titanic’s final resting place in the Atlantic Ocean. Both ships will make stops in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to visit the cemetery dedicated to unclaimed victims of the Titanic.

> A 3-D edition of the 1995 Oscar-winning film “Titanic” will be released April 6.

> An auction featuring 5,000 artifacts from the Titanic will be held on April 11.
The New American Wing Galleries for Paintings, Sculpture and Decorative Arts

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Permanent

After four years of renovation, the Met’s 26 galleries of American painting and sculpture reopened in January. The unparalleled collection starts with 18th-century New England portrait paintings, including eight by Bostonian John Singleton Copley. Masterpieces of decorative arts, such as a 1772 Chest-on-Chest (below) by Thomas Townsend, are also on display.

Visitors can’t miss George Washington, the subject of paintings by Charles Willson Peale, Gilbert Stuart and John Trumbull. Emanuel Leutze’s “Washington Crossing the Delaware” (above) is showcased in a room all its own. One of the Met’s most popular pieces, Leutze’s 1851 painting is huge (21 feet long by 12 feet high).

The installation takes visitors on a roughly chronological journey, but it also covers themes of race, class, economics and war, including Winslow Homer’s “The Veteran in a New Field,” painted in 1865. Thomas Cole’s utopian paintings and John Singer Sargent’s Belle Epoque portraits are again on display.

For more information, visit www.metmuseum.org.

“Titanic: 12,450 Feet Below”
Mystic Aquarium, Mystic, Conn.
Opening April 12, 2012

A new exhibit opening at the Mystic Aquarium will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Titanic’s launch and sinking. Teaming up to bring the vessel’s history to life are Dr. Robert Ballard, a renowned oceanographer and president of Sea Research Foundation’s Institute for Exploration, who led the 1985 expedition that first located and mapped the sunken Titanic, and Tim Delaney, former Walt Disney Imagineering designer. The exhibit will feature a glowing iceberg that’s cold to the touch, a bi-level adventure area inspired by Titanic’s engine room, hands-on experiences that try to uncover the ship’s lingering mysteries, and modern deep-sea technology that led to Titanic’s eventual discovery.

“The Titanic sinking is, of course, one of the greatest dramas of the last century,” says Ballard. “Everything about her conception, construction, launch, passage, passengers, loss and legend is fascinating and mind-boggling. Our goal with this new exhibit has been to draw visitors into the wonder of discovery by exposing them to natural phenomena such as icebergs, hydrodynamics, navigation, deep-sea exploration. ... I believe that the excitement of discovery is transferrable and can inspire future generations of explorers, discoverers and innovators.”

The exhibit marks the first phase in the development of the United Technologies Ocean Exploration Center, which is expected to open formally in early 2013. The center will be dedicated to deep-sea oceanographic archaeology, geology and exploration.

For more information, visit www.mysticaquarium.org.

“Domestic Embroideries of Colonial Boston”
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Through June 3, 2012

View lovely embroideries made by Colonial Boston women and girls at a new exhibit at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts. Visitors can inspect the craftsmanship of Adam and Eve samplers, pastoral pictures of leaping stags and galloping hunters, crewelwork bed hangings, and delicately embroidered baby caps. These long-treasured family embroideries reveal much about the lives of Boston women and their role within Colonial society.

“Domestic Embroideries” is the third of three exhibitions examining how Boston’s women and young ladies used needlework skills to decorate their homes and keep up with fashion.

For more information, visit www.mfa.org/exhibitions.
Elizabeth Hutchinson Jackson Chapter, Indian Land, S.C., shares its name with the mother the seventh president of the United States. Born in Ireland, Elizabeth Hutchinson married Andrew Jackson in 1761. Four years later the couple and their two young sons, Hugh and Robert, emigrated to America, settling in the Carolinas. In February 1767, the elder Andrew Jackson died unexpectedly three weeks before the birth of Andrew Jackson II. When the Revolutionary War broke out, Hugh, Robert and Andrew—who was just 13 years old—joined a patriot regiment. Andrew and Robert were taken prisoner and infected with smallpox. Elizabeth secured her sons’ release via a prisoner exchange, saving the future president’s life, but not his brother’s. Elizabeth herself died soon after, having contracted cholera while nursing soldiers in a Charleston hospital.

Mary Stuart Chapter, Tupelo, Miss., chose its name to honor an intelligent and industrious woman born October 6, 1825, to Father Thomas C. Stuart and Susan Caldwell Stuart, who came from South Carolina to minister to the Chickasaw American Indians. Mary received her early education at the Monroe Mission, then from Reverend James Weatherly of Oxford, Miss. After the Civil War, she taught school at the Chickasaw Female College in Pontotoc until her marriage to Dr. Robert S. Stewart in 1868. She opened a school in her home in Tupelo for young ladies shortly after Dr. Stewart’s death in 1871. The Tupelo Standard noted on June 14, 1873, “It is an individual enterprise in the hands of a highly cultivated Christian lady … a first-class Female Institution … This school is growing in favor.” Mary Stuart died of pneumonia on May 1, 1884.

The namesake of the Narcissa Prentiss Chapter, Walla Walla, Wash., was a member of one of the first major parties to travel the Oregon Trail. After a brief courtship, Narcissa married Dr. Marcus Whitman on February 18, 1836. The newlyweds left the next day to begin a life of mission work in the American West. The Whitmans settled six miles from Fort Walla Walla at Wailatpu, or “place of the eye grass” in the Cayuse American Indian language. Their daughter, Alice Clarissa, was one of the first white children born in the Oregon Country. Tragically, Alice drowned at age 2, and the Whitmans were killed during an attack on the mission on November 29, 1847. In letters home published after her death, Narcissa noted that she ran the household, assisted in religious ceremonies and taught at the mission school.

Does your chapter name have an unusual story behind it? E-mail a description to americanspirit@dar.org.
Consider membership in the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR), a volunteer women’s service organization that honors and preserves the legacy of our Patriot ancestors. More than 200 years ago, American Patriots fought and sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy today. As a member of the DAR, you can continue this legacy by actively promoting patriotism, preserving American history and securing America’s future through better education for children.

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

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

How many members does the National Society have?
DAR has 170,000 members in nearly 3,000 chapters worldwide, including chapters in 12 foreign countries. Since its founding in 1890, DAR has admitted more than 900,000 members.

How can I find out more?
Go to www.dar.org and click on “Membership.” There you’ll find helpful instructions, advice on finding your lineage and a Prospective Member Information Request Form. Or call (202) 879–3224 for more information on joining the work of this vital, service-minded organization.
the lives of America’s first ladies are on display as never before in a brand-new exhibit at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

“The First Ladies” is a new presentation of objects from the Smithsonian’s nearly century-old First Ladies Collection. This exhibition features 26 dresses and more than 160 other objects, ranging from those of Martha Washington to Michelle Obama. New objects on view include Grace Coolidge’s flapper-style evening gown, fabric from Mary Lincoln’s red room and Dolley Madison’s white silk shoe.

The exhibit’s curator, Lisa Kathleen Graddy, talked with American Spirit about the museum’s fresh look at the unique role of first lady.
American Spirit: What facets of the life of the first lady does this exhibit showcase?

Lisa Kathleen Graddy: The exhibition focuses on the fact that while some duties, such as White House hostess, are performed by all first ladies, the job does not come with a specific list of responsibilities. America’s first ladies have been national advocates, trendsetters, leaders and role models. Each one remakes this undefined and challenging position to suit her own interests, the needs of the administration and the public’s changing expectations of women in general and first ladies in particular. Three sections of the exhibit examine interest in the first lady’s fashion, her role as a hostess, and the special projects and programs she selects. A final section concentrates on Dolley Madison, Mary Lincoln, Edith Roosevelt and Lady Bird Johnson and the different ways they handled the White House, families, parties and politics as they crafted significant roles for themselves that they believed would allow them to best serve the president and the country.

American Spirit: You mentioned Dolley Madison, who played an important role during a crucial time in American history. How did she and other early first ladies adapt to life after the American Revolution?
Graddy: Post-Revolutionary society assigned American women a less public political role. It redefined them as the guardians of the home, training the next generation of citizens in the country’s republican ideals. Like many women in the early republic, Dolley Madison practiced a personal form of politics as part of a social network of friends, relations, and the wives of Washington officials. By exchanging letters and visits, the first lady gathered and dispensed information about political events and public opinion.

American Spirit: How has the role of the first lady evolved over time?
Graddy: Modern first ladies are expected to play more public roles. It is not enough for a first lady to be a gracious hostess. She is expected to take on her own projects and causes and to actively promote them. Martha Washington would be astonished at the high visibility and public appearances of Michelle Obama and the rest of the modern first ladies.

