FEMALE CAMP FOLLOWERS WITH REGULAR ARMY FORCES DURING THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

by

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(ABSTRACT)

Female camp followers throughout history have followed troops into the field fulfilling supply and labor needs which the military structure could not. This pattern began to change during the American Revolution as governments and military commanders tightened their control on the military. Emerging army patterns and new attitudes concerning women acted to discourage the informal reliance on women and to encourage a more formal and controllable reliance on military units. By examining women with regular army groups, a stronger understanding of these women's lives and choices becomes possible.

This study examines the number of women involved, the reasons they chose to follow military troops, the life they found with the military, and military commanders' attempts to control women and their behavior.

Between five thousand and twenty thousand women traveled with military forces during the Revolution for reasons
of economic need, a sense of duty, and love. They cleaned, cooked, nursed, and helped in gun crews for occasional pay, rations, and the chance to stay with their husbands, sons, and male friends. Disease, childbirth complications, and violence within and outside camp claimed their lives. Meanwhile, military leaders issued orders against straggling, riding the wagons, looting, and the illegal sale of alcohol in an effort to control the women's behavior. Such efforts only achieved intermittent success.
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# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS  iv  

INTRODUCTION  1  

Chapter One: Military Personnel  7  

Chapter Two: Life with the Army  26  

Chapter Three: The Military Perspective  58  

AFTERWORD  72  

NOTES  81  

SELECTED SOURCES  97  

VITA  104
INTRODUCTION

The vast number of people who followed pre-modern armies have been lost. These people, both male and female, sold goods and services to soldiers. Camp followers' true nature and identity have been obscured by the realities and expectations associated with modern armies -- especially American armies. In the twentieth century, while there are civilian workers connected to the military, the American military has clearly defined rules, regulations, and procedures for dealing with both the fighting and supply needs of an army; however, during the American Revolution, the focus of this thesis, camp followers generally stepped in to fulfill needs which the military was unable or unwilling to address. Many camp followers acted as a necessary support system for the military.

Of course, camp followers during the Revolution also caused problems. Being for the most part unofficial members of military forces, military commanders had difficulty
controlling their behavior. When the presence of camp followers conflicted with military goals or ran counter to official priorities, camp followers, females in particular, provoked damaging comments from officers. Class expectations in regard to proper female behavior differed. Since officers usually came from the upper class and camp followers from the lower, conflicts between officers and camp followers occurred because of these differences.

During the Revolution, large numbers of women joined American troops. Women connected to British and German regiments came with their men across the ocean and from the American colonies as well. Most camp followers were women who carried their domestic responsibilities into the field. Children traveled with them and as the Revolution extended from days into years, yet more children arrived. Since the Revolution was fought on American soil, some camp followers were trying to escape opposing military troops and the dangers common to war. Some camp followers, male civilians in particular, supplied the military with goods or acted as wagon masters. While few officers' wives were seen as traditional camp followers, Lucy Knox, Baroness von Riedesel, Lady Acland, and several other women stayed with the military for significant portions of the war.

One reason women disappeared into the background is the lack of records they left. Most information regarding
them must be pieced together from officers' orderly books and diaries. The former reflected poorly on camp followers since, like court records, they most often reported misbehavior and attempts to correct perceived problems. Diaries rarely mentioned women since they tended to ignore the commonplace for the unusual. They also concentrated on battles and not on camp life. The two most valuable sources of information on women with military regiments during the American Revolution are Baroness von Riedesel's journal and Sarah Osborn's pension application. The first records the experiences of a Brunswick General's wife. The second is a ten page dictated account of an American sergeant's wife's experiences.¹

The best secondary source for this topic is Walter Hart Blumenthal's *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution* published in 1952. It provides invaluable information on women camp followers; however, the work is dated, ignores issues of class, and suffers from the underlying premise that women camp followers should be apologized for. This closing statement from the first section is a telling one: "Let us draw the veil of compassion over the memory of these nameless women and call them wartime wives and brides of the barracks and the bivouacs."² Since Blumenthal's book, several other secondary works dealing with the American Revolution have added to our understanding of this conflict and women's
role in it.

The next three chapters draw heavily from four works which appeared from 1979 to 1981. One of the best is Sylvia R. Frey's *The British Soldier in America: A Social History of Military Life in the Revolutionary Period*. While she does not focus on women, her work includes valuable information on women with British forces. Linda Kerber's *Women of the Republic: Intellect & Ideology in Revolutionary America* and Mary Beth Norton's *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* are rich in information on women of this period and the options they had during the Revolution as well as the war's effects upon their lives. Charles Royster's *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* captures the conflict between Revolutionary ideals, civilian life, and military realities. Despite a preoccupation with male soldiers, it does introduce women and provides information on camp followers. Although these four works do not focus on military women, the information they provide is invaluable to understanding camp followers. Another work, *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* edited by Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, provides detailed information on several aspects of women's lives including inheritance, realities of race, and changing laws. Linda K. Kerber introduces this book with "'History Can Do It No Justice': Women and the
Reinterpretation of the American Revolution", an article which includes six pages on female camp followers; however, the anthology as a whole does not focus on women associated with the military.³

This study is a re-examination of women with regular military forces. It is incomplete. More work on this topic is definitely needed, but hopefully my work provides a clearer understanding of these women, their role and reasons for following troops, and the life they lived. On the American side, I have focused on Washington's army because of the availability of records and because his was the single largest military force. On the British side, the armies of Generals Howe and Burgoyne receive the closest scrutiny.

In the first chapter, the number of women with large bodies of both American and British troops are discussed. The second part of chapter one discusses the reasons women followed military forces. These reasons included duty, love, fear, and economic concerns.

Chapter Two examines the work women performed and the living conditions they found with the military. Work such as washing, cooking, and nursing were familiar tasks performed under harsh conditions. Carrying water to guns and standing as camp watch gave women additional work. The living conditions they found and the rewards they received for their labor reflected military realities and
the value or lack of value placed upon "women's work".

The last chapter deals with the problems military leaders faced with women. Whenever military needs and commanders' expectations clashed with women's activities, ways to deal with these differences had to be found. Sometimes orders designed to correct behavior were enough, and sometimes women were punished. Since Revolutionary ideology was hostile to the reality of a regular army and upper-class values conflicted with the reality of female camp followers, how military leaders and female camp followers interacted highlights differences in ideology and class.
Chapter One: Military Personnel

During the American Revolution, women and their children accompanied American and British military troops. The number of women remained low in relation to the number of men. Although women and men shared reasons for joining the military, some reasons, such as economic necessity, drew women more strongly than men.

Male Numbers

At the beginning of the Revolution, the American population stood at 2,500,000. Even through this figure included 500,000 black slaves, Congress predicted a possible army of 75,000; however, the American regular army never rose above 19,000 men and officers. On November 4, 1775, Congress authorized a new army of 20,372 men. In fact, this strength fell to 10,000 or below on many occasions. The weather, availability of supplies, family needs, and morale affected the number of men willing
to enlist and the number willing to stay with the army. A December 22, 1776 Return of the Army camped on the Delaware shows 10,106 men. Three thousand three hundred fifty seven of these men were sick, absent or on furlough. The spring following the 1777-1778 Valley Forge camp found the army with only 5,000 soldiers. One thousand seven hundred men made up the Pennsylvania Line, the largest division in the Continental army, in the winter of 1780-1781. This was approximately one third of the army in the field.

At other times the Continental Army, which routinely maintained fewer men than the total in militia units, benefited from an influx of enlistments. For example, in early 1780, 10,400 Americans faced the British on the North River, now called the Hudson River. This was partly the result of the French fleet's arrival which boosted hopes of American victory. In short, the number of Americans in the field fluctuated widely and bore only passing resemblance to the Congress's calls for troops. Most Americans preferred citizen soldiers, militia men, who stayed in their own states and could return to their homes following battles. Enlistment numbers reflected this preference.

Establishing a definite number for American personnel is a difficult task. Unlike the British, the Americans created their military as the war unfolded. Although
they followed some guidelines already in existence, such as the militia system, they had to decide on a regular army system. Records are unreliable because of the lack of a set system and poor record keeping. The most difficult problem to resolve is the deliberate irregularities which resulted from corruption. Although 231,950 separate male enlistments occurred, this number is not an accurate reflection of the number of men serving since it can not take into account people who enlisted multiple times under false names, enlisted after deserting from another unit, or graft practiced by officers. Bounty jumpers enlisted in various units under different names to gain additional bounties. Soldiers were retained on ration and pay lists longer than their time with the army justified so that the officer in charge of the list could draw the missing person's rations and pay.  

British troops always outnumbered American troops. Great Britain at the beginning of the American Revolution had a troop strength of 48,647. These troops were divided between English and Irish forces. In addition, over the course of the Revolution a total of 29,166 Germans served Britain. In fact, from 1779 to the end of the Revolution, German soldiers outnumbered British soldiers in Canada. In America, with German and Loyalist additions, Britain maintained an average troop strength of slightly more than 39,000.
Female Numbers

Walter Hart Blumenthal in *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution* estimated that a few thousand women traveled with the armies. Until recently, his estimate stood unchallenged. Today historians such as Linda Grant DePauw believe that his estimate is too low. She estimates that up to twenty thousand women traveled with military forces. This figure is based upon quotas set after the war and total male enlistments.\(^9\) The true figure probably lies somewhere in-between.

