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<https://ccc-cultivatingcommunityconnections.net>

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C-Connections

\* Encouraging Community Involvement  
\* Linking Communities to Resources

Uniting community members to transform our neighborhoods is at the heart of what we do.



## Movers and Shakers (Prince George's County)

### Celebrating Unsung Revolutionary War Heroes

As our nation takes time to reflect on the 250<sup>th</sup> year since declaring independence, we want to also celebrate the role of enslaved people and women whose contributions to the Revolutionary War were instrumental in the Continental Army's success.

In this edition of *Cultivating Community Connections*, we are highlighting some of these lesser known heroes. These people and their dedication to a cause can serve as inspiration for us today and for generations to come.

#### James Armistead Lafayette, Spy Continental Army 1748 – 1830\*

<https://www.thenmusa.org/biographies/james-armistead-lafayette/>



Engraved portrait of James Armistead Lafayette by John B. Martin, circa 1824. Library of Virginia

Below are several excerpts from the web site's report about James Armistead's remarkable service. We encourage everyone to read his whole biography using the link above.

“It is the pinnacle of irony that the United States was born from a war for independence that depended, in part, on people who were enslaved. Historians estimate that between 5,000 to 8,000 free and enslaved Black men fought on the side of the colonists during the Revolution. The Continental Army had approximately 230,000 militiamen and Soldiers, meaning that Black Soldiers made up 3.5% of patriot troops. Most of these brave men's names have been lost to history, but a few have been remembered for their exemplary actions toward a cause and a country that did not consider them fully human. One such man was James Armistead Lafayette, who put himself at constant risk to act as a double agent to spy on the British.”

“Washington, like many important and influential men of the time, was a slave-holder and was therefore uncomfortable with the idea of armed free and enslaved Black men in the Army. Those who were already part of the Army were allowed to remain, but new rules were quickly enacted on July 10, 1775, that barred additional Black men from joining the armed forces.

Those rules, however, failed to last as the war dragged on and the Army became desperate for additional troops. By 1778, Washington had become more amenable to the idea. In addition to needing the manpower, he was surrounded by enthusiastic young officers who pushed him to allow Black Patriots to fight. One such man was the Marquis de Lafayette, who would have a profound impact on James Armistead's Army career and post-war life.

“(continued on p. 2)

## James Armistead Lafayette (continued from page 1)

<https://www.thenmusa.org/biographies/james-armistead-lafayette/>

“As was typical of slave records from the period, there is little documented evidence concerning James’ early life. Some sources indicate that he was born around 1748, while others list 1760 as the correct approximation for his birth. What is certain is that he was born into slavery and his life before the war was spent on a plantation owned by William Armistead in New Kent County, Virginia. James would have to seek his permission to enlist in the Continental Army, specifically the Marquis de Lafayette’s unit, in 1781. When James enlisted it was with the understanding that he was not a free man. Once the war was over he was to return to William Armistead’s ownership. Because of this, the Marquis de Lafayette decided to use James’ status as a slave to the Continental Army’s advantage. He instructed James to spy under the guise of a runaway.

James successfully infiltrated Lt. Gen. Charles, Lord Cornwallis’s Virginia headquarters posing as a runaway slave who was willing to spy on American troops. As a double agent, he was tasked with gathering important details about British plans while also planting false information about the Continental Army. His race and status as a slave helped him filter between camps and listen in on conversations without raising suspicion. While acting as a British agent, he was assigned to work with the infamous American turncoat Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold, and was told to spy on the Marquis de Lafayette by Cornwallis himself.

Perhaps the most significant contribution James made to the war effort was when he provided evidence that Cornwallis was sending 10,000 troops from Portsmouth, Virginia to Yorktown, Virginia. Thanks to his warning, Lafayette was able to alert Washington in time. Washington and French General Rochambeau incorporated James’ information into their plan for a joint American and French blockade and bombardment that caught the British off guard and eventually led to their surrender on October 19, 1781.”

## The Role of Women in the American Revolution

<https://www.bostonteapartyship.com/women-of-american-revolution>

“War has never solely been a male endeavor. Winning requires the help and participation of the entire population. This frequently occurred during Colonial times. Women performed many invaluable roles that helped secure the nation’s freedom. Along with supporting the war effort at home, several women even fought as soldiers, acted as couriers and engaged in espionage.” Here are a two of their stories.