American Spirit: Talk about the range of artifacts you have on display in this new exhibit. How does the Smithsonian obtain items for the collection?
Graddy: The always popular dresses and White House china are showcased in the exhibition. We are also highlighting objects that illustrate the times of certain first ladies, including a piece of charred wood from the White House that survived the War of 1812, Mary Lincoln’s bracelet watch … and mementos of Lady Bird Johnson’s 1964 campaign whistle-stop train tour aboard the Lady Bird Special. Objects come from descendants and family friends, collectors and some from the first ladies themselves.

American Spirit: What are some of the most notable items of clothing you have in this particular exhibition? Why do you display clothing in this exhibition?
Graddy: The fashions most closely associated with the first ladies are the inaugural ball gowns and they, along with [other] dresses worn by the first ladies, are the most popular objects in the exhibition. … First ladies are expected to provide a dignified and attractive image as representatives of the United States.

Since there were no formal inaugural celebrations when Gerald Ford became president, Betty Ford chose this state dinner dress to represent her in the Smithsonian’s collection. The pale-green sequined chiffon gown embroidered in a chrysanthemum pattern was designed by Frankie Welch.

Mary Lincoln’s purple velvet ensemble was believed to have been made by African-American dressmaker Elizabeth Keckly and worn by the first lady during the winter social season of 1861–1862. The evening bodice (pictured left) is trimmed with lace and chenille fringed braid. A daytime bodice (not pictured) is trimmed with mother-of-pearl buttons.
We look to their fashion choices for clues to their characters and personalities and maybe even the administration’s politics. Only a few first ladies have become fashion icons, inspiring trends and promoting American designers, but all have had their wardrobes scrutinized by the American public, continuing the debate over what is “appropriate” for presidential style.

**American Spirit:** Do you have a favorite object in this exhibition?

**Graddy:** My current favorite object is a small copy of *Treasure Island* that Edith Roosevelt gave to her son’s friend Charley Taft as the family was leaving the White House in 1909. She inscribed it, “Charley from Quentin’s Mother.” Quentin’s friend Charley was the son of cabinet secretary William Taft and a constant visitor to the White House. He took the book to read during his father’s 1909 presidential inauguration.

**American Spirit:** What should everyone know about the role of the first lady?

**Graddy:** It’s a more challenging job than they may realize. We invite all of our visitors to take a look at the women who have served as America’s first ladies. Each made the job her own. Each became an example that her successors could, and can, look to for inspiration as they set out to develop their own agenda and leadership style. We end the exhibit by asking the question, “What would you do with the job if it were yours?”

**American Spirit:** What can all Americans learn from the first ladies?

**Graddy:** Any number of things but, most assuredly, grace under pressure and the ability to look at our own skills, passions, and opportunities and identify the things that we each can do best to serve our country and fellow citizens.
Frances Cleveland’s floral chine skirt was originally worn with a peach velvet bodice. Both pieces were probably made around 1895 by the House of Doucet of Paris. The floral bodice shown in the photo was created later from fabric taken out of the skirt.

Grace Coolidge’s blue satin flapper-style evening gown is trimmed with dark-blue sequins and gold glass beads. She gave the dress to her White House maid, Maggie Rogers, and it was likely shortened to be worn by Maggie’s daughter Lillian.

A Daughter And a First Lady
The following first ladies were DAR members:

Julia Dent Grant
Caroline Scott Harrison
Florence Kling Harding
Edith Carow Roosevelt
Eleanor Roosevelt
Mamie Doud Eisenhower
Rosalynn Smith Carter
Nancy Davis Reagan
Barbara Pierce Bush
Laura Welch Bush

Edith Roosevelt’s 1905 inaugural gown was a robin’s-egg blue silk gown with a design of plumes and birds woven in gold thread. The pattern for the fabric was destroyed so that the first lady’s dress could not be copied. The skirt was altered and the original bodice removed before the dress was donated to the Smithsonian.
Indispensable Lady

MARTHA WASHINGTON’S
Role in the Revolution
GEORGE WASHINGTON biographer James Thomas Flexner referred to his subject as the “Indispensable Man.” While Flexner’s tribute was accurate, Martha Washington’s contributions to her country deserve a similar accolade—“Indispensable Lady.” In particular, Martha played a pivotal role during the Revolutionary War in two critical ways. Her visits to the Continental Army’s winter encampments critically boosted the morale of Continental soldiers experiencing prolonged deprivations. She also provided considerable moral support to her husband, the hard-pressed commander in chief. During the desperate months of the Valley Forge encampment—and throughout her husband’s two terms in office as president—our nation’s first “first lady” served her country brilliantly.

Early Life and First Marriage
Born Martha Dandridge on June 2, 1731, Martha (nicknamed Patsy) was the oldest child of a brood of three brothers and five sisters. Martha’s parents, John Dandridge and Frances Jones, owned sizable farming acreage in Chestnut Grove within the southeastern region of the Virginia Colony. In 1750, at the age of 18, she married Daniel Parke Custis, born in 1711, who came from a wealthy plantation-owning family. With Custis, Martha bore four children—all with the middle name Parke due to inheritance requirements that the name be continued. Two of their children, Daniel Parke Custis II (1751–1754) and Frances Parke Custis (1753–1757), died in childhood. On July 8, 1757, her husband passed away, leaving her with a vast estate of lucrative tobacco plantations comprising almost 18,000 acres. In addition to trustee responsibility and control over the inheritances left to her two remaining children, Jacky and Patsy, she also had her own independent dower inheritance of 23,000 pounds sterling, as well as bank stock in England.

With the death of Daniel Parke Custis, Martha was left a widow—an exceedingly rich one. Her wealth combined with her attractive features made Martha the focus of many suitors, including Charles Carter, 24 years her senior and a scion of the Lancaster County, Va., clan of Robert “King” Carter, one of the wealthiest men in the Colonies.
George and Martha at Mount Vernon

However tempting Charles Carter’s overtures, it was a 6-foot, 3-inch, 26-year-old Virginia Colony Militia colonel named George Washington, eight months her junior, who attracted her attention. Washington visited Martha several times during the early part of 1758, and by June 5, they had announced their engagement. Eagerly seeking prominence in Virginia society, Washington ran for and was elected one month later to the House of Burgesses representing Frederick County. He would go on to serve 16 years in the House of Burgesses. That December, the future Continental Army commander in chief resigned his militia commission. Now out of military service, Washington wore civilian attire at his wedding to Martha on January 6, 1759.

During the decade and a half that followed, Washington amply fulfilled the role of country squire, overseeing the home and lands he inherited from his half-brother, Lawrence Washington. Washington also now had control of vast plantations and funds from the Custis estate. For her part, Martha undertook the responsibility of running the Mount Vernon household. Washington cared for and supported Martha’s two young children as a father would.

George visited Martha several times during the early part of 1758, and by June 5, they had announced their engagement.

Unfortunately, both lived tragically short lives. Martha (“Patsy”) Parke Custis, born in 1756, suffered from epilepsy. Washington was devastated when a seizure she suffered on June 19, 1773, proved fatal. John (“Jacky”) Parke Custis, born in 1754, died in his 20s. Against his mother’s stern admonitions, he had joined his stepfather as a military aide at the siege of Yorktown, where Jacky died of typhoid fever on November 5, 1781.

Martha always enjoyed having family members stay with her at Mount Vernon. However, in an age when medical treatment was at best crude, and procedures such as bloodletting could prove fatal, the nurturing Martha had to cope with the frequent illnesses and deaths of many members of her large extended family. Amid a constant flurry of houseguests and the administration of huge landholdings, she and Washington remained a loving couple. Turbulent events in their country, however, forced the couple to endure long periods of hardship.

The relationship between the 13 Colonies and Britain was becoming increasingly untenable. On June 1, 1774, Washington, still a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses, participated in a day of fasting and prayer in solidarity with the beleaguered Massachusetts Colony. The British ordered Boston Harbor closed as a response to the Boston Tea Party as well as a growing number of protests against Parliamentary control. The
Americans had their own response to British heavy-handedness. They formed the Continental Congress in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, and began discussing issues ranging from British taxation to eventual independence. Washington was chosen to represent Virginia at the Continental Congress. On June 15, 1775, at the Second Continental Congress, Massachusetts representative John Adams nominated Washington as general and commander in chief of the Continental Army. Washington accepted the monumental task of transforming committed, but untrained and often unruly, militias into a united force.

