FOURTH ANNUAL SALUTE TO WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

American Spirit
Daughters of the American Revolution
March/April 2014

Early American Women of Distinction

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON
A Mother to Many Daughters

LIBERTY FOR ALL
Elizabeth Freeman’s Journey

NAN-YE-HI
Cherokee Beloved Woman and Promoter of Peace

Early American Women of Distinction

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### Spirited Adventures

**Natchitoches, La.**
The 300-year-old northwest Louisiana town continues to celebrate its French, Spanish, African, American Indian and Creole American influences.

*BY JEFF WALTER*

### Historic Homes

**The Women of Laura Plantation**
A restored 19th-century French Creole sugar plantation offers a detailed look at the strong-willed women who managed it.

*BY SHARON McDONNELL*

### Our Patriots

**Nan-ye-hi, or Nancy Ward**
Born around 1738 in the Cherokee capital of Chota, Nan-ye-hi was well-respected by her people and settlers alike for her brave efforts for peace.

*BY PAULINE MOORE AND JAMIE ROBERTS*

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### About the cover:
Learn more about Antonio Rodrigues’ illustrations of Elizabeth Freeman, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and Nan-ye-hi in the President General’s message on page 4.

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From the President General

The March/April issue,—our fourth annual tribute to Women’s History Month,—is always a joy to create since we all find ourselves newly inspired by little-known stories of brave, wise and compassionate women of early America.

Our cover was designed to highlight three of the diverse and distinguished women featured in this issue. After our designers researched available images of them, illustrator Antonio Rodrigues used organic shapes and earthy colors to illuminate Elizabeth Freeman, the former slave who helped abolish slavery in Massachusetts, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, a pioneer in Catholic education who became the first U.S. citizen to be canonized, and Nan-ye-hi, an influential leader and peacekeeper during a time of great upheaval in the Cherokee Nation. The subtle background script that fleshes out the illustrations comes from General Henry Knox family letters in the DAR Americana Collection. The handwriting underscores one of American Spirit’s goals: to faithfully record these early American women’s remarkable stories and convey their importance to modern readers.

Another feature is excerpted from Nancy Rubin Stuart’s book, Defiant Brides: The Untold Story of Two Revolutionary-Era Women and the Radical Men They Married. Stuart details the moments that Lucy Flucker Knox and Peggy Shippen Arnold met their Revolutionary husbands Henry Knox and Benedict Arnold, and hints at ways the women’s initial parallel lives eventually diverged.

Sarah Wilson was sent to America as an indentured servant, but managed to escape from servitude and convince colonists at several South Carolina plantations that she was related to Queen Charlotte of England. Her elaborate hoax is a tale that lovers of mystery and intrigue will relish.

The Whatnot department tells the story of Elizabeth Blackwell, who overcame discouragement and ridicule to become the first woman to earn an M.D. from an American medical school. Another piece recalls how Daughters of the American Revolution came to number over 100,000 members and to be vitally involved in the planning and execution of the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. We also dig a little deeper into one woman’s search to learn more about a Revolutionary War-era bayonet wedged behind a radiator in her historic Acton, Mass., home.

We travel to Louisiana for two stories: Our Historic Homes department visits Laura Plantation, a French Creole sugar plantation that was run by several strong-willed women in the 19th century, and Spirited Adventures checks in on Natchitoches, the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase.

Finally, we’re proud to salute Utah Daughter Carolyn Bushman whose “reach for the stars” motivational style has become a literal motto, as she inspires students to excel in a NASA Explorer School Project.

Lynn Forney Young

American Spirit

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President General
Lynn Forney Young
DAR Magazine National Chairman
Sue Butler
Editor in Chief
Denise Doring VanBuren
magazineeditor@dar.org
NSDAR Printing and Publications Director
Edith Rianzares
Publications Coordinator
Courtney Peter
Circulation Coordinator
Natalie Herndon
Managing Editor
Jeff Walter
Art Director
Nancy Mann Jackson
Production Manager
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Contributing Editors
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Thomas B. Allen
Lynn Boyer
Jennifer Dauphine
Renee L. Harris
Natalie Willis
Lynn Forney Young
Devon Stull
Advertising Information
Cathy Williams
(843) 410–2739, ext. 101

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WHEN CAROLYN BUSHMAN first learned about the NASA Explorer School Project in 2004, she immediately thought about what it could mean for her low-income, predominantly Hispanic students in their small, rural town of Wendover, Utah.

“We’re about an hour and a half away from the nearest city, and when you’re that far away, there aren’t a lot of professional role models,” says Ms. Bushman, a math teacher at Wendover High School. “Too many of our students were dropping out to start working at the nearby casinos. We had to find a way to show them there were other opportunities out there.”

She thought the program, which provided grant money and access to NASA’s people, missions, research and facilities, would help inspire her students. Others in the school felt it was a long shot. The program, in its second year, was choosing just 50 schools nationwide, and the deadline to apply was three weeks away.

Wendover High School made the deadline and today its NASA Explorer School Project is thriving. In the past 10 years, Ms. Bushman and her students have traveled cross-country to witness two shuttle launches. Her students designed a flag that traveled to the International Space Station. Their experiments have been launched into space. They’ve shadowed NASA employees at the Ames Research Center in California. And they’ve had a number of discussions with NASA astronauts, including Sandra Magnus, who first visited the school the year the program launched and then spoke to students from the International Space Station in 2009.

“After that 20-minute downlink, the seniors came to me and said they wanted Astronaut Magnus to speak at their graduation,” Ms. Bushman recalls. “I looked at them like they were crazy.”

But then her students reminded her of something she often repeated to them: “Reach for the stars.” And so she emailed Astronaut Magnus, who spoke at the graduation for Wendover High’s 17 seniors in 2009.

To say that the program has exceeded Ms. Bushman’s expectations is an understatement. “It truly has changed my life and the lives of many of my students,” she says.

One of those success stories is that of Esmeralda Arreola—a promising student who was unsure how she could afford college. Because of the NASA program at Wendover, she was hired as an intern at the Ames Research Center for two summers and earned a full scholarship to Utah State University, where she’s studying chemistry and has dreams of working for NASA someday.

“That’s what it’s all about—changing students’ lives and making them aware that they can do anything they want to do,” she says. “Now I have students wanting to be doctors, nurses, engineers or lawyers, whereas before I seldom heard students talking about wanting to go to college.”

To recognize her efforts, the Bear River DAR Chapter, Logan, Utah, of which Ms. Bushman is a member, awarded her the Mary Smith Lockwood Founders Medal for Education in 2007.

“It was the first honor I received as a teacher, and I cherish it because it meant that people were recognizing what I was trying to accomplish and the difference I was trying to make,” says Ms. Bushman, who also was named Teacher of the Year by the National Space Club in 2012. She has been involved in the NASA Solar System Ambassador and SOFIA Airborne Astronomy Ambassador programs.

Despite her excitement over the DAR award, she wasn’t able to attend the ceremony. That’s because on the same day, she and her students were in New Mexico at a rocket launch, where they conducted several experiments, including one on board the rocket.
National Treasures
Step inside the DAR Museum for a closer look at its fascinating collection.

THIS STRANGE-LOOKING CONTRAPTION is actually a washing machine. Called the “Queen,” it was made in Reading, Pa., by the Knoll Manufacturing Company between 1910 and 1920. This early washing machine is essentially a cedar washtub with an agitator attached to a hand crank. Although this tub may have made scrubbing a little easier, the user still had to fill it, turn the agitator, empty the tub, and wring and rinse the clothes. The only “machine” here was the people power needed to turn the crank.

Before the introduction of electric washing machines, women faced the backbreaking task of washing clothes; there was nothing easy about it. Everything associated with this burden, including filling the washtub, was accomplished by hand. With no liquid detergents or spot cleaners available, a great deal of exertion went into scrubbing, wringing, and literally beating the dirt and grime out of garments, after which they had to be rinsed in a separate tub and hung up to dry.

In an effort to ease the laundering hardship, hundreds of patents were issued for all sorts of washing machines, many of which featured ingenious contraptions to agitate the clothes, thereby removing the drudgery of scrubbing. Still, these machines continued to be powered by foot or hand.
In her 1895 autobiography *Pioneer Work in Opening the Medical Profession to Women* (Humanity Books, 2005), Elizabeth Blackwell wrote, "But a strong idea, long cherished till it has taken deep root in the soul and become an all-absorbing duty, cannot be laid aside. I must accomplish my end. I consider it the noblest and most useful path that I can tread." Blackwell's perseverance in keeping to that often rocky path earned her official recognition as the first female physician in the United States.

Blackwell was born in February 1821 near Bristol, England. Her father relocated the family to the United States in 1832, for financial reasons as well as to assist in the abolitionist movement. After his untimely death in 1838, Blackwell went into teaching to help support her large family.

Though initially disgusted by the idea of studying the human body, Blackwell was inspired to pursue medicine after a dying friend said she would have suffered less if her physician had been a woman, according to “Changing the Face of Medicine,” a 2003 National Library of Medicine biography. Blackwell asked physician friends about the idea of becoming a doctor, but was told “that there was no way of obtaining such an education for a woman; that the education required was long and expensive; that there were innumerable obstacles in the way of such a course; and that, in short, the idea, though a valuable one, was impossible of execution.”

Despite the discouragement, Blackwell was excited by the challenge and devoted two years to raising money and applying to dozens of medical schools. She finally was accepted by Geneva Medical College (now Hobart College) in Geneva, N.Y., after the all-male study body voted her in as a joke. Despite initial reluctance by faculty and students, Blackwell began studies in 1847 and graduated first in her class in 1849, becoming the first woman to receive an M.D. from an American medical school. She later studied surgery, midwifery and obstetrics in clinics in London and Paris.

After contracting an eye infection from a patient, Blackwell lost sight in one eye, which prevented her from becoming a surgeon. She returned to New York and, in 1851, established a medical practice in New York City. With few patients and a lack of camaraderie with other physicians, she struggled, yet she managed to open her own dispensary. It steadily grew until

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The first presidential inauguration was held 225 years ago on April 30, 1789—almost two months later than originally scheduled. Bad weather had delayed members of the First Federal Congress from arriving in New York City, the temporary capital. It wasn’t until April 6 that the House and Senate had quorums and could count the electoral ballots, more than a month late.

The result was hardly surprising—George Washington was elected unanimously, garnering all 69 votes. Congress sent word to him at Mount Vernon, Va., and he set out for the inauguration in New York City. The trip resembled a royal procession, with ceremonies, public events and banquets at every stop.

Robert R. Livingston, the chancellor of New York, administered the oath of office to Washington on the second-floor balcony of Federal Hall. Dressed in an American-made suit, white silk stockings and silver shoe buckles with a steel-hilted sword, Washington swore the oath on a Bible borrowed from St. John’s Masonic Lodge, No. 1.

Washington then gave his inaugural address to a joint session of Congress. Senator William Maclay of Pennsylvania noted that the occasion moved even the unflappable Washington, who trembled at times during the speech.

George Washington’s inauguration as the first president of the United States at Federal Hall, New York City, April 30, 1789.

The 1,431-word inaugural address was solemn, modest, uplifting and full of awe at both the challenges and the opportunities that lay ahead. Washington repeated his intention to serve without pay, and he urged Congress to enact a Bill of Rights as soon as possible, but otherwise not to change the Constitution further at that time.

The inauguration was full of firsts that have remained part of subsequent swearing-in ceremonies: It was held outdoors and included a Bible; the inaugural address was given to a joint session of Congress; and the event was followed by a church service, parades and festivities.

