

MAMA BEARS, YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU NOW!!

This article is my way of sharing five stories about five Women from our country's Patriot past. The first Woman, Prudence Cummings Wright. Prudence was born on November 26, 1740. There are conflicting accounts about which colony she was born in. She married in 1761, had 11 children and died on December 02, 1823, at the age of 83. Yet her faithful night was in 1775.

On March 11, 1775 Prudence's baby child, Liberty died. For comfort and support, Prudence went to her parents' home in New Hampshire. While there, Prudence listened as her brother Samuel, a loyalist, spoke with his friend and British Officer, Leonard Whiting, about passing information favorable to the British. Prudence had 2 other brothers, 1 was also a loyalist, and 2 sisters.

Prudence was so disturbed by what she heard that she returned home to Pepperell and organized 30 - 40 women into a militia. Prudence was 35 at the time, The youngest volunteer was Elizabeth Hobart, 17. Prudence was the leader and Sarah Shattuck was 2nd in command

As a side note, by mid April, 1775, most all the men and husbands in Pepperell had marched to the battles of Lexington and Concord and to the siege of Boston.

The women dressed as men and found whatever weapon or tools they could, including pitchforks and other farm tools. They patrolled the roads. The Women knew that for loyalists to get to Boston through Pepperell, they would have to cross Jewett's Bridge, which is over the Nashua River.

One night, the Women waited at the bridge, kept their lanterns shielded and they kept quiet. Two riders came from the north. Prudence and the other Women jumped out and surprised the riders. Prudence demanded to know the riders' identity and business. One rider was her brother, Samuel. He knew Prudence meant business and tried to retreat. Leonard Whiting was the second rider. He came forward thinking the Women would not stop him. Wrong.

Both riders were dragged off their horses, restrained, their bodies and possessions searched. Dispatches intended for the British were found. The two were sent to a tavern for the night. The next day they were freed with the promise to never return to the colony. Prudence never saw Samuel again. At one time, he was her favorite brother. Prudence Cummings Wright - **ARDENT PATRIOT**.

The second Woman, Margaret Cochran Corbin. Margaret was born on the western frontier of Pennsylvania on November 12, 1751. She married in 1772, had no children and died on January 16, 1800, at the age of 48. Yet one of her many faithful days was on November 16, 1776.

The hardships of Margaret's young life inspired the courage and resilience that would

serve her well during the Revolution. Margaret was 4 when the French & Indian War broke out. Margaret & her brother were sent to live with an uncle, away from the attacks. At the age of 5, Margaret was orphaned when her father was killed during an Indian raid and her mother was taken captive, never to be seen again. Margaret and her brother were adopted and raised by an uncle.

In 1772, at age 21, she married John Corbin, who, 3 years later, in 1775, joined the Pennsylvania military. If she stayed home, Margaret would have to care for herself, might become impoverished, starve or be captured in the War. Margaret did not stay home, Margaret left with her husband for war, becoming, like many other women, a Camp Follower who earned a little money cooking, sewing & doing laundry for soldiers. She also helped take care of the sick & wounded. Amazing, this very difficult life apparently was better than staying at home, alone.

In 1776, the Corbins' regiment marched to New York and Fort Washington, in northern Manhattan. The British took control of the city, which left the Fort as the only American stronghold on the island.

Nov 16, 1776, Margaret, dressed as a man, joined her husband and 600 other soldiers in the Battle of Fort Washington. John was a matross, a person responsible for loading cannons. Margaret helped John load his cannon. The British, including their Hessian mercenaries, numbered 4,000.

Margaret did not retreat to safety after John and most of the team were killed,. She quickly and heroically took over firing the cannon against the British. Eventually, Margaret was also hit by enemy fire, musket balls and grapeshot, which nearly severed her left arm and severely wounded her jaw and left breast. She was unable to use her left arm for the rest of her life. Margaret's cannon was the last to fire before the fort was abandoned. The British eventually won this battle. When found, Margaret was critically wounded and the British doctors saved her life. Margaret and other prisoners were paroled and released back to the care of Revolutionary hospitals.

Being alone in life with no family to rely upon, Margaret struggled financially. After she recovered from her wounds, Margaret joined the Invalid Regiment at West Point, where she aided the wounded.

Margaret was not living large. Unable to work, with a paralyzed left arm, Margaret had trouble dressing and feeding herself. Women found Margaret to be a gruff, rough, unfeminine Woman with a drinking habit. She did not have many women friends. A commanding officer who respected her described her as "such an offensive person that people are unwilling to take her in charge."

July 6, 1779, the Continental Congress, in recognition of her brave service, awarded Margaret with a lifelong pension equivalent to half that of male combatants. Margaret was the first Woman to be officially recognized for her military service. Congress also gave her a suit of clothes to replace the ones ruined during the conflict.

Some time later, Congress eventually awarded Margaret with an additional clothing and rum allowance.

In 1782, Margaret married a wounded soldier, but he died a year later. In 1783, Margaret was formally discharged from the Continental Army. She died in 1800 and was buried in an obscure grave along the Hudson River. However, in 1926, with the aid of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Margaret's remains were moved and were reinterred with full Military Honors at the West Point Cemetery. Margaret is one of only two Revolutionary War soldiers buried there.

A plaque at Fort Tryon Park in Manhattan, hails her "as the first woman to take a soldier's part in the War for Liberty." As opposed to the Revolutionary War. Think about it. Margaret Cochran Corbin - **PATRIOT SOLDIER**.

The third Woman, Sybil Ludington. Sybil was born in New York and lived to be 77 years old. Her faithful day was on April 26, 1777.

On April 26, 1777, Sybil was at home with her father, Henry Ludington, a Colonel in the local militia. That night, a rider came to the door and told the Colonel that he needed to notify the militiamen under his command that the British army was marching on Danbury. The Colonel had three problems. The rider and his horse were dead tired, the rider did not know the area and all the militiamen had disbanded and gone home for planting season. The Colonel had one solution, Sybil. Sybil had to ride to notify all 400 militiamen it was time for them to assemble and march to Danbury.

Two years prior, in April 1775, there was a very famous rider, Paul Revere. Taking nothing away from Paul, I would like to compare his ride to the ride Sybil made. Paul and Sybil both rode at night. Paul rode with two other riders, William Dawes and Samuel Prescott. Sybil rode alone. Paul's goal was to ride to Lexington and Concord. He made it to Lexington, but not Concord. Paul rode about 12 miles before he was capture by the British. Sybil was to ride 20 - 40 miles to alert 400 militiamen. She did not arrive home until sunrise, exhausted and soaked to the bone because of the rain. When Paul rode he was 40 with 43 more years of life. When Sybil rode she was 16 with 62 more years of life. You decide you made a more courageous, dangerous and successful ride.

As acknowledgment of her brave ride, Sybil has been written about, has a memorial statue on the banks of Lake Glenida in Carmel, New York and is on a 1975 United States bicentennial stamp. Sybil Ludington - **FREEDOM RIDER**.

The fourth Woman, Lydia Barrington Darragh.

Lydia was born in Dublin 1729. She married in 1753 to William Darragh. They had 9 children, 4 died very young and she died on December 28, 1789, at the age of 60. Her faithful night was on December 02, 1777.

Lydia and William moved the colonies in 1755. They settled in Philadelphia because of its large Quaker community. William was a tutor, Lydia a midwife. Quakers, by their nature are pacifist, however, it would appear the Darraghs did not get that memo. This meant they had to keep their support of the rebel cause a secret. Washington was getting his khaki kicked in the fall of 1777. On September 26, 1777, the British marched into and took control of Philadelphia. Eventually, almost 1/3 of the city evacuated.

British General Sir William Howe established a headquarters at the home of John Cadwalader, a neighbor across the street from Lydia's home. Lydia's spy career began. Lydia had her 14 year old son, John, smuggle coded notes about the British to her eldest son Charles, a patriot soldier. Charles was with Washington at Whitemarsh. So much for the family being pacifists.

In the fall of 1777, the British used Lydia's house for meetings. The British allowed Lydia and what remained of her family, 2 children, to stay. On December 02, 1777, the British held a secret meeting in the home and told the family to stay in their rooms. Lydia didn't. She hid in a linen closet that was attached to the meeting room and overheard the plan to attack Washington's army at Whitemarsh on December 04.

Lydia's had a plan to get the information to Washington. As a homemaker, she would need to leave home to visit her children that were no longer in the city and obtain flour. She made the journey. There is more than one story as to how she got the information to Washington. The code message described the surprise attack and said - General Howe was coming, 5,000 men, 13 cannons, baggage wagons and 11 boat on wheels.

Washington got the information and had time to prepare. The fight lasted 4 days and ended as a standoff. Howe returned to Philadelphia and Washington moved to Valley Forge for a long 7 month winter encampment.

The British felt someone had leaked their plan. Lydia was even questioned. On December 09, 1777, Lydia told Major John Andre, the spy master who would turn Benedict Arnold, that no one in her family was awake during the meeting. Andre believed her denial. What a Spy. It is said, Lydia acted alone without even William knowing what she had planned to do.

The British left Philadelphia in June 1778 and Lydia's children returned home. In 1783, William died. This story is supported by Boudinot's memoirs published in 1909. Lydia, the Quaker housewife who outsmarted a British General and out lied a British spy master. Lydia Barrington Darragh - **PATRIOT SPY**.

The fifth Woman, Deborah Sampson.

Deborah was born in Plympton Massachusetts on December 17, 1760. She married after the war and had 3 or 4 children. Deborah died on April 29, 1827, at the age of 66. Her faithful days and night began in 1782 at the age of 22.

Deborah's father, Jonathan, was related to Myles Standish and her mother, Deborah, was the great granddaughter of MA Governor William Bradford. Quite a distinguished heritage, you would think. Deborah had 6 siblings. At the age of 5, Deborah's father did not return from a sea voyage. Her impoverished mother had to place all her children in different homes. At age 10, Deborah became an indentured servant to help pay off her family's debts. At 18, self educated Deborah had completed her indenture and supported herself by becoming a teacher and weaver.

In 1782, the war raged on and Deborah had a very patriotic soul. She decided to disguised herself, became Robert Shurtleff, and joined the 4th mass regiment as a man. She was fit for this duty because she already enjoyed hunting, tracking and fishing.

Some of her military endeavors included scouting territory, including Manhattan, to determine British numbers; Deborah and 2 sergeants lead 30 men on an expedition that ended with one on one fighting with Tories; Deborah led a raid on a Tory home that resulted in the capture of 15 men; at Yorktown, Deborah dug trenches, attacked a British position and experienced canon fire.

She escaped detection many times. When shot in the left thigh she removed the pistol ball herself and tended her own wound. She was on the wrong end of a sword and received a cut to her forehead. Deborah soldiered on. Only when Deborah became ill during an epidemic and was taken to hospital was it determined by the medical staff that this soldier is not a man. After a year and a half, her secret was discovered.

Deborah was honorably discharged on October 23, 1783. She returned home to Massachusetts, got married and had children. In 1797, Herman Mann wrote of her life. Thanks in part to Paul Revere speaking on her behalf, Deborah eventually received a military pension from Massachusetts. In 1802, Deborah began a year long lecture tour, the first woman to do so.

A few quotes from Deborah Sampson quotes: "I burst the tyrant bands, which held my sex in awe." - "Why can I not fight for my country too?" - "I am indeed willing to acknowledge what I have done, an error and presumption. I will call it an error and presumption because I swerved from the accustomed flowery path of female delicacy, to walk upon the heroic precipice of feminine perdition!"

Deborah Sampson - **FREEDOM FIGHTER**