Martha Encamped
Washington requested the company of his wife at the various encampments during the war. Martha’s first trip began on November 16, 1775, when she joined her husband at the Cambridge encampment outside of the Continental Army siege at Boston. It took 25 days for Martha to travel on crude roads from her Mount Vernon home to the Cambridge encampment. Martha’s motivation then and throughout the war was the desire to comfort her husband. After Martha’s arrival, many of the other Continental Army officers and even regular soldiers also invited their wives to the encampment, which invariably boosted the morale and doggedness of the troops. Martha stayed at Cambridge until April 4, 1776, and then headed south. However, she did not go directly to Mount Vernon. Instead, she stayed briefly in New York City awaiting her husband. Once together, they traveled next to Philadelphia. Arriving on May 23, 1776, Martha was inoculated for smallpox—an essential though highly risky treatment during this era. After overcoming the side effects of the smallpox vaccine, she began traveling back and forth between New York and Philadelphia during the early part of summer 1776.

Aside from the momentous signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, events were often bleak for the American cause. At the same time, British and Hessian troops were invading Staten Island. During that summer, the invasion would spread to Brooklyn and Manhattan. The Battle of Long Island, the Battle of New York and the Battle of White Plains were all disastrous losses for the Americans. Although Martha wished to remain with her husband, George requested instead that she stay in Philadelphia throughout August, and she complied. From Philadelphia she went back to Mount Vernon, where she kept busy running the household and tending to several grandnieces and grandnephews who were living with her.

After having been summarily defeated in New York, the Continental Army fled to New Jersey where, by January 1777, they were ensconced at their Morristown encampment in the northern part of the state. To call Morristown an “encampment” is an overstatement, because no shelters were erected for the soldiers. Instead, the Continentials stayed with local families and faced what would be a repeated pattern of coping with inadequate levels of shelter, food and supplies.

In February, word reached Martha that the commander in chief was suffering from a severe sore throat, referred to at the time as “quinsy,” and in present-day terms as peritonsillar abscess. (George Washington would die from this malady on December 14, 1799.) As soon as she heard of his illness, Martha left Mount Vernon. She spent nearly a month traveling on primitive, gutted roads further hindered by blizzard conditions in order to reach her husband. Arriving in Morristown in March, Martha brought with her wagonloads of food, medicine and cloth, the latter of which was made from flax grown at Mount Vernon. She also brought—as she would throughout the war—her trademark “let’s-get-to-work” mindset. In this way, Martha was remarkable for her ability to effectively cope with disheartening circumstances.

At Morristown, she began to set up social events to help boost morale. She conducted sewing circles and held simple-fare dinner parties for the officers and their wives. With her
husband back in good health, Martha left New Jersey in June 1777. Martha’s next concern was with her pregnant daughter-in-law, Eleanor (“Nelly”) Calvert Custis, who married John Parke Custis when he was 18 and she was around 16. On the last day of the year, Eleanor gave birth to her second daughter, Martha (“Patsy”) Parke Custis, at Mount Vernon.

A Significant Role at Valley Forge

Surrounded by her rapidly growing family in Virginia, Martha nevertheless was again called away to duty by the commander in chief in January 1778. Since December 1777, the Continental Army had been camped at Valley Forge, a location easily defendable but also near enough to monitor British-occupied Philadelphia. Washington himself called Valley Forge, near the frozen banks of the Schuylkill River in southeastern Pennsylvania, “a dreary kind of place.” Undernourished soldiers performed sentry duty without shoes to protect them from the frozen ground.

Martha arrived after nearly a month of travel, bearing wagonloads of supplies for her husband’s desperate soldiers. Washington, in solidarity with his men, was living in a tent, but when Martha arrived he moved indoors to the diminutive Isaac Potts house located at the confluence of Valley Creek with the Schuylkill River. This temporary home would also serve as the general’s headquarters. Immediately, Martha started to organize group activities. She formed sewing circles to darn shirts and socks and made daily visits to the hordes of sick soldiers suffering from typhus, typhoid, dysentery and pneumonia. During the encampment, more than 2,500 out of the estimated 10,000 to 12,000 soldiers billeted at Valley Forge died from disease. For entertainment—and no doubt to get everyone’s mind off of the dreadful circumstances—Martha organized singing groups to bring warmth and hope to the camp.

Spring at Valley Forge

By the onset of spring in 1778, the weather had warmed sufficiently for more food to be brought into Valley Forge. On May 10, the most profound news of the war up to this point reached Washington—the French had signed the Treaty of Alliance with the Americans. The next day, the general ordered a massive parade in honor of the new grand alliance. As the Continentals passed in review in front of George and Martha Washington, the soldiers displayed the camaraderie, pride and swagger of a winning army. In better spirits than when she arrived in February, Martha left Valley Forge on June 9 to return to Mount Vernon.

The sacrifices at the Valley Forge encampment provided a trial by fire for the struggling Continental Army, but what was gained at Valley Forge inexorably helped the Americans in their quest for liberty. Martha’s presence at encampments in Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and, most especially, Valley Forge, nurtured and strengthened her husband, enabling him to endure years of disappointment, hardship and fatigue. From the time George Washington left Philadelphia to assume command of the Continental Army on June 15, 1775, until September 9, 1781, more than six years later, the commander in chief stayed on the field of battle without once returning home. On October 19, 1781, British General Charles Lord Cornwallis surrendered his army to Washington at Yorktown. Two more years of tense negotiations were required to officially end the War of Independence in favor of the United States of America.

Throughout Washington’s time as commander in chief, U.S. president and again as a gentleman farmer, Martha was his indispensable lady. They were married for more than 40 years. Martha passed away at Mount Vernon on May 22, 1802, 11 days before her 71st birthday.

Dr. Daniel S. Marrone is a distinguished service professor at Farmingdale State College of the State University of New York (SUNY). He received the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Scholarship and Creative Activities in 2011. His stories on Nicholas Herkimer and Nathanael Greene ran in the January/February 2010 and November/December 2010 issues, respectively.
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OF THE APPROXIMATELY 2,500 National Historic Landmarks across the country, fewer than 5 percent are dedicated to the work of a woman. This small group includes Paulsdale, a circa-1800 homestead skirting a residential neighborhood in Mount Laurel, N.J., where lifelong equal rights activist Alice Stokes Paul, an eighth-generation American Quaker, was born January 11, 1885.

The principles of equality and nonviolence and the obligation to right social injustice guided Paul’s formative years at Paulsdale. In adulthood, Paul made it her mission to advance these ideals throughout the country and the world. “Her heritage and Quaker viewpoints informed the positions she took,” says Kimberly Hess, a former member of the Alice Paul Institute’s Board of Trustees and a member of Princeton DAR Chapter, Princeton, N.J. “It’s fascinating to see how a person’s background shapes her ideals.”

Today the Alice Paul Institute (API) headquartered at Paulsdale carries on the work of the celebrated crusader who, despite countless obstacles, remained convinced of her fundamental belief that, “There is nothing complicated about ordinary equality.”

‘The Principle Was Always There’

William and Tacie Paul, Alice’s parents, purchased Paulsdale, or “the home farm,” as it was called, in 1883. At the time the property included more than 200 acres. William Paul, a successful banker, hired laborers to care for the farm’s orchards, gardens and dairy herd.

In the decade after Paul’s birth, her younger siblings William, Helen and Parry joined the family. As Hicksite (as opposed to Orthodox) Quakers, the Pauls denounced the materialistic tendencies flourishing among some Friends in favor of plainness, simplicity and a connection to the natural world. The farmstead afforded many opportunities to commune with nature. Paul often read under the mammoth copper beech tree that still stands in the yard.

The family also emphasized education. Tacie’s father, Judge William Parry, co-founded Swarthmore College in 1864. Tacie attended from 1878–1881, but left one year short of graduation to marry William Paul. In 1901, Paul enrolled at Swarthmore, where she earned the first of her six degrees.

A shared interest in the suffrage movement linked mother and daughter as well. Tacie, a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), sometimes brought Paul along to meetings. Having been exposed to such freethinking attitudes toward equality in her youth, Paul did not realize that Quaker doctrines were not accepted by society at large. “When the Quakers were founded … one of their principles was and is the equality of the sexes. So I never had any other idea … the principle was always there,” she said in a 1974 interview.

After graduating from Swarthmore, Paul spent a brief stint in New York City as a social worker, but the inability to effect lasting change frustrated her. She left the city to pursue a
master’s degree in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1907, a Quaker scholarship sent Paul to study in Birmingham, England, where she became reacquainted with the fight that soon took over her life.

**A Schooled and Innovative Protestor**

In December 1907, Paul attended a speech given by suffragist Christabel Pankhurst, whose mother Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). The crowd’s jeering and heckling rendered the speech impossible to hear. The reception shocked Paul. “In the suffrage meetings she had gone to with her mother, everyone was essentially in agreement that men and women deserved equal rights,” writes Mary Walton in *A Woman’s Crusade: Alice Paul and the Battle for the Ballot* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

The WSPU attracted attention to the cause by any means available, including militant tactics such as smashing windows and throwing rocks. Arrests, which generated publicity, were celebrated. Paul joined in immediately. Under the guidance of the British suffragists she learned to withstand harassment, conduct a hunger strike and endure torturous force feeding. She returned to the United States in January 1910 as a veteran of seven arrests and three jail terms, and a suffragist celebrity.