There is a long-running debate about whether Washington concluded the oath of office by adding the words, “So help me God” to the constitutionally prescribed oath. As an exhibit at Mount Vernon states, “Scholars debate whether Washington added these final four words to the oath as set forth by the Constitution. Most modern-day presidents include these words and think they are following in Washington’s footsteps.”

While waiting for Washington to arrive in New York, Congress set about finding a place for him to live. According to Mount Vernon, Congress leased 3 Cherry Street from Samuel Osgood for a $845 per year, and ordered him to “put the house and the furniture thereof in proper condition for the residence and use of the President of the United States.”

Alterations and renovations included expanding the drawing room where the president would entertain guests. New furniture was ordered and older pieces reupholstered. Congress spent about $8,000 refurbishing the house.

But Washington didn’t live there long—the house was too small for his family and staff and also relatively distant from Federal Hall. In February 1790, Washington moved to the much-larger Alexander Macomb House at 39–41 Broadway. He moved again in August 1790, when the capital was relocated to Philadelphia.

The Osgood House was built in 1770 by local merchant William Franklin. After he died in 1780, Osgood married Franklin’s widow, Maria Bowne Franklin. The house later was used as a bank, apartments and shops, and a rundown tenement before it was demolished in 1856. One of the piers of the Brooklyn Bridge now stands atop the site.

The Macomb House later became Bunker’s Mansion House Hotel and was eventually demolished, too. In 1939, the Mary Washington Colonial DAR Chapter, New York, N.Y., installed a plaque at the site commemorating its importance.
Stars of the White City
Daughters’ Roles at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair

THE DAUGHTERS of the American Revolution played a starring role at the legendary and influential 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, also known as the Chicago World’s Fair. Not only was the DAR given its own headquarters at the exposition, but, as reported in the January 1893 issue of American Monthly Magazine, “The first work planned by the Chicago Chapter was the Colonial Exhibit, to be placed in the Woman’s Building at the World’s Fair.” The Chicago Chapter, the National Society’s first, was in charge of this exhibit of Revolutionary War relics, to which many other chapters throughout the country contributed.

An Act of Congress called for an appointment of a Woman’s Board to promote the interests and work of women at the exhibition, and the wealthy and philanthropic Bertha Honoré Palmer was named the first president of the Board of Lady Managers. At the dedication ceremonies for the exposition in 1892, Mrs. Palmer said, “Even more important than the discovery of Columbus, which we are gathered together to celebrate, is the fact that the general government has just discovered woman.” Also named to the board were DAR Founder Mary Smith Lockwood and Frances Wells Shepard, who succeeded Effie Beulah Reeme Osborn as the Chicago Chapter regent.

One of the board’s tasks was to design and supervise the construction of the Woman’s Building as a showcase for women’s art and to house exhibits highlighting women’s progress from primitive to modern times in the arts, crafts, sciences, education and labor. The board also planned and executed the World’s Congress of Representative Women held in conjunction with the World’s Fair. According to May Wright Sewall’s 1894 book The World’s Congress of Representative Women: A Historical Résumé, Volume 1, about 150,000 women attended the weeklong event at the Art Institute of Chicago. It featured 76 sessions and more than 600 participants giving speeches on topics spanning education, religion, science, charity, philanthropy, and moral and social reform.

In her May 19, 1893, speech during the meeting—recorded in American Monthly Magazine’s August 1893 issue—Mrs. Shepard spoke of the National Society’s growing influence: “Our Society, although but three years in existence, has so impressed itself upon the thought of the times as to have been accorded a place in this most notable Congress of Representative Women of the World.” She also talked of how the exhibition demonstrated the expanding role of women outside the domestic sphere: “Women and mothers have duties to perform outside and beyond the hearthstone, while neglecting none that lie there. Even as the matrons and maidsens of the Revolution molded lead into bullets, and supplied camp and hospital with comforts and necessaries, so must we Daughters, as women, emerge into the activities of life which gather about us; and to our husbands, sons, brothers and fathers, yield what our capacities in their highest working order and most perfect development can furnish, both in the home and spheres of intellectualty.”

Mrs. Palmer, who wasn’t eligible for DAR membership but who was named honorary state regent of the Illinois DAR, hosted an afternoon tea and reception at her home later on May 19 for DAR members and other Congress attendees. “Many distinguished women of the United States and foreign countries were present at this elegant entertainment,” noted Mrs. Lockwood in her 1906 book written with Emily Lee Sherwood, Story of the Records, D. A. R.

The National Society also was greatly influenced by the architectural innovations that sprang from the World’s Fair. The exposition’s architects had succeeded in creating a stunning “White City,” with all of the buildings designed in the classical Beaux Arts style and many built in various shades of brilliant white stone. Many of these same architects later brought that vision of a “City Beautiful” to Washington, D.C. DAR Memorial Continental Hall was designed as a model of this ideal.
The Celebrate America! Committee spotlights DAR members providing meaningful service to their communities in creative ways. Daughters collectively provided more than 3 million hours of volunteer service in 2013. To see your chapter or state featured, please send entries and photos of members in action to americanspirit@dar.org.

A New Beginning For Veterans

Sometimes it’s obvious when a veteran needs help, as in the case of those who are homeless or disabled, but in other instances the need is not as easily recognizable. For example, a veteran who owns a small business may seem to be mastering the transition from military to civilian life. The Veterans Entrepreneurship Program (VEP) helps ensure that perception becomes reality. The weeklong course held on the campus of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in July 2013 aimed to equip veterans with the information, skills and strategies they need not only to start new businesses, but also to keep them running successfully.

Members of five local DAR chapters—Chickamauga, Chief John Ross, Judge David Campbell, Moccasin Bend and Nancy Ward—were among the volunteers acting as support staff for VEP participants. Under the direction of Susan Henderson, DAR Project Patriot Committee chair for Nancy Ward Chapter, friendly Daughters shuttled veterans from the airport to their hotel, provided lunches prepared by favorite Chattanooga restaurants and readily engaged in conversation.

Working with the VEP gave DAR members a chance to see veterans receive hands-on guidance they can use to secure their long-term success. Daughters met men and women from all branches of the military who are working hard to find a future for themselves. “A lot of these veterans are coming back with PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder],” notes Ms. Henderson. “We’re giving them something to do with their minds.”

The veterans appreciated both the seminar and its support staff, as evidenced by a letter one participant wrote to Ms. Henderson after he returned home. “You brought relief to my anxious moments as well as comfort and direction and organization,” he wrote. “I appreciated the way you went out of your way to make us feel welcome.”

Elizabeth Blackwell

Continued from page 7

she and her sister Dr. Emily Blackwell, along with Dr. Maria Zachrewska, were able to incorporate it into the New York Infirmary for Women and Children in 1857. By the late 1860s, the institution had added a women’s medical college.

Blackwell also began lecturing on women’s medical education and practice, physical education for girls, and hygiene and sanitation. Around 1870, Blackwell quit her New York practice and moved to England, where she had previously spent some years encouraging women’s engagement in medical practice and crossing paths with Florence Nightingale, as Julia Boyd details in her 2009 *Lancet* article “The Art of Medicine.” Blackwell continued her campaign for reform in England until her death in May 1910.

Despite her accomplishments, Blackwell endured much ridicule and humiliation in her pioneering pursuits. “These malicious stories are painful to me, for I am woman as well as physician, and both natures are wounded by these falsehoods,” she wrote. “Ah, I am glad I, and not another, have to bear this pioneer work. I understand now why this life has never been lived before.”

The tenacity of this revolutionary woman, born 100 years before American women secured the right to vote, made the path forward easier for countless women, particularly in the field of medicine.

— Victoria Sage is a member of Omaha DAR Chapter, Omaha, Neb.
Remembering the Men Who Mapped the West

EL TOYON DAR CHAPTER, Stockton, Calif., used a $500 NSDAR Special Projects Grant to erect a commemorative marker honoring Christopher “Kit” Carson, an invaluable member of Captain John C. Fremont’s second expedition to survey and map the area between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

Having met Carson in 1841, during his first expedition, Fremont chose the frontiersman and explorer to help guide his party of approximately two dozen men.

The party set out in May 1843 with the goal of eventually crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Often lost amid winter’s treacherous mountain snowdrifts, the men faced freezing temperatures and scarcity of food, forcing them to slaughter and eat several of their horses. Carson is credited with guiding the men to safety in the Sutter’s Fort area in early March 1844. After several weeks of rest the expedition continued on, stopping in present-day San Joaquin County on March 26, 1844.

In 1923, El Toyon DAR Chapter marked the expedition’s campsite by placing a plaque honoring Fremont on a large oak tree near the Calaveras River. After the oak tree fell around 1950, the plaque was removed and stored at the San Joaquin Historical Society Museum.

Less than 100 yards from the historic campsite sits the Dodge House, which was home to sisters Emily and Clara Dodge, both charter members of El Toyon DAR Chapter. Chapter member Iris Mae Samuel asked owner Michael Scott, who bought the Dodge House in 2009, if the Fremont plaque could be installed on his property. Members also proposed adding a second plaque to recognize Carson, whose vast knowledge and skill as a guide made it possible for Fremont to map several western routes.

Scott not only agreed, but also constructed a brick monument to better showcase both commemorative markers. The John Fremont plaque was installed in 2010, and the new Kit Carson plaque joined it in 2012.

The NSDAR Special Projects Grants program invites nonprofit organizations to apply for matching-fund grants to support local projects related to historic preservation, education and patriotism. Visit www.dar.org/grants to learn more.

Martha Jefferson Randolph Chapter, Sherman, Texas, adopted the name of Organizing Regent Anna Hotchkiss Gillespie’s third-great-grandmother. The oldest child of Thomas and Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson, Martha married Thomas Mann Randolph in 1790. Randolph was active in Virginia politics, serving as delegate, senator, congressman and governor. Together the couple had 11 surviving children, whom Martha, herself educated in Paris, taught at home. She served as White House hostess at various times during her father’s two terms as president. (Widowed in 1782, Jefferson never remarried.) Randolph was estranged from his family for a number of years, though they reconciled shortly before he died. Martha’s last years were spent in Boston, Washington, D.C., and Edgehill, Randolph’s Virginia estate. She died in 1836 and was buried at Monticello, beside her husband and her father.

Sarah Whitman Hooker Chapter, West Hartford, Conn., is named for a local woman whose lineage included William Pantry, one of the founders of Hartford, and Reverend Solomon Stoddard, the first librarian of Harvard College. At age 22, Sarah married Thomas Hart Hooker of Farmington, Conn., a direct descendant of Reverend Thomas Hooker, a framers of the Connecticut Constitution. Thomas joined the Connecticut militia in June 1775 and died mere months later, leaving Sarah to manage the family’s house and farm. In late 1775, Governor Jonathan Trumbull asked Sarah to take in two English captives, British Governor Colonel Phillip Skene and his son, Captain Andrew Skene. They stayed until April 1776. Sarah later married Captain Seth Collins. She lived in Hartford’s West Division until about 1830, when she moved to Pennsylvania. Her home still stands on New Britain Avenue in West Hartford.

The namesake of Caroline Close Stuart Chapter, Lake Saint Louis, Mo., came to North Carolina in the 18th century as the young wife of Findley Stuart. They were among many Highland Scots to settle there, hoping to find land to farm and a life free of English oppression. Within the community Caroline was known as an herbalist and healer, skills she is said to have employed to help wounded Revolutionary soldiers. She and other local women used their nursing skills to greatest advantage in March 1781 after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, one of the war’s bloodiest conflicts. Caroline dispensed herbal drinks and clean shirts and applied poultices and bandages. After the war she continued to work as a doctor. The honored matriarch of her Stuart clan died at age 103, leaving a legacy of healing and caring for others.