Few records listing the number of women officially with the army survive. Those not officially with the army left even fainter trails. Figures for women in the British army are easier to calculate because the British army generally followed a quota system in regard to women. Two to six women, depending on the year and commanding officer, could officially travel with each company of approximately fifty to one hundred men. General Washington stood opposed to a fixed quota. Two reasons were given in explanation, and both were valid. Women consumed much needed supplies and slowed the army's march, thus they were a burden; however, Washington feared that men would desert if their women could not follow the army. The second reason concerned the women's economic need. Quotas would have caused unnecessary hardship. Some soldier's families had no economic means other than what they could find with
the army. In a letter, Washington gave the following as an example of a time when a quota would not have been helpful: "The regiments of [New] York, which, in part, are composed of Long Islanders and others who fled with their families when the enemy obtained possession of those places and have no other means of subsistence. The cries of these women; the sufferings of their children, and the complaints of the husbands would admit of no alternative."\textsuperscript{10}

Washington's General Orders set a quota at the war's end of one woman to fifteen men.\textsuperscript{11} However, a fixed quota was not established until an Act of Congress set one on March 16, 1802, after the Revolution and Washington's death. Each company of thirty to fifty men would be allowed four women. Each would receive one ration and so would all necessary nurses and hospital matrons.\textsuperscript{12} Before this decision, the number of women present depended upon the commanding officers and circumstances.

In the 1780-1781 winter 100 women and children stayed near the Pennsylvania Line. The return made near New Windsor in June 1781 showed 137 women on authorized rations. The January 24, 1783 Return near West Point gave 405 women.\textsuperscript{13} These figures show that during one of the worst winters of the war, the 1780-1781 winter when the army number dropped to 1,700, a female-male ratio of about 1 to 17 existed. They also indicate that the number of women following the army gradually increased.
Women following the American army can be divided into three categories. They could be officers' wives, soldiers' wives and other family, or others such as temporary refugees and prostitutes. A few visitors, business women, and petitioners came to military camps from nearby towns and returned to those towns as soon as they completed their business.

Officers' wives rarely stayed with the military during actual campaigns. Most joined their husbands during winter encampments and then returned to their homes when campaigns began. Mrs. Martha Washington, Lady Kitty Stirling, Mrs. Knox, and Mrs. Greene spent the 1778-1779 winter at Valley Forge. Of this group, only Mrs. Knox continued with the army. She stayed with the military when she could and stayed near American headquarters at other times.¹⁴

The two best known women with the American army were Sarah Osborn and Margaret Corbin. Both soldiers' wives, they traveled with the Continental army for a significant portion of the Revolution. Mrs. Osborn spent over three years with the military -- time which included the surrender at Yorktown. Mrs. Corbin became famous at the Battle of Fort Washington where she took her husband's place in an artillery unit after he was injured.¹⁵

Prostitutes and other women without legal or at least binding connections, such as a blood relationship, to specific men did not remain long with the American army.
Relatively few women without strong claims attempted to travel with soldiers. Those that did make such an attempt found most commanders unwilling to continence their presence. Jean-Francois-Louis, comte de Clermont-Crevecoeur, a first lieutenant in the Auxonne Regiment, Royal Corps of Artillery wrote on August 11, 1781: "On 11 August a woman was arrested who had come from New York on the pretext of seeking her father who, she claimed, was a soldier in the American army; but doubtless her intentions were not so pure. She was put in a safe place to rest from her journey, which she had made on foot."16 Generals Ward and Washington both issued orders to investigate the presence of women and to discourage "lewd" women.

Unlike the American army, the British army had fixed quotas on the number of women permitted to each company; however, this number depended upon the generals. From 1776 through 1777, General Howe permitted six women per company. General Burgoyne allowed three per company in Canada; and from 1778, General Clinton allowed two per company.17

Walter Hart Blumenthal's estimate places five thousand women with the British troops in America. Moreover, up to twelve thousand children traveled with the British over the war years.18 This was despite the fact that no children of common soldiers sailed from England. When
sailing from England, the government placed strict control upon the number of women allowed to sail with the troops. The British government attempted to conserve space on transport ships, prevent unnecessary cost, and decrease problems for the army in America by limiting the number of women and children present. Once the troops reached America, women and children from the rebelling colonies joined military units, thereby increasing the total number of women and children with the British army. Births in the regiments also increased the number of children with the army.

In January of 1776, Lord George Germain, British Secretary of State for America, sent 5,992 troops to America. These troops constituted eight military regiments at full strength. Each contained 677 men, 60 women, and 12 servants. That was an approximate ratio of 1 woman to 11 men. Fraser's Corps with the 42nd Highlanders followed in February. The former held 2,298 men and the latter 1,168. Fraser's Corps had 160 women and the 42nd Highlanders brought 80. Both had a female to male ratio of approximately 1 to 14. A March 17, 1776 return gives 2,213 men for the First Division of Brunswickers from Stade. Seventy-seven women sailed with them creating a ratio of approximately 1 to 29.19

When the British evacuated Boston in March, 667 women and 553 children left with half the troops.20 Some of
these women and children were temporary refugees who left the army when they found safer positions. Others stayed with the army. A regimental breakdown shows the 22nd Regiment with 87 women, 61 children; the 25th, 80 women, 49 children; the 40th, 107 women, 85 children; the 43rd, 92 women, 71 children; the 52nd, 84 women, 100 children; the 63rd, 96 women, 64 children; and the Artillery, 121 women, 123 children. In New York of 1779, 1,550 women and 968 children depended upon approximately 4,000 British troops for housing. In 1781 when 1,900 German prisoners were moved from Charlotsville to Pennsylvania 300 women and children had to be moved with them.

British women fell into the same categories as American women. Officers' wives usually did not travel with the British army during campaigns. Baroness von Riedesel and Lady Acland did. The Baroness wrote her own memoirs which stand as one of the few personal records left by a woman with an army during the American Revolution. Her account provides important information on her experience, the presence of women, and attitudes of that time.

One soldier's wife steps out of obscurity when she aids the Baroness during a battle. While she personally left no record of her actions during this battle, by drawing the Baroness's attention, she gained mention in the Baroness's account. The women with both armies
are usually found in the personal accounts of male military
members and not through their own writings.

A few mistresses, prostitutes, and women other than
wives found room with the British army. Personal records
left by British soldiers, Sergeant Lamb among others,
make a strong case for the difference between official
policy and actual numbers. Mrs. Loring became infamous
as the mistress of General Howe. While she was the current
wife of a British Commissary General of Prisoners, a post
given to him by Howe, she and Howe became well known
through their association and through their gambling. 24
Other officers caused more scandal than fame.

The number of soldiers and women with the armies
fluctuated widely over the Revolution's course. Both
armies suffered from losses due to death from disease
and battle. Capture and desertion caused additional loses.
The Americans in particular suffered from recruitment
problems. Personnel numbers rose in summer and fell during
the winters. Thomas Paine made the following impassioned
statement: "These are the times that try men's souls.
The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in
this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but
he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of
man and woman." 25 This excerpt from "Common Sense", Mr.
Paine's first of sixteen pamphlets beginning December
19, 1776, could be taken literally and metaphorically
because people left the army in greater numbers at certain times. Winter was one such time, as were the dark days following a military defeat.

In 1777 there was a ratio of approximately one woman per every eight British soldiers. Among the German soldiers a ratio of about one woman per every thirty soldiers existed. By 1781 this ratio would decrease until there would be about one to every four and a half British soldiers and one to every fifteen German soldiers. The Continental army figures align more closely to German figures than British figures. At the beginning of the war, few women traveled with the Continental army. As the war continued and disruption increased, more women began to follow military troops.

An absolute number of men, women, and children present with both armies is less important than the evidence that women and children were present. The figures in the Returns mentioned above and the Washington quota make clear the presence of women and hint toward a difference between the Continental and British army in America. American leaders were more ambivalent toward women with the military than the British. This may in part be explained because British military leaders had to deal with greater numbers of women than the American leaders. In addition, British leaders had a less idealized vision of proper female behavior or at least their standards
for upper and lower class women did not match.

Reasons for Joining

Reasons for joining the military varied and often overlapped. Both men and women joined for reasons of patriotism, a sense of duty, and economics. Differences between men and women determined which of these and other reasons such as the craving for excitement, love, and family concerns held sway. Some reasons affected men more visibly than women. One example of those kinds of reasons is patriotism. Economic survival was a reason more clearly pressing for women.

As Charles Royster eloquently points out in A Revolutionary People at War, for Americans patriotism played a strong role in people's willingness to remain with the army year after year. Officers and enlisted men both lacked the basic necessities promised by the civilian government. Officers who entered hoping to improve their financial and social position used their own money to survive when military supplies failed to appear. Public approval and respect which officers saw as their due for the most part failed to materialize; yet many stayed with the army. 27

While numerous people in the eighteenth century felt that men and women's duty differed, both genders felt the pull of duty in their choice to join or follow military
troops. For Americans, virtue became an important issue during the American Revolution since Revolutionaries believed that the presence or absence of virtue would determine their fate. If the people lacked virtue, the Revolution would fail. For Americans, virtue became an important issue during the American Revolution since Revolutionaries believed that the presence or absence of virtue would determine their fate. If the people lacked virtue, the Revolution would fail. According to upper and middle class ideology and class values, virtuous women displayed several characteristics which made them unsuitable military people. They were delicate, modest, emotional, and flexible. Virtuous women did not belong in a military camp. They fulfilled their patriotic duty by remaining home and caring for their children. General Washington supported this vision of patriotic women in a February 13, 1781 letter to Anne Francis which portrayed patriotic women as women who admired the military and supported their country quietly while suffering bravely. The battle field belonged to men. General Washington's attitude supported the army pattern forming which called for a separation between soldiers and women. Women who followed their men into military camps did not agree with these ideas. In general, female camp followers did not come from the upper and middle classes nor did they have the economic means to remain in their homes with their men absent.

Unlike most women, officers and many soldiers keenly felt that duty demanded they serve with the army. An American chaplain, Hezekiah Smith, wrote his wife, "The
prospect of usefulness in the glorious cause of our
country, joined with that of usefulness to souls, inclines
me to yield. . ." 32  Contrast this vision of duty with
Baroness von Riedesel's. In a letter to her mother the
Baroness wrote, "I could not endure the thought of
separating myself from you, especially for so long a time;
and yet, the thought that you begged me -- nay, commanded
me to remain here, made me shudder. Yet to remain, when
the best, the tenderest of husbands allowed me to follow
him, would have been impossible. Duty, love and conscience
forbade it. It is the duty of a wife to leave all and
follow her husband. My love for him is known to you,
as well as his for me and the children." 33  Many women,
including Baroness von Riedesel, felt their duty was to
perform whatever service that was in their husbands' best
interest.

