

The Battle of Long Island

Dr. Gilbert Potter (1725-1786), Elizabeth Williams (1726-1811)

According to documents submitted to the US Sons of the American Revolution, Dr. Gilbert Potter was a practicing physician in Huntington, Long Island, which is now Amityville, at the outbreak of the Revolution. He gave up his practice and joined the 1st Regiment of Suffolk County as a Lt. Colonel under Col William Floyd. He was also a refugee from Long Island to Connecticut. He acted as a spy for Washington and led the troops at Jamaica at the Battle of Long Island. According to Wikipedia, the Battle of Long Island, also known as the Battle of Brooklyn or the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, fought on August 27, 1776, was the first major battle in the American Revolutionary War after the Declaration of Independence, the largest battle of the entire conflict, and the first battle in which an army of the United States engaged, having declared itself a nation only the month before.

In this battle, Washington and the Americans were outnumbered 32,000 to 10,000 and outmaneuvered by the British with about 1000 killed or wounded with 1000 captured, compared to about 350 of the British. Many more Americans would have been killed or captured had it not been for a miraculous escape to Manhattan under a "MYSTERIOUS FOG" without a single life lost by 9000 Americans. Lest we take too much pride for the heroic action of our family ancestors like Dr. Gilbert Potter, we must also remember that some of our ancestors, especially some in New York, were Loyalists (i.e., loyal to King George!). These ancestors probably betrayed the efforts of George Washington and the revolutionary forces. These may well have been the reason the Americans were being outmaneuvered and killed by the British prior to this miraculous escape from Long Island to Manhattan!

How could George Washington and his ragtag army of volunteers ever think they could take on this professional, British army, the best trained and best equipped army of that day? The truth be known, it took several miracles like this one, some great leadership, and Divine protection for the Americans to win our independence and keep our freedom.

Can you imagine what Long Island and Manhattan must have looked like in 1776??

Elizabeth Williams: I don't have very much about Elizabeth Williams, but you can probably assume that behind every MAN with such great accomplishments, there was a WOMAN doing much of the work!! I did find this very old article from a newspaper entitled: **Wife takes over Doctor's Practice.** "Dr. Gilbert Potter, being an active and zealous rebel, had fled to Connecticut with others and joined the patriots on the main shore. He left everything in Huntington in charge of his wife, Elizabeth Williams Potter, a daughter of Nathaniel Williams, an educated and remarkable woman, who not only took charge of all his affairs, but assumed the Doctor's medical practice; and if tradition be true, she was as good a doctor as her husband!" An excerpt from p.16-17 of the Huntington NY Long Islander, 1922 Nov-May 1924 Greyscale - 1201.pdf, Old Fulton NY Postcards.

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