If your chapter has an interesting story, send it to americanspirit@dar.org.
The Blanchard Project

Cleaning out the garage and downsizing may not sound adventurous—unless you live in the historic district of Acton, Mass., and find a Revolutionary War-era bayonet wedged behind a radiator.  

By Janice M. Ward

Some homeowners might relegate the rusty relic to the recycling bin, but Ann Sussman donned her detective hat in the summer of 2012 and traced the origins of the 18th-century weapon that she found in her home, built by the philanthropic Blanchard family.

Acton is famous for its early contribution to the Revolutionary War. Every local schoolchild knows the saying, “The battle began in Concord, was fought in Lexington, led by the minutemen of Acton.” Thanks to the gunsmith trade of Captain Isaac Davis, Acton’s militia was, unlike other militias in the area, equipped with rifles outfitted with bayonets—knife-shaped blades affixed to their gun barrels. Because of their equipment and training, Capt. Davis and his 39 men led the advance on Concord’s Old North Bridge on April 19, 1775. Although Davis was killed, his minutemen and other militia forced the British to retreat.

Sussman believed that the Blanchard house bayonet she found might be linked to this pivotal battle—and set out to prove her theory. “I grew up in a historic house in Lexington, Mass.,” Sussman says, “and I like making connections that others may not see—bringing the past to the present.” She knew that her house was built by Webster S. Blanchard, the great-great-nephew of Luther Blanchard, fifer at the Battle of Concord and minuteman under Capt. Davis. The fifer’s silhouette is memorialized on the town seal of nearby Boxborough, the town’s annual Fifer’s Day celebration is held in Luther’s honor, and its elementary school is named Blanchard Memorial. But could Luther—or his brother, Calvin, a fellow Patriot at the Battle of Concord—have owned the bayonet?

“I knew I could be holding not only something from the battle, but also something from Isaac Davis,” Sussman says.

At the Acton Historical Society’s Jenks Library, Sussman found postcards and letters about the Blanchard family, but no references to weapons. The librarian suggested Sussman visit the Concord Museum for further research.

David Wood, the museum’s curator, believed that the weapon was created during the Revolutionary War period, and asked Joel Bohy, historic arms and militaria expert from Skinner’s Auction House, to further examine the bayonet. Tying the weapon to the Revolutionary War was one hurdle overcome; conclusively tying it to the Blanchard family was the next obstacle.

The imminent sale of Sussman’s home in the spring of 2013, coupled with her enthusiasm for history and architecture, informed her next step—to include the bayonet’s provenance in a larger story encompassing the Blanchard house, family and legacy.

Sussman collaborated with a filmmaker and this writer to create a documentary called “The Blanchard Project.” She and her team interviewed local historian William Klauer, who told the story of Luther and Calvin Blanchard. Both were born on a farm in Littleton, which later became Boxborough; both were apprenticed as masons at Jonathon Hosmer’s in Acton near the home of Captain Isaac Davis; and both were minutemen at the Battle of Concord. A memorial stone in West Acton includes the following inscription:

“From this Farm Went Calvin and Luther Blanchard to Concord Fight and Bunker Hill. Sons of Simon Blanchard, who was killed at the Battle of Quebec, 1759. Luther was the first man hit by a British Ball at the Old North Bridge and died in the service of his country a few months later.”

The Blanchard lineage follows from Calvin (1754–1800) to Simon (1784–1867) to Luke (1826–1901) to Arthur (1864–1953) to Webster (1894–1953). Calvin’s heirs transitioned from farming to selling Pippin apples when the railroad came to Acton in 1844, and further diversified their business concerns in real estate, lumber and brick. The last two generations built stately homes beside one another on Windsor Avenue in West Acton—Arthur’s Victorian-style home, built in 1892, and Webster’s Dutch Colonial, built in 1922 and later purchased by Sussman, only the third owner. The wealthy, community-minded Blanchards donated more than $300,000 to local public schools in the 1950s; their Blanchard Foundation funded an auditorium for Acton’s first high school and subsidized the Blanchard Memorial School in Boxborough.

Meanwhile, Bohy, the expert whose main subject of research is April 19, 1775, armaments, emailed Sussman the following: “As far as it [the bayonet] being from April 19th [1775], there is no way of saying without some sort of written provenance. It could have been used from the Revolution through the Federal period. Acton, as well as some other towns, purportedly were supplied better...”
than others on the 19th, and there were a variety of muskets or fowlers that were used … I guess we will never know, which makes the value of the bayonet around $200 or so in a retail market.”

Undeterred by the indecisive news, Sussman and her team began filming the story of the Blanchards and the mysterious bayonet in Arthur and Webster’s side-by-side houses to capture period architectural details. “We’re still trying to ascertain if we can find any other Isaac Davis weaponry to see if it matches,” Sussman says.

While the Blanchard bayonet story is a lesson in the difficulty of definitively tying period objects to specific events, Sussman believes her journey to solve a mystery, uncover history and discover details about Blanchard benefactors has been valuable in itself.

Ephemera Society of America’s 34th Annual Conference and Paper Show
March 14–16, 2014
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Old Greenwich, Conn.

The Ephemera Society of America’s 34th Annual Conference and Paper Show will be devoted to the theme “Field to Table: The Ephemera of Food and Drink.” Through presentations devoted to food and culinary ephemera—such as menus, home remedies, handwritten recipes, seed catalogs and packets, trade cards, food labels, advertising-related “little cookbooks,” almanacs, wine labels and cocktail-related printed material—the conference will reflect on how each step of the journey from field to table represents a different aspect of society’s values.

The society is an international organization of dealers, collectors, academics and institutions that study paper ephemera of all eras. “Ephemera informs us of history in a way that is, literally, tangible—and provides deeper insight into the past than merely reading texts,” says Nancy Rosin, president of the society.

For more information, visit ephemerasociety.org.
Spirited Adventures
By Jeff Walter

The Oldest Town in the Louisiana Purchase Retains Its Old World Character

NATCHITOCHES
Natchitoches, in northwestern Louisiana, is celebrating the 300th anniversary of its founding this year. Established as part of French Louisiana by the French Canadian explorer and soldier Louis Juchereau de St. Denis in 1714 (which makes it four years older than New Orleans) and incorporated on February 5, 1819, it is the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase, the United States’ landmark 1803 transaction with France.

Natchitoches (pronounced NAK-uh-tush) has a rich multicultural history and makeup that incorporates French, Spanish, African, American Indian, Creole and American influences.

A Trading Post

Part of the historical legacy of St. Denis, who led a 1714 expedition from Natchitoches to the Spanish town of San Juan Bautista (now Villahermosa) on the Rio Grande in Mexico, was his tendency to befriend local American Indian tribes. His diplomatic skills played a key role in the development of Natchitoches as a trade center.

Natchitoches, seat of Natchitoches Parish, was named after an Indian tribe whose village lay nearby on the Red River. The Natchitoches tribe settled in the area in the early 17th century.

The Red River location attracted the French and Spanish with its proximity to overland and waterborne trade routes. The new town sat at the base of the Great Raft, a 100-plus-mile logjam that dammed the river, creating a large basin well suited to river trade, although it created major navigational challenges upriver.

Plantation Life

In its early days, Natchitoches thrived as an agricultural center dotted with plantations that were founded by French settlers and worked by slaves from Africa and the Caribbean. Plantations began to flourish in the 1780s, producing tobacco, indigo and, after the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, primarily cotton.

Many plantations included small villages where slaves maintained homes and raised their own crops and livestock. During Colonial times, some planters had relationships with their female African and American Indian slaves, and the resulting children often were granted their freedom, becoming known as “free people of color.” Their descendants are known as Cane River Creoles.

A Shifting River

The Americans’ arrival in the 19th century introduced many changes. Perhaps the greatest came when Henry Shreve, a steamboat captain and Army Corps of Engineers superintendent, invented the “snagboat” to clear the Great Raft and other logjams, a process he completed around 1839. While this cleared the way for river traffic, it also caused the Red River to gradually shift eastward and, by the 1870s, completely bypass Natchitoches.

Residents and the Corps built dams at both ends of the remaining Cane River waterway, where the Red River’s main channel had been, to create a 32-mile oxbow lake that today passes through downtown Natchitoches. In the long run, the shifting of the river protected Natchitoches from 20th-century development and aided the preservation of its historical character.

Civil War and Beyond

Natchitoches Parish was tested during the Civil War. In 1864, Union forces led by Major General Nathaniel Banks passed through Natchitoches and the surrounding communities en route to Shreveport as part of the Red River campaign. Banks’ men planned to capture tens of thousands of bales of cotton stored in warehouses along the river, but the Confederates burned the cotton to keep it out of enemy hands. After failing to capture Shreveport, the retreating Yankees began setting...
many communities on fire, but Confederate forces saved them from complete destruction.

After the war cotton prices fell but the plantations continued, with sharecropping replacing slavery.

In 1884, the Louisiana State Normal School was founded in Natchitoches to train teachers. Today it is called Northwestern State University, and its resources include a Creole Heritage Center.

Modern Natchitoches

Today Natchitoches, which recorded a population of 18,323 in 2010, attracts more than 1 million visitors a year. The town received a Great American Main Street Award for its efforts to preserve its downtown historic district. Much of its historic European-style architecture remains, a mix of wrought iron, stucco and red brick.

The downtown river walk is the city’s tourism center. Front Street, one of Natchitoches’ original brick streets, overlooks the river walk and is lined with shops and boutiques.

Cane River National Heritage Area (www.CaneRiverNHA.org; (318) 356–5555) covers 116,000 acres along the Cane River. It is full of Colonial plantations, homes, churches, cemeteries and forts. Highlights include the Oakland (www.nps.gov/cari; (318) 356–8441) and Melrose (www.melroseplantation.org; (318) 379–0055) plantations.

Badin-Roque House, just miles south of Natchitoches in Natchez, La., is a rare surviving example of the early Creole building style called poteaux-en-terre, or posts-in-ground (www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/caneriver/bad.htm; (318) 357–6685).

Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site features a replica of an original French fort settlement based on the original 1716 plans and archival research (www.crt.state.la.us/parks/iftstjean.aspx).

The Natchitoches area has more than two dozen bed-and-breakfast inns, including the historic Steel Magnolia House (steelmagnoliabouse.com; (318) 581–3138), which was built in the 1830s, served as a Civil War hospital and was featured in the 1989 movie “Steel Magnolias.”

Kaffie-Frederick Inc. General Mercantile, established by Jewish Prussian immigrants Adolph and Harris Kaffie in 1863, is the oldest general store in Louisiana (http://oldhardwarestore.com; (877) 865–6681).
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Any people believe that slavery was a Southern tradition and don’t realize that some Northerners also had slaves,” says Joanna Ballantine, regional director of the Trustees of Reservations, which manages historic properties including the Ashley House in Sheffield. “We want more people to realize this and to learn that the Revolution opened up opportunities for slaves to become free and for free whites to realize their own freedoms.”

Fighting Back Against Enslavement

Elizabeth Freeman, born into slavery in New York around 1742, was known as “Bett” in early life and later as “Mum Bett.” She served in the home of Colonel John Ashley of Sheffield for almost 30 years.

In 1773, Ashley was the leader of a group of 11 local citizens who wrote a document known as the Sheffield Declaration. According to Massachusetts Supreme Court documents, the Sheffield Declaration expressed anger at how the British throne was treating its subjects in Massachusetts and resolved “that mankind in a state of nature are equal, free and independent of each other and have a right to the undisturbed enjoyment of their lives, their liberty and property.”