In civilian life, women had first claim on their
men's loyalty and service. Women who, bravely or bitterly,
sent their men to the army gave up part of this claim
on their men. 34  Men who deserted or left the military
when their women asked them to return home may have been
honoring these earlier claims. Women traveling with their
military men found a compromise between relinquishing
their claim and refusing to allow their men to join or
remain in the army and fulfill their public duty.

One natural human impulse is to maintain a family
or community unit. In the militia, those bearing arms remained firmly connected to the civilian population.\footnote{35} In fact militia members strengthened their ties to the civilian population through political activity because they acted as a political police force. Regular army service differed from militia service. Soldiers and their women recognized that difference. Regular army people weakened their ties to their own communities. By joining military companies formed in their home towns and by taking their women with them, American men attempted to maintain civilian ties. As an additional benefit, American military people who maintained family and community ties surrendered less control of their lives to the feared standing army.

Some women tried to stay near their men for the combination of maintaining ties, love, and duty. The Baroness, Lucy Knox, Martha Washington and others stayed with their men as much as possible. The Baroness stayed near her husband throughout most of his Canadian tour and his captivity in America. Martha Washington joined her husband in his Valley Forge quarters and wherever she could when he established a base. During his marches, she cared for their home in his absence.

All women did not feel the pull of love or duty in that way. Sara Osborn was one who did not. She was present at Yorktown with Washington. Her 1837 pension application is one of the few records left by women who
personally traveled with either army. In it, she told how she came to be with the American army. Her husband enlisted as a sergeant without her knowledge. He then insisted she accompany him. Mrs. Osborn did not feel bound to travel with her husband and she resisted following him. Pressure from Mr. Osborn grew strong and promises by his commanding officer became more reassuring. In the end, she obeyed her husband and traveled with him. So even though women could not be drafted into the military, they could be coerced into coming with their men.  

When the craving for excitement was combined with a sense of duty, people willingly joined the military. Peer pressure also increased people's desire to join. Joseph Martin Plumb wrote that soldiers would come back talking about their adventures and that his friends were leaving to join the army and so he decided to do the same. Women, such as Deborah Sampson, who disguised themselves as men in order to enlist must have felt the lure of adventure. No one will ever know how much the desire for excitement affected the men and women who joined the regular military during the American Revolution.

Most people had to have strong reasons for taking the risk of following an army. Everyone knew that camp life was hard and dangerous. One group willing to brave the dangers of camp life was slaves. Blacks of both sexes
flocked to the British army seeking the freedom British agents promised. On June 30, 1779 the British General Henry Clinton threatened Black males "taken in arms" with resale and promised them freedom for joining the British military. Many more responded than the British expected or desired. 38

Refugees also gambled upon the military's willingness to shelter them. As armies marched through areas, they drove people in front of them. When Americans gained control of an area, Loyalists hoping to escape persecution often tried to find a place with the British army. The same held true for Patriots when the British gained control of an area. Many Americans fled to quieter areas especially if they had family in the country. Margaret Morris, a widow living near Philadelphia, wrote in her journal on December 6, 1776: "On my journey home, I was told the inhabitants of our little town [Burlington, N.J.] were going in haste into the country, and that my nearest neighbours were already removed." 39 She herself remained with her children in Burlington. Others, lacking the resources and connections to relocate in the country or the faith to remain in their homes, gambled upon their reception by the army.

Economics played a key role for those joining the army. Both men and women felt the strength of this reason but in different ways. In Britain, the men who enlisted
in the army, while not the dregs of society for the most part, lacked a secure place in civilian society. The army provided a place secure from economic uncertainty by providing a guaranteed income, food, shelter, and clothing. The income might be delayed, the food poor, the shelter scanty; however, none of these were much different than what they would have found in a steady low level civilian job. As a bonus, the army offered medical care, postage, and leave.\textsuperscript{40}

The American government offered all these except the postage; but, they also offered soldiers bounties of money and land for joining. States competed against each other for recruits driving the bounties higher.\textsuperscript{41} Joseph Martin Plumb speaks of choosing the most attractive offer. Men of moderate property tended to stay in militia units.\textsuperscript{42} Those like Plumb sold their services to militia men, searching for draft replacements.\textsuperscript{43}

While American men may have joined the Continental army for economic gain, women would have traveled with the army for survival. Few women on either side found a place on official ration lists. The majority of women had to share their men's pay and rations or find some means of income such as selling labor, skills, stolen goods, or themselves. Women looking for economic gain would have found the British army and her German allies a better choice. Their men received more to share as
well as having more money to spend on goods and services.44

The reasons women followed military troops varied. Sometimes the women themselves might not have been able to say which was the most important reason they stayed with the armies. Clearly the most common and strongest reason was economic need; however, the need to escape opposing forces, satisfy their sense of duty, and maintain families drew women into both armies' camps. Since both the American and British armies discouraged women without ties to a particular man or company from following the army, most women had strong personal ties to a particular man or unit. These ties ensured women some level of care and created concerns for the military leadership.
Chapter Two: Life with the Army

Once a woman became a camp follower, she was forced to make adjustments. She accepted duties -- many of the same she held in civilian life, as well as a few only found in the military. Rewards and hardships came with these duties. Military needs often determined women's living conditions, including their clothing, shelter, food, money, and leisure activities. Women sharing their men's military life also shared dangers most did not risk as civilians.

Duties

In keeping with traditional expectations, women usually performed tasks thought of as women's work. The separation between women's work and men's work was such that men only reluctantly performed tasks which they considered women's work. For example, Brissot de Warville, a French traveler, noted in 1788 that a friend did not keep poultry, have spinning done, or make cheese even though he needed all
these things done. His friend's reason was that he did not have a wife. In frontier areas, women and men occasionally aided each other in their work. Women helped in field work and men helped with knitting and milking; however, when in 1778 a doctor from Dorchester, Massachusetts saw Pennsylvania German women working in the field, his surprise proves that this practice was not common to his own experience.¹

Since women performed valuable services both during peace and war, this created hardships for armies not having a sufficient number of women. To maintain the health, efficiency, and appearance of an army, the military needed people who would cook, clean, wash, and sew. Female responsibilities in civilian life included washing, sewing, cooking, cleaning, child care, and poultry and dairy operations. During the war, neither the British nor the Continental army had units whose assigned duties were to take care of such tasks. Washing and uniform repair were unreliable since they depended upon men themselves or the availability of local people willing to do the job. Soldiers did their own cooking or found someone to cook for them. Cleaning, including personal hygiene, was men's responsibility. They frequently neglected this duty unless forced by a commander's orders.²

Believing that laundry should be done by women, American soldiers would send clothing home if possible.
If not possible, men would wear their clothes until they fell off their bodies. 3 When women stayed with a company, both commanders and the women themselves expected women to be useful. Sarah Osborn's pension application contained this statement: "Deponent took her stand just back of the American tents, say about a mile from the town, and busied herself washing, mending, and cooking for the soldiers, in which she was assisted by the other females..."4 Those who could afford to hired someone to wash for them. This advertisement appeared in the June 28, 1776 issue of the Virginia Gazette: "Women who can wafh[sic], mend, & c. will meet with good encouragment by applying to the 3d regiment."5 On January 8, 1780, Colonel Ebenezer Huntington wrote to his brother: "I am now endeavoring to hire some Woman to live in Camp to do the Washing for myself and some of the Officers, th'o I am aware that many Persons will tell the Story to my disadvantage. But be that as it may, I am determin'd on it, if I can hire one on better terms than hiring my Washing."6 His need for clean clothes at a reasonable rate outweighed his fear of being thought to keep a mistress.

Sarah Osborn both washed and cooked for the American army at Yorktown immediately before the surrender. This recollection comes from her pension application:
"On one occasion when deponent was thus employed carrying in provisions, she met General Washington, who asked her if she "was not afraid of the cannonballs?"

"She replied, "No, the bullets would not cheat the gallows," that "It would not do for the men to fight and starve too.""7

Since there was no unit to cook for the men, they would go hungry during battles unless women such as Mrs. Osborn cooked while battles raged.

The American army keenly felt the lack of women's services and their presence. Bathing, while looked upon as dangerous when done in excess, was understood to decrease occurrences of illness; however, without women present men avoided it when possible.8 When Washington began ordering soldiers to bathe, many took advantage of this order to avoid regular duties and to shock civilian visitors by bathing while on duty and by bathing where they would be seen by visitors.9

Camps reflected most soldiers' lack of discipline and understanding of field sanitation. Washington began issuing orders concerning camp cleanliness as early as July 14, 1775 at Cambridge: "As the Health of an Army principally depends upon Cleanliness; it is recommended in the strongest manner, to the Commanding Officer of Corps,
Posts and Detachments, to be strictly diligent, in ordering the Necessaries to be filled up once a Week, to be swept daily, and all Offal and Carrion, near the camp, to be immediately buried; The Officers commanding in Barracks, or Quarters, to be answerable that they are swept every morning, and all Filth & Dirt removed from about the houses. . ."\(^{10}\) Having women present did not guarantee a clean and organized camp. Blumenthal perceived and described camps in this way: "At Hackensack, early in the war, pigs rooted in the piles of waste, women kept chickens, and the area was overrun with trulls. In disciplined camps most females sought to keep their men neat, but even here some threw refuse anywhere, and women and children neglected to use the privies, as indicated by occasional orders to enforce such use."\(^{11}\) This occurred because most American women were just as unaware of field sanitation as their men and because they were even less disciplined than their men. Another alleged reason for camp disorder was the high percentage of rural people and lower classes who did not have very high standards of cleanliness.\(^{12}\) The most telling reason was the American army's need for more women evenly distributed among the army units to do the tasks that women performed.