At home, many suffrage groups sought Paul’s help. She joined NAWSA. As her first big project with the organization, Paul proposed that a suffrage parade be held in Washington, D.C., on March 3, 1913, the day before Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration. At the time, “the concept of marching on Washington was almost unknown,” Walton notes.

Holding the parade at a time when the capital would be full of inauguration spectators would maximize publicity. “Alice had a great understanding of how media and marketing could be used to mobilize a national movement,” says Valerie Buickerood, executive director of API. Reputed to be serious, austere and abrasive, Paul was undeniably effective.

Months of work and fundraising culminated in a massive procession from the U.S. Capitol down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House. Spectators taunted the marchers and overran protective barriers as police did little to intervene. Thanks to the ensuing public outcry over the suffragists’ treatment, the parade generated headlines for weeks.

During the next several years, Paul and NAWSA developed divergent viewpoints about what path would lead most quickly to women’s suffrage. The organization concentrated on securing suffrage in individual states, while Paul felt it more efficient to focus on a federal amendment that would enfranchise all American women at once. Paul split from...
During the silent sentinels campaign, 2,000 women picketed, 500 were arrested, and 168 served time in jail.

NAWSA and directed her attention to lobbying for federal support. Her work kept her based in Washington, D.C., where she joined the Mary Washington DAR Chapter. She organized a march to Congress and a cross-country suffrage convoy, all while coordinating publicity campaigns and fundraising efforts. On July 5, 1916, Paul founded the National Woman’s Party, the first political party for women.

Paul dismissed the idea that suffrage protests should be suspended during World War I, pointing out the incongruity of fighting for democracy in Europe when half of the United States population remained without voting rights. Her stream of public demonstrations could not be stopped. Beginning in January 1917, Paul mobilized shifts of women to picket the White House as “silent sentinels” holding banners demanding suffrage. Banners carried messages such as suffragist martyr Inez Milholland’s rallying cry, “How Long Must Women Wait for Liberty?”

During the silent sentinels campaign, “2,000 women had picketed, 500 had been arrested, and 168 served jail time,” Walton writes. Suffragist prisoners staged hunger strikes and demanded to be treated as political prisoners. On November 15, 1917, a group of suffragists including Paul and other leaders reported to Occoquan Workhouse in Northern Virginia to serve their latest sentence. That first night, prison guards brutalized the women, physically hurling them into cells and denying them food and water, only to force feed them later. The event, known as the “Night of Terror,” was depicted in the 2004 HBO film “Iron Jawed Angels,” starring Hilary Swank as Paul.

Finally, in early 1918 President Wilson publicly voiced support for the suffrage amendment, which was passed by Congress on June 4, 1919. On August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment achieved ratification by the states, ending the long, exhausting fight.
Beyond Suffrage

Paul savored the suffrage victory, but she viewed it as a springboard, not an endpoint. The country still fell short of her ultimate goal, “ordinary equality” for all, so Paul drafted an amendment calling for equal rights for men and women throughout the United States. “Paul believed that a judge could interpret the U.S. Constitution to exclude women, which is why she was committed to the Equal Rights Amendment,” says Kristina Myers, API director of heritage and outreach. “Paul believed in the principles of the Founding Fathers and the Constitution, and she believed they should apply to everyone. People think of her as lawless, but she wasn’t.” In 1972, Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment, first introduced in 1923. It was never ratified.

The scope of Paul’s work expanded further as she worked to achieve equality for women throughout the world. Hess calls Paul “a thinking person’s revolutionary. She took the idea of equality that came out of the American Revolution and applied it more broadly. She didn’t rebel for the sake of rebelling. She knew the world would be better off if her goals were realized.”

In 1939, Paul founded the World Party for Equal Rights for Women. The preamble of the United Nations Charter includes a passage on gender equality, due in large part to Paul.

During Paul’s last years, local Quakers provided for her care. Paul died July 9, 1977, in Mooresstown, N.J. A memorial service for her was held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. A resolution to posthumously award Alice Paul the Congressional Gold Medal “in recognition of her role in the women’s suffrage movement and in advancing equal rights for women” is currently before Congress.

Reinventing Paulsdale

After the Paul family sold Paulsdale in the 1950s, the home remained a private residence until 1990, when API purchased the house and 6.5 acres of the original property. Using Paulsdale as its headquarters provides a tangible connection to API’s namesake as the organization works to honor
Paul’s legacy by educating the public about her life, preserving her historic home, developing future leaders and achieving women’s equality.

“So much of who Alice was and what she went on to do was nurtured here,” Buickerood says. “She retreated to Paulsdale throughout her life.”

While the home’s exterior closely resembles its appearance during Paul’s residence, the interior has been adapted to provide modern amenities for student programs and API staff offices.

A light fixture in the main hallway is original to the home. William and Tacie Paul’s marriage certificate, signed by friends and relatives who witnessed the ceremony, is on display in the parlor. Other family treasures on view include a circa-1885 map of the farm likely drawn by William Parry, a detailed Paul family tree and many original photos. One large parlor wall showcases Paul’s six college degrees—a bachelor’s in biology from Swarthmore, a master’s in social work and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Pennsylvania, and three law degrees from American University. A mid-1800s wood-and-glass bookcase of Paul’s holds photos and mementos.

To further Paul’s legacy of equality, API has created a heritage and leadership development center at Paulsdale. “A lot of thought was given to what Alice would want this property to be,” Buickerood says. “Alice would want an organization to continue her work in equality and achieving more parity for women.”

Myers concurs. “We knew Alice wouldn’t want Paulsdale to become solely a house museum,” she says. Instead, the home became an early model of adaptive reuse, an idea that was still relatively new in the 1990s, Myers notes. The historic artifacts occupy the periphery, freeing the rooms’ wide-open spaces to host workshops, presentations and leadership programs.

Originally aimed at middle-school girls, API’s program offerings now serve that flagship group as well as students of all ages. Resources for teachers and professional women are also available. Throughout the year, events such as the Alice Paul Equality Awards and the Women’s Equality Day celebration, which marks the anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, showcase Paul’s legacy.

API believes that to be introduced to Paul is to be inspired by her. Hess voices perhaps the most tantalizing thought about the equal rights visionary who was still alive just 35 years ago: “It would be interesting to see how Alice Paul would function in 2012.”

VISIT PAULSDALE: Tours are held at noon and 1 p.m. on the second Saturday of each month, March through November. Reservations are not necessary; drop-in visitors are welcome. Contact the Alice Paul Institute to schedule a group tour.

Alice Paul Institute Inc. at Paulsdale 128 Hooton Road, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054 (856) 231-1885 | www.alicepaul.org

Daughters of the American Revolution
ON JANUARY 8, 2012, the Ursuline Sisters of New Orleans held their 197th Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving honoring Our Lady of Prompt Succor for her aid in securing an American victory in the Battle of New Orleans on January 7–8, 1815.

The Mass fulfilled a promise the nuns had made after a ragtag army of about 4,000 men under General Andrew Jackson defeated an invading British force nearly twice its size, in a battle that took place before word that the war was over had reached America.

On January 7, with the British only a few miles from the city, Mother Superior Marie Olivier de Vezin and many of the women of New Orleans began praying before the statue of the Blessed Mother at the old Ursuline Convent on Chartres Street. The nuns vowed that if American lives were spared in the coming combat, the Ursulines would hold an annual Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving.

Some years later, Edward Livingston, a senator from Louisiana who served in the Battle of New Orleans, described the event, as quoted in John William Ward’s Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age (Oxford University Press, 1953): “The pious sisterhood were awakened from their rest, or disturbed in their holy vigils, before the dawn of the 8th of January, by the roar of cannon and volleys of musketery. The calendar, which pointed out the prayers of the day, was hastily opened, and indicated the auspicious name of St. Victoria.

“They hailed the omen … and while they daily offer up their thanks to that Power to whose aide they ascribed their deliverance, they have not been unmindful of him [Jackson] who was chosen as the instrument to effect it.”

As their prayers rose through the night and into the dawn, the rising sun burned away the mist over the battlefield. The motley collection of American defenders—“frontiersmen, militiamen, regular soldiers, free men of color, Indians, pirates and townspeople,” according to Robert V. Remini in The Battle of New Orleans: Andrew Jackson and America’s First Military Victory (Viking, 1999)—could see the massed scarlet coats approaching the city’s hastily erected defenses.

The fierce, bloody battle started shortly after dawn, and the bulk of the fighting ended before noon, with only seven American dead compared with at least 2,300 British dead. The Americans had only a handful of wounded, while the British suffered more than 1,400 wounded and 500 captured. Though sporadic fighting continued through the day, including a smaller, second attack by the British, the lopsided carnage convinced the demoralized Redcoats to withdraw.

