WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

WOMEN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

How did women participate in the American Revolution?

PART 1 is also suitable for units on non-violent protest and women in politics
PART 2 could be used in examining women and war

NEW YORK STATE SOCIAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM, GRADE 11:
UNITED STATES AND NEW YORK STATE HISTORY

UNIT ONE  Constitutional Foundations for the United States Democratic Republic
Chapter 1  The Constitution: The Foundation of the American Republic

These questions and documents can be used in conjunction with the New York State Education Department standard curriculum for grade 11 Social Studies: United States History and Government. Students will be able to discuss the American Revolution: its causes, and how women’s roles changed during the Revolution.

These lessons are appropriate for units on The American Revolution.

Students will be able to:

• describe the involvement of women in the American Revolution
• explain how women’s involvement both conformed to and challenged traditional female roles and assumptions of their capabilities
• analyze primary documents, support conclusions with evidence from materials and share findings with other students

VOCABULARY

boycott; revenue; Townshend Duties; Tea Acts; genteel

Additional terms are listed with each set of materials.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

WOMEN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR — PART I
Slavery and Luxury, or Liberty and Sufficiency?

NOTE: This lesson is best suited for use after students have learned about the American colonial relationship with Britain and the reasons for the Declaration of Independence as the included materials relate and refer to events and issues such as the Townshend Duties and Boston Tea Party.

ACTIVITIES

I. Opening activity. Student free writing (See the assessment for an alternate opening activity.)

How do you see women involved in politics and war today? Give specific examples. Should women’s involvement be the same as that of men? Explain the reasons for your answer.

II. Discuss the opening activity. Have volunteers share responses and write them on a board or paper visible to the entire class. What patterns, similarities or difference appear in responses? Give students the opportunity to respond to answers.

Read with students the student handout, “Roles and rights of women during the Revolutionary era.”

III. Group activity

A. Introduction: The British ended the policy of salutary neglect after the French and Indian War (1754 – 1759) as they sought to make the American colonists pay what the British saw as their fair share of the costs of the war and running the British Empire. The British Parliament passed a series of acts to gain additional revenue from the colonies. The Sugar Act (1764), Stamp Act (1765) and Townshend Duties (1767) placed taxes on items of daily use. They were met by protests, boycotts and rising anger from the colonists who cried “No taxation without representation” because they had no elected representatives to speak on their behalf in Parliament. In 1773 the Parliament passed the Tea Act, which actually reduced the price of tea in an effort to resuscitate the East India Company, but American colonists viewed the Act as a ploy to get them to buy more tea and pay taxes. The Boston Tea Party, in which the tea aboard several ships was thrown into Boston harbor, is the most famous response to British taxation, but as the sources you read will demonstrate, women were also active in opposing British taxation and rule.

B. Break the class into groups and explain that each group will be receiving materials about the involvement of women in the American Revolution and should designate a reader, materials handler, recorder and reporter. Each group is responsible for closely examining the materials, completing the accompanying tasks and reporting to the class how women participated in the American Revolution and (if it was addressed in their materials) how their actions were viewed.

C. Distribute four sets of materials:
   Tea Group A  Tea Group B  Group C: Edenton Resolves  Group D: Clarke Letter

D. Groups examine materials and complete tasks for them.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

IV. Share learning: One student from each group shares what has been learned about the actions taken by women during the American Revolution, how they conformed to or challenged women’s accepted roles and the reactions to them. Students take notes on the findings of each group.

V. Discuss group findings. What similarities and differences exist between the types of involvement presented in each of the sources? What do the reactions to women’s involvement reveal about the status of women in early American society?

VI. Assess findings. The illustration and questions 1, 2 and 5 for it could be used as the opening activity for this lesson.

A. Examine the illustration “A Society of Patriotic Ladies at Edmonton in North Carolina”.

B. Respond to the following questions:
   1. Who and what is present in the illustration? (Be aware of sex, race and social class.)
   2. What are they doing? (Pay attention to all the activities.)
   3. How does this illustration relate to the activities of women in the American Revolution?
   4. What do you believe to be the artist’s opinion of these patriotic ladies? On what do you base your conclusion?
   5. What questions and comments do you have about the illustration?