The British army officers with their greater access to money hired washers for their laundry more often than did their American counterparts. British records show
women receiving set amounts for washing shirts, which indicates that hiring women to wash was a standard practice. In general, the British and German troops depended upon their own women for washing, mending, cooking, and cleaning just as American troops did.  

One of the most important duties women performed was nursing. In times of need, the British called for camp women to care for the sick. During the British occupation of Ticonderoga, for example, a July order called for two women from each Regiment. In both armies, women nursed their own men as needed and occasionally served in military hospitals. American and British military leaders welcomed females as nurses almost without reservation. Throughout the war American military hospitals remained understaffed. Both militaries usually insisted that women on ration roles serve in the hospitals when asked. If they refused, the commanding officers struck them from the roles.

British attempts to discourage soldiers from marrying resulted in regulations that penalized soldiers' wives for working in hospitals where their husbands were patients. Even if wives did not resign at such times, their pay was cut or discontinued. British regulations forced women to choose between nursing their men and losing much needed income.

Scavenging was one way women increased their income. Lower-class women routinely gathered wood, grain, food,
pieces of clothing, and other items as civilians. During the war, they continued this activity. When women visited the battlefields looking for missing husbands, lovers, and relatives, they often searched the dead. These women sought valuable items left behind. To both friend and enemy, they must have resembled vultures as they picked over the dead and wounded for clothes, money, salable items, and military supplies such as ammunition.¹⁷

Women not only scavenged on the battlefield, they looted the surrounding countryside. Sometimes the line between scavenging and looting was fine and easily crossed. Women stole food for themselves and their families. They stole clothing and other items not provided by the military, and they stole anything else they could. Many civilians considered them worse than the soldiers they followed.¹⁸

Men had many reasons for wanting their own women present in camp. A woman's first duty was to her husband or mate. He benefited the most from her labor and nursing skills. This was no small thing since just providing a meal was a large concern. Since women generally exercised nursing responsibilities in civilian life, they were sometimes better trained than many of the surgeons' mates who cared for the military wounded or ill. If not more skilled, most women were at least more compassionate.¹⁹ Moreover, with his wife present, a soldier did not have to worry about how she was doing at home. He could see
for himself if she were well or ill. He had access to any money she obtained by working for others. At this time, a woman did not own her own wages, her husband did. Regardless of how much or how little money it was, the husband controlled it legally. Naturally the presence of his wife guaranteed him a sexual partner.

Women providing sexual favors made up a percentage of those following both armies. Prostitutes included high-class mistresses of generals, those who set up in public houses near army camps, and those traveling with the army who were willing to trade sex for money, food, or goods. These women pointed to an interesting difference between the Continental and British armies. The British army seemed to have more women providing sexual services and prostitutes were kept more openly. General Friedrich von Wurmb remarked on General Howe and his men at Philadelphia: "We have parties and gamble, whereby every night 700 and 800 pounds are lost and won. Gen. Howe also gambles. Each Monday there is a play. The actors are English officers and their mistresses." General Howe's mistress, Mrs. Loring, made the General and herself notorious throughout the colonies and England. Rumors circulated suggesting that Mr. Loring, an American-born British commissioner, gained his position though his wife's relationship to the General. Some rumors even blamed Mrs. Loring for Howe's defeats. Songs and ditties spread Howe
and Loring's fame, spoke of their excesses, and chided Howe for spending more time in Mrs. Loring's bed than preparing for battle. Having a mistress was not the problem. Making a public spectacle caused the scandal.

Not all British or German officers followed the practice of keeping mistresses or approved of their officers visiting public houses. On April 16, 1777 General von Riedesel wrote: "After my return, I celebrated the queen's birth day by giving a great dinner, a ball and a supper; and since then, following the example of the other generals, I have continued to give a supper and a ball every week; partly to gain the affection of the inhabitants of this place, and partly, also, to provide innocent pleasures for the officers, and thus keep them from visiting public houses and bad company." This attitude echoed the attitudes held by most American officers. Because of both practical and moral concerns, most military leaders discouraged contact between "bad women" and troops under their command. General Artemas Ward of the Continental army had two such women drummed out of camp on February 10, 1776. He was not alone in closely examining the women with the army. Washington called for counts (official totals of the number of women with the army) to be made on several occasions. Colonel Israel Hutchinson sent men to investigate a June 29, 1776 report of disorderly women living in the deserted barracks at Dorchester. When they
found and determined them to be the women and children
of garrison men, he ordered them not to have soldiers
present at night. Of course, by linking virtue, including
what they perceived as proper female virtue, with victory,
American leaders had a strong incentive to control the
presence of 'immoral women'.

Women with the armies performed a few distinctly
military duties. At times when camps were established
and then the men left camp to engage in battle, women stood
watch. This afforded some security for a company's meager
belongings and freed more men for battle. Leaders
occasionally used their presence to misrepresent their
military strength to the opposing force. Lt. Col. Simcoe,
the commander of the Queen's Rangers, used the women in
his unit to great effect on at least one occasion. On June
2, 1781 in pursuit of Baron Steuben, the British found
themselves outnumbered. Lt. Col. Simcoe decided to attempt
trickery. The following is taken from A Journal of the
Operations of the Queen's Rangers: ".....Capt. Hutchinson,
with the 71st regiment, (clothed in red,) was directed
to advance as near to the banks of the Fluvana as he could
with perfect safety, and without the hazard of a single
man, from the enemy's shot, who had lined the opposite
shore; the baggage and women halted among the woods, on
the summit of the hill, and, in that position, made the
appearance of a numerous corps:...."26 Steuben's army,
believing themselves outnumbered, withdrew.  

Another valuable service women performed was carrying water to artillery guns. Unless they were periodically cooled with water, the guns would overheat. By allowing artillery men's wives to carry this water, a man was freed to perform another task. This was especially useful in the understaffed Continental Army. Molly Pitcher was a generic term for the women performing this service; however, it came to be believed that this was an actual person. Some historians and biographers argued that Mary Hayes or Margaret Corbin was Molly Pitcher. Hayes and Corbin were remembered and rewarded because their service stood out from the norm. Mrs. Hayes took her husband's position at the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse. Mrs. Corbin took her husband's place after he fell at the Battle of Fort Washington until she was wounded herself.  

Living Conditions

Military living conditions, especially in the field, varied significantly; however, they were definitely poor in comparison to those of the general population. Within the army, regardless of whether it was British or American, a hierarchy existed with officers receiving the best of the available clothing, shelter, and food. They received more money and had a greater choice of leisure activities. Army women shared the advantages and disadvantages of their
men's rank.

Neither British nor American armies issued clothing to women. In October 1778, the American Board of War attempted to provide some clothing for hospital personnel and the women of the army by ordering that when the men received new uniforms, their old ones should be taken and redistributed. Within a week of issuing a general order to this effect, Washington had to rescind it. The men rightly felt that this order would deprive them of clothing they had earned and needed. 29 Lack of money for military needs affected soldiers' willingness to aid women and limited women's opportunities for surplus clothing. British army uniforms were restrictive to the point of interfering with blood circulation, poorly designed for the climate, and ill-suited for the demands military service placed upon them, but they were more readily available than were American uniforms. 30 Unlike their American foes, British soldiers did not cling to every item they received for fear that it could not be replaced. Troops could not be tracked by their bloody footprints in the 1776-1777 winter since most had shoes. Women from both armies lacked clothing -- Americans all the more so since even soldiers wore rags.

The women of both armies wore civilian clothing, discarded items, and items stolen from each other and civilians. In November of 1777, British camp followers
with "bare feet, cloathed in dirty rags" marched through Cambridge. 31 When marching through Philadelphia, Washington ordered women to take an alternate route, since he was ashamed of their appearance and behavior. 32 American women's clothing shortage became so desperate it began affecting morale. Following a January 1, 1781 mutiny of the Pennsylvania Line, Joseph Reed suggested, "A new gown, silk handkerchief, and a pair of shoes, etc., would be but little expense, and I think as a present from the State would have more effect than ten times the same laid out in articles for the men." This suggestion to prevent future mutiny did not find favor with his peers. 33

Housing varied with camp conditions and also with rank. High officers both American and British lived in separate houses during winter camps situated in nearby towns with their families. During marches, they had their own tents with furniture and other luxuries. Their wives, like Martha Washington, either returned to family homes during campaigns or, like Baroness von Riedesel, stayed with their husbands following behind the armies until after battles. 34 Baroness von Riedesel slept everywhere from an American General's house as his guest to a tent on the march to Virginia. 35

A common soldier's wife found less hospitable housing. She usually slept in the open with the soldiers or shared whatever available shelter with the men. Common soldiers'
housing ranged from several men and their women in a tent to a few in a hut. Housing at Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1775 was a motley affair. Washington wrote: "Some are made of boards, and some of sail-cloth. Some partly of one and partly of the other. Again, others are made of stone and turf, brick or brush. Some are thrown up in a hurry; others curiously wrought with doors and windows, done with wreaths and withes, in the manner of a basket. Some are your proper tents and marqueees, looking like the regular camp of the enemy. In these are the Rhode Islander, who are furnished with tent-equipage, and everything in the most exact English style."\textsuperscript{36} The camps' ragged appearance continued throughout the war. During the 1780-1781 winter, 100 American women lived in huts built near the Pennsylvania Line.\textsuperscript{37} Since American forces spent less time occupying towns than did British forces, they had less opportunities to live in barracks and to quarter with townspeople.