Word of the victory reached Mother Superior Olivier de Vezin shortly after morning Mass. The nuns turned part of the convent into a hospital, where they cared for many injured British soldiers and helped nurse them back to health.

Military historians have cataloged the many British errors that led to their overwhelming and deeply humiliating defeat. These included ignorance of the local terrain, inadequate provisioning, tenuous supply lines and supreme arrogance.

Jackson made mistakes, too, and his little army suffered from a lack of adequate arms and training. A furious desire to
humble the British helped offset these shortcomings, according to Remini. The Americans fought from behind hastily erected parapets, firing with deadly accuracy at the British who fought European-style in exposed massed groups.

Still, after the battle Jackson acknowledged in a letter to the Ursuline Sisters that “heavenly intercession” provided the victory. (The letter is now part of the Ursuline Museum.) Whether Jackson was correct is a matter of faith, but if so, the Ursulines were uniquely equipped to ask for divine assistance.

Unconventional Nuns
The Ursulines arrived in New Orleans in 1727, nearly two centuries after The Order of Saint Ursula was founded in 1535 in Brescia, Italy, though France would later become their main stronghold. The group was part of a larger Catholic response to the Reformation in Europe, which included a surge in the formation of orders for religious women yearning to express their piety.

Almost from the beginning, these new orders confounded traditional expectations for orders of religious women. Traditionally, women who had taken religious vows remained cloistered inside a convent—meaning they were largely shut off from interaction with the world. But rather than remain strictly cloistered, these new orders felt called to become active participants in the societies around them.

The Ursulines were one of the first and largest of these orders, writes Emily Clark in Masterless Mistresses: The New Orleans Ursulines and the Development of a New World Society, 1727–1834 (UNC Press, 2007). The nuns felt called to instill a strong Catholic faith in women through education in Catholic doctrine. Though celibate themselves, the Ursulines believed that creating devoted Catholic mothers would help ensure new generations of children who would resist the lure of Protestantism.

In the 17th century, the Ursulines established hundreds of schools at their convents in France. They adhered to a modified version of cloister by remaining in their convents while students came to them. Along with the tenets of Catholicism, the nuns also taught reading, writing and arithmetic, leading to a remarkably high degree of literacy among girls and young women.

Under Louis XV’s Code Noir, the nuns were also allowed to offer education to a very diverse group of women in America. They did this until the “Jim Crow” laws went into effect after the Civil War. It was not until the early 1960s that they once again became community leaders in offering education for all girls, says the convent’s archivist, Mary Lee Berner Harris, who adds, “My class was the first to integrate in 1962.”

Not surprisingly, the order encountered opposition from both within the church and from secular European society, which balked at educating women. But the church allowed them to continue their mission as part of the overall struggle against the Protestant heresy.

During the early Colonial era, a few Ursulines came to Canada, then under French control. In the early 18th century, the nuns were presented with an opportunity to extend their missionary work to France’s Louisiana colony.

A New World Order
Established in 1699 by the Company of the Indies, the Louisiana colony struggled for years simply to hang on, though its strategic location at the mouth of the Mississippi River made it worth keeping. New Orleans was far from the bustling, cosmopolitan city it would become by the early 19th century. Its population was small, its economy weak and its living conditions marginal. Fevers such as malaria regularly incapacitated its citizens, while the still-wild countryside teemed with snakes, insects and alligators. Relations with local American Indians were uncertain at best, exacerbated by the enslavement of some natives.

In 1723, Jacques Delachaise, the chief colonial commissioner, set out to change things. A top priority was to improve the wretched public hospital, which was vital to maintaining the health of the colony’s soldiers, as well as its citizens.

Delachaise petitioned the Company of the Indies to send him a group of nuns from a nursing order such as the Filles de la Charité. When none accepted the invitation, the Jesuit superior for Louisiana suggested recruiting the Ursulines instead. The Jesuit and Ursuline orders had long had a friendly relationship, Clark writes, and they shared a calling to teach and evangelize. The Ursulines had also provided nursing services...
The Ursuline Nuns were eager to carry their missionary work to Louisiana, which had become a dumping ground for French convicts and other undesirables. The frontier cried out for someone to protect its women from the loss of faith and virtue, making it ideal for the Ursulines’ mission, according to Clark.

The nuns immediately set up a school “that educated women and girls of European, American Indian and African descent, enslaved and free, throughout Louisiana’s colonial period,” Clark writes. In addition to boarding students, the nuns welcomed day students, including Indian and African girls who received basic instruction in the Catholic catechism. (Today the Ursuline Academy is regarded as one of the oldest, continuously operating schools for girls and one of the oldest Catholic schools in the United States.)

However, despite a contract that specifically called for them to provide nursing services, the nuns sidestepped the provision for almost seven years. The contract obliged the colony to provide a convent next to the hospital, which would allow the nuns to remain technically cloistered while tending the sick. But the city leaders argued endlessly over the cost, design and construction details, allowing the nuns to refuse to take over the facility until that condition was met.

The new convent finally opened in 1734. As time went by, the nuns’ social welfare role expanded, as they began to shelter female orphans, poor widows, abused and battered wives, and other women in need.

As they had in France, the Ursulines again encountered resistance to educating girls, as well as to their open-door policy of admitting all races and conditions, Clark writes.

Oddly, the order owned a small number of slaves who worked for the convent as well as on properties the nuns purchased over the years as investments and sources of income. They educated their slaves, and encouraged them to marry and have families—something rarely seen elsewhere in the South. They also sold slaves, especially ones who they felt created trouble, though they tried to sell families as a unit, rather than as individuals.

The composition of the order changed over the years, from the original group of French nuns, to New Orleans-born Europeans, to French creoles and later Spanish creoles, when Spain acquired the colony as a prize of the French and Indian War.

The internal changes reflected those in the Crescent City itself, yet throughout the order remained remarkably true to its founding principles, Clark writes.

“Over the course of the 18th century, the Louisiana nuns forged a new version of Ursuline piety when they added to their educational project a wide variety of services that tended to the social welfare of the colony’s inhabitants. Caring for the sick, teaching the young, sheltering the orphaned, the abused and the destitute, they and their convent worked to lay a stable foundation of healthy, educated people for the growing city and acted as a safety net when families failed through death, poverty or violence to carry out the tasks society asked of them,” Clark writes.

Praying to their beloved Lady of Prompt Succor for assistance was completely in keeping with their mission of faith.

The Genesis of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Patroness of the State of Louisiana

The Ursuline Sisters had been in New Orleans for almost 75 years when Spain ceded the Louisiana Territory to France in a secret treaty in 1800. The Spanish Ursuline Sisters, fearful of French rule, fled to Cuba, leaving only seven nuns to run a hospital, day school, boarding school and orphanage.

Desperate for help, Mother St. Andre Madier wrote to a cousin in France asking her to send young women interested in joining the Ursuline ministries in New Orleans. Mother Agathe Gensoul decided to appeal to her bishop for permission to come to New Orleans. Her bishop didn’t wish to lose such a valuable asset, so he insisted that she obtain special permission from the pope.

In 1808, in the midst of political and religious oppression in Europe, she wrote to Pope Pius VII, a prisoner of Napoleon Bonaparte. Praying before a statue of Our Lady, she was inspired to say, “O most holy Virgin Mary, if you obtain for me a prompt and favorable answer to this letter, I make the promise to have you honored in New Orleans under the title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor.” On April 28, 1809, the pope granted his approval and blessing, and Mother Gensoul set out to have a statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor carved in fulfillment of the vow she made. Both arrived in New Orleans in December 1810. Originally housed at the old convent on Chartres Street, it is now in the National Shrine of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, on State Street.
Sylvia’s diary

Uncovering the Life of a 19th-century EVERYWOMAN

By Alden O’Brien
Photography by Scott Braman
Early American women left few traces of their lives in official documents, but some of them left personal records in the form of diaries. One such diary is that of Sylvia Lewis of Bristol, Conn., whose 20-volume diary is part of the DAR Americana Collection.

Sylvia Lewis (later Tyler) began her diary in March 1801, shortly before her 16th birthday. “Sylvia Lewis her journal begun March the 1st 1801 to continue,” she wrote on the inside cover of the first volume—and continue she did. She made an entry for each day—usually a record of her activities, both chores and socializing—for the next 20 years. She left a timeline that includes her marriage, the birth of four children and the death of one, as well as moves to rural New Hartford, Conn., and to the Western Reserve in present-day Ohio. Throughout, she gives the modern reader insights into the daily routines and emotional life of an average New England woman of the Federal era.