DISCOVERING HISTORY IN TODAY’S NEW YORK TIMES

1. Revisit the handout, “Roles and rights of women during the Revolutionary War era.” Choose three of the seven items listed, and for each, find an example in a New York Times article of women today breaking that old rule in some way. Write a comparison-contrast essay exploring the ways that the roles and rights of women have – and may have not – changed since Revolutionary times.

2. Choose an article in The New York Times that talks about a person or group of people who do not have complete freedom in their country. Write a letter from a real or fictional woman in this modern situation to a woman in one of the documents you read for this lesson, discussing your views about what it is like to have limited freedom.

3. Select a photograph from The New York Times and read the related article. Then, draw an editorial cartoon based on the photograph to illustrate your opinion of the topic of the article.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Roles and rights of women during the Revolutionary era

Girls were educated at home with the emphasis on raising them to be good wives and mothers. Female literacy was valued for religious instruction (reading the Bible), for reading necessary to household affairs and for providing children with basic education.

All property and earnings of a married woman belonged to her husband. A husband was legally entitled to hire out his wife for work and collect all her wages.

A man had the legal right to beat his wife and children but not permanently disable or kill them.

Women did not have the right to leave their husbands, who could place ads in newspapers if they ran away.

Divorce was almost non-existent and when divorces were granted the father almost always gained custody of the children.

Husbands and wives incapable of peacefully living together sometimes led mutually agreed upon separate lives, occasionally even in different households.

It was considered completely inappropriate for a woman to address men publicly, such as in a speech or sermon.

See “Founding Mothers: Women of America in the Revolutionary Era” (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co. c1975) by Linda Grant De Pauw for more information.
# WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

**Tea Group A:** A copy of “The Agreement of the Ladies in this Town, against drinking Tea, until the Revenue Acts are Repealed”

**VOCABULARY TO KNOW**
genteel; Townshend duties; boycott; ancillary; revenue; tactics; repeal; abstain

Directions: With your group members, review the vocabulary above. Look up the meaning of the words that you do not know. Read the introduction to the document and the document itself and answer the following questions related to it. Be sure to write key words or phrases from the document to support your answers where necessary.

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<td>How does this conform to or contradict the accepted roles and rights of colonial women?</td>
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WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Tea Group A

VOCABULARY TO KNOW
repeal; abstain

“The Agreement of the Ladies in this Town, against drinking Tea, until the Revenue Acts are Repealed”

January 31, 1770, Boston Gazette, February 12, 1770

At a time when our invaluable rights and Privelages are attached in an unconstitutional and Most alarming Manner, and as we find we are reproached for not being so ready as could be desired, to lend our assistance, we think it our duty perfectly to concur with the true friends of Liberty, in all the Measures they have taken to save this abused country from Ruin and Slavery: And particularly we join with the very respectable body of Merchants and other inhabitants of the Town, who met in Faneuil Hall the 23rd of this instant in their Resolutions, totally to abstain from the use of Tea: And as the greatest Part of the Revenue arising by virtue of the last Acts, is produced from the Duty paid upon Tea, which revenue is wholly expended to suport the American Board of Commissioners: We the subscribers do strictly engage that we will totally abstain from the use of that Article, (sickness excepted) not only in our respective families: but that we would absolutely refuse it, if it should be offered to us upon any Occasion whatsoever. This agreement we cheerfully come into, as we do hereby oblige ourselves religiously to observe it, till the late Revenue Acts are Repealed.

To this above agreement, the Mistresses of their respective families (only) are Come in, to the number of 100.

N.B. In the above number, the worthy Ladies of the highest Rank and Influence (that could be waited on in so short a time) are included.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Tea Group B: “A Lady’s Adieu to her Tea Table”

**VOCABULARY TO KNOW**

adieu; Tea Act; monopoly; Parliament; rallied (past tense of rally); gentrification; prosperous; gaudy; equipage; detestable

Directions: With your group members, review the vocabulary above. Look up the meaning of the words that you do not know. Read the introduction to the document and the document itself and answer the following questions related to it. Be sure to write key words or phrases from the document to support your answers where necessary.

