



## E-Newsletter | July 2013

### Revolutionary War Women

As we celebrate the Fourth of July and the birth of our country, we pause to remember some of the women who fought to secure our independence. What women did at this time was not matter-of-fact, comfortable for most people or even "accepted." Even today, our military is still not fully comfortable with American women in combat on the front lines of wars in which we still engage. In the War against England (the Revolutionary War), some women fought disguised as men.

Others fought beside their husbands. Others assumed their husbands' positions after their deaths in the fighting. In this edition of our newsletter, we profile Margaret Corbin, Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley, and Deborah Sampson.

Margaret Corbin took up a cannon when her husband was killed at Fort Washington on Manhattan Island, New York in 1776. She was seriously wounded there herself when her arm was almost severed and her breast was lacerated by grapeshot. In what was a most unusual-some would say radical-move, in 1779, the Continental Congress granted her a lifetime pension. Corbin lived until about 1800 on her Congressional pension and on charity payments from the Invalid Regiment. She was known throughout her community as a bad-tempered, hard-drinking eccentric by the nickname of "Captain Molly!"



Molly Pitcher



Deborah Sampson

The same Margaret Corbin discussed above, is sometimes referred to as Molly Pitcher. However, the woman most well known as "Molly Pitcher" (a term used by the soldiers to refer to any of the women who carried water to the troops), was Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley. Mary accompanied her husband, William Hays, during the Philadelphia Campaign (1777-1778) in New Jersey. During the Battle of Monmouth (June 1778), Mary was assisting William (who worked with the artillery). Sometime during the battle, her husband collapsed; at that time, she took over and she manned the artillery in his place. A cannon ball passed through her legs; the only resulting damage was the

removal of her lower petticoat.

After the battle, George Washington asked about the woman he had seen loading the cannon on the battlefield. In commemoration of her courage, he issued her a warrant as a non-commissioned officer. Mary was then known as Sergeant Molly for the rest of her life. She was awarded a pension by the Pennsylvania State Legislature for her service.

Deborah Sampson is one of several women known to have fought in the Revolutionary War. She was the first known American woman to impersonate a man in order to join the army and take part in combat. In 1782, she was so passionate, determined and persistent to help in the war effort, that she enlisted in the army as a man. There were other women who also did this; most of their names and their accomplishments have been lost to history. Deborah later received a pension for her valiant service. In a rare and most unusual move, after her death, her husband was granted a survivor's pension.

These women fought for their - and our - freedom and we are grateful for their sacrifices.

**Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America**  
Charlotte S. Waisman and Jill S. Tietjen

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