**Sarah Fulton:** “Created in response to unfair British taxes and [regulations, the Daughters of Liberty](#) organization was first mentioned in the press in 1766. They would organize boycotts, help manufacture goods that were in short supply and even engage in public protest when necessary. Regarded as the “Mother of the [Boston Tea Party](#),” Sarah Fulton is credited with the idea of men disguising themselves as Mohawks. The Daughters of Liberty also encouraged others to support liberty. Famed Sons of Liberty leader [Samuel Adams](#) said, “with ladies on our side, we can make the Tories tremble.”

**Sybil Ludington:** “Known as the female [Paul Revere](#), then 16-year-old Sybil Ludington rode 40 miles astride her horse Star to warn local militia that British troops were on the move. Redcoats had landed on the coast of Connecticut and were marching inland to destroy rebel supplies. Because Colonel Henry Ludington had to stay near Danbury to brief his soldiers, his eldest daughter volunteered to rouse the local militia. She rode through the night avoiding bandits and British patrols before returning safely in the morning. Although the militia could not save Danbury, they did force the British troops back to Long Island Sound.”



### What Do You Think?

Cultivating Community Connections would like to know about the people in your community that are making a difference. Tell us who they are and what they are doing.

Email us at:

[CultivatingCommunityConn@gmail.com](mailto:CultivatingCommunityConn@gmail.com)

### Our Leadership Team

Carol Jenkins- founder

Jeff Jenkins- co-founder

In memory of Melissa Daston-  
*Movers and Shakers* past  
president

Carol Relitz- web administrator

Thank you for supporting CCC’s  
efforts to strengthen  
communities.

## HISTORICALLY SPEAKING: An Interview with Mary Beth Norton

<https://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol3/norton/norton.html>

Mary Beth Norton is the author of several highly-regarded books about the lives of women in Colonial America. Her book, *Liberty's Daughters*, provides a deep analysis of various social classes, including enslaved women, with details about their lives before and after the Revolutionary War.

“In an interview in 2000, Mary Beth Norton sat down with historian Ben Barker-Benfield to discuss her career and her approach to the study of early American women's history. That conversation was published in the *Journal for MultiMedia History*.”

“... the revolution is a very destructive and disruptive experience for American families. For women and men. It's the first major war that took men away from their families for long periods of time. Many of the leaders of the revolution were away from home for many years at erratic intervals. These are the men who were in congress, the officers of the continental army and so forth. And so their wives had to take on new tasks at home. Their wives had to do things they never had to do before. They had to decide what fields to plant with what grain. They had to decide where to sell the crops. They had to decide what to do about servants. They had to decide do I sell this horse, or do I buy that horse or what do I do about the livestock. All kinds of questions that women had never previously been in charge of. And they couldn't ask anybody for advice. Their husbands were away sometimes there was no other men in the neighborhood who they trusted or they didn't want to and so one of the things I do in the book is I chart the changing relationships of husbands and wives as wives have to take on more and more responsibilities.

And to me a simple change of pronoun in many of the letters summed it up as I discovered in the early letters after husbands and wives were separated by the revolution. Men and women would talk about the farm as the husbands. The husbands would say it's my farm and the wife would call it your farm. In many of these families after several years it became our farm. And what's wonderful, as in the letters of Abigail and John, it goes further and for Abigail it becomes my farm and for John it becomes your farm. So they make this final leap. There's a complete change of the personal pronoun of who's doing the farming. But in any event, that for me symbolizes the kinds of opening up for women that occurred at the end of the revolution.

Yet on the other hand, the other thing that happens at the end of the revolution is that or by the end of the revolution, is that although women's experiences now seem to be important for the survival of the nation and for the future of the country, the way it gets conceptualized is that women are important insofar as they help their menfolk to become good republican citizens and so that is embodied in republican husbands but especially in republican sons. And this is the theme of republican motherhood that what women do in the republic is they raise good republican sons who can go on to keep the republic alive. **One of the key issues in America at this time is the belief in that fragility of the republican system of government and the belief of the rising generation is absolutely crucial to the maintenance of that government. And so, therefore, there begins at the end of the revolution this very strong emphasis on the improvement of women's education. Because the reasoning goes like this: if every republican boy can grow up to be president then every republican boy's mother has to be capable of educating him to be a good republican citizen. And, therefore, she has to be educated. This was the first time there was a rationalization for women learning more than the basics of education in this country.**”

**[Check Out Our Useful Resource on CCC's Web Site](https://ccc-cultivatingcommunityconnections.net)**  
<https://ccc-cultivatingcommunityconnections.net>

A big “Thank you!” to our web master, Carol Relitz, for all of her work on the CCC web site!!

**Thank you to all of the volunteers who work so hard to serve their communities!**

**A special thank you goes out to the members of Cultivating Community Connections and Movers and Shakers. You are making a difference every day. Thank you for all of your efforts and your support!**