Sylvia was the granddaughter of one of the early settlers of Bristol, Josiah Lewis, whose eight sons and their families all lived near each other, seven in Bristol and one across the township border in Southington. The diary is populated with Lewis cousins, uncles and aunts, as well as her mother’s Parmalee relations from nearby Goshen, Conn. Her uncle Abel Lewis owned the tavern across from the village green and the Congregational church, and just a modern block away from Sylvia’s house.

Throughout the year Sylvia and her friends attended many balls at Uncle Abel’s tavern. Though not celebrated as a religious holiday, Christmas was the occasion for a ball held the following night, as were Thanksgiving and the secular holidays of election day and militia training day. Abel’s daughters Naomi and Ruth were near Sylvia’s age and were her frequent companions on berry-picking expeditions, sleigh rides, quilting parties and other social events attended by the teenage boys and girls of Bristol.

Afternoons and evenings were frequently given over to paying or hosting visits among neighbors, but mornings were for work. The Puritan concern with being productive and not wasting time seems to echo in Sylvia’s activity records. In the Puritan mind—and the Federal-era Yankee inherited much of this mindset—a person must make the best use possible of her time on earth and account to her Maker for it. By listing her accomplishments, even to the extent of counting each day’s spinning production, Sylvia was engaging in a spiritual effort to show how she had “improved her time.” The last page of her first diary volume, which spans March 1801 through the end of February 1802, is filled with her tally of how many times she had done laundry or ironing, how many “runs” (skeins) of each fiber she’d spun, and how many times she had brewed beer or made cheese.

‘Did almost all kinds of work’

Sometimes Sylvia worked as a mother’s helper for other families or did housework for neighbors. But the most significant portion of her work involved textile and clothing production. Sylvia quilted throughout the years, both for herself and others. Some quilting days with neighbors were merely quiet social visits; sometimes they were referred to as “a quilting” (not yet called a quilting bee), meaning the day ended with a party including music and the young men of the town.
Spinning formed an almost daily task. At various seasons, Sylvia spun linen and tow from flax, wool from the family’s sheep, cotton (presumably store-bought in raw form) and even silk. Connecticut attempted to encourage independence from European goods by subsidizing efforts at silk production, from mulberry tree planting to the production of silk thread. In several entries in 1801–1802, Sylvia mentions unwinding silkworms’ cocoons and spinning silk, offering a rare glimpse into this widespread but short-lived episode in Connecticut’s history. More commonly, however, she knitted stockings and mittens from cotton and wool: “Knit some in the evening” is a frequent conclusion to her daily entries.

“Knit some in the evening”

Knitting could be done in the lesser light of candles at night, making it a good evening task.

Some of Sylvia’s skeins were used for weaving, for herself or others. Several times a year Sylvia reported either setting up a loom at Uncle Abel’s house or taking her yarn to a neighbor’s to weave. Some of her weaving was done for neighbors, work for which they would have paid her father. At that time the wages of children of the house would have been put to the family account, not into Sylvia’s own hands. It was not until Sylvia began work as a schoolteacher, and later at the button factory in town, that she took home her own pay. At that point she was happy to record what she earned and how she spent it. Each job earned about a dollar a week. One year, she spent most of her summer term’s teacher’s pay on a new wool cloak and some decorative trim for it.

‘Went to the store and bought some calico for a gown’

The diary gives a wonderful glimpse into an early 19th-century girl’s wardrobe. Sylvia records buying fabric to
make new dresses (one or two per spring/summer or fall/winter season). Frequent alterations to older garments show the extent to which women of the time prolonged the use of their clothes by updating them, or even remaking them into something new entirely. In 1812, she wrote: “Made me a petticoat out of my black flannel froc [sic].” Trips to “the store”—Bristol had several, and she sometimes ventured to the next town, Farmington, or even as far as Hartford, 17 miles away—resulted in the purchase not only of calico (printed cotton) and silk, but also of accessories such as bonnets, lace gloves and a parasol. Just as now, accessories were the perfect way to complete and update a look.

Sylvia’s fashion choices show that even as the daughter of a central Connecticut farmer, she was fully aware of the latest trends. She most likely read American journals, which often reprinted articles from London fashion magazines. In 1802, when London proclaimed the popularity of the tippet—a fur boa-like item—Sylvia “dressed Martins [sic] skins and made myself a tippet.” (The marten is similar to a mink or weasel, and was native to most of the Eastern United States at the time.) Even though she had to dress her own animal skins to get her fur boa, she had the latest trend.

‘Him I held dearer than every thing but life itself’

The diary for 1809, the year Sylvia married Abel Tyler from New Hartford, Conn., is lost, but her writing picks up again in January 1810, when she was settled in her new home. Before the marriage Abel appears to have been a clock or tinware peddler, which may have been what brought him to Bristol. The town had several tinware shops and would later become a manufacturing center for wooden clocks, the new style of clock at that time. But in the New Hartford years, Abel and his uncle Abial Tyler made saddles and trunks. Sylvia helped support the family not only with her extensive dressmaking (she recorded making more than 200 dresses for her family and neighbors), but also by assisting with the trunks, often making such notes as “cut out the paper to cover a trunk” or “assisted in Cutting paper & covering two Trunks.”

In the years after her marriage, Sylvia confides more of her feelings than she did in her youth. The diary becomes the repository of her secret concerns and disappointments, and at times her spiritual struggles. While never very introspective, these glimpses into her internal life add new dimension to Sylvia’s character and help us imagine her life in more depth. Referring to her husband as “Mr Tyler,” in the common mode of her time, she doesn’t paint the picture of him as an ideal spouse. At times impatient (“again I shed some tears in consequence of his harsh speech,” she wrote in February 1813) and at others not a helpmate (“I did house work mended greased my wool & put it up Mr Tyler sat in the house most of the day,” she pointedly noted in 1816), Abel sometimes caused Sylvia heartache. Yet when he went off on expeditions she missed and worried about him.

The birth of her children elicits occasional bursts of maternal affection cloaked in Sylvia’s typical restraint. Her son Lewis was born in September 1810, and daughter Ruth arrived in 1813. She sometimes wrote that she “took care of my little ones,” something she presumably did every day but only sometimes bothered to note, but these entries hint at her fondness. When her third child died after just two days, she recorded “taking a last look of my dear departed child & tried to compose myself to rest.” Outpourings of even such restrained emotion are rare, but she will sometimes declare she was
"heavy-hearted," "distressed" or that she "shed some tears." Beyond that, one must read between the lines for hints of Sylvia's feelings and opinions.

In the fall of 1814, Abel Tyler left Sylvia and their young children to head to Ohio with Sylvia's brothers, Abraham and Levi Lewis, who had already settled there. Northeastern Ohio was called the Western Reserve, or land reserved for Connecticut emigrants. The Lewis brothers were among a handful of clockmakers from the Bristol area who brought the new methods of wooden clockmaking to the West and peddled their wares up and down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and beyond.

Abel returned after a few months but went west again in 1816 for more than a year. His absences left Sylvia to support the family and run the household alone, and she fretfully recorded the new burdens this put on her. Abel's chores, such as gathering wood and taking care of the livestock, were hardly ever mentioned earlier, but were now Sylvia's duties. "I picked up wood got breakfast and the Cow ran away into the woods I walked with Lewis after her, returned quite tired," begins an entry in September 1816. That same day she would mop the floor, entertain three relatives who paid a call, cut and baste a gown for a neighbor, make bread and cut apples for applesauce—not to mention caring for 6-year-old Lewis and toddler Ruth.

Abel returned to Connecticut in August 1817 to pack and bring his family to Ohio (or "New Connecticut," as the Western Reserve was also called) on a grueling five- and a half-week journey through the Finger Lakes region of New York, across the southern edge of Lake Erie and into Trumbull County, Ohio, on the Pennsylvania border. Sylvia was often tired and sick on the journey. Only by reading entries in June 1818 do we learn that at the time she had been in the first trimester of her third pregnancy. Sadly, this was the baby who died after only two days. "My trials were new & not to be described to those who have not felt the same, but I hope may be sanctified for my good," she wrote with typical emotional restraint and a conventional expression of Christian resignation.

Although Sylvia was deeply religious, she never experienced the conversion required for full membership in the church during the period covered by the diary. When in 1808 she wrote that "Ruth thought she had experienced religion and become taking a last look of my dear departed child & tried to compose myself to rest."
reconciled to God,” her next thought was to fear she would not, like Ruth, go to heaven: “and must I be forever separated from her—dreadful thought.” Yet she was a regular churchgoer, observing the Sabbath by reading devotional texts at home if illness or weather prevented attendance. Each Sunday in the diary’s later years, she also recorded the text of the two sermons she heard preached at morning and afternoon services, often calling one or both “alarming indeed,” a reminder of the fire-and-brimstone oratory style of many Congregational and Presbyterian preachers in Connecticut and Ohio at the time.