British barracks in New York during the 1779-1780 winter were cold and crowded. That winter, fuel became scarce and people suffered frostbite while inside the barracks. Recommendations called for 600 cubic feet of space per each man; however, they usually received less. Fourteen or more people crowded into a room. Commanders often assigned barrack space without regard to giving families privacy -- single males and different couples
bunking together. Following the surrender at Saratoga, the British army stayed in huts. Sergeant Roger Lamb wrote: "It was not infrequent for thirty or forty persons, men, women and children, to be indiscriminately crowded together in one small, miserable, open hut; a scanty portion of straw their bed, their own blankets their only covering." Inclusion on the ration list gave military women status and a reliable source of food. These lists named all those officially allowed provisions from the general stores and stated specific amounts. The season, area, and food availability determined the amount, kind of food, and the quality of food issued. Regardless of differences, rations -- as these provisions were called -- became the major source of food for soldiers and the camp people. Women received a part of the male ration as their ration or a full ration based upon the number of men present rather than upon the number of women present. British women received one half of a male ration while American women received a full ration for every fifteen men present.

Patriot troops constantly received less than the government promised. The standard ration at Valley Forge in 1776-1777 consisted of a pound of flour and a pound of fresh or cured meat. Most often the men received flour or some other grain alone. Fire cake -- this grain mixed with water and cooked on a rock or around a stick -- was the standard dish and sometimes troops did not have even
Whenever possible, American rations improved. Amounts increased, items were added, and they became more regular. An April 16, 1778 Valley Forge order set a ration at one and a half pounds of bread or flour, one pound of fish or beef, or three quarter pound pork, and a gill of whiskey or other spirits; or one and a half pound of flour, one half pound of pork, a half pint of peas or beans, and a gill of whiskey or other spirit. One item, rum, was prized by both men and women. This item was not included in Mary Corbin's invalid pension of July 6, 1779. She protested until it was included.

Full rations for a British soldier consisted of seven pounds of beef or four of pork, seven pounds of bread or flour, one half pound of rice or oatmeal, three pints of peas, and six ounces of butter with a measure of rum. Women received half of this and children one fourth. Substitutions of salted meat for fresh and rice for flour occurred especially in the South, but these substitutions, although militarily sound, were not popular with those receiving them.

The way armies found provisions for their troops had a profound effect upon the amount, kind, and quality of rations men and women received. Initially, the command received stores from government suppliers. These suppliers, for example British purchasing agents or congressional purchasing agents, bought goods from civilians and arranged...
their transportation to individual regiments. British provisions depended most heavily upon overseas shipments. Americans depended upon the open American market and upon Congress's power to receive and distribute goods promised by each state's government. Corruption among military and government officials in both American and British systems insured that troops received inferior goods more often than not. Unscrupulous people sold spoiled items for top price, inspectors supplied substandard products, and those receiving goods resold them on the black market while reporting them as delivered.

Foraging parties supplemented government provided provisions. These parties requisitioned anything useful to their regiments. Civilian ill will toward the military, both American and British, increased due to foraging party activities. In areas where armies spent much time, foodstuffs, wood, and forage became scarce. Civilians suffered as military parties took items against their will. Some military parties disregarded orders to compensate civilians. Even when parties followed orders to leave receipts which civilians could eventually redeem, civilians distrusted American promises of repayment. Bitter experience increased civilian distrust and popular reluctance to provide military supplies.

Money could buy better rations, clothing, and improved housing; however, currency was the least common form of
pay for camp followers. Their pay came in less obvious forms. The most common form was inclusion on ration lists which gave women a more steady supply of food. Clothing and housing, as overseen by military authority, were important factors in determining their actual pay. Plunder, looting, and private arrangements all added to personal income.

Women received pay more for specific services rather than for being members of the military. Their relationship to military forces, both American and British, precluded pay. Women, even those who carried water to artillery crews and took over in emergencies, were not supposed to be with the military to fight. American pension regulations later reflected this basic belief by awarding pensions to women depending upon their husbands' service. Sarah Osborn traveled with the army for years, and yet she received a pension based upon her husband's service not her own. Exceptions include Mary Corbin who became famous for her activities at the Battle of Fort Washington. During the battle her husband fell. She took his position, firing a cannon, until she was wounded herself. For this act of courage, Mrs. Corbin received a $30 grant from Pennsylvania in June of 1779. In July of the same year, the War Board granted her one-half pay and a complete suit of clothing or its value in money. 49

British regiments paid women for cooking, cleaning,
and laundering more often than did American forces, which were less able to afford these services. In addition, American military leaders felt they deserved these services for including women on ration lists. British women officially requested to perform tasks could be penalized for refusing. Nonetheless, British women did sometimes receive pay for services while Americans did not. The amount paid varied by regiment and by year. One regiment paid women to cook and clean six pence for every man per week. Some laundresses washed shirts for three pence each. 50

Private arrangements between camp women and soldiers gave women opportunities to earn money. British officers and their wives hired servants and paid camp women for services. One American officer mentions in a letter wanting to hire a woman to wash his clothes. People in both American and British camps made these kinds of arrangements. 51

Both British and American officers viewed allowing women to be with the army as financial support for soldiers' families. The government and the military began to see this kind of support as a legitimate concern as they linked family unhappiness with desertion. For the military, soldiers who worried about their families' economic welfare made them less dependable and lowered their morale. Soldiers' wives who did not travel with the army received
no monetary support from the military. Some American towns promised soldiers' wives that they would be able to buy food at pre-war prices, but often ignored these promises as prices rose. Needy British wives received an official begging license which allowed them to beg in the streets without arrest. Compassionate Lists, which included names of British soldiers' wives suffering economic hardship, authorized a small monetary grant for those whose husbands had been killed after rendering longterm service. Other aid came from private charities which depended upon the good will and interest of those providing the money. None of these measures seriously prevented economic hardship.

Financial trouble at home encouraged soldiers to desert. The military felt that their need for female labor was secondary to combating desertion. This tended to ensure that women without some connection to soldiers did not remain with the army since women with connections to soldiers could serve the dual function of decreasing desertion and acting as a source of labor. Those given official status by being placed upon the ration roles provided the only female labor pool the military generally called upon.

After the day's work ended, the camp people sought relaxation. People tired after a long march and on the verge of starvation found amusement in small things.
Rank opened some forms of entertainment, formal balls for example, just as ideology closed other forms, such as gambling for more idealistic Americans. All soldiers enjoyed talking, playing with their children, chasing civilian livestock, and drinking.

Simple pleasures meant a great deal to the common soldiers and their families. Music was an important source of entertainment as well as a functional part of the military. Music set march and battle rhythms, encouraged soldiers, and intimidated their enemies. Military groups carried fifers, drummers, and other musicians in their ranks. Pipers always came with Scottish regiments. General Washington confirms the importance of military musicians in this June 4, 1777 order: "The music of the army being in general very bad; it is expected, that the drum and fife Majors exert themselves to improve it, or they will be reduced, and their extraordinary pay taken from them. Stated hours to be assigned, for all the drums and fifes, of each regiment, to attend them and practice -- Nothing is more agreeable, and ornamental, than good music; every officer, for the credit of his corps, should take care to provide it." These military musicians and those with the talent to play other instruments entertained informally.

American officers and their ladies enjoyed many of the same activities the upper classes at home enjoyed.
Women sewed and gossiped. In the 1777-1778 Valley Forge camp, Martha Washington conducted a sewing circle. Men and women gave dinners and visited civilian connections during winter encampments. General Washington and his fellow officers attended several balls during the Revolution. The General himself held a celebration in honor of Louis XVII following the war.  

Their English counterparts enjoyed many of these same activities, plus a few that some Americans rejected. Dancing, hunting, drinking, gambling, concerts, and plays occupied many hours for the English gentlemen and their ladies. Displaying the hypocrisy often present in the upper classes in regard to the working and lower classes, General Howe, one of the most infamous gamblers of the Revolution, wrote concerning gambling: "Such Instances of idleness and depravity are always ard particularly at this time to be prevented and suppressed." Theater productions organized and acted in by soldiers, usually officers with a few talented enlisted men, entertained the British, their women, and the civilians of occupied towns. Plays such as Zara with a prologue written by General John Burgoyne, Shakespearean plays, and comedies, such as The Rivals by Richard Brinsley Sheridan and The West Indian by Richard Cumberland, helped to satisfy upper-class cultural desires. In Philadelphia, the British showed respect for the Quaker population by halting these plays
during Passion Week. Certain plays, for example ones mocking Americans which military prisoners produced in Stanton, Virginia, offended Americans. Heavy drinking, gambling, and open relations with mistresses appeared decadent to Americans and drew criticism.  

All ranks and sexes drank. Since alcoholic beverages seemed safer than water or milk, there was little concern displayed, except by medical doctors such as the American Dr. Benjamin Rush who began warning about the dangers of alcohol as early as 1777, until people drank to excess. Rations included a measure of alcohol. After ingesting that portion, additional amounts came from sutlers, bootleggers, and civilians. Drinking gave false courage to military people, helped them bear harsh conditions, and put them at risk for poisoning from the drink itself, disease due to a weakened immune system, and for hypothermia in winter.  

Dangers

Just as women shared the responsibilities of camp life, they also shared the dangers. The nature of war itself -- battles with the threat of capture by the enemy or death from a wound or disease -- did not leave women untouched. War in eighteenth-century America did not consist of well-organized battles with all fighting being done in a small confined area. Instead, most battles
were spread over large areas with unclear battle lines. Most women stayed back from battles, but some got caught up in the fighting and some stayed with the artillery during battles.

Mary Corbin received a pension and status in the Invalid Regiment based on the wound she suffered while traveling with the Pennsylvania artillery. She took over her husband's post after he was killed until hit by grapeshot herself. While incidents of this kind were not common, they occurred. Women took their chances with stray shells and sniper fire even when they tried to stay removed from battles. Baroness von Riedesel spent a wearisome night surrounded by falling shells and wounded soldiers. When sniper fire prevented men from carrying water, a woman took over this task. The sniper, knowing her gender, did not fire upon her. Other British women were not so fortunate. During the occupation of Philadelphia a grenadeer's wife was killed. Another soldier's wife was mortally wounded at Fort Ann.