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<td>Who is the “Lady” of the poem? (Be certain to identify social class and location of speaker.)</td>
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<td>What is the goal of this action?</td>
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<td>What do you think was the purpose of the poem and printing it?</td>
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<td>What do you think was the opinion of the author regarding the “Lady”的 actions?</td>
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Tea Group B

“A Lady’s Adieu to her Tea Table,” Virginia Gazette, January 20, 1774

Farewell the Tea Board, with its gaudy Equipage,
Of Cups and Saucers, Cream Bucket, Sugar Tongs,
The pretty Tea Chest also, lately stor’d
With Hylen, Congo, also and best Double Fine.
Full many a joyous Moment have I sat by ye,
Hearing the Girls’ Tattle, the Old Maids talk Scandal.
And the spruce Coxcomb laugh at – maybe – Nothing.
No more shall I dish out the once lov’d Liquor,
Though now detestable,
Because I’m taught (and I believe it true)
Its Use will fasten slavish Chains upon my Country,
And LIBERTY’s the Goddess I would choose
To reign triumphant in AMERICA.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group C: A Statement of North Carolina Citizens and The Edenton Resolves

**VOCABULARY TO KNOW**
patriot; scorn; loyalist; scoffed; indifferent; resolve; welfare; adherence

Directions: With your group members, review the vocabulary above. Look up the meaning of the words that you do not know. Read the introduction to the document and the document itself and answer the following questions related to it. Be sure to write key words or phrases from the document to support your answers where necessary.

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WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group C

A Statement of North Carolina Citizens, August 22, 1774

Resolved, That we will not directly or indirectly after the first PART of January 1775, import from Great Britain any East India goods, nor any merchandise whatever, medicines excepted nor will we after that PART import from the West Indies, or elsewhere, any East India or British goods or manufactures, nor will we purchase any such articles so imported of any person or persons whatsoever, except such as are now in the country, or may arrive on or before the first PART of January, 1775.

…Resolved, That we will not use, nor suffer East India tea to be used in our families, after the tenth PART of September next, and that we will consider all persons in this Province, not complying with this resolve, to be enemies to their country.

“For The Publick Good”


As we cannot be indifferent on any occasion that appears to affect the peace and happiness of our country, and as it has been thought necessary for the publick good to enter into several particular resolves, by meeting of Members of Deputies from the whole Province, it is a duty that we owe not only to our near and dear relations and connections, but to ourselves who are essentially interested in their welfare, to do everything as far as lies in our power to testify to our sincere adherence to the same; and we do therefore accordingly subscribe this paper as a witness of our fixed intention and solemn determination to do so.

Signed by fifty-one Ladies
[Anonymous]
**WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY**

**Group D:** An excerpt of a letter by Charity Clarke

**VOCABULARY TO KNOW**

abound; Amazons (spelled amozones in the text); swains; Arcadia; banish; sufficiency

Keep in mind that some of the words in the document are spelled irregularly, but can be understood if sounded out.

**Directions:** With your group members, review the vocabulary above. Look up the meaning of the words that you do not know. Read the introduction to the document and the document itself and answer the following questions related to it. Be sure to write key words or phrases from the document to support your answers where necessary.

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<td>Who do you think Charity Clarke is?</td>
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<td>To whom do you think the letter is written? (Be certain to identify social class and location.)</td>
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WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group D

An excerpt of a letter by Charity Clarke.

June 16, 1769.

...don’t think for all this that I prefer England to America; I would not quit my woods & rivers, for all the gay amusements you abound with; you need not talk of sower grapes; I assure you the way of life that would be to me the most agreeable is downright Indian; and if you English folks won’t give us the liberty we ask; instead of a Thalestries at the head of a fighting army of amozones, I will try to gather a number of ladies armed with spining wheels, & attended by dying swains who shall all learn to weave, keep sheep and will retire beyond the reach of arbitrary power; clothed with the work of our hands & feeding on what the country affords, without any of the cares, Luxuries or oppression of an long inhabited country, in short we will found a new arcadia; you imagine we cannot live without your assistance, but I know we can; banish every thing but the necessaries of life; & we will want nothing but what our country will afford; we shall by then be happy; no more slaves to fashion & ceremony; freedom ease content & peace shall be our constant companions, each Father shall be king of his family & no other power shall be admitted; the first who shews any marks of ambition shall with the joint consent of the community be sent back to dwell, with those who prefer slavery and luxury to Liberty and sufficiency . . .

*Thalestris has been written of as a queen of the Amazons, warrior women of Greek mythology.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

WOMEN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR — PART I
Slavery and Luxury, or Liberty and Sufficiency?