Diary as Reference

Sylvia’s diary provides a wealth of detail about the daily life of a Federal-era woman in New England and Ohio. Genealogy research helps to identify the people she mentions and illuminates her entries further, with many characters being close or extended kin. For example, “Mrs. Hooker” is revealed to be a first cousin and “Eudrick Griffin” not merely a hired hand but also her husband’s first cousin. Delving into probate inventories, land and church records, and other contextual research fleshes out the tale even more. And Sylvia herself has provided important details of several aspects of her times to historians. Philip E. Morris Jr.’s American Wooden Movement Tall Clocks, 1712–1835 (Heritage Park Publishing, 2011) lists Sylvia as a clockmaker, as she mentions helping with several of the processes involved. Her diary has helped identify some of the women who painted the clock faces. Clothing through American History: The Federal Era through Antebellum, 1786–1860 (Greenwood, 2010) by Ann Wass quotes her sewing records several times.

In some cases, the diary is the only source of information for vital records. Her brother Abraham’s marriage to Lois Lowry is noted in a Lowry family history, for example, although it is not recorded in any surviving records. But it is only the diary that tells us that Lois died in Ohio in 1814, Abraham married widow Rachel Plumb in Connecticut in 1815, and that it is therefore Rachel, not Lois, who died in 1837, as a Trumbull County newspaper noted.

Sylvia appears to have discontinued her diary after 1821. A glance at the family Bible’s birth records, still in the hands of descendants, hints at why: She gave birth to Norman in late January 1822, followed by Abel, Sylvia and Nathan between 1823 and 1828. Sally Thompson, a baby fostered after Sylvia’s baby’s death in 1818, remained with the family as an adopted daughter. Thus Sylvia had, in the late 1820s, a house filled with five children under the age of 10; quite possibly a diary-keeping habit was impossible to maintain.

As far as we know, she did not try again until 1829, when the best she could manage was to write occasional entries covering a few months at a time; this volume covers 1829–1831. If later volumes were kept, they have not survived. Those that remain were passed down in eldest daughter Ruth’s family and donated to NSDAR in the 1970s.

In leaving behind a decades-long, first-person account of her day-to-day life, Sylvia Lewis Tyler’s diaries deliver a rare chronicle of a 19th-century everywoman and secure her place in history.

Alden O’Brien, the curator of costumes, textiles and toys at the DAR Museum, has been transcribing and researching Sylvia’s diaries.

Sylvia recorded her professional sewing in Ohio at the end of the 1817 volume, telling us much about clothing in pioneer Ohio.
WOMEN AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN EARLY AMERICA

By Emily McMackin
Sitting in the drawing room of most every upper-class home in the early republic was a keyboard where the lady of the household sat, her hands gliding across the keys, striking upon chords and filling the room with variations of airs and arias for a genteel crowd of listeners.

For women musicians in early America, this was their stage. “Music was associated with the ideal of a woman as an ‘angel in the house,’” writes Adrienne Fried Block in *Women in Music: A History* (Indiana University Press, 2001).

THE ABILITY TO PLAY MUSIC reflected “social grace and accomplishment,” says Judith Tick, professor of music at Northeastern University and author of *American Women Composers Before 1870* (University of Rochester Press, 1995). Music was the instrument a lady used to uplift and create harmony in the home—and sometimes catch the eye of a beau. In paintings of the era, women were often pictured with a lute or another instrument in their hands gazing up longingly at a male figure.

“‘There was a subtext associated with music making,’” Tick says. “It became a metaphor for romance, love and courtship.”

Ideally, musicianship was thought to lead to a good match for a woman, keep her from idle activities, soothe her husband and children, and foster a happy home life.

For women with the talent and ambition to take their music beyond the parlor, the challenge was “transcending the limits of what was considered the norm for them,” Tick says.

“Women were discouraged from pursuing a professional career as an artist or displaying themselves onstage as an object of attention.”

What was the purpose, then, of the countless hours women spent perfecting their music? Simply this: “It marked you as a lady,” Tick says.

**Early Music Making**

When the first colonists set sail for the New World, they left behind a rich musical culture full of madrigals, ballets, operas, choirs and cathedral compositions. Tight cargo space on ships kept most from bringing instruments with them. Even if there had been room for their harpsichords and organs, life in the rugged American wilderness left little time for making music.

“Music did not play an important role in the lives of most early American women until the basic necessities of survival had been established, and communities became wealthy enough to support luxuries such as musical instruments,” writes Dorothy Mays in the 2004 reference work, *Women in Early America: Struggle, Survival and Freedom in a New World*.

Research into the Massachusetts Bay Colony shows that worship music was esteemed in the Puritan community, and settlers embraced it, singing psalms at
church and at home. Religious leaders discouraged using musical instruments in worship because of the association with Catholicism, but congregational singing was encouraged among both sexes.

Many New England women learned how to read music through early-18th-century tunebooks and singing schools that taught the rudiments of music theory and notation.

An exception to the lack of instrumentation during this period were the Moravian settlements of Pennsylvania and the Carolinas. Intent on preserving their musical heritage, these German immigrants established choirs and orchestras with brass ensembles to perform sacred and secular masterpieces of their homeland. Known for its egalitarian views, the community encouraged both men and women to study and perform the works of great composers like Mozart, Haydn and Bach.

“Within the community, women played all kinds of instruments, sang in choirs and were involved in composing music,” says David Hildebrand, musicologist and director of the Colonial Music Institute in Severna Park, Md.

Even in the most Puritan communities, music eventually became more secular, offering colonists an escape from their hardworking lives. Fiddle playing was a common choice for male musicians, and the cittern—a 10-string, teardrop-shaped English guitar tuned to an easy-to-play, open C chord—was a popular domestic instrument strummed by men and women.

By the mid-18th century, music was thriving in New England with the rise of hymnology, and it also flourished in the southern Colonies and in the hills of the middle Colonies, where waves of Irish, Scottish, Swedish, German and French immigrants brought folk music from their homelands.

In many households, the spinet—a smaller, more affordable version of the harpsichord—became the instrument of choice and the center of entertainment. On it women played everything from age-old psalms, hymns and anthems to the most popular ballads, marches and dance tunes. Occasionally, they were accompanied by a man on the violin, flute or English guitar.

Suitable for Playing

By the Revolution, Colonial men played a wide array of instruments, including drums, trumpets, trombones, fifes, French horns, dulcimers, oboes, bassoons, clarinets and cellos, but women were limited to the cittern or the keyboard. By the late 1700s harps were also considered suitable for females.

“A woman would not be caught playing a fiddle—or most kinds of wind or string instruments,” Hildebrand says.

These instruments were viewed as unfeminine because they required alteration of the physical posture and “the contortion of facial muscles,” Mays writes. Mobility of the instrument also determined its appropriateness for women.

“If you learned to play the keyboard, the assumption was that you would play it at home,” Tick says.

Musical activities among women were tightly constrained to the home and a small circle of family and friends. “Outside of performing a solo in a friend’s home, making music in public was frowned upon,” Tick says.

Though some women performed music in public venues at the time, most of these were English singers or actresses, or part of family-led theater troupes. A lady would never play in a tavern, on stage or even in most churches.

When playing for others, women were encouraged to avoid long and complex works, keeping songs simple and light. They would play “approved collections of English, Irish and Scottish airs and sonatas, minuets and other instrumental pieces by some of the great composers,” Hildebrand says.

Broadside ballads covering current and historical events and topics of crime, religion and love were popular sources of household music, along with selections from “The Beggar’s Opera” and other English comic operas of the era.

“Just as many of us today will purchase a CD of our favorite Broadway show, colonists would bring music they saw performed on stage home to play and sing to,” Hildebrand says.

Music tutors traveled throughout the southern and middle Colonies giving lessons to wealthy young ladies, and in larger cities such as Boston, Baltimore and Charleston, a small class of teachers—some of whom were female—emerged.
Music in a Democracy

Most music during the Colonial era was pulled from tunebooks like the New England Psalm-Singer or collections of traditional and popular songs printed in British publications. Few folk songs were written down; most were transferred orally and improvised. But after the Revolution, the publication of secular sheet music skyrocketed, paralleled by the rise of a musically inclined middle class.

“All almost every young lady … from the children of the judge, the banker, the general, down to those of the constable, the huckster and the drummer, can make noise upon some instrument or other, and charm their neighbors with something which courtesy calls music,” wrote a correspondent for the Philadelphia Mirror of Taste and Dramatic Censor in 1810.

Much of the sheet music produced was written for amateurs, with publishers aiming to “satisfy the modest abilities of music makers at home, to offer them practical or topical sources of mild diversion,” writes H. Wiley Hitchcock in Music in the United States (Prentice Hall, 1988).

Despite the increased accessibility of music in the new democracy, musicianship among women was still a mark of status.