The threat of capture by the enemy brought its own dangers to women. Women feared that they would be separated from their men, not issued provisions, or be abused; however, these fears do not seem to have been realized in most cases. On several occasions the American army had to deal with captured women. On May 21, 1776 this statement was recorded in the Continental Congress Journal:
"The women and children belonging to prisoners be furnished with subsistence, and supplied with firing and other things absolutely necessary for their support." Two hundred and ninety-seven women -- two hundred and fifteen British and eighty-two German -- drew rations on November 22, 1777 at Prospect Hill, not including the officers' wives with Burgoyne. 64 Lafayette wrote on January 6, 1778:

"General Washington has also just decided to send for his wife, a modest and respectable person who loves her husband madly. The English gentlemen [have decided, I believe, to make use of the wives of others, for want of their own. They] have received, in addition, a reinforcement of three hundred girls from New York, and we have taken from them another ship filled with chaste officers' wives who were going to join their husbands. They were very much afraid that they would be kept [for the winter] for [the use of] the American armies." 65

The tone of this Valley Forge letter and other evidence suggests that these women's fears proved groundless.

Military personnel traveling outside their own communities and through areas where they would probably never return faced little peer pressure to conform to community standards. Since community standards reinforced legal marriages, some problems women faced came about
because of illegal marriages and desertion. The term 'artillery wives' was commonly used to describe prostitutes and women whose claim to marriage with a military man was shaky at best.\textsuperscript{65} Sarah Osborn, who followed her husband into the American army at his insistence, found after the war that he had a wife from a previous marriage.\textsuperscript{67} The British Sergeant Lamb's wife was a lady already married to another soldier.\textsuperscript{68} The tendency for military men to take multiple wives was a favorite joke and spoofed in plays.\textsuperscript{69}

To reduce the drain on military stores, military regulations tried to ensure legal marriages. British soldiers had to have the written consent of one of their company commanders before they married, otherwise the couple would face censure including the denial of housing. American regulations varied from state to state. Pennsylvania law attempted to protect the person performing the marriage and discourage common law marriages. When banns for the couple were not published or the wedding occurred outside a church, the clergyman performing the marriage applied to the Secretary of the Province for a license. During the Revolution, the government allowed military commanders to issue licenses for marriage. The Valley Forge winter saw several marriages between local farm women and American soldiers and at least one marriage between a camp woman and a soldier. Ebenezer David, a
Rhode Island chaplain, interrupted his February 3, 1778 letter to marry a couple "by virtue of General Sullivan's license."\textsuperscript{70}

The absence of community standards combined with military hardships created greater dangers for married camp followers. Within their own communities, women could expect at least unspoken protection from abusive spouses. Men tempted to abuse wives and children risked community disapproval and retribution from their in-laws. The British military actually condoned a high degree of violence as long as it remained directed toward their own troops and camp people and not toward civilians. British records show cases of wife swapping, physical abuse, and murder. Army women and children suffered rape more often than did civilians. Most crimes against children were discovered and reported when parents sought treatment for children who developed venereal disease. Wife killings comprised twenty percent of homicides. Jealousy and alcohol abuse encouraged violence. When John Lindon's wife tried to leave him for another soldier, he prevented this by killing her. One husband killed his wife when he found her drunk.\textsuperscript{71}

One danger only women faced was death from having children. During the eighteenth century, women usually became pregnant the first year of marriage and again every two years until they either died or became infertile. In a normal population, women had five to ten pregnancies
with three to eight surviving children. Because of childbirth complications, women more often died in their prime than did men. Most women knew at least one woman who had died from bearing children. This knowledge adversely affected attitudes toward having children and increased the amount of fear present at childbirth. 72

Camp women not only contended with the usual problems of childbearing, but also with the lack of family aid. For women, the assistance provided by female relatives during childbirth and the time following it was important. The support given by family was often the only kind available to poor, middle-class, and rural women. Generally, the oldest daughter of a sibling or other relative would stay with the woman during the birth and for a few days following the baby's arrival to allow the woman a respite from caring for the rest of her family and to recover from labor. Recovery time was rarely long enough due to a shortage of labor. 73 Rest and family aid, or for that matter any aid, were rare for women with the armies. During a blizzard, one woman with British troops delivered her child in an open baggage cart. Another pregnant woman, left behind as Burgoyne's army marched from Canada, was forced to stop at a Quaker home and have the child. The next day she and the baby resumed their journey. Eventually, they reached Ticonderoga and her husband. 74

53
Pregnant army women contended with the problems mentioned above and with the typical problems of camp life. Common sense insists that the unsanitary camp condition, poor nutrition, and hardships of camp life increased women's death rate. In addition, child mortality was probably higher than in the general population as Mrs. Sterne's case illustrates. Four of her six children died in a British barracks before their fourth birthday. Field duty was more dangerous. The physical burdens long marches, poor living conditions, and a diet high in salt cured meat, when they could get even that, reduced sexual activity and the ability of those sexually active to conceive. 75

Sexual activity introduced the added danger of venereal disease. Neither American nor British officers saw women as victims; instead they regarded women as the cause, and as such, commanders attempted to control venereal disease by controlling women. Venereal disease was a constant threat to readiness because at any given time large numbers of men were unable to function. Dr. Robert Hamilton of the British army estimated that a regiment of 400 would have 300 cases of venereal disease a year. While many of these would be repeat cases, this was a staggering number. In order to limit venereal disease, officers attempted to control soldiers' contact with women. Some regiments fined men with venereal disease. Overall these attempts were futile. The Army began giving mercury
treatments to the men. 76

Although figures on venereal disease in the Continental Army are not readily available, venereal disease was a great concern. One indication that venereal disease was present in the American fighting forces is a January 3, 1777 advertisement in The Virginia Gazette: "Deserted from Alexandria, on the 15th of this infant (December) John Britt, a marine in my company, who is an Irishman, about 26 years old, 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, a stout well make fellow, much pitted with the smallpox, has a blemish in one of his eyes (I think the right) and when he went off was labouring under the venereal disease. 77 American commanders' attempts to control the presence of 'lewd' women also indicate the presence of venereal disease.

Still other forms of disease, not violence or capture, posed the most pressing dangers to camp women. More died from camp diseases than in battle. A lack of food, clothing, and adequate shelter, crowded and unsanitary conditions, and the hardships of marching lowered resistance to disease and fostered epidemics. Camp diseases such as dysentery, smallpox, yellow fever, and typhoid fever raged throughout the war. Dr. Brocklesby, a British army medical man, estimated that eight times as many men died from fevers as died from battle. 78 As the American Army stopped at Crown Point on their retreat from Canada, between fifteen and thirty men a day died from dysentery, malaria,
and smallpox.79

Despite lingering objections to inoculations, both armies thought smallpox inoculations necessary. The British began voluntary inoculations for smallpox by 1775. Those that refused were quarantined.80 Washington ordered inoculations beginning in 1776.81 Baroness von Riedesel inoculated her children when she had the opportunity in New York.82 It is unclear whether camp women were inoculated; however, since British and American military commanders and civilians feared that camp followers would spread this disease, it is clear that camp followers were exposed to smallpox and that they traveled between camps and civilian areas.

Throughout the American Revolution women worked with and for military forces. They brought their civilian responsibilities and skills to the armies by cooking, washing, and caring for their families. To fulfill expectations, both their own and military commanders', they performed these tasks for other men in their units when needed. When necessary and allowed, they performed military duties such as standing camp watch and carrying water. As a reward, they shared both the better times and the hardships of the soldiers. At times, this meant good food, shelter, and an occasional monetary payment. During other times, it meant starvation, lack of shelter, and long brutal marches. While women rarely fell in battle,
they faced many of same dangers men did, including terrible camp diseases.
Chapter Three: The Military Perspective

The majority of references commanders made to camp women involved difficulties of one sort or another. Commanders found women slow, disobedient, and the cause of violence among the ranks. Moreover, the open nature of camps with women entering and leaving when armies camped near towns made them natural spies. Women with the armies increased civilian fears because violence, property damage, and disease came with armies, and women moved between military camps and civilian areas more freely than did men. According to military commanders, American and British, camp women threatened both strategy and virtue.

Female Movements

During the American Revolution, military troops traveled from one area of action to another by boat, foot, or wagon. The quality and availability of roads varied from one area to another and were affected by weather
conditions. For those reasons, water and foot travel stayed the most reliable means of transportation during the Revolution. The British favored water travel around Boston where they had more reliable access to boats and waterways than to wagons and roads. Since officers had greater control over who boarded boats, only authorized women came aboard. These women either obeyed officers or they were put ashore. Away from Boston, both armies found foot travel more efficient. Wagons with equipment such as tents and supplies generally followed the men. Men on foot traveled faster than did wagons and could overcome obstacles more easily.

By tradition and for practical reasons, women traveled with the wagons behind the troops. When troops moved, commanders wanted to keep their fighting force together and alert to danger. Both women and men wanted to stay together; however, commanders believed women would distract the men and delay troop movements. Women, especially those with small children, had trouble keeping up with the troops. Women and men stopped to rest and explore on their own. They often used the opportunity to loot the countryside or desert their companions.

American and British military leaders often issued orders regarding the position they wanted women to take. One of the most frequent complaints General Washington made against camp women concerned their refusal to stay
with the baggage. Women constantly earned Washington's ire by straggling to and fro. While the army marched, he wanted women to remain behind the soldiers with the baggage.

Women usually tried to stay close, if not to the troops then, at least, to the wagons. When travel became strenuous and women grew tired, they tried to ride on the baggage wagons. This created additional concerns for commanders. Shortages of wagons and draft animals plagued military efforts of both American and British leaders. Where compassion may have urged them to allow women to ride, practicality insisted that wagons carry equipment and supplies, not passengers. The tension between compassion and practicality is apparent in the following order from Washington:

"No women shall be permitted to ride in any waggon, without leave in writing from the Brigadier to whose brigade she belongs: And the Brigadiers are requested to be cautious in giving leave to those who are able to walk--Any women found in a waggon contrary to this regulation, is to be immediately turned out by the Quarter Master General, Waggon Master General, or any of their Assistants, in the division or brigade to which the waggon appertains; as also by any of the officers who command the baggage guard of such waggons."¹
This was one of Washington's first official orders concerning women riding the wagons. Less than two months later on August 27, 1777, Washington ordered: "Women are expressly forbid any longer, under any licence at all, to ride in the waggons." Practicality, bolstered by problems with men allowing unauthorized women to ride wagons, triumphed over compassion.