“A Society of Patriotic Ladies at Edenton in North Carolina,” March 25, 1775
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

WOMEN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR — PART 2
“Who Was Molly Pitcher?”

VOCABULARY
petition; pension

ACTIVITIES
I. Opening activity: visual analysis
Instruct students to examine carefully the two illustrations of Molly Pitcher and list similarities and differences. What can they conclude about Molly Pitcher from the images?

II. Discuss the opening activity.
Hypothesize who Molly Pitcher was based on the illustrations. What is the significance of the name “Pitcher”? (If necessary point out the bucket in each illustration.)

III. Read description of Molly Pitcher to students.

Thousands of women served in the Continental army during the War for Independence as nurses, cooks, laundresses, ammunition runners and water carriers. It is unknown how many women fired artillery or were in combat positions. The term Molly Pitcher is a generic term referring to any woman who carried water to men on the battlefield and a legendary character of the American Revolutionary War who is a composite of many actual women who served the artillery or enlisted as soldiers disguised as men. Margaret Cochran Corbin, Mary Ludwig Hayes and Deborah Sampson Gannett (originally spelled “Samson”) are the three most widely known individuals whose participation in the War for Independence contributed to the Molly Pitcher legend.


IV. Group activity
A. Introduction
Break your class into groups. Explain that each group will be receiving material about a Molly Pitcher and should designate a reader, materials handler, recorder and reporter. Each group is responsible for closely examining the materials, completing the accompanying tasks and reporting its findings to the class.

B. Groups examine materials and complete tasks.

V. Share learning: Each group reports its findings to the class.

VI. Closing discussion
1. Why did the women need to disguise themselves as men?
2. What attitudes and stereotypes did Americans of the Revolutionary and post-Revolution eras have regarding women in the military?
3. What discrimination and inequality did female soldiers face after the war?
4. How did the women who fought during the War for Independence fulfill and challenge the accepted views of women of the era?
VII. Assessment options:
1. Write a speech on female contributions to the military during the War for Independence that would be presented at a war memorial ceremony.
2. Write an obituary for Mary Cochran Corbin or Deborah Sampson.
3. Design a plaque or memorial to women who served in the Continental army.
4. Respond to one of the quotes on Women and War using the information that you gained from this lesson (additional option: use the voice and perspective of Margaret Cochran Corbin or Deborah Sampson).

VIII. Extension activities:
1. Write a letter as if you are a patriot living during the American Revolution (be sure to determine whether the author is male or female and his/her opinion on women’s proper place in society). Describe how women are involved in the Revolution, the reactions they are receiving and why.
2. Write a journal as if you are a patriot woman who is considering which way(s) to support the Revolution. Evaluate the different forms of participation and select at least one, explaining the reasons for your choice.
3. Draw a cartoon illustrating the participation of women in the American Revolution.
4. Write an essay in which you compare women’s involvement in the American Revolution to that of women today in America’s ‘war on terror.’

Any of the activities should include:
• descriptions of at least three ways in which women were involved in the American Revolution
• analysis of how each form of female involvement conformed to or conflicted with the socially accepted roles of women of the era and how the activity was regarded by others
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

DISCOVERING HISTORY IN TODAY’S NEW YORK TIMES

1. Molly Pitcher is a legendary character of the American Revolutionary War who was a composite of many actual women who served in the artillery or enlisted as soldiers disguised as men. Today, American women are generally accepted in the military. Over the course of a few days, clip photographs in The New York Times of American women in the military and paste them onto a sheet of paper. Create a list of words that describe each of these women. Next, create a modern-day Molly Pitcher who is a composite of these women. Draw a picture of her, modeled after the pictures of the Revolutionary Molly you saw at in class, and write a journal entry from the modern Molly’s perspective. Share what it is like to be a part of the war effort, and reflect on ways in which your experiences are both similar to and different from those of the original Molly Pitcher.

2. The New York Times prints opinion articles called Op-Eds, which provide views on current events written by Times columnists and guest writers. Read several Op-Eds to gain an understanding of their length, format, use of facts to support viewpoints and use of persuasive language. Then, write an Op-Ed to be published in the imaginary newspaper, “The Revolutionary New York Times,” authored by Margaret Cochran Corbin, Mary Ludwig Hayes or Deborah Sampson. In the voice of one of these women who contributed to the Molly Pitcher legend, share your personal experiences and opinions about the ways in which women have played critical roles in the Revolutionary War.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

WOMEN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR — PART 2
“Who Was Molly Pitcher?”