After overhearing much dining table talk about the issues of liberty and rights, Bett began to chafe against the injustices of slavery, especially the cruel treatment she suffered from John’s wife Hannah Ashley. One day, when Hannah attempted to strike Bett’s sister (some accounts say her daughter Betsy) with a hot shovel, Bett intervened and was struck and burned. She ran away from the Ashley home for good.

Rather than returning to be enslaved again, Bett sought help from Theodore Sedgwick, a young local attorney who had served as clerk of the Sheffield Declaration committee. Sedgwick had been a frequent guest in the Ashley home. (Sedgwick later served as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, a Massachusetts senator and a judge in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.)

In 1781, Sedgwick filed an action ordering Ashley to release Bett and Brom, a male slave, to the sheriff because they were not his legitimate property. When Ashley refused, the case of Brom and Bett vs. Ashley was tried before the County...
Court of Common Pleas in Great Barrington, Mass. Sedgwick argued that holding slaves was a violation of the Massachusetts Constitution, and the jury sided with him. The court awarded freedom to Bett and Brom, and ordered Ashley to pay each of them 30 shillings in damages. After the ruling, Bett changed her name to Elizabeth Freeman.

Freeman’s case set a precedent for the eventual abolition of slavery in the state of Massachusetts. According to the Massachusetts Judicial Review, the case was unique because it took place less than a year after the state constitution was adopted and, in contrast to prior freedom lawsuits, there was no claim that the slave owner had violated a specific law. It was simply a direct challenge to the existence of slavery in Massachusetts under the state constitution.

“Freeman’s story is important because she had the courage to sue Col. Ashley for her freedom in 1781, something almost unheard-of at the time, adopting the rhetoric of the Revolution to defend her case, and the ideals of the new 1780 Massachusetts Constitution,” Ballantine says. “Mum Bett’s suit for freedom led to the abolition of slavery in Massachusetts.”

Now a free woman, Freeman lived for many years with the Sedgwick family as a beloved servant. (Revolutionary War veteran Agrippa Hull, the subject of a January/February 2012 American Spirit article, also worked in the Sedgwick household.) Freeman worked as a nurse and midwife and eventually owned her own home and land, Ballantine says. When Freeman died on December 28, 1829, she was buried in the Sedgwick family cemetery.

The novelist Catharine Maria Sedgwick, the youngest daughter of Judge Sedgwick, wrote about Mum Bett in “Slavery in New England,” published in Bentley's Miscellany in 1853. Catharine was very close to her former nurse and quotes her as saying, “Any time, any time while I was a slave, if one minute’s freedom had been offered to me, and I had been told I must die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it—just to stand one minute on God’s airth [sic] a free woman—I would.”

Sharing Mum Bett’s Struggle

Today, the Ashley House teaches visitors about the story of Freeman and the Patriot family she served. “We want to ensure that future generations understand, on a human level, the story of slavery and the bravery required to bring the story to the forefront,” Ballantine says. “Mum Bett and her story are part of the Revolutionary-era struggle for freedom.”

Visitors can view an interpretive exhibit that tells the story of Freeman’s life and see a copy of Freeman’s last will and testament, as well as the Sheffield Declaration. Tours are available on weekends during June and July and by appointment.

“The Ashley House tells two stories in the same house,” Ballantine says. “It tells the story of the Ashley family who were leaders of economic, political and social life in the southern Berkshires, and the enslaved woman in the household who stood up against the powerful Col. Ashley and was inspired to incite positive change in the world.”

On August 16, 2014, the Ashley House will host Elizabeth Freeman Day to celebrate Freeman’s life and the official proclamation of her freedom. To learn more, visit www.thetrustees.org/places-to-visit/berkshires/ashley-house.html.
Hot dogs, parades and apple pie—there’s nothing like the USA! Our exclusive “American Pride” Sneakers feature canvas uppers covered in an American flag-inspired print that has a distressed denim look. The heel and toe of each shoe is adorned with diagonal red and white stripes and the body of the shoe is blue with white stars. Written on the side of each shoe is “I ♥ The USA” and a silver-toned “USA” heart dangles from the laces. White rubber soles and foam insoles provide wear-anywhere comfort. What a great way to celebrate America!

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The Episcopalian-born, widowed mother of five faced bankruptcy, endured the loss of many loved ones and experienced discrimination due to her conversion to Catholicism. Despite these trials, in her 16 years as a devoted Catholic, Mother Seton, as she often is known, founded a flourishing religious community as well as the United States’ first free Catholic school for girls operated by religious women. In 1975 she became the first citizen born in the United States to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church.

“We say Mother Seton is a saint for our times because she had a lot of struggles that people today can relate to. They identify with her,” says Amanda Johnston, marketing manager at the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON

A Mother to Many Daughters

SAINTLINESS AND HUMANITY seem to be mutually exclusive characteristics. One is aspirational, a rarely realized ideal; the other is relatable, capable of sparking recognition across time, culture and class. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton possessed both.

By Courtney Peter | Illustration by Antonio Rodrigues

The next year, he married Charlotte Amelia Barclay, with whom he had seven children. The group did not become a harmonious blended family, however. Bayley’s work led to frequent absences, and an estrangement between the doctor and his second wife also complicated the situation. Often Elizabeth and her older sister, Mary, were sent to stay with an uncle in New Rochelle, N.Y., where they received a comprehensive education, including instruction in French and piano.

Elizabeth often was lonely during her childhood. As an introverted girl who experienced extreme moods and emotions, she found comfort in nature, music, journaling and God. Although she and her father became close after she married, of her youth Elizabeth wrote, “I thought at the time that my father did not care for me.” She spent her late teenage years shuffling between various relatives’ homes.

On January 25, 1794, in New York City, Elizabeth married William Magee Seton, the oldest child of Rebecca Curson and William Seton, founder of Seton, Maitland and Company, a prominent shipping and import firm. She gave birth to their first child, Anna Maria, in 1795, followed by William, Richard, Catherine and Rebecca, the youngest, born in 1802. Elizabeth enjoyed an active social life and became a founding member of the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children.

“The charitable work she engaged in during this period had a

Shifting Fortunes

Elizabeth Ann Bayley was born August 28, 1774, in New York City, the second child of Richard and Catherine Charlton Bayley. Her father, a physician and researcher who specialized in the study of public health and epidemics, later became New York’s first Public Health Officer. Elizabeth’s mother died in spring 1777, leaving Bayley a widower with three daughters (youngest daughter Catherine died in 1778).

Life changed drastically after Elizabeth’s father-in-law died in 1798. William assumed control of the family business and the Setons took in William’s six young siblings. Soon both the business and William’s health were in decline. (He had suffered bouts of tuberculosis since childhood.) Orders went unfulfilled as ships were lost in storms, seized by North African pirates or captured as a result of the Quasi-War between the United States and France. At the turn of the century, the company folded and the Setons faced bankruptcy. Richard Bayley died of yellow fever while caring for quarantined patients in August 1801, adding to the family’s losses.

By 1803 William’s condition was dire. Hoping a sea voyage would cure him, Elizabeth, William and Anna Maria sailed to Leghorn, Italy, where they planned to stay with the Filicchi family. Brothers Philip and Antonio Filicchi were longtime friends William knew through the shipping business. At sea William’s condition did improve. Then the ship reached Italy.

**A Time of Transition**

Upon arrival at Leghorn on November 19, 1803, the Setons were moved directly into quarantine. They had left New York during a yellow fever outbreak, and the ship didn’t have a bill of health. The trio spent their first weeks in Italy in a dungeon-like holding area instead of the Filicchis’ comfortable home. “Mrs. Seton viewed the dreary succession of days as so many postponements to her husband’s chance of recovery,” writes Melville. After a full month of confinement, they were finally released. William died December 27, 1803, at age 35.

Sister Anne Marie Lamoureaux of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, one of the modern-day religious communities that considers Mother Seton its foundress, explains her predicament:

“She’s an Episcopalian in a Catholic country, she doesn’t speak Italian, and she has to find an English cemetery to bury her beloved husband.”

The trip’s original mission failed unequivocally, but a new purpose emerged. Elizabeth and Anna Maria visited museums and churches throughout Italy with the Filicchi women as they waited for their ship to prepare for its return voyage. About the turn of the century, Elizabeth’s interest in religion had increased under the direction of Episcopalian Reverend John Henry Hobart. Given the chance to observe the daily rituals of Catholicism while in Italy, Elizabeth was drawn to the faith.

Her hosts encouraged her interest. Elizabeth became an eager student of Roman Catholicism, but she did not rush to convert. Mother and daughter returned to the United States on June 4, 1804, accompanied by Antonio Filicchi.

As she adjusted to life as a single mother of five, Elizabeth deliberated the question of conversion. Hobart and the Filicchis lobbied for their respective faiths. “The struggle was undoubtedly complicated by the circumstances under which she had been introduced to Catholicism, by the ardor of her temperament, and the emotional crisis her widowhood induced.” Melville writes. She professed her faith in Roman Catholicism on March 14, 1805, received her first Holy Communion 11 days later, and was confirmed the next year.

Anti-Catholic sentiment was common in early 19th-century New York. Elizabeth’s conversion drove away many friends and caused tension within her extended family, especially when her sister-in-law Cecilia Seton followed suit in 1806. Melville described the conversion as a move from the “respectable majority to the disreputable minority.” By default Elizabeth attended St. Peter’s on Barclay Street, which at the time was New York City’s only Catholic church. Protestants sometimes heckled Catholic worshippers during Mass, and a riot erupted at least once. “It requires indeed a superior mind to all externals to find real enjoyment here,” Elizabeth wrote to Antonio Filicchi.

Elizabeth’s financial future required attention, too. Generous family members and friends supported the Setons for a time; however, she clearly needed a viable long-term plan. Her goal was to teach at a Catholic boarding school, but it took time to find the right situation. In 1808, Reverend Louis Dubourg of St. Mary’s Seminary and College in Baltimore, Md., asked Elizabeth to begin a Catholic girls’ school there. Baltimore was the center of the Catholic Church in the United States, and also a much more affordable place to live. Plus, Elizabeth’s sons could attend St. Mary’s at a discount. It was an ideal fit.

Dubourg wrote to Elizabeth, “I remain more and more satisfied that even if you were to fail in the attempt you are going to make, it is the will of God you should make it.”

‘The Little Mustard Seed’

Elizabeth lived with her daughters on Paca Street in Baltimore and taught 10 girls at a small school. Her yearlong stay served as a period of preparation. She dreamed of forming a religious community committed to charity and to educating young girls. As planning progressed, Elizabeth wrote to Cecilia, “It is expected I shall be the Mother of many Daughters.”
Elizabeth founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Josephs with assistance from mentors and supporters. Sulpician Reverend Pierre Babade recruited the community’s first sisters; wealthy convert and seminarian Samuel Cooper, who donated $10,000 to buy 269 acres of land at Emmitsburg, Md., gave it a home; and the order of Sulpician priests at nearby Mount St. Mary’s, led by Reverend John DuBois, offered fellowship as well as free education for Elizabeth’s sons.

On March 25, 1809, Elizabeth privately pronounced vows to Archbishop John Carroll, and from that point forward she was known as Mother Seton. In June she left for Emmitsburg with a small group. The Stone House, their first permanent home, was ready by the end of July. They lived simply but worked hard, growing produce and raising animals on the surrounding land. Within months the community that Mother Seton called her “little mustard seed” outgrew the Stone House; in February 1810 they moved to the new, larger White House, with ample space for a classroom and chapel.