Some of these problems became visible in Washington's June 19, 1778 order: "The indulgence of suffering Women to ride in Waggons having degenerated into a great abuse, and complaint having been made by the Officers of the day that the Plea of leave from Officers is constantly urged when the Waggon Masters order such Women down: It is expressly ordered that no Officer grant such a leave for the future but the Commanding Officers of a Brigade or the Field Officers of the day who are to grant it only on account of Inability to march, and in writing." Too many women attempted to ride when they could walk. When asked to step down, they lied about having permission to ride.

Male troops sometimes supported women's efforts to ride instead of walking or tried to join women with the baggage. On June 7, 1779 Washington wrote: "The General was sorry to see thro'out the march a much greater proportion of men with the baggage than could possibly be necessary and ... the pernicious practice of suffering
the women to encumber the wagons still continues notwithstanding every former prohibition." This conflict proves that issuing an order did not guarantee that soldiers or women would follow it. Washington's frequent orders on this subject show that riding the wagons without permission proved to be an ongoing problem.

British commanders issued orders similar to the ones Washington issued and also faced problems with people disobeying them. On June 18, 1778 for instance, General Henry Clinton ordered women to march with the baggage. Within the month, one woman disobeyed, whom Clinton had lashed and drummed out. ⁵

**Female Activities**

The strongest reason military commanders and officers had for controlling female movements concerned the activities females engaged in when not under supervision. While being able to enter and leave camp or the march at will gave women an advantage in gathering supplies, this freedom also gave them the opportunity to give away military secrets, steal, loot civilians' property, buy illegal supplies, pay illegal prices, sell illegal items, and commit or incite acts of violence. These activities can be seen through officers' orders which attempted to prevent such problems, usually by limiting female mobility.

Camp women acted as spies during the American
Revolution. Some did so with deliberation. Others provided their enemies with military information without realizing it. Basic information relating to troop strengths, supplies, and morale was common information inside camps. Gossip concerning battle plans and chances for success circulated among officers, enlisted men, and civilians. Baroness von Riedesel wrote: "It displeased me, however, that the officers' wives were familiar with all of the army's plans and seemed all the more strange to me, as during the Seven Years' War I had noticed that in Duke Ferdinand's army everything was kept absolutely secret. Here, on the contrary, even the Americans were acquainted with all our plans in advance, with the result that wherever we came they were ready for us, which cost us dearly."  

While Americans may not have suffered to the same extent, American officers were aware of the link between women and lack of secrecy.

Officers attempted to prevent spying and other problems by limiting access between camps and towns. On April 26, 1777 in Morristown, Washington ordered: "I have given orders to all the Officers at the out Posts, to suffer no more Women to pass in or out, upon any pretence whatever."  

On July 22, 1779 at West Point he gave this order: "If any more women desire to go to New York, they are to be permitted without restriction as to number, on condition of their not returning."
Howe was busy issuing his own orders for the British. On September 23, 1775 he ordered: "No woman to be allowed to pass the ferry without a pass from the Commanding Officer of the Corps to which they belong, and the pass is to be taken from them by the Officer of the ferry Guard when they return from Boston." On March 10, 1776 this order appeared: "Any woman belonging to the Army, that may be found in Town after One O'Clock, will be taken up & sent to the Provost & will be left behind." In April of that year Howe issued the following: "Any Woman that comes on shore, not to be suffered to return on board again." These orders illustrate the importance commanders placed on controlling female mobility.

Another reason they wanted to control women's movements was to prevent looting and property destruction. Stragglers and women without supervision committed acts of retribution against civilians and stole myriad objects from clothing to food. In April 1781, Nathanael Greene suspected the women of his command of helping soldiers burn houses near Camp Gum Swamp in South Carolina. Since such activities increased civilian suspicion and fear toward the armies and decreased their willingness to aid legitimate army activities, both sides discouraged looting. Military commanders set harsh punishments for those receiving or having stolen goods. Public lashings and being banished from camp were common. General Greene threatened to
execute anyone caught setting fires. Since looting and scavenging added to their standard of living, neither women nor men were easily discouraged. Penalties, although harsh, proved ineffective against looting as recurring orders against looting show.

Orders further forbid women from leaving the baggage and from attending fires when opportunities for looting were more apparent. Other orders assigned supervisors. This appeared in General Howe's November 18, 1775 orders: "Women belonging to the Army will not be Allowed to be present at any Fires that may happen." On Saturday April 13, 1776, General Howe ordered: "The Commanding Officers of Corps, to be answerable that proper People be sent on Shore at Dartmouth, to superintend the Women, & others that may be left there to wash or for any other Purpose, who are to be accountable for all Depredations that may be committed on the Houses or Estates of the Inhabitants."13

In the spring of 1776 General Howe had problems with soldiers and women paying more than the fixed price for provisions. Some enterprising colonists even tried to reach their customers onboard ship, so on April 1, 1776 Howe's orders included:

"His Excellency the Governor having, for the Benefit of the Navy & Army, fixed the Price of Provisions by Proclamation, No Officer or Follower
of the Army is on any Account to give more than is therein specified.

The Commanding Officers of Transports to direct the Masters of their respective Ships to have the Boats hoisted half way up the Sides, every Night at 8 O'Clock & no Boat to be absent from the Ship after that hour.

Any Woman that comes on shore, not to be suffered to return on board again."14

Women often made a profit from the illegal sale of alcohol which they saved from their own rations, bought or stole outside camp, or stole inside camp. While most people, believed that liquor was healthful and necessary for military troops, commanders knew that it was advisable to control its availability and use. Both American and British commanders punished those drunk on duty.15 Several orders, both American and British, addressed the role of women in its presence in camp. These orders pointed out another problem commanders faced with women. General Howe ordered, for example, on June 21, 1775: "If any Men or Women are detected selling or giving Rum to the Soldiers the former will be severely Punish'd, the Latter Dismiss'd with Infamy from Camp and the Soldiers found Intoxicated will have no further Allowance of Rum served out to them."16

Many women sold alcohol to anyone with sufficient
money, including to Indians. General Burgoyne was forced to issue orders against this practice. On July 3, 1777, he issued this follow up order near Ticonderoga:
"Commanding Officers are to assemble the Sutlers and Women of the respective Regiments, and inform them that the first person found guilty of disobedience shall instantly have their liquors and sutling stores destroyed and [be] turned out of Camp, besides receiving such Corporal Punishment as a Court Martial shall inflict." 17

Alcohol abuse encouraged violence and disorderly behavior. Women also seem to have been linked, often inadvertently, to many acts of violence in the British army. Jealousy caused some mates to attack their wives or other men. When Alexander Monroe found his wife drunk, he beat her to death. William Norrington stabbed another solider to death when that solider made advances toward Mrs. Norrington. James McCullough died in a fight over Patrick McGuire's wife. One of the most disturbing cases involved James Cairns of the Royal Irish Regiment of Foot and his wife. Mrs. Cairns was taken by her husband's company officer. When James Cairns objected, he was beaten with a whip. Cairns was charged with insubordination and sentenced to 800 lashes when he defended himself. After 500, he deserted.18 No further mention is made of him or his wife.

Sometimes orders forbidding an action proved
ineffective and brought punishment. In both armies, women who did not follow orders or displeased officers faced punishment. Officers examined women carefully before allowing them to stay with military troops. Permission to stay was difficult to gain and easy to lose. The most common form of punishment was simply to be turned out from camp. Those women on ration lists could lose their status without actually being turned out. Some offenses brought corporal punishment or a combination of corporal punishment and dismissal.

On June 6, 1775 in Boston, General Thomas Gage discovered that British camp women had broken into buildings which had been infected by smallpox. He ordered these women found and driven from camp. On one occasion General Howe authorized one hundred lashes for Isabella MacMahon who stood convicted of receiving stolen goods. Her husband received one thousand lashes for the same offense.

Army discipline called for corporal punishment for almost every offense. The American army set lower limits on the number of lashes allowed than did the British army. The official number was one hundred lashes for a single offense; however, the true number of lashes an offender received depended upon the commander. The British army routinely ordered more than one hundred lashes per offense, though troops sometimes were able to escape the severity of corporal punishment if the lash was applied with less
than full force. It is little wonder that army personnel reacted violently in their relations with others.

Morality and Reality

During the American Revolution, people struggled with the tension between popular ideals and military realities. Both American and British commanders believed that women should send their men off to battle while they, themselves, remained home; and yet, thousands of women openly followed military forces throughout the fighting. Officers' wives with the military were rare, admired, and respected. Lucy Knox, Baroness von Riedesel, and the few others present received compliments and admiration. The soldiers' wives and women received suspicion and pity.

This difference is striking and came in part from differences in class expectations and the lack or presence of wealth. Baroness von Riesedel, an officer's wife with money, wrote of the kindness accorded her by British officers and many of the British women. She states that soldiers bowed to her on one occasion. When the Riedesels left to return to Europe, a play was done in her honor. In contrast, Hannah Winthrop, a resident of Cambridge, recorded her impression of soldier's women in a November 11, 1777 letter to Mercy Warren:

"Last Thursday, a large number of British troops came softly thro the Town [Cambridge] via Watertown
to Prospect hill. on Friday we heard the Hessians were to make a Procession in the same rout, we thot we should have nothing to do with them, but View them as they Passt. To be sure the sight was truly astonishing. I never had the least Idea that the Creation produced such a sordid set of creatures in human Figure--poor, dirty, emaciated men, great numbers of women, who seemed to be the beasts of burthen, having a bushel basket on their back, by which they were bent double, the contents seemed to be Pots and Kettles, various sorts of Furniture, children peeping thro' gridirons and other utensils, some very young Infants who were born on the road, the women bare feet, cloathed in dirty rags, such effluvia fill'd the air while they were passing, had they not been smoaking all the time, I should have been apprehensive of being contaminated by them. After a noble looking advanced Guard Gen. J--Y B[urgoy]n headed this terrible group on horseback."23

These are totally different images. The difference lay in money, class, and expectations. Officers and their women, for the most part, had wealth. Soldiers and their women did not. These women's poverty sometimes obscured their labor, devotion, and bravery.

