

Daughters  

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of  
Liberty

*by Joan Kane Nichols*

Number of Words: 1620

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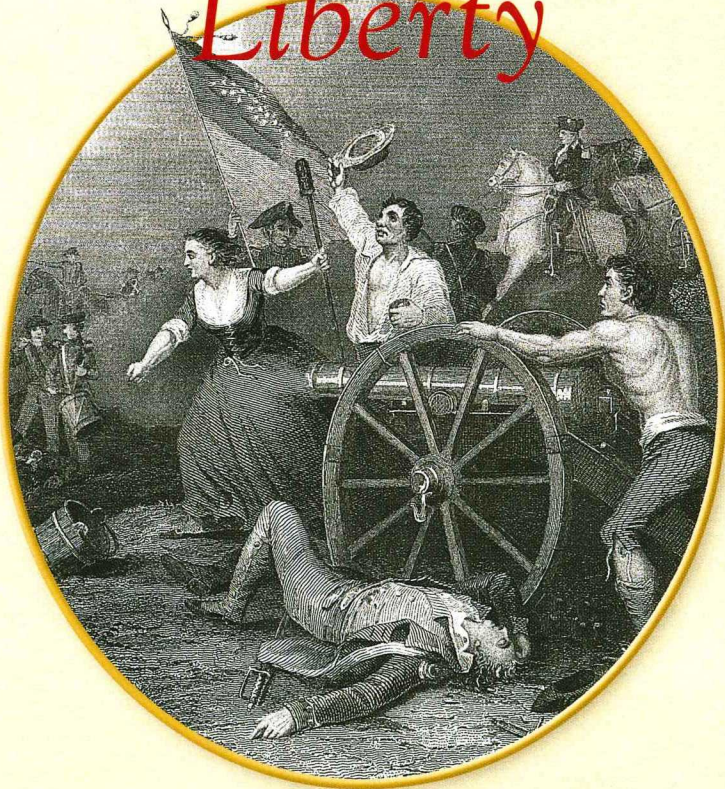
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# Daughters *of* Liberty



by Joan Kane Nichols



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

BOSTON

## Introduction

*T*his book is about three women who were heroes of the American Revolution. One printed the Declaration of Independence. One gathered troops to fight the British. One helped free the enslaved people of Massachusetts. These women didn't think of themselves as heroes. But they were.

What does it take to be a hero? Sometimes it's enough for two things to meet—a special job that needed doing and someone able to do it. Mary Katherine Goddard, Sybil Ludington, and Elizabeth Freeman were smart. They worked hard. They had learned important skills. Each was ready to play a part in the history of her times.





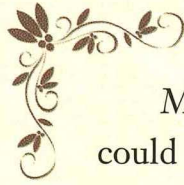
# Mary Katherine Goddard

(1738-1816)

In July 1776 Congress approved the Declaration of Independence. Copies of it were printed. But these copies did not include the names of the signers. It was too dangerous. If the revolution failed, the king would hang the signers as traitors.

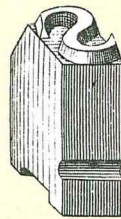
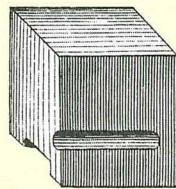


For months, the war did not go well. Congress had to flee Philadelphia. It met in Baltimore, Maryland, instead. Then, in December 1776, George Washington led a successful attack on Trenton. Hopes rose. The signers waited no longer. In January 1777, they went to Mary Katherine Goddard, Baltimore's leading printer. They asked her to print copies of the Declaration and to include the signer's names. She accepted the job.