Molly Pitcher firing cannon at Battle of Monmouth, by E. Percy Moran, c. 1911.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

WOMEN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR — PART 2
“Who Was Molly Pitcher?”

“Molly Pitcher,” An Engraving by J.C. Armytage from a painting by Alonzo Chappel., c. 1859.
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group A: Deborah Sampson – Living Down the War

VOCABULARY TO KNOW
petition; augment; maneuver; social convention; swerve; abound; deviant; escapade; chastity

Directions: Read the background information on Deborah Sampson Gannett. Read the excerpts from “Will the Real Molly Pitcher Please Stand Up?” by Emily J. Teipe.

Answer the following questions:

A. What did Deborah do to add to her family’s income after the war?

B. How was this activity a challenge to accepted roles for women at the time?

C. How was a woman joining the military a challenge to accepted female roles of the late 1700’s?

D. How did Deborah Gannett’s performances and her biography show awareness of public criticism of her wartime activities and try to placate (quiet) it?
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group A

Excerpts from: “Will the Real Molly Pitcher Please Stand Up?” ©1999 by Emily J. Teipe.

In 1792, Deborah petitioned the state of Massachusetts for her back pay. ... Her petition was approved by the legislature and signed by Governor John Hancock that same year. She is also very likely the first American woman to appear on the theatrical stage. In an effort to augment her income, Deborah Gannett performed in Boston and New York theaters, charging seven dollars an appearance. In 1802 the Mercury and New England Palladium, a Boston newspaper, advertised that “Mrs. Gannett equipt in complete uniform will go through the Manual Exercise. The whole to conclude with the Song and Chorus of ‘God Save the Sixteen States.’” It was later reported that she had marched through twenty-seven maneuvers, wearing her blue and white uniform, armed with a musket, followed by a speech that was largely an apology for having “swerved from the flowery path of female delicacy.” Breaking social convention in more ways than one, Deborah Sampson’s stage appearances, which predate those of early female abolitionists and feminists, are notable for making her the first American woman to give public lectures to mixed audiences of men and women.

It is significant that Deborah felt it necessary to apologize on stage for having swerved from the path of femininity .... By disguising herself as a man, running away from home alone, and joining the army, Deborah had broken all the rules of social convention. Until the twentieth century, a young lady had only two legitimate reasons for leaving home--her marriage or the death of her parents. It was unthinkable for a single woman to be on her own without risking damage to her reputation. Popular literature abounded with horror tales of female deviants who had suffered the consequences of leaving home and living on their own. They met with the resulting moral deterioration of illegitimate childbirth, prostitution, or even death. Taken from this cultural perspective, Deborah’s biography can best be understood not as an exaggerated account of her military exploits but as an apology to her community. Her biographer Herman Mann emphasized repeatedly that throughout all of Deborah’s wartime escapades, she had maintained her chastity.

Summer 1999, Vol. 31, No. 2
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group B: Letter on Behalf of Deborah Sampson Gannett

VOCABULARY TO KNOW
habit; apparel; effeminate; meanest

Directions:

1. Read the background information on Deborah Sampson Gannett.

2. Read Paul Revere’s letter written on behalf of Deborah Sampson Gannett. Paul Revere was a well respected patriot, a leader of the Sons of Liberty and perhaps best known today for his horseback ride in 1775 warning Americans of approaching British troops. He was also a skilled silversmith who created anti-British engravings, helped supply the patriot army with musket balls and cannons and created the first Continental currency.

3. Answer the following questions:

   A. According to Revere why does Gannett need a pension? Why does she deserve one?

   B. How did Revere view female soldiers prior to meeting Deborah Gannett?

   C. What characteristics about Gannett does Revere stress in arguing that she should be awarded a pension? Why do you think he stressed those attributes?

   D. Why do you think that Gannett sought assistance from Revere in her effort to receive a pension? Why do you think she had still not received a pension 21 years after the war?
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group B

Background information on Deborah Sampson Gannett.