Both armies allowed camp followers, but commanders
tried to ensure that women remained well-disciplined. The orders both armies issued regarding women primarily addressed the same problems commanders had with men. If not on the same scale, both men and women lootèd, became drunk, failed to stay with their group, sold illegal items, looked and were hungry and ragged, and committed acts of violence.

The military provided a hard life for its people. Women who followed military troops had to be strong in order to survive. Rules governing marriage, the practicalities of childbearing, the ever-present threat of violence, and the use of alcohol all suggest that women who remained with armies were capable of being as strong, hard, and vicious as any soldier.
AFTERWORD

This study has examined women with American and British regular military units during the American Revolution. It discusses the number of women who chose to follow the military, their reasons for making this choice, the conditions they lived under while with the military, and the conflict between them and military officers. These women provide important information on armies in the eighteenth century, living conditions, and the choices available to women.

Female numbers never rose above a small percentage of the male troops. In some cases few to no women could be found with certain military companies; however, at other times, a female to male ratio of as much as one to five existed. Linda Grant DePauw's estimate, the highest to date, places 20,000 women with the military at one time or another during the Revolution. Just as male enlistments and numbers fluctuated, so did female numbers.
These women had many reasons for traveling with military troops. Patriotism, their own sense of duty, and economics were the three clearest reasons. Economic considerations had the most force. The majority of women with the military had few economic resources. Class played a part in a woman's decision to follow an army and in the kind of living conditions one then found with the military.

Women suffered from poor housing, little pay, and food that ranged from tolerable to non-existent. Danger visited them daily in the form of exposure, disease, and violence both on and off the battlefield. They also found companionship, a sense of purpose, and excitement.

These women, from officers' wives to companions of common soldiers, gave the men comfort. They nursed the ill and wounded, carried on the same or similar functions performed in their civilian lives, and sometimes performed such military tasks as carrying water to artillery guns.

Although women's presence was grudgingly accepted, it created problems for military leaders. Officers' complaints that women used supplies needed for fighting men, slowed military movements, and proved difficult to control no doubt were true; however, it is also true that their presence was needed. In addition, considering how many women traveled with the military and the relative lack of commentary on women, it can be argued that the problems military commanders speak of in regard to women
were not as bothersome as the problems men caused.

The Revolutionary War changed both men and women's lives. Whether women stayed home and sent their men into battle or traveled with their husbands and other male connections, the war affected their lives both during and following the years of combat. Those women who traveled with military forces found that military demands shaped every aspect of their lives while they lived under military authority. Women must have carried strong memories into their civilian lives. Their silence on this subject cannot be assumed to indicate a lack of attitudes and opinions.

Women traveling with the military during the American Revolution left behind few words of their own. A faint image of these women comes from various sources. Three who took part in the Revolution left records with information on their postwar lives. These records indicate the possible paths of other women who had stayed with military units during the Revolution. The Americans Mary Corbin and Sarah Osborn left two of these records. The third was written by Baroness von Riedesel, a German general's wife.

Of Mary Cochran, the least is known. She married John Corbin in 1772. This marriage took Mary Corbin into the military part of the American Revolution when her husband enlisted with the 1st Continental Artillery of Pennsylvania at the beginning of the Revolution. She became
the heroine of the Battle of Fort Washington when she took her wounded husband's position, firing a canon until she was shot. She was permanently disabled at this battle and her husband killed. After the Continental Congress granted her half-pay for life on July 6, 1779, she joined the Corps of Invalids at West Point. In 1782 she married a fellow soldier and cared for him until his death. The inhabitants of West Point knew her as 'Captain Molly' and 'Dirty Kate', depending upon whether they respected her for her military service or disliked her for her eccentricity and bad temper. Until her own death on January 16, 1800, she drew rations at West Point including a full uniform which she wore with great pride. She was buried in an unmarked grave; however, in 1926, she was exhumed and re-buried at West Point with honor.¹

During the war, Sarah Osborn traveled with her husband, Sergeant Aaron Osborn. They were present with Washington at the Battle of Yorktown. Following the British surrender at Yorktown, Sarah Osborn and her husband traveled to New Windsor with the army. Three months after their son's birth, one and a half years after Osborn's discharge, he deserted his family. Sarah Osborn found her husband with Polly Sloat and her parents fifteen to sixteen miles above Newburgh. As the person who transcribed Sarah Osborn's pension application wrote: "Deponent was kindly treated by the inmates of the house but ascertained for a truth
that her husband was married to said girl. After remaining overnight, deponent determined to return home and abandon her said husband forever, as she found he had conducted in such a way as to leave no hope of reclaiming him."

Soon after that, she heard that he had taken yet another wife.2

Sarah Osborn then married John Benjamin. They lived in Blooming Grove, Orange County, New York thirty-five years or so. Then they moved to Pleasant Mount, Wayne County, Pennsylvania where she made her pension application about ten years after Benjamin's death.3

Sarah Osborn Benjamin's life was not easy. She only mentions her first marriage in passing. Her second was not notable for her husband's stability. During the War, she faced danger and hardship. Her daughter married well; but her son "lived in Blooming Grove, Orange County, New York, had fits and was crazy, and became a town charge, and finally died there at the age of about thirty years." She lived until her ninety-eighth year.4

Mrs. Benjamin remembered her war years well. She took pride in her service, but went back to civilian life gladly. While she was able to put her hardships behind her, the experience with her second husband left a permanent mark. This is clear from her application: "Deponent was informed more than forty years ago and believes that said Polly Sloat, Osborn's second wife above mentioned, died
dead drunk, the liquor running out of her mouth after she was dead. Osborn's third wife she knows nothing about."  

The imagery is too evocative to be other than her own. Sarah Osborn's statement might even have been a little self-congratulatory because she had done better than Polly Sloat.

Baroness von Riedesel traveled to America with her children and had two more while with the British army. She did not admire the Americans, and she did not like many British people either. In her journal, she too often mentioned acts against her and too rarely commented on the kind actions of her hosts. Thomas Jefferson among other prominent people treated her and her family with good will and consideration above what an enemy could expect.

She was a general's wife. She loved him and wanted to be with him. That was the reason she came to America. Her journal vividly records the suffering she saw and endured during her time with the British army. The following is a reasonably typical excerpt:

"Toward three o'clock in the afternoon, instead of my dinner guests arriving as expected, poor General Fraser, who was to have been one of them, was brought to me on a stretcher, mortally wounded. The table, which had already been set for dinner, was removed
and a bed for the General was put in its place. I sat in a corner of the room, shivering and trembling. The noise of the firing grew constantly louder. The though that perhaps my husband would also be brought home wounded was terrifying and worried me incessantly."

Once her husband's duty was concluded, she happily returned to their home in Brunswick. As the Baroness wrote in Germany: "I retired with the most sincere and heartfelt thanks to God for having preserved me through such manifold dangers, but especially for having preserved for me all my family, and, yes, having even brought me a gift, my little daughter America.""

Her time outside her country increased her patriotism. Before the war, she thought little of the customs and people outside her country. Being forced to deal with the ridicule of British people when she first arrived in England and the hatred of Americans for those fighting on the British side strongly influenced her feelings for her own county.

All three of these women displayed pride concerning their time with the military, as well they should. Each took part in an event and a time that would never come again in their lives. They survived. They were unusual in some ways. Mary Corbin became the heroine of the Battle of Fort Washington, Sarah Osborn married a bigamist and
lived to almost a hundred, and Baroness von Riedesel, a relatively young, well connected woman, freely chose to follow her husband despite her family's pleas. In other ways, they were typical women of their time. Each had the standard level of education for their gender and class, were married to the man they followed into war, and survived a difficult war to the best of their ability.

Male records clearly indicate a correlation between military service and later votes for Federalist politicians. It is more difficult to draw conclusions for military women's post-war political life. Women did not vote; however, the Revolution did change their political lives. Before the War, women usually did not express political opinions. Following the War, they did. The Revolution politicalized women. Allegiances became well known and clearly defined. Questions once thought academic came to mean security or poverty and persecution. Politicians told women that their actions and opinions made a difference. Once the War ended, these lessons could not be forgotten. One way Americans reconciled new political feelings and activities with old ideas of 'women's place' was by promoting 'Republican Motherhood' in which women could serve their country and share in the benefits of liberty by rearing virtuous sons. Republican motherhood was an elegant compromise between political ideology and post-war reality.8
Women's presence with military units made an impact on military men, civilians, and political leaders. The British asked fewer philosophical questions in regard to women than Americans. For Americans, the Revolution was as much a war of ideas as a military conflict if not more so. Americans justified their rebellion by emphasizing American virtue and British corruption. Two standards they used to judge virtue and corruption were the armies and female behavior. Americans in general had to reconcile the reality of the regular army which made independence possible and the ideal of the citizen soldier. One way civilians reconciled the ideal of the citizen soldier and the need for a regular military was by emphasizing the militia's role in the Revolution. The more idealistic of the Revolutionaries had to reconcile their ideas of proper female behavior with the female behavior they saw during the war. By emphasizing women's civilian role in the Revolution and by ignoring common women's legitimate involvement in military units, they could ignore the fact that similarities between the British and American army women outweighed the differences.
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