St. Joseph’s Free School opened to day students from the surrounding area on February 22, 1810. Although Mother Seton originally intended to teach poor local girls, the need for income motivated the sisters to admit paying boarders. With their arrival in May 1810, the school was renamed St. Joseph’s Academy and Free School. Attendees always included some free students, but, “It was in large measure an institution where families of substance and reputation liked to send their daughters,” Melville writes. Strict discipline and religious instruction remained central components, though not all students were Catholic. By June 1813 attendance swelled to 50 students, 32 of them boarders who lived in the White House with the 18 sisters. Mother Seton wrote to Antonio Filicchi, “We are obliged to refuse continually for want of room.”

In 1812, the Sisters of Charity adopted an amended version of the constitution of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, based in France. The modifications reflected the Emmitsburg community’s emphasis on teaching, as well as Mother Seton’s unusual situation. “She was a mother, so her vow of poverty had to be different,” Sister Anne Marie explains. “Her children were her first responsibility.”

Two of Mother Seton’s children died at Emmitsburg: Anna Maria in March 1812 at age 16, and Rebecca in November 1816 at age 14. She also lost sisters-in-law Harriet and Cecilia in 1809 and 1810, respectively. She responded...
to these trials with an acceptance acquired not inherently, but through spiritual development.

Having successfully established the Sisters of Charity and St. Joseph’s Academy and Free School, lost so many of those close to her, and battled illness herself, Mother Seton longed for the reward of eternity. She died at the White House on January 4, 1821, in a room adjoining the chapel. With her last words she implored those crowded at her bedside, including daughter Catherine, “Be children of the Church.”

A Persistent Legacy

As proof of an individual’s ability to not only endure and adapt, but also make a lasting contribution to the world in spite of hardship and loss, her life represents a Catholic ideal as well as an American one. “She was an ordinary woman whose extraordinary ways as wife, mother and widow enabled her to parent five children alone, take initiatives and make life-changing choices because of her convictions,” writes former Daughters of Charity archivist Betty Ann McNeil in the epilogue of Elizabeth Bayley Seton 1774–1821.

Her legacy continues through the work of the Sisters of Charity Federation of North America, composed of 12 religious congregations with thousands of religious sisters, associates and collaborators who serve people living in poverty. The federation’s members include the approximately 50 Daughters of Charity living in Emmitsburg where Mother Seton settled more than 200 years ago. (In 1850 the Sisters of Charity of St. Josephs formally united with the French Daughters of Charity.)

The Roman Catholic Church also recognized her impassioned contributions to Catholicism. In 1940 Pope Pius XII formally introduced the cause of sainthood for Mother Seton. Following a detailed investigation examining every aspect of her life, she was canonized as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton on September 14, 1975. In his homily celebrating Mother’s Seton’s canonization, at St. Peter’s Square in Rome, Pope Paul VI proclaimed, “May the dynamism and authenticity of her life be an example in our day—and for generations to come—of what women can and must accomplish, in the fulfillment of their role, for the good of humanity.”

Retrace Mother Seton’s Journey of Faith

Visit these two sites to learn more about America’s first canonized saint.

**Mother Seton House at St. Mary’s Spiritual Center and Historic Site**

See the home where Mother Seton and her daughters lived during their year in Baltimore.

600 N. Paca Street, Baltimore, Md. [www.stmarysspiritualcenter.org](http://www.stmarysspiritualcenter.org) (410) 728-6464

**National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton**

The site where Mother Seton founded the Sisters of Charity of St. Josephs, which remains home to the Daughters of Charity, now includes a shrine to its foundress. The grounds include the Stone House, the White House, a Basilica dedicated to Mother Seton, and a visitors center and museum.

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Laura Plantation, a 19th-century sugar cane plantation on Louisiana’s River Road in Vacherie, offers an exceptionally detailed glimpse of its four generations of French Creole owners, including the strong-willed women who ran the plantation for decades.

By Sharon McDonnell
TODAY A TOUR OF THE PLANTATION—about an hour’s drive north of New Orleans—tells the story of Guillaume Duparc, its French-born founder and a Revolutionary War veteran; his wife, Nanette, who managed the plantation for 21 years; their daughter, Elisabeth, who managed it for almost 47 years; her daughter-in-law, Désirée; and Désirée’s daughter, Laura Locoul Gore. Though Gore left Creole Louisiana for St. Louis after her marriage in 1892, it was never far from her memories. When she was in her 70s Gore wrote a memoir, *Memories of the Old Plantation Home*, to describe plantation life for her daughter, who was reading *Gone With the Wind* at the time.

The tour is based on Laura’s book and extensive records of the families—prominent sugar and cotton planters, real estate investors and wine importers who emigrated from France—at the National Archives in Paris. A tour of the property includes a dozen buildings listed on the National Register, including slave cabins where the Br’er Rabbit folk tales originated.

“The tour is not about a house filled with antiques, but about stories of the people who lived there,” said Jay Schexnaydre, assistant manager at Laura Plantation. “Take any preconceived ideas of what a plantation is out of your mind. Our goal is not to ignore things, nor apologize. We simply tell the story as Laura told it. She wouldn’t have wanted it otherwise.”

**Built By a Revolutionary**

Guillaume Duparc was born in Normandy, France, where he narrowly missed being shot by his angry father after killing the father’s close friend in a duel. Duparc joined the French Navy and emigrated to America. He fought the British at the battles of Savannah, Pensacola and Yorktown, where he was wounded in 1781. Appointed commandant of the Pointe Coupee Post in central Louisiana in 1792 under Spanish rule, he served until 1803, the year of the Louisiana Purchase.

In 1788 he married Nanette Prud’Homme, the daughter of a doctor for France’s military post at Fort St. Jean-Baptiste, where the small city of Natchitoches now is located. (See page 14 for more on Natchitoches.) As a reward for his war service, in 1804 President Thomas Jefferson gave him a land grant in St. James Parish, which Duparc enlarged with land bought from Acadian settlers. He began a sugar farm, *l’habitation Duparc*.

His 24,000-square-foot manor house was completed in 1805. Built from cypress wood inlaid with brick, it sat just 600 feet from the Mississippi River. Raised high above ground on brick columns and walls, it was supported underground by an 8-foot-deep pyramidal brick foundation. The Creole mansion’s green, ochre and light gray...
stucco exterior contrasted sharply with the white Greek Revival-style plantation mansions owned by Anglo-Americans. By 1808, when Duparc died, the plantation had grown to 10 buildings, including a small basic sugar mill, housing for 17 African-American slaves, a barn and warehouses. His will ordered that if his family ever chose to sell, they must sell it “above all, not to an American person, to avoid all trickery and bad chicanery ... from this sort of people.”

**Governed By Two Women**

After Duparc’s death, his 41-year-old widow Nanette became the plantation’s first woman president and ran it until she was 62. When she retired, she lived in the “Maison de Reprise,” a home she built next to the manor house in 1829. She convinced her three children to pay her an annual stipend (amounting to $75,000 a year today) as a consultant to the sugar business. Though she had two sons, she left the business to her daughter, Elisabeth Duparc Locoul, who ran it for the next 47 years. The estate prospered under Elisabeth’s astute, forceful management style.

In 1822, Elisabeth married Raymond Locoul of Bordeaux, France, the heir to a winery. In 1829, she created the Duparc Frères et Locoul Sugar Company with her two brothers and purchased state-of-the-art equipment for their sugar mill. The next year, she bought more land to plant additional sugar cane as well as buildings in New Orleans to house it, and added cypress timber and rice as cash crops. She also oversaw the wine distribution company after the couple started importing the Locoul family’s wines into the United States in the 1830s.

By 1860, the Duparc-Locoul plantation included 960 acres of sugar cane, 1,134 acres of cypress forest and a wide variety of livestock. It produced 460,000 pounds of granulated sugar plus 30,000 gallons of molasses a year. The slave population also had grown to 183.

During her frequent stays in New Orleans, Elisabeth lived in a grand house on Toulouse Street in the French Quarter, behind the French Opera House. Though she desperately wanted to live in France, she was loath to leave the family businesses in the hands of her brothers, so she stayed. “I neither give nor lend nor endorse for anyone” was her longtime slogan, evidence of her cautious approach, adopted after seeing some planters lose their money or homes by co-signing loans for friends with financial problems.

Elisabeth’s son Emile Locoul was born on the plantation in 1822. He studied at a military college in Bordeaux and wanted to be a lawyer, but the family intervened, believing a “Southern gentleman had to be a planter,” his daughter Laura later wrote. His wife, Désirée Archinard, was born on the Metoyer Point cotton plantation in Natchitoches Parish.

**Named in a Daughter’s Honor**

Laura Locoul Gore was born in 1861, the year the Civil War began.
Emile joined the Confederacy and became a captain, while Désirée escaped with baby Laura to her family’s home in Natchitoches. The Metoyer plantation wasn’t harmed during the Civil War, as others were, but in 1862, cannonballs from the Union gunboat Essex killed Nanette Duparc and struck the manor house.

Later, Emile named the plantation “The Laura” after his daughter and made its symbol a gold crescent moon with her name inside. He served as a Louisiana state legislator for eight years, and he and Désirée lived for two months each winter in a house on Bourbon Street in New Orleans’ French Quarter. In 1876 Laura began attending boarding school in New Orleans, where she made her formal debut and attended Mardi Gras balls and dinners. She once was a maid of honor in the royal court of Rex, the city’s most prestigious private Carnival club.

Her father died in 1879, leaving 17-year-old Laura and her mother to run the plantation, which they did for a decade. But after years of struggling with low sugar prices that didn’t cover production costs or wages, the plantation was sold at auction in 1891 to the Florian Waguespack family for “a mere song,” in Laura’s words. “The land is famous for its productiveness,” and is reachable by railroad from New Orleans, said the auction notice.

In 1892, after a secret six-year engagement, Laura married Charles H. Gore of St. Louis. Her three children didn’t see Laura Plantation until 1931, when they visited with their mother. Laura died in 1963 at age 101 in St. Louis.

Unlocking Its Secrets

In 1993, Norman and Sand Marmillion bought the long-abandoned Laura Plantation. The couple wanted to restore its buildings and open it as a tourist attraction, but they didn’t have any old photographs or documents to guide the restoration. The Waguespack family, which owned it from 1891–1984, had lost their photos in a fire.

Based solely on a letter dated 1967 believed to have been written by a visiting member of the Duparc-Locoul family, the Marmillions began their detective work. The letter listed addresses in St. Louis, New Jersey and Paris, France, so the Marmillions wrote to all three. A letter addressed to “Mrs. Charles Gore” in St. Louis was returned “address unknown,” while a woman at the Paris address said she didn’t know about the plantation and that her mother had just died at age 98.

The Marmillions then began calling the 64 Gores listed in a St. Louis phone book. On the 62nd call, they reached Laura’s grandson, Stephen Gore, who said he had no photographs, but referred them to a New Orleans woman whose family had known Laura’s for many decades. The woman gave the Marmillions her grandmother’s address book, which listed many people from Louisiana and St. Louis, though most were by then deceased. Fortunately, one family friend, Clyde Norris of St. Louis, told them he had been waiting for such a
phone call for 14 years. He shared with the Marmillions Laura’s handwritten manuscript, vintage photographs and scrapbooks. The couple wrote again to the Parisian woman, who turned out to be a cousin of Laura’s. She offered them access to the French National Archives to research the family and the plantation, and they conducted further research at the Historic New Orleans Collection and in St. Louis. In 2007 the Marmillions published Laura’s memoir, which still serves as the basis for the plantation’s guided tour.

The tour showcases vintage family photographs, including one of Laura’s mother in the dining room, as well as original family possessions and furnishings. Of particular note is the fireplace carved by a slave, as well as Désirée’s keepsake fan, and plaster walls composed of ground-up oyster shells and horsehair. The tour also includes the men’s parlor, or business suite, a women’s parlor also used as a birthing room, a pantry and a raised basement. Four 1840s wooden slave cabins, the 1829 Maison de Reprise, and a formal jardin Français with tropical plants, overseers’ cottages, carriage houses and barns remain on the grounds.