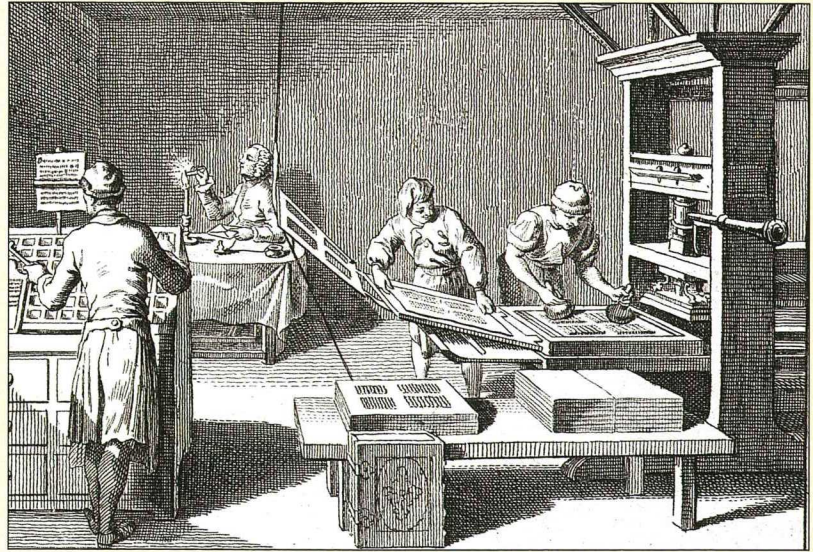
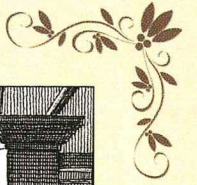
Mary Goddard knew that printing the Declaration could get her in trouble. The British might close down her business. They might even put her in jail. But she was not the sort of person to make a fuss. She was a good worker, proud of her craft. Her brother called her “an expert and correct compositor of types.” (A compositor was someone who arranged metal type to form words, sentences, and pages.)

She had learned her skills by watching, paying attention, and helping in the family print shop in New London, Connecticut. In those days, most people worked in their family’s business. Father, mother, children, servants, and slaves shared the work of running a farm or keeping a shop. Wives and daughters knew as much and worked as hard as the men in the family. Women were butchers, bakers, dressmakers, laundresses, tanners, doctors, midwives, teachers, barbers, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, whalers, and printers.



**Type blocks were used for printing.**

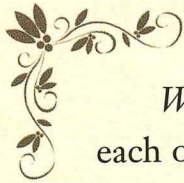




**A printing shop in the 1770's**

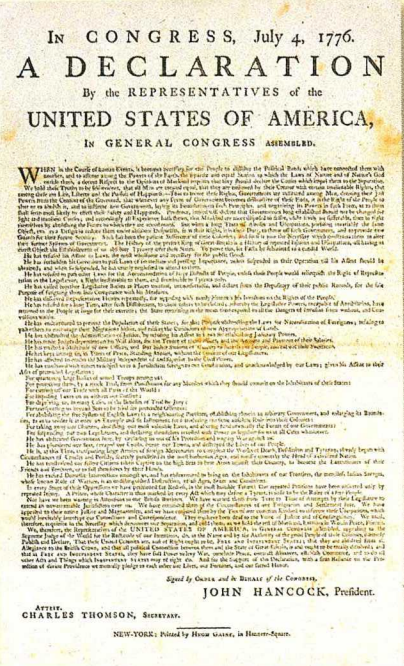
Mary Goddard stuck the handwritten copy of the Declaration of Independence in her reading stand. (If you go to Washington, D.C., you can see the exact same manuscript today.) The reading stand was fastened to a case, a tray divided into sections. Each section held a different kind of metal type—an alphabet letter, number, or other character. Mary stood before the tilted case. She held a narrow frame called a composing stick. Keeping her eyes on the copy, she quickly pulled the letters she needed from the case. Through long practice she knew where each one was.





*W, h, e, n.* She slotted each one in place into the stick. When the stick was full, she transferred the lines of type to a metal pan called a galley. When the galley was full, she inked it. She printed a rough copy, called a proof. She checked the proof for mistakes. When all the type was set, she placed it into a large frame and locked it in place on the printing press. Each page was inked and pressed, over and over, and the copies set aside to dry.

Mary Katherine Goddard's work was done. The copies she printed were sent to every state in the nation. Now Americans in every village and town could read the names of the brave men who had declared the independence of the United States.