Physical examinations and proof of identity or age were not required to join the Continental Army. On May 20, 1782 Deborah Sampson, 5 foot 7 and a half inches tall, disguised herself as a man and enlisted with the Fourth Massachusetts Regiment under the name Robert Shurtleff. She gave her age as 19 rather than her actual 21 to avoid suspicion over lack of facial hair. She served on patrols and saw combat in upstate New York. She was wounded in a battle near Tarrytown and cared for her own wounds rather than be found out. In 1783, while hospitalized in Philadelphia for a fever, an army surgeon discovered she was a woman. She was never punished for masquerading as a man. On October 23, 1783, she was honorably discharged by General Henry Knox at West Point. After the war she married Benjamin Gannett, had three children and adopted a fourth.

Sources:

“Will the Real Molly Pitcher Please Stand Up?”, by Emily J. Teipe,
Women’s Leadership in American History

Group B

A letter from Paul Revere to Congressman William Eustis

[Image of a letter from Paul Revere to Congressman William Eustis]
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group B

Transcript of a letter from Paul Revere to Congressman William Eustis

Canton, Feby 20 1804

William Eustis, Esq
Member of Congress
Washington

Sir

Mrs. Deborah Gannett of Sharon informs me, that she has inclosed to your Care a petition to Congress in favour of Her. My works for manufactureing of Copper, being a Canton, but a short distance from the Neighbourhood where She lives; I have been induced to enquire her situation, and Character, since she quitted the Male habit, and Soldiers uniform; for the more decent apparel of her own Sex; & Since she has been married and become a Mother. – Humanity, & Justice obliges me to say, that every person with whom I have conversed about Her, and it is not a few, speak of Her as a woman of handsom talents, good Morals, a dutifull Wife and an affectionate parent. – She is now much out of health; She has several Children; her Husband is a good sort of a man, ‘tho of small force in business; they have a few acres of poor land which they cultivate, but they are really poor.

She told me, she had no doubt that her ill health is in consequence of her being exposed when She did a Soldiers duty; and that while in the Army, She was wounded.

We commonly form our Idea of the person whom we hear spoken off, whom we have never seen; according as their actions are described, when I heard her spoken off as a Soldier, I formed the Idea of a tall, Masculine female, who had a small share of understandg, without education, & one of the meanest of her Sex. – When I saw and discoursed with I was agreeably surprised to find a small, effeminate, and converseable Woman, whose education entitled her to a better situation in life.

I have no doubt your humanity will prompt you to do all in Your power to git her some releif; I think her case much more deserving than hundreds to whom Congress have been generous.

I am sir with esteem & respect your humble servant

Paul Revere
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group C: Deborah Sampson – Petitioning for Pensions

VOCABULARY TO KNOW
retroactive; indigent; inventory; relinquish; per annum; render; hasten

Directions:

1. Read the background information on Deborah Sampson Gannett.

2. Read the excerpts from “Will the Real Molly Pitcher Please Stand Up?” by Emily J. Teipe.

3. Answer the following questions:

A. How did the pension that Deborah Gannett received in 1809 compare to that of male veterans?

B. What was Deborah Gannett’s financial condition in 1818?

C. What arguments did Deborah’s husband make demonstrating he deserved a pension for himself after her death?

D. How did Benjamin Gannett’s pension compare to his wife’s? What do you think may account for the difference?
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group C

Deborah Sampson – Petitioning for Pensions

In 1809, after twenty years of petitioning the federal government, Deborah received a disability pension of four dollars a month. (Male veterans claiming disability received five dollars a month.) In large part due to Revere’s intervention, the pension amount was made retroactive to 1803. With this money, the Gannetts were able to build a clapboard home on their acreage and plant a few trees. However, the pensions Deborah received never relieved their poverty or debt. Shortly after receiving the pension, Deborah wrote to thank Paul Revere and asked to borrow ten dollars. When the 1818 pension bill was passed by the Monroe administration, she applied again. The 1818 pension, designed specifically to help indigent veterans, promised government relief to those still struggling thirty-five years after the war. It required applicants to submit a personal inventory of their assets and net worth including real estate and household goods. (The government did not require that the value of clothing and bedding be estimated in the inventory.) In the application, Deborah Gannett, fifty-eight years old and mother of three children, claimed total assets of twenty dollars, which included her clothing. In order to qualify for the new pension, she had to relinquish the former disability pension of forty-eight dollars per annum as well as a state pension of four dollars a month. Deborah received the seventy-six-dollar stipend for about seven years.