George Washington’s stepdaughter-in-law Nelly Custis was praised for her musical aptitude. She regaled guests at the White House with instruments the president purchased for her, including a five-octave, double manual harpsichord imported from London and a Dodds pianoforte—one of the first built in America.

While serving as an ambassador in Paris in the 1780s, Thomas Jefferson purchased a six-string Spanish guitar for his daughter Mary (“Maria”). The Spanish guitar, which eventually supplanted the cittern in the early 1800s, was just coming into vogue, and Jefferson’s 1815 sketch of the instrument’s fingerboard, likely for his granddaughter Virginia Randolph, includes notes on how to play it properly.

As new wealth began to accumulate in merchant cities along the Eastern seaboard, the desire to emulate the Old World standards and culture of Europe grew. Public concerts began featuring European virtuosos whose skill raised the nation’s level of taste, creating an affinity for the “art music” esteemed overseas. “Music making by amateurs was considered a social grace in imitation of high English society,” Block writes.

A Mandatory Skill

Music lessons were mandatory for well-bred young ladies, and wealthy families spared no expense on instruments and instruction. Finishing schools and seminaries for girls taught music along with reading and writing, French, and other “ornamental” skills such as dancing, drawing, cooking, embroidery and needlework.

Part of education was learning how to entertain and contribute to social life at home—and that included bringing music into the household,” Tick says.
Not everyone agreed with this view. One of the biggest dissenters was Benjamin Rush, who suggested in his 1787 essay, “Thoughts upon Female Education,” that hours spent perfecting an instrument would be better invested in reading the classics.

“How many useful ideas might be picked up in these hours from history, philosophy, poetry and the numerous moral essays with which our language abounds, and how much more would the knowledge acquired upon these subjects add to the consequence of a lady with her husband and with society than the best performed pieces of music upon a harpsichord or a guitar!” he wrote.

Though he considered vocal music an endearing talent that helped women “soothe the cares of domestic life,” becoming more skilled at musical instruments was a waste of time because most women abandoned them after marriage, he observed.

“Of the many ladies whom we have known who have spent the most important years of their lives in learning to play upon instruments of music, how few of them do we see amuse themselves or their friends with them after they become mistresses of families! Their harpsichords serve only as sideboards for their parlor,” he continued.

Throughout the early 19th century, a typical music curriculum included lessons in voice, guitar, harp and piano. A few seminaries taught violin, but those were the exception.

“Girls didn’t get much training beyond basic literacy,” Tick says. And just as they were steered away from studying Greek and Latin, “they were discouraged from learning music theory or playing orchestral instruments,” she adds.

America’s First Women Composers
None of the earliest musical institutions taught composition to women because it was believed females lacked the spatial and mental orientation to visualize and create music. Those who attempted to compose were often discouraged or forbidden from doing so.

Of the hundreds of known secular songs published in America before 1825, only about 70 were composed by women.

“They were mostly written by English women or published under androgynous or anonymous names,” Tick says.

It was common to see works penned by “A Lady of Maryland” or “A Lady of Charleston.” A popular 1825 anthem “Titus March” was attributed to “A Lady of Baltimore.”

This convention started to shift in the 1830s, as women’s magazines like Godey’s Lady’s Book began printing “parlor songs,” crediting women for their works. While some still masked their gender with initials or hitched themselves to male composers, women increasingly began to use their musical prowess to earn income, independence and acclaim.

As the century progressed, American women began filling the ranks of music academies and conservatories, performing at concert halls and music festivals, and teaching the next generation of female musicians who would go on to achieve more than their mentors dreamed possible. By the mid-19th century, these ladies were stepping into their identity as skilled musicians, composers and artists—and they never looked back.

Emily McMackin wrote about early American women’s letters for the March/April 2011 issue.

Music making was a mark of refinement among early American women, but it played more of a personal role in the lives of African-American slave women, who sang songs closely tied to events in their everyday lives, from backbreaking work in the fields to intimate moments with family. Derived from rhythms and harmonies passed down through generations, songs were sung in a call-and-response pattern, punctuated by hand clapping and foot stomping and accompanied by fiddles and drums.

Little is known about instrumentation among African-American women during this era, but some accounts indicate that it may have been less restrictive than it was for their mistresses.

John Adams alludes to this in his description of a tavern scene in a diary entry collected in Music in Colonial Massachusetts 1630–1820 (Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980): “Every Room, Kitchen, Chamber was crowded with People. Negroes with a fiddle. Young fellows and Girls dancing in the Chamber as if they would kick the floor thro ... Fiddling and dancing of both sexes, and all Ages, in the lower Room, singing, dancing, fiddling, drinking flip and toddy, and drams.”
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Esther Damon

The Last Widow of the Revolution

By Maureen Taylor

BY THE TIME ESTHER SUMNER

Damon died 131 years after the first shots at Lexington and Concord, this DAR member had the distinction of being the last Revolutionary War widow. Born in 1814, Sumner grew up in tiny Plymouth Union, Vt., listening to the Revolutionary War stories told by her maternal grandfather, William Thompson. In her early 20s, another veteran, the 70-something Noah Damon, courted her while sharing his own tales of war service. He also mentioned that he was financially stable.

Damon’s proposal was probably welcome news to Esther’s ears. Esther’s father, Justus Sumner, died when she was 8, leaving her and her mother Elizabeth Frink without financial support. Esther worked during the summer and attended school in the winter. The town of Plymouth Union hired her to teach when she was 17.

Four years later, she met Damon in Bridgewater, Vt., where she was working in the home of local resident Seth Fletcher. Damon moved to the area around 1832 or 1833 after the death of his wife. Two weeks after their first meeting, he and Esther were husband and wife, married in a ceremony in the home of her employer.

As his wife, Esther would, upon Damon’s death, qualify for a pension under the service-pension act of June 1832 that provided for widows and children. It is unknown how many young women married older veterans, but it wasn’t unusual. As of 1869, there were still 887 widows on the pension rolls. At least some of them were much younger than their husbands.

When 76-year-old Noah Damon married 21-year-old Esther Sumner on September 6, 1835, the residents of the town of Bridgewater were surprised and perhaps displeased. Soon after the wedding, Esther discovered that Damon was penniless. Due to limited financial means and the fact that Damon’s advanced age left him unable to work, the couple applied for support from the town. In the early 19th century, town councils often supplied financial aid and assistance for residents unable to care for themselves. While the town of Bridgewater decided to support Noah, the council declined to do so for Esther, delaring that she was “able to care for herself.” She found several jobs, but the town claimed her earnings to pay for Damon’s maintenance. At her behest, he left Bridgewater to go live with one of his daughters in New Hampshire.

When Damon finally applied for a pension in 1848 at 89 years of age, he never mentioned that he still had a wife. In his pension application, Damon told the court that as a boy under 16 years of age he’d enlisted in Milton, Mass., and served with the Milton Minute Company, which fought at the Battle of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. A year later he was drafted for three months’ service with General George Washington’s army in the New York City area. He suffered a bayonet wound in his right thigh and used the scar as proof of service for the pension. He testified that he’d served several more times in a variety of capacities, including participating in the Battle of Newport, R.I., in 1778. When he died on July 2, 1854, Esther Damon became eligible for a pension.

In 1855, Esther hired an attorney to help with her pension claim. Her mother testified about her daughter’s marriage to Damon, his inability to support her and the actions of the town. Esther’s pension petition was successful, and she was awarded $80 per year. In 1868, the amount was increased to $96 annually.

Esther Damon never remarried. If she had, she would have been ineligible for her widow’s pension. She moved with her mother to Plymouth, Vt. According to the 1860 federal census, Esther listed her personal worth as $250. By 1880 her mother had died, so Esther had taken in an elderly boarder to help with her expenses. She eventually lived with another local widow, a Mrs. Snow, until that woman’s death in 1903.

In October 1904 at the age of 90 she applied to become a member of the Palestrello DAR Chapter, Wallingford, Vt., through her grandfather Thompson’s service. As proof of her service she used the inscription on his headstone, “William Thompson, October 1830, age 79 a soldier of the Revolution.” She was officially approved in November 1904.

In the same year, her fellow DAR members sought further compensation for her from the Vermont Legislature. In a special act passed in Vermont, Damon is referred to as “the last surviving widow of a revolutionary soldier.” She was awarded $200. In addition, Vermont Daughters raised money toward her support, in an effort to make “the closing years of her life happy and comfortable.” On the federal level, the Committee of Pensions under Congress increased her pension to $24 per month because of her “distinction of being the sole surviving widow pensioner of the Revolutionary War.” Esther Damon died on November 11, 1906.

Maureen Taylor is the author of The Last Muster: Images of the Revolutionary War Generation. She is currently working on a second volume. For more information, visit www.maureentaylor.com.
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