An electrical fire in 2004 almost destroyed the main house. Most of the home’s contents were saved, however, and even though Hurricane Katrina struck in the midst of the restoration, work was completed 28 months later. Though Laura Plantation didn’t suffer any wind or flood damage from the hurricane, the area’s tourism business struggled for several years. It’s now open for tours in English and French, as well as specialty tours that cover the lives of women, slaves and artisans on French Creole plantations.

Also connected to the plantation are the Br’er Rabbit folk tales, published under the title *Louisiana Folktales* in 1894 by Alcée Fortier, president of the American Folklore Society. During his visits to Laura Plantation years earlier, Fortier collected French Creole stories that freedmen told their children about a smart rabbit, Compair Lapin, or Br’er Rabbit. Fortier’s friend, Joel Chandler Harris, later published the stories as *Tales of Uncle Remus*.

**Visiting Laura Plantation**

2247 Highway 18, Vacherie, La.
(888) 799-7690
www.lauraplantation.com

Regular tour (in English and French): $20
Specialty tours about Creole women in Louisiana, slavery on Creole plantations, artisans and folklore: $25
When Henry Met Lucy

From that moment in late August 1773 when 16-year-old Lucy Flucker first saw Henry Knox, she was smitten. The tall, “uncommonly good-looking officer” was drilling on horseback with the Boston Grenadier Corps, a local militia. Adding to Lucy’s curiosity was a black silk cloth wrapped around the officer’s left hand. “Lieutenant Knox appeared with a wound handsomely bandaged with a scarf which, of course, excited the sympathy of all the ladies,” recalled a fellow militiaman. That scarf concealed a raw red scar from a recent gun accident that had blown away Knox’s two smallest fingers.

Intrigued, Lucy visited Knox at his bookstore in Cornhill, Boston’s printing district, whose streets echoed with the clatter of churning presses. Within two years of its 1771 establishment, Knox’s New London Bookstore became a popular meeting place, attracting clients like engraver Paul Revere, Rhode Island blacksmith Nathanael Greene, and attorney John Adams. One reason for its attraction, Adams recalled, was Knox’s “pleasing manners and inquisitive turn of mind”—an opinion that others confirmed throughout Knox’s life. Another admirer, the French major general François Jean Beauvoir, Marquis de Chastellux, described Knox as “a man of understanding, a well-formed man, gay, sincere and honest. It is impossible to know, without esteeming him, or to see without loving him.”

Lucy sensed that from the start. Warming to his congenial personality and erudite knowledge, the bookish teenager immediately fell in love. Knox was equally enamored with the spirited and stunning brunette. Often, he was so distracted by Lucy’s snapping dark eyes, high color and

Nancy Rubin Stuart’s new book, Defiant Brides: The Untold Story of Two Revolutionary-Era Women and the Radical Men They Married (Beacon Press, 2013), focuses on the lives of Peggy Shippen Arnold, a constant supporter and accomplice of her Revolutionary War hero-turned-traitor husband, Benedict Arnold, and Lucy Flucker Knox, an aristocratic daughter of Loyalists who steadfastly followed her Patriot husband Henry Knox through the army camps of the Revolution. Although the two women never met, as wealthy, intelligent, well-educated girls attracted to military leaders—and both willing to challenge familial conventions to enter into controversial marriages—they lived initially parallel lives. Their husbands’ wartime choices caused their personal stories to diverge. “Lucy and Peggy stood on opposite sides of the political schism, one a staunch Patriot, the second as a spy … unwitting counterparts who lived dramatically different lives in the service of connubial love,” Stuart writes.

Stuart studied the correspondence of the two women, their families and friends to capture the roles they played in the events of the time. The letters detail the struggles of maintaining close marriages during long separations and the fears and frustrations of war. The following excerpts from the book describe the couples’ first meetings and paths to marriage.
voluptuous curves that he fumbled making change for his cli-
ents. By late winter, the couple had decided to wed.

“Every particle of heat seems to be eradicated from the head
or else entirely absorbed, in the widely ranging fire emitted
from the heart,” Knox penned on March 7 [1774]. “To tell you
how much I long to see you would be impossible—do my good
girl let me hear from you some way or other.” Although Lucy’s
parents disapproved, the 24-year-old bookseller persisted in
his courtship. “What news?” he asked. “Have you spoken to
your father or he to you upon the subject?”

When Lucy broke news of her engagement to the
Fluckers, they exploded. Little did it matter that Henry was
ambitious or had once attended Boston Latin School. To the
Fluckers, he was ordinary. Lucy disagreed. Henry’s father,
William, a comfortable shipmaster, had died suddenly in
1762, plunging the family into poverty and forcing 12-year-
old Henry to leave school. After his apprenticeship with a
printer, Henry supported his widowed mother and younger
brother, William. The Fluckers were not impressed. Knox
was common, they sniffed, a “man in trade,” inappropriate as
Lucy’s husband.

Her father, Thomas Flucker, was the Crown-appointed
secretary of the province of Massachusetts. Her mother, a
Waldo, was an heiress to vast tracts of land in the district of
Maine. If Lucy insisted upon marrying Knox, they predicted,
she would “eat the bread of poverty and dependence,” while
her married sister, Hannah Flucker Urquart, rode through
the streets in a fine carriage.

Added to the Fluckers’ objections were Knox’s radical poli-
tics. Though the British had imposed harsh taxes upon the
colonists and sent soldiers to patrol Boston, that had been
done to restore peace. Could not Lucy understand that every-
thing she enjoyed—the Fluckers’ Summer Street townhouse,
fine clothes, imported household goods, servants—came
from her father’s Crown appointments? To Lucy that was
not important. “My mother,” her eldest daughter explained
decades later, “claimed the privilege of thinking for herself on
a subject so deeply involving her own happiness.”
Interestingly, Lucy’s own mother, the beautiful Hannah Waldo, had also defied convention in her youth. In 1751, several days before her long-planned wedding to one Andrew Pepperrell, Hannah spurned him. Six weeks later, she married Lucy’s father, Thomas Flucker, a widower whose “natural” or illegitimate daughter, Sallie, later lived with the family. Even so, the Fluckers opposed Lucy’s decision. Ultimately they “gave a half-reluctant consent” but “refused to sanction [the marriage] by their presence.” On June 16, 1774, six weeks before her 18th birthday, Lucy defiantly married Henry Knox at Boston’s King’s Chapel.

“Be pleased to accept my sincere compliments of felicitation on your late auspicious nuptials with a lady famed for every female excellence,” Knox’s friend John Murray later wrote. “May that event be productive to you both of all the happiness your hearts can wish.”

No such congratulations arrived from Thomas and Hannah Flucker, who left town on Lucy’s wedding day. Only two members of the Flucker family attended the ceremony: Lucy’s sister Hannah and half-sister Sallie. Nearly a year later, Lucy’s brother, Thomas, a British soldier, sent his wishes from Antigua. Radiant with happiness, the bride paid no attention to snubs or the wagging tongues of Boston’s wealthy Loyalists. What mattered most—and would throughout Lucy’s life—was her marriage to the “best and tenderest of friends,” whom she called “her Harry.”

Relations between the newlyweds and the Fluckers remained tense and, after the April 19, 1775, violence at Lexington and Concord, quickly deteriorated. By then, the Fluckers’ friend, General Thomas Gage, commander of the British forces in America, pressed Knox to support the Crown. When the young man refused, Gage threatened arrest if he bolted from the city.

The Knoxes refused to be bullied. Wielding her needle, Lucy stitched Henry’s militia sword into her cape. One moonless night, they slipped out of Boston and galloped to the headquarters of the Continental Army in Cambridge.

Once Henry enlisted, Lucy moved into a crowded house in Watertown, a few miles from the army camp at Cambridge. From there the teenager wrote to her family, especially to her mother and sister. But no letters arrived in return. The blood spilled at Lexington and Concord had ruptured her ties to the Fluckers. Years later, Lucy rebuked her sister Hannah for “the great neglect with which I have been treated both by you and my dear mamma.”

Henry wrestled with different frustrations. With little time to pack his bookstore manuals on artillery and fortifications, he had to rely upon his memory to erect fortifications at Roxbury. Fortunately, Knox was a brilliant man. His intelligence, as Continental Army surgeon Dr. James Thacher observed with wry understatement, was “not of the ordinary class.”

By early June, Knox insisted that Lucy leave Watertown for the safer western Massachusetts town of Worcester, 35 miles from Cambridge. Reluctantly, she complied. Whenever separated from Knox, Lucy slumped, feeling alone and invisible. She wrote Knox that he was “always in my thoughts, whose image is deeply imprinted on my heart.” In a rare moment of self-awareness, the young woman even understood that her dependence was probably unhealthy. Henry, she declared, was a man “whom I love too much for my peace.” Nevertheless, Lucy continued to cling desperately to Knox, her one anchor in the churning tides of the Revolution.

Henry Knox

“I wish to render my devoted country every service in my power,” Henry later explained to his wife. His only objection was that it “separates me from thee, the dear object of all my earthly happiness.”

The first sign of Knox’s prospects as a warrior began on July 6, 1775, when the newly appointed General George Washington toured Knox’s fortifications at Roxbury with General Charles Lee. Knox proudly wrote Lucy of the “pleasure and surprise” the two generals expressed over the fortifications he had built from memory. That same letter expressed his excitement—his “pleasure,” as he put it—to see Lucy the following week in Worcester. There, Lucy had her own “pleasure” to share with Henry—news that she was pregnant.
When Benedict Met Peggy

During the summer of 1778 Benedict Arnold, a widower with three children, met Peggy Shippen, the 17-year-old daughter of Judge Edward Shippen. The judge attempted to stay neutral in the Revolution but had done business with the British while they occupied Philadelphia. Peggy had been courted by British Captain John André during the British occupation.

Through the Robert Morrises, Arnold met their relative Judge Edward Shippen and, inevitably, Shippen’s daughter Peggy. Theories vary about where that introduction took place, among them the Shippen drawing room, the City Tavern, the ball for [French minister] Count [Conrad Alexandre] Gerard, or one of Arnold’s galas held at his home. By late summer the crippled general was escorting Peggy to dinners, receptions and the theater, smitten with her beauty, wit and spirit. When criticized for courting the neutralist (or possibly Tory) daughter of Judge Shippen, Arnold merely shrugged. After all, as military governor of Philadelphia he was obliged to restore peace. What better way to smooth political differences and unite opposing factions than through such a romance?

For all her superficial sophistication, Peggy was overwhelmed. To her, as to other Philadelphia beauties who clustered around the handsome general at galas, Arnold, his leg propped upon a stool, seemed a warrior of mythic proportions. That his heroic military record was complemented by his gallant manners, and that he was cultured and appreciated high living, only added to his appeal. Hobbling about on a white, jewel-encrusted cane and a built-up shoe to compensate for the two inches lost in height to his crippled leg, Arnold’s disability reminded others of his heroism at Montreal and Quebec City; at Valcour Island and Saratoga, N.Y.; and at Ridgefield, Conn.

His courtship with Peggy Shippen immediately titillated Philadelphia society. “I must tell you that cupid has given our little general a more mortal wound than all the hosts of Brittons could,” Mary White Morris reported to her mother. “Miss Shippen is the fair one.”