After her death in 1827, her husband (believed to be the only widower to file for a pension) could not qualify for benefits since they had not been married until 1784. In 1831 Gannett, aged eighty-three, was sick and impoverished. He depended upon local charity for survival and decided to petition the government for a pension. Gannett’s pension affidavit describes Deborah’s life after the war. He stated that she had been honorably discharged and rendered an accurate account of her military service. He also believed that her discharge papers were lost. According to Mr. Gannett, her war wound, a musket ball lodged in her thigh for forty-six years, “followed her through life and hastened her death.” Another witness, Mr. P. Parsons, testified that Deborah had been unable to perform any labor due to her wound. Consequently, Benjamin had been subjected to heavy medical expenses for more than twenty years before Deborah started receiving a pension. In 1831 Gannett still owed physicians six hundred dollars for her treatment. On March 4, 1831, a special act of Congress awarded Benjamin Gannett a more generous pension than Deborah had ever received. This stipend of eighty dollars a year was to continue “for and during his natural life.” Four years after Deborah Samson Gannett’s death, Congress stated in the pension granted to Benjamin, “the whole history of the American Revolution records no other similar example of female heroism, fidelity and courage.”

Excerpts from: “Will the Real Molly Pitcher Please Stand Up?” ©1999 by Emily J. Teipe
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WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group D: Margaret Cochran Corbin’s Pension

VOCABULARY TO KNOW
artillery; provision; gallant; deplorable; public stores; cannoneer; camp follower; exhume

Directions:
1. Read the excerpts from the Journals of the Continental Congress.
2. Read the background information on Margaret Cochran Corbin.
3. Answer the following questions:
   A. Why was the Board of War discussing Corbin in 1779?

   B. What did the 1779 Congress grant her as a result of her wartime activities? How long was she to receive this?

   C. What is the nature of Corbin’s injury according to the Congressional reports?

   D. What additional award was granted Corbin by the 1780 Congress and why?
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group D

Margaret Cochran Corbin’s Pension

From Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789
TUESDAY, JULY 6, 1779

A letter from the Board of War, was read; Whereupon,

[Note 3: 3 This letter is in the Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 147, III, folio 501.]

Resolved, That Margaret Corbin, who was wounded and disabled in the attack on Fort Washington, whilst she heroically filled the post of her husband who was killed by her side serving a piece of artillery, do receive, during her natural life, or the continuance of the said disability, the one-half of the monthly pay drawn by a soldier in the service of these states; and that she now receive out of the public stores, one complete suit of cloaths, or the value thereof in money.

Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789
TUESDAY, JULY 25, 1780

A report from the Board of War was read; Whereupon,

At a Board of War, July 24, 1780

Present Col. Pickering, Mr. Peters, Col. Grayson, Genl. Scott, Genl. Ward

The board having received information that Margaret Corbin (for whom Congress made provision in their act of July 6. 1779 for her gallant conduct in serving a piece of artillery when her husband was killed by her side) still remains in a deplorable situation in consequence of her wound, by which she is deprived of the use of one arm, and is in other respects much disabled and probably will continue a cripple during her life, Beg leave to report

Resolved, That Margaret Corbin receive annually, during her natural life, one compleat suit of cloaths out of the public stores, or the value thereof in money, in addition to the provision made for her by the act of Congress of July 6, 1779.

[Note 2: 2 This report is in the Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 147, IV, folio 460.]
WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Group D

Margaret Cochran Corbin’s Pension

Background information on Margaret Cochran Corbin

Margaret Cochran was born in 1751 in Franklin, Pennsylvania. In 1772 she married John Corbin, who four years later joined the First Company of Pennsylvania Artillery and became a cannoneer. Margaret, like thousands of other women, became a camp follower.

On November 16, 1776, Fort Washington on Manhattan Island was attacked by Hessian mercenaries fighting for the British. Margaret assisted handling ammunition and cleaning and loading the cannon. When John was fatally shot, Margaret took over firing the cannon until she herself was shot, seriously wounded in the chest, jaw and left arm (which was almost severed) and captured. She was disabled the remainder of her life due to her wounds. She lived and worked near the U.S. Military Academy at West Point until she died in 1800. In 1926 the Daughters of the American Revolution had her remains exhumed and reburied in West Point Cemetery.

Sources:
“Margaret Corbin Circle”, Your Park, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_your_park/historical_signs/hs_historical_sign.php?id=11275