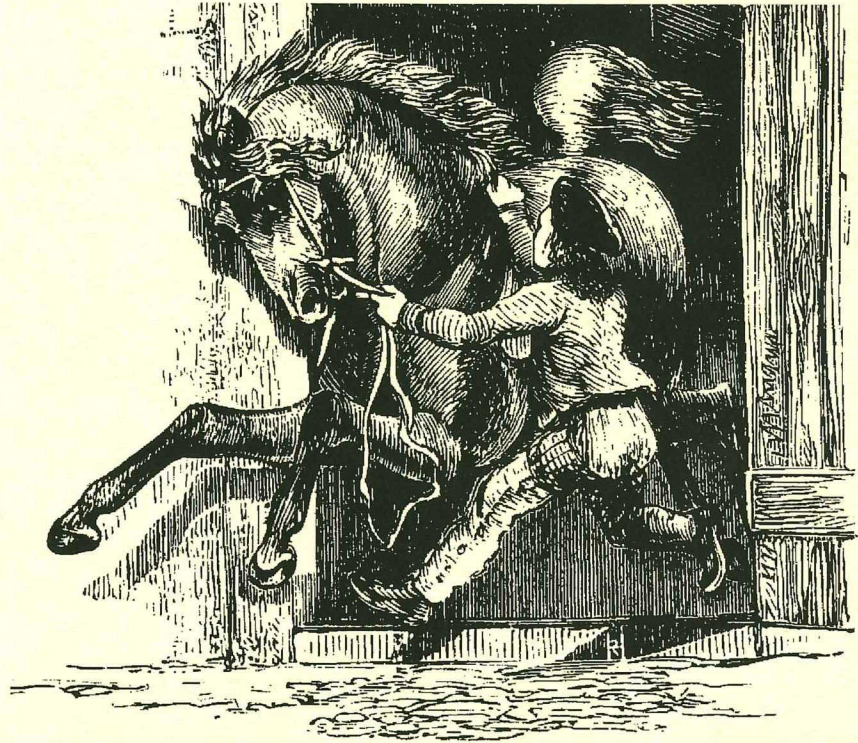




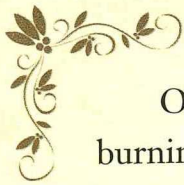


# Sybil Ludington

(1761-1839)



You know about Paul Revere. But do you know about Sybil Ludington? Paul was 40 and rode 16 miles to warn of a British attack. Sybil was 16 and rode 40 miles.



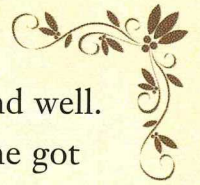
On the night of April 26, 1777, the British army was burning and looting the town of Danbury, Connecticut. A messenger dashed off to tell Colonel Ludington the news.

The Ludingtons lived 15 miles away in the town of Fredericksburg, New York. (Today it is part of the town of Kent. Its name has been changed to Ludingtonville.) In June 1776 Congress had named Henry Ludington Colonel of the 7th Militia of Dutchess County, New York.

The messenger gave Colonel Ludington his orders. He must gather his troops and march at once to Danbury. But how was he to do it? His 400 soldiers were not regular army troops camped close by. They were militia. They lived at home on their own farms, ready to fight when the need arose. They were spread across 40 miles of New York countryside.

Who was going to call them to assemble? Not the messenger. He had other orders. Not the Colonel. He must make his plans and instruct the men as they arrived. Only one other person was brave and skilled enough to make the ride—the Ludingtons' oldest daughter, Sybil.

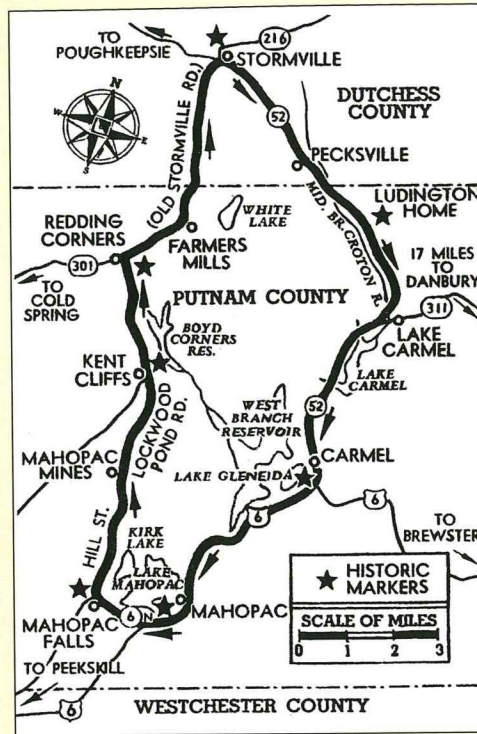




Sybil knew how to ride a horse fearlessly and well. She practiced riding her horse Star whenever she got the chance. She also knew her neighborhood. She knew Peekskill Hollow and Horse Pond Road. She had ridden to the settlements of Cold Spring, Carmel, Mahopac, Kent Cliffs, and Farmers Mills.

**Sybil Ludington gathered the colonial militia on April 26, 1777.**

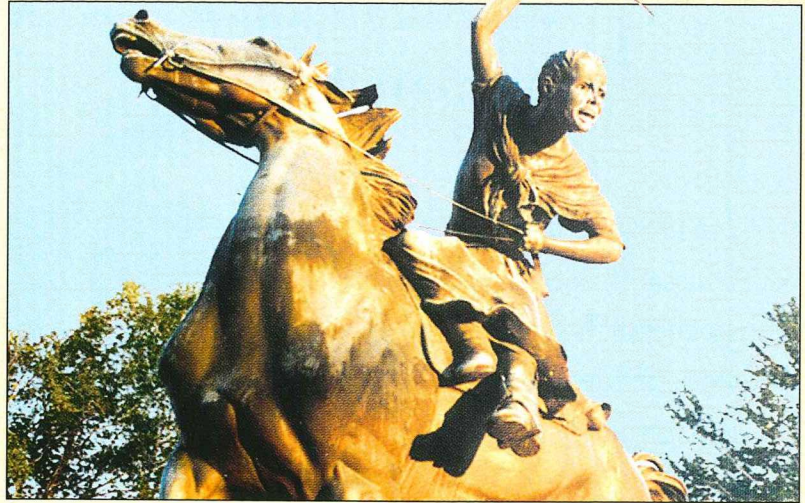




Look at Sybil's route on this map.

Sybil set off on a 40-mile journey. The roads were unpaved and unmarked. There were many Tories in the area. If any found out what she was doing, they would stop her. It was nighttime. Unlike a traveler today, she had no streetlights, car headlights, or even a flashlight to show her the way. Even the houses were dark. She had a lantern. She had Star, a horse she knew and could trust. She had her skills as a horsewoman and her knowledge of the surrounding countryside.





**This statue of Sybil is by Anna Hyatt Huntington.**

She rode in a circle through Putnam and part of Dutchess counties. She galloped all night through Peekskill Hollow to Horse Pond Road to the settlements of Carmel, Mahopac, Kent Cliffs, and Farmers Mills. With the short stick she carried, she prodded Star and pounded on her neighbor's doors.

By morning, she was done. The 400 men of the 7th Regiment gathered outside the Ludington house for the march to Danbury. They reached it in time to battle the British troops and force them back to their ships.

Sybil Ludington was a hero. General George Washington gave her his personal thanks.

# Elizabeth Freeman

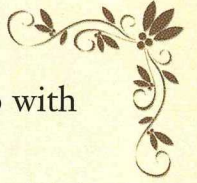
(1742/44?-1829)



In 1780 people all over Massachusetts were talking about the new state constitution and its Bill of Rights. Some of these people were in Sheffield in the house of a man named Colonel John Ashley. A woman named Elizabeth Freeman was there too, but they didn't pay much attention to her. To them she was just a slave who dusted and swept and waited on table.

Elizabeth Freeman knew how to carry out her duties quietly and well, without calling attention to herself. "By keepin' still and mindin' things," she heard a lot. She heard words like *freedom* and *independence*. She heard that the new constitution said, "All men are free and equal." It may not have occurred to Colonel Ashley and his guests





that *freedom* and *independence* had anything to do with Elizabeth Freeman. But it occurred to her.

Elizabeth Freeman had been born to enslaved African parents in Claverack, New York. She was six months old when Colonel Ashley bought her and her sister, Lizzy. He took both girls to his home in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Elizabeth served the Ashleys until she was nearly forty. They called her "Mumbet." She had a daughter known as "Little