By September, Arnold’s ardor had spilled over in two letters—one to Judge Shippen and the other to Peggy. The first assured the judge that he had no interest in the Shippen money. “My fortune is not large, though sufficient . . . to make us both happy. I neither expect nor wish one [a dowry] with Miss Shippen. My public character is well known; my private one is, I hope, irreproachable.” Nor did Arnold consider the Revolution an obstacle. “Our difference in political sentiments will, I hope, be no bar to my happiness,” he smoothly observed. “I flatter myself the time is at hand when our unhappy contest will be at an end, and peace and domestic happiness be restored to everyone.”

On the 25th, Arnold wrote to Peggy, repeating almost verbatim his love letter sent two years earlier to [former love] Betsy DeBlois: “Twenty times have I taken up my pen to write to you, and as often has my trembling hand refused to obey the dictates of my heart,” he began. His passion was “not founded on personal charms only; that sweetness of disposition and goodness of heart, that sentiment and sensibility which so strongly mark the character of the lovely Miss P. Shippen, renders her amiable beyond expression and will ever retain the heart she has once captivated.” Only the last line of his letter was new: “Whatever my fate may be, my most ardent wish is for your happiness; and my last breath will be to implore the blessings of heaven on the idol and only wish of my soul.”

Neither Peggy nor her father responded initially. One objection they may have had was Arnold’s social status. Though now a major general, he was formerly a middle-class Connecticut apothecary. Another was the 19-year gap in age between Arnold, then 36, and Peggy. A third was his crippled leg, and a fourth, that the widowed general was the father of three sons, then cared for by his sister in Connecticut, who would likely join his Philadelphia household.

For all her superficial sophistication, Peggy was overwhelmed. To her, as to other Philadelphia beauties who clustered around the handsome general at galas, Arnold, his leg propped upon a stool, seemed a warrior of mythic proportions.

BENEDICT ARNOLD

During the autumn of 1778, Betsy Shippen, Peggy’s sister, married her cousin, the judge’s protégé, Edmund Burd. Arnold continued to press for Peggy’s hand in marriage, though the Shippens were concerned about rumors that the commandant had engaged in unsavory business deals in New Haven.

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Little did Arnold seem to care that his own reputation had lost its currency. By mid-winter 1779, his one desire was to return to civilian life, with Peggy at his side.

Fueling that desire was a letter from General Philip Schuyler, Arnold's friend and military colleague, which explained that the authorities of New York state planned to award Arnold land for his heroism at Saratoga. If he could “obtain a tract of any consequence,” Arnold responded, he was willing to become a citizen of New York. In return, he would establish “a settlement of officers and soldiers” to protect the state's borders. Intrigued with the prospect of living like a landed European aristocrat, Arnold then reported to Judge Shippen that he anticipated “something handsome” with which to bestow a generous prenuptial settlement upon Peggy.

For months, the romance had simmered along uncertainly as Peggy remained noncommittal even to her favorite sister, Betsy Shippen Burd. When a friend asked in a December 30 letter if Peggy would soon wed, Betsy replied, “Everyone tells me so with such confidence that I am laughed at for my unbelief. Does she know her own mind yet?”

Betsy’s new husband, Edmund Burd, claimed Peggy did: “My expectations have been answered. From what I gather a lame leg is at present the only obstacle.” Arnold, he added, “from the slight knowledge I have of him to be a well-dispositioned man … one who will use his best endeavors to make P. happy and I doubt not, will succeed.” From Lancaster, Pa., Peggy’s grandfather, the patriarch Edward Shippen, also heartily approved “another match in the family, this one to the fine gentleman.”

Gossips continued their chatter through January, prompting Elizabeth Tilghman’s declaration on the 29th: “I had like to have forgot the gentle Arnold … when is he like to convert our little Peggy? They say she intends to surrender soon. I thought the fort could not hold out long. Well, after all, there is nothing like perseverance and a regular attack.”

By then, the teenager had conditionally accepted the “gentle” Arnold’s proposal—pending her father’s approval. One hundred and twenty years after this period, a Shippen descendent claimed in the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography that Judge Shippen had had no choice but to consent to the marriage. Whenever he expressed doubts about Peggy’s proposed marriage, she reverted to her childhood pattern of weeping, taking to her bed, refusing to eat or drink, and, ultimately, becoming ill.

Judge Shippen had had no choice but to consent to the marriage. Whenever he expressed doubts about Peggy’s proposed marriage, she reverted to her childhood pattern of weeping, taking to her bed, refusing to eat or drink, and, ultimately, becoming ill.

Margaret Francis, had been a love match. “If I had obtained a girl with a considerable fortune no doubt the world would have pronounced me happier,” the future judge once wrote his father. “Happiness does not consist in being thought happy by the world, but in the internal satisfaction and contentment of the mind.”

By late winter 1779, news of Peggy’s engagement became public knowledge. During Henry Knox’s visit to Congress in early winter, Arnold proudly introduced him to Peggy. Knox was immediately impressed that “our friend Arnold is going to be married to a beautiful and accomplished young lady, a Miss Shippen—of the best families in this place,” he gushed to his brother William.

In February 1779, Pennsylvania’s Supreme Executive Council accused Arnold of military misconduct while in command in Philadelphia. Among the eight formal charges of corruption and misuse of government money was the charge of “discouragement and neglect of patriotic individuals while friendly to ‘those of another character.’”

At the Shippen townhouse on South Fourth Street, Peggy and her family were as stunned by those notices as they were suspicious of [Supreme Executive Council President John] Reed’s accusations. Remembering the Patriots’ harsh treatment of the judge in 1776–1777 and the family’s frightened retreats to the countryside, the Shippens considered the Supreme Executive Council’s accusations one more example of power run amok.

Arnold complained to Peggy about Reed and the council’s “villainous attempt to injure me.” George Washington suggested Arnold ask for a Congressional hearing to clear his name, but Arnold initially preferred a court-martial in which he would be judged by his peers.
Longing for reassurance, he wrote Peggy [still his fiancée]:

My Dearest Wife

Never did I so ardently long to see or hear from you
as at this instant. I am all impatience and anxiety to
know how you do. Six days’ absence without hearing
from my dear Peggy is intolerable. Heavens! What must
I have suffered had I continued my journey; the loss of
happiness for a few dirty acres [in New York state].

Disheartened by the storm of accusations around him, he added:

I can almost bless the villainous roads and the more
villainous men who oblige me to return. I am heart-
ily tired with my journey and almost so with human
nature. I daily discover so much baseness and ingrati-
tude among mankind that I almost blush at being of
the same species and could quit the stage without
regret were it not for some few gentle, generous souls
like my dear Peggy.

Among those few "generous souls” was Henry Knox, whose
letter to his brother William complained that the newspapers
carried “highly [unfair] charges against General Arnold by the
State of Pennsylvania.” To Knox, as to his wife, Lucy, Reed’s
accusations seemed absurd. “I shall be exceedingly mistaken
if one of them can be proven,” Knox confided to his brother.
Arnold was then returning to Philadelphia, he added, “and
will, I hope, be able to vindicate himself from the aspersion of
his enemies.”

Ultimately Arnold rejected the concept of a court-martial.
Instead he appealed to Congress, which, in turn, handed over
the accusations to a special committee. After an anguished
debate, all but two of the charges were dropped. Reed was out-
raged, protesting so forcefully that on April 3 [1779] Congress
agreed that Arnold must be judged on four accusations of the
Supreme Executive Council.

Peggy, meanwhile, continued to believe in Arnold’s inno-
cence. She was 18, in love, implicitly trusted her fiancé, and
had the support of her relatives. “I think all the world are run-
mad. What demon had possessed the people with respect to
General Arnold. He is certainly much abused; ungrateful
monsters, to attack a character that has been looked up to,”
wrote Elizabeth Tilghman to her
cousin, Peggy.

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Discretion was bred into the Shippens’ bones. Whatever
arguments, embarrassments or regrets the family expressed
were hidden behind their handsomely polished front doors.
The accusations against Arnold were unjust, the Shippens
publicly maintained, yet another instance of political
chicanery from the fanatically patriotic Reed and his intimi-
dated Congressional cronies.

By March 19, 1779, Arnold had resolved to change his
plans, resigning that day as commandant of Philadelphia. He
also released Gen. Schuyler from his offer for an upstate New
York residence. Instead, either by scraping together or borrow-
ing assets, he purchased Mount Pleasant, an elegant property
just outside Philadelphia, for 16,240 pounds. Built of white
stone, the Georgian mansion on the banks of the Schuylkill
River] included 96 acres of lawn, a formal garden, orchards
and outbuildings. According to John Adams, it was “the most
elegant seat in Pennsylvania.” Now part of Philadelphia’s
Fairmount Park, Mount Pleasant was never meant to be
Arnold’s residence. Instead it was to serve as an income-pro-
ducing rental, placed in trust for Peggy and her future children
as financial protection in the event of his death.

On Thursday, April 8, a white-gowned Peggy and Arnold,
leaning on the arm of an aide, were married in the Shippen
drawing room. Among the witnesses were Peggy’s relatives,
bridal attendants, Arnold’s sister Hannah and his three sons,
newly arrived from Connecticut. Of the subsequent celebra-
tion, Judge Shippen wrote, “We saw company for three days.
This, with punch drinking, etc. is all the entertainment that
was given.”

Six days later an enchanted Elizabeth Tilghman gushed to
Betsy, “Will you my dear give my best love to Mrs. Arnold, tell
her that I wish her every happiness that this world is capable of
affording, and that she may long live [in] the delight and com-
fort of her adoring general.”

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and the Radical Men They Married by Nancy Rubin Stuart,
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SARAH
Colonial Imposter
WILSON

By Thomas B. Allen
Soon after she began to serve Vernon, Sarah slipped into the apartments of Queen Charlotte. By one account, she broke open a cabinet and stole some royal jewels, a miniature painting of the Queen and one of the Queen’s dresses. Arrested for theft and violation of the royals’ privacy, she was tried and sentenced to death. After Vernon pleaded for her errant maid’s life and the Queen interceded, the sentence was commuted to transportation to the Colonies for seven years.

There is no record of Sarah’s voyage, but accounts of convicts’ passage tell of four to seven weeks of hunger, thirst, sickness and, for women, sexual abuse. Many did not live to see America. At the dock, said an Old Bailey criminal court report, survivors “are placed together in a Row, like so many oxen or cows, and the Planters come and survey them; and if they like ’em, they agree for price with the person entrusted with the selling of ’em.”

Ship captains often hid the convicts’ crimes, parading them as unblemished immigrants ready for indenture. Apparently, this is what happened to Sarah when her ship arrived at Baltimore. She was sold for an unrecorded sum to William Duvall, who owned a farm at Bush Creek, southeast of Frederick, Md.

“After a short residence in that place,” says a London Magazine report, “she very secretly decamped.” Neither the magazine nor any other source explains how she managed to cross the Potomac River into Virginia and keep on traveling until she reached South Carolina. There, she became a new person: Princess Susanna Carolina Matilda of Mecklenburg-Strelitz—sister of Queen Charlotte. On the plantations of South Carolina she began her grand masquerade, convincing those who gushed over her that she had fled a scandal in the Queen’s court.

Sarah probably earned credibility by chattering about the rakish Prince Henry, Duke of Cumberland and Strathearn, King George’s young brother. He had been sued for “criminal conversation”—adultery—by the husband of Lady Grosvenor, who was the sister of Sarah’s savior, Caroline Vernon.

One day in 1770, the teenaged Sarah Wilson began a journey from her Midlands, England, village to London in search of a job. Boldly, she entered the Queen’s House (where Buckingham Palace now stands), and talked her way into becoming a maid to Caroline Vernon, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George III. Although this sounds like the opening of an English fairy tale, in reality it is the beginning of a crime story that took Sarah from the shadow of the gallows.
Sarah also established her identity by showing off her portrait of the Queen, jewels and enough of a wardrobe to convince her beguiled admirers that she was indeed of royal blood. “It is indeed mysterious,” wrote 19th-century historian Alice Morse Earle, “that a transported convict could retain in her possession, through all her reverses, the very jewels for whose theft she was punished; yet the story can scarcely be doubted.”

Sarah made a grand progress through the plantations of the Carolinas. She rode in loaned carriages and was the guest of numerous planters who discreetly pressed sums of money upon her. She showed her appreciation by promising to use her influence to obtain military commissions or political appointments for her hosts. Unlike her dazzled devotees, some skeptical Americans had never heard that the German-born Queen Charlotte had a sister, and they wondered why Princess Susanna did not have a German accent.

The “fame of the royal visitor,” wrote Earle, “spread afar and found its way to Bush Creek, to the ears of Mr. Duvall.”

In the fall of 1773, he posted an advertisement with a description that ungraciously gave the glamorous Princess Susanna “a blemish in her right eye” and “stoops in her shoulders.” He offered a reward of “five pistols, besides all cost and charges.” And he sent a lawyer, Michael Dalton, off to search for her from Philadelphia to Charleston. Dalton found her on a South Carolina plantation and brought her back to Duvall at Bush Creek.

If her masquerade was discovered her indenture term could be doubled, but, according to local lore, fate and the Revolutionary War intervened. When another indentured woman with the same name appeared in Maryland around 1775, Sarah used the coincidence to mask her second escape. Duvall, meanwhile, left his farm to go off to war with the militia.

“I often fancy that I find traces of her career, still masquerading, still imposing on simple folk,” Earle noted. “For instance, Rev. Manasseh Cutler wrote, at his home in Ipswich Hamlet, Mass., on January 25, 1775: A lady came to our house who had made a great noise in the country, and has been made the occasion of various conjectures. She calls herself Caroline Augusta Harriet, Duchess of Brownstonburges … Three days later he writes that he ‘conveyed the extraordinary visitor to town in a chaise.’

“With this glimpse of Sarah—if Sarah she were—visiting in a little New England town in a sober Puritan family, and riding off to Boston in a chaise with the pious Puritan preacher, she vanishes from our ken …”


Thomas B. Allen is the author of George Washington, Spymaster: How the Americans Outspied the British and Won the Revolutionary War; Tories: Fighting for the King in America’s First Civil War and other books. Learn more at www.tballen.com.
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Illustration inspired by a bronze sculpture of Nan-ye-hi (Nancy Ward) by Griffin Chiles
though she had close ties to white settlers and warned colonists of an upcoming attack by rogue Cherokee during the Revolutionary War—leading to her identification as a Patriot by the Daughters of the American Revolution—she maintained her Cherokee identity and worked tirelessly to keep white settlers from encroaching on her tribe’s ancestral lands.

The Journey to Leader

Nan-ye-hi was born in the territory of the Overhill Cherokee, in what is now known as East Tennessee, around the time that the smallpox epidemic of 1738–1739 killed approximately half of the Cherokee people. Her mother was traditionally thought to be Tame Doe of the Wolf clan. Cherokee women didn’t marry within their own clan, so it’s not unusual that her father’s identity is unknown. Structured around seven clans, Cherokee society was matrilineal, and children identified most strongly with the clan of their mother. Their closest male parental relationship would be with one of their mother’s male relatives—in Nan-ye-hi’s case, it was with her mother’s oldest brother, Attakullakulla, an influential leader and diplomat.

“At the time of Nan-ye-hi’s birth, the Cherokees believed in a spiritual world in which the universe was composed of opposing forces, such as those between war and peace, animals and humans, and men and women,” writes Cynthia Cumfer in her “Nan-ye-hi” essay in *Tennessee Women: Their Lives and Times* (University of Georgia Press, 2009). “Harmony was achieved by balancing these forces. Women and men did not dominate, but complemented each other. Like men, women had considerable freedom, including the right to choose their husbands and to leave them if they were unhappy.”

When Nan-ye-hi was about 14 she married Kingfisher, a Cherokee of the Deer clan, and they had a daughter Ka-ti, or Catherine, and a son Hiskyteehee, later known as Fivekiller.

During the 1740s and 1750s, the Cherokee and Creek fought a long war over land in North Georgia, and the Battle of Taliwa in 1755 was one of its most decisive battles. According to Emmet Starr’s account, *History of the Cherokee Indians and Their Legends and Folk Lore* (Wardman Company, 1921), Nan-ye-hi accompanied Kingfisher to fight in the battle. Cherokee legend has it that she stood beside him in the skirmish and chewed the bullets to make them more deadly. When Kingfisher was killed, she picked up his gun and helped the Cherokee to victory. For her
bravery, Nan-ye-hi was given some of the battle spoils seized by the Cherokee, including a slave.

Her actions in the war earned her the title of “Ghigau,” meaning “Beloved Woman” or “Warrior Woman,” and she became a voting member of the tribal council of chiefs. She also was named the leader of the influential Council of Women, made up of a representative from each of the seven clans. According to The Cherokee People by Thomas E. Mails (Treasure Chest Books, 1996), “it was believed that the Supreme Beings often spoke to the people through the beloved women, and they were given absolute power in the question of what to do with prisoners taken in war.” Nan-ye-hi’s position gave her the right to pardon, release or condemn any prisoner held by the Cherokee—a power not granted to the peace chief or the war chiefs.

In the late 1750s Nan-ye-hi married Bryant Ward, an Irish trader from South Carolina, who had observed the Battle of Taliwa. (Some accounts say that Ward already had a European wife and son. It wasn’t uncommon for white traders to take Cherokee wives so they could live protected in the Cherokee Nation. For her part, Nan-ye-hi might have chosen to marry a white settler to strengthen trade relationships.) Ward and Nan-ye-hi had one daughter named Elizabeth (called Betsey), who later married General Joseph Martin, superintendent of Indian Affairs for Virginia. Nan-ye-hi and Ward’s marriage ended in 1760, and he returned to South Carolina.

A Negotiator for Peace

On the eve of the Revolutionary War, the Cherokee were torn in their allegiances and angered by the steady stream of white settlers taking over their ancestral property. “Many frontier people settled on Cherokee land, believing that as civilized white farmers they had superior land rights to those of savage natives who used large tracts of land for hunting,” Cumfer writes. “Many of the Cherokee warriors and chiefs threatened war against the settlements at the same time that rebellious colonists on the East Coast were declaring their independence from England.” Seeking peace between the white settlers and her own people, on at least two occasions Nan-ye-hi sent warnings to white settlers to strengthen trade relationships.) Ward and Nan-ye-hi’s hopes that this treaty would bring peace would eventually be dashed. In 1808 and again in 1817, she and the Women’s Council spoke out in opposition to the forced sale of Cherokee lands, but their objections were largely ignored.

A Voice for Her People

The devastation of these important Cherokee towns compelled Nan-ye-hi and the Women’s Council to become more prominent negotiators between the Cherokee and the whites. After militia campaigns against the Cherokee in 1780–1781, General Nathanael Greene convened peace talks, in which Nan-ye-hi addressed white negotiators. According to a transcription that survives in the Nathanael Greene Papers, she, speaking through an interpreter, said: “You know women are always looked upon as nothing, but we are your mothers. You are our sons. Our cry is all for peace. Let it continue because we are your mothers. This peace must last forever. Let your women’s sons be ours, and let our sons be yours.”

Her appeals apparently swayed the American commissioners and prevented yet another devastating property loss. The next year Nan-ye-hi was credited with brokering a prisoner exchange with Virginia Governor Benjamin Harrison. Nan-ye-hi also was instrumental in negotiating the Treaty of Hopewell in 1785. Signed by U.S. Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins and members of the Cherokee Nation, it laid out a western boundary for the Cherokee lands.

Nan-ye-hi’s hopes that this treaty would bring peace would eventually be dashed. In 1808 and again in 1817, she and the Women’s Council spoke out in opposition to the forced sale of Cherokee lands, but their objections were largely ignored.
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As Nan-ye-hi witnessed the trampling of numerous treaties honoring Cherokee land rights, she became increasingly suspicious of the U.S. government. Though unable to attend all the council meetings as she grew older, she continued to send a relative, perhaps her son Fivekiller, carrying her walking cane as proof of being her proxy vote.

In 1819 the government forced Nan-ye-hi and many Cherokee to abandon their homes in the Overhill lands and settle further south on the Ocoee River. In 1821, Nan-ye-hi returned to her birthplace at Chota to live with her brother Longfellow. She operated a successful inn until her death some time around 1822.

As Christina Berry notes in her “All Things Cherokee” online article on Nancy Ward, “Nan-ye-hi’s efforts for peace did help to avoid large-scale war with the white settlers,” though nothing could ultimately prevent the Cherokee Nation from being forcibly removed from its lands. In 1838 General Winfield Scott and his troops marched thousands of Cherokee to the Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) on a 1,200-mile journey that became known as the Trail of Tears.

Nan-ye-hi is buried near Benton, in Southeast Tennessee, in a plot along with Fivekiller and Longfellow. The grave site is located on a hill overlooking the Ocoee River, where U.S. 411 crosses near the ancient ford of the Warrior’s Path and the old Federal Road. Records show that Nan-ye-hi’s stagecoach inn and a mill were located on the property of her grave site, and her home was in a grove of trees on the upper portion of the property. (See below for more on the property’s preservation.)

Alderman writes that Nan-ye-hi “possessed a strong personality and character capable of enduring the problems of her country along with her people. She was not a traitor, but a fighter—in her own way—for human rights.”

The Nancy Ward DAR Chapter marked her grave in 1923. That marker reads:
“*In Memory of Nancy Ward*
*Princess and Prophetess of the Cherokee Nation*
*The Pocahontas of Tennessee*
*The Constant Friend of the American Pioneer*
*Beloved Woman*”

In 2002 Margaret “Peggie” Hall, Alexander Keith DAR Chapter, Athens, Tenn., a genealogist interested in the history of early Tennessee settlers and American Indians, began a project to preserve and beautify Nancy Ward’s grave site in Polk County, Tenn.

Though the grave was listed as a state historical site, it had become rundown. One side of the property was being consumed by kudzu vines, the walkways were bordered with weeds, and the grave site needed repair and cleaning. Hall inspired other DAR members to dedicate time and effort to preserving the site.

After years of work, the Nancy Ward grave site today is landscaped with walkways adorned with flower beds and trees that were native to Tennessee in Nancy Ward’s day. Additional “special trees of the Cherokee” are planted on the property. The focal point is a giant cedar tree, which forms an umbrella over the graves of Nancy Ward, her son Fivekiller and her brother Longfellow. Cherokee decorated the tree with prayer flags—narrow strips of red cloth tied with a bit of tobacco—and nearby is a display of four flags: the U.S. flag; the Tennessee state flag; the Western Band Cherokee Nation flag and the Eastern Band Cherokee Nation flag. Tennessee’s 13 Cherokee District DAR chapters helped with the needed restoration: Alexander Keith, Avery Trace, Chickamauga, Chief John Ross, Coytee, General William Lenoir, Hiwassee, Judge David Campbell, Moccasin Bend, Nancy Ward, Ocoee, Rhea-Craig and Southwest Point. Three Sons of the American Revolution chapters in Tennessee also joined the effort: Col. Benjamin Cleveland, John Sevier and Hiwassee. Other volunteers joined the beautification project representing Tennessee’s Hiwassee and Ocoee River Parks organizations, the Polk County Historical Society and the Spring City, Tenn., Garden Club, as well as Tammera Hicks, Cherokee advisor, and other community friends.

—Pauline Moore
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