

Phillis Wheatley Massachusetts



Phillis Wheatley was the first African American, the first slave, and the third woman in the United States to publish a book of poems. She was kidnapped in West Africa as a child and transported aboard a slave ship to Boston in 1761, and purchased by John Wheatley as a servant for his wife. Because of her poor health, obvious intelligence, and Susannah Wheatley's fondness for her, Phillis was never trained as a domestic; instead she was encouraged to study. She published her first poem in 1767, and six years later, she published a book, *Poems on Various Subjects*. That same year, John Wheatley emancipated her.

His Excellency General Washington

*Celestial choir! enthron'd in realms of light,
Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.
While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.
See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan,*

*And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!
See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light
Involved in sorrows and the veil of night!*

*The Goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,
Olive and laurel binds Her golden hair:
Wherever shines this native of the skies,
Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise.*

*Muse! Bow propitious while my pen relates
How pour her armies through a thousand gates,
As when Eolus heaven's fair face deforms,
Enwrapp'd in tempest and a night of storms;
Astonish'd ocean feels the wild uproar,
The refluent surges beat the sounding shore;
Or think as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,
Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train.
In bright array they seek the work of war,
Where high unfurl'd the ensign waves in air.
Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
Enough thou know'st them in the fields of fight.
Thee, first in peace and honors—we demand
The grace and glory of thy martial band.
Fam'd for thy valour, for thy virtues more,
Hear every tongue thy guardian aid implore!*

*One century scarce perform'd its destined round,
When Gallic powers Columbia's fury found;
And so may you, whoever dares disgrace
The land of freedom's heaven-defended race!
Fix'd are the eyes of nations on the scales,
For in their hopes Columbia's arm prevails.
Anon Britannia droops the pensive head,
While round increase the rising hills of dead.
Ah! Cruel blindness to Columbia's state!
Lament thy thirst of boundless power too late.*

*Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
Thy ev'ry action let the Goddess guide.
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! Be thine.*

Mary Katherine Goddard Maryland



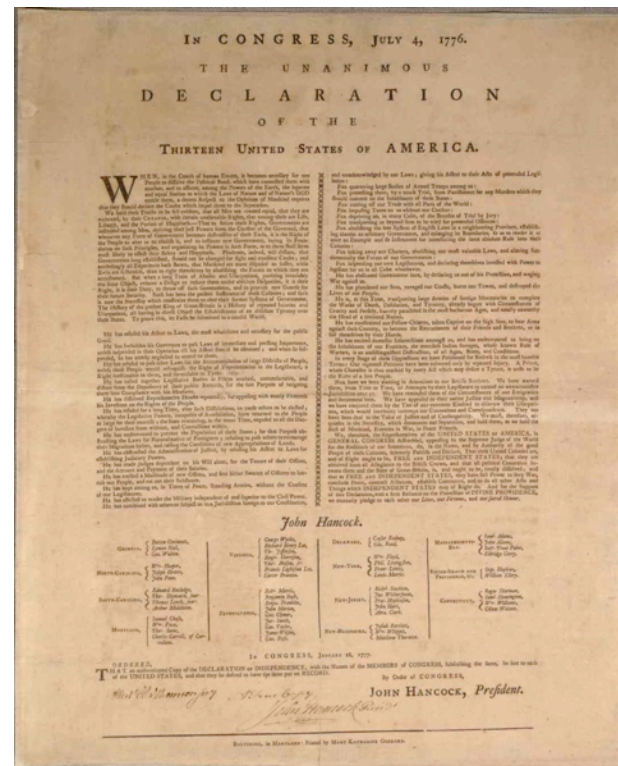
Mary Katherine Goddard was a newspaper editor determined to publish the truth, as well as a fighter for the right of women to pursue a career. In 1773, she came to Baltimore with her brother to start the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, Baltimore's first newspaper. It was among the best newspapers in the colonies.

Mary Katherine edited the newspaper singlehandedly for most of the period from 1775 to 1785. Under her editorship, the newspaper openly expressed the Americans' yearning for freedom. Mary Katherine gave Baltimoreans news of the beginning of our war for independence, with reports of the momentous events in Massachusetts of April 19, 1775--the opening salvos with the Battles of Concord and Lexington. An editorial of June 14, 1775 proclaimed,

"The ever memorable 19th of April gave a conclusive answer to the questions of American freedom. What think ye of Congress now? That day. . . evidenced that Americans would rather die than live slaves!"

Twice, the Whig Club (a radical group made up of local merchants and tradesmen) objected to something that appeared in the *Maryland Journal*, and raided her offices and threatened to run her out of the state. But the state government sided with her in defense of a free press. One one of these occasions, in 1779, she had published a criticism of General George Washington.

In January 1777, Mary Katherine Goddard printed the first copy of the *Declaration of Independence* to include the names of the signers.



Mary Katherine was named postmistress of Baltimore in 1775. She held this position until 1789 when the Postmaster General decreed that the head of the Baltimore postal system must be a man. Two hundred Baltimore men supported her petition for reinstatement. But a female was said to be unsuitable for the position because the job entailed travel beyond the capacity of a woman. Goddard appealed to the U.S. Senate and to President George Washington himself, but to no avail.

"Molly Pitcher"

"Molly Pitcher" was a nickname for women who carried water to the troops during the war.

Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley Pennsylvania

The most famous "Molly Pitcher," Mary is usually the one people have in mind. She joined her husband, William, as a camp follower during the Philadelphia Campaign (1777-1778) in New Jersey, eventually wintering with the Army at Valley Forge.

We all have come to know her as "Molly Pitcher." She gained this title later on at the Battle of Monmouth. The only contemporary witness to the scene in June of 1778 described it thus: "A woman whose husband belonged to the artillery and who was then attached to a piece in the engagement, attended with her husband at the piece the whole time. While in the act of reaching a cartridge and having one of her feet as far before the other as she could step, a cannon shot from the enemy passed directly between her legs without doing any other damage than carrying away all the lower part of her petticoat. Looking at it with apparent unconcern, she observed that it was lucky it did not pass a little higher, for in that case it might have carried away something else, and continued her occupation."

Mary was awarded a pension in 1822 by the Pennsylvania State Legislature.



Another "Molly Pitcher" was Margaret Corbin (b. 1751) — who took up a cannon when her husband was killed at Fort Mifflin 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. She lived until about 1800 after receiving charity payments from the Invalid Regiment and later a small pension from Congress.



MOLLY PITCHER AT THE GUN.



Deborah Sampson Massachusetts

Deborah Sampson was born on December 17th, 1760 in Plympton, Massachusetts. She was raised by friends and relatives until she was ten years old, then indentured for the next eight years. By the time she was twenty, she had educated herself to become a part-time teacher.

Late in the war, she decided she had to contribute to the war effort, but not in the normal manner available to women of her day. She sewed a man's suit of clothes, left her farm and walked thirty miles to Middleborough, Massachusetts, where she enlisted in the Light Infantry Company, Fourth Regiment, Massachusetts Continental Line under the assumed name of Robert Shurtleff, a name she made up.

Her first narrow escape from discovery was when she was altering her poorly fitting uniform, and was observed to be very good with a needle. She explained it away by stating there were no girls in her family, so as a youngest son she had to learn how to sew.

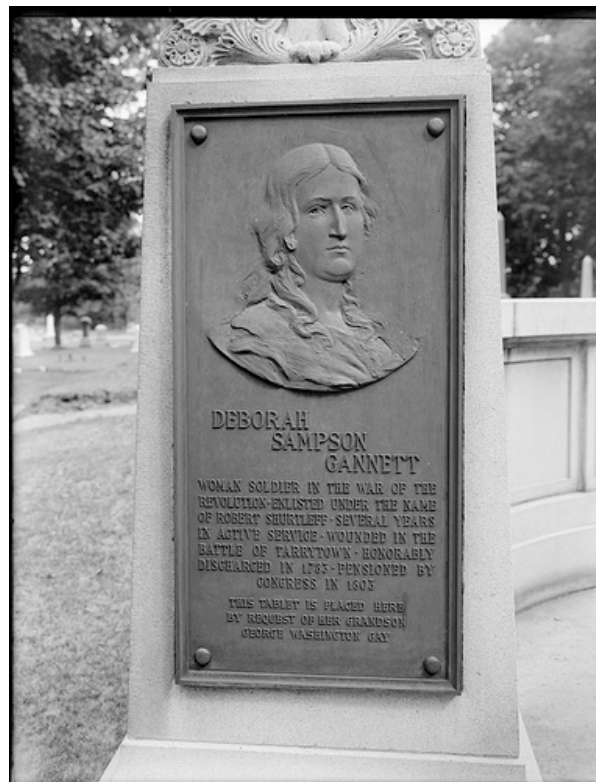
In battle she received a sabre wound across the left side of her head. She refused to go to the hospital, fearing discovery, and tended the wound herself.

Within weeks she was hit in the thigh by a musket ball, and was carried to the hospital. But, once there, she showed the surgeon the lesser wound to her head, and he released her. She tried to dig the musket ball out of her thigh with her pen knife. Failing that, she nursed the wound as best she could. But, having left the ball in the leg was to cause her trouble for the rest of her life.

The Fourth Massachusetts was transferred to Philadelphia, where Robert/Deborah was assigned to General John Patterson, Brigade Commander, as an orderly. She was then taken ill with a severe fever, rendering her unconscious. At the hospital, a doctor discovered the truth but decided to protect her secret. But, as "Robert" was being nursed back to health, the doctor's

niece fell in love with him/her. Nothing could be done at this point but to admit to the deception.

When advised of the situation, General Patterson notified General Henry Knox, who, in turn, advised General George Washington. He ordered Robert Shurtleff/Deborah Sampson to be honorably discharged. General Knox signed the document on October 25th, 1783, and letters of testimony to her gallantry in combat were presented. She had served for a year and a half.



At the urging of Paul Revere, Deborah went on tour in 1802, capitalizing on her wartime fame.

In 1805 she was awarded a pension by the State of Massachusetts in the amount of \$4.00 per month, primarily because of her wound to her thigh which was proving debilitating. In 1818 it was doubled.

Mercy Otis Warren Massachusetts



Known as the "Conscience of the American Revolution," Mercy Otis Warren accomplished things unknown to women in her time. She was a prolific and influential writer, the first woman playwright, wrote the first history of the American Revolutionary War (by a man or woman), and influenced most of the Founding Fathers, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Patrick Henry.

She spoke up for women's rights, and she counted both John and Abigail Adams among her friends.

In 1774, she described the American situation as follows:

"America stands armed with resolution and virtue; but she still recoils at the idea of drawing the sword against the nation from whence she derived her origin. Yet Britain, like an unnatural parent, is ready to plunge her dagger into the bosom of her affectionate offspring. But may we not hope for more lenient measures!"

Years later, she described America as standing more ready:
"I hinted that the sword was half drawn from the scabbard. Since then it has been unsheathed. ... Almost every tongue is calling on the justice of heaven to punish the disturbers of the peace, liberty, and happiness of their country."

Mercy Warren wrote plays expressing her political opinions. In 1772, she published *The Adulateur*, which was directed against Governor Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts and predicted the Revolutionary War. Several other plays were written, also cryptically directed against Governor Hutchinson, and all were written anonymously. It would be 1790 before Mercy Otis Warren would put her own name to a book.

She wrote her last book, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*, in 1805. President Jefferson ordered advance copies for himself and every cabinet member in the White House.

Seldom has one woman in any age acquired such influence by the mere force of a powerful intellect. She is said to have supplied political parties with their arguments; and she was the first of her sex in America who taught the reading world in matters of state policy and history.

"Our situation is truly delicate & critical. On the one hand we are in need of a strong federal government founded on principles that will support the prosperity & union of the colonies. on the other we have struggled for liberty & made costly sacrifices at her shrine and there are still many among us who revere her name to much to relinquish (beyond a certain medium) the rights of man for the dignity of government."

Mercy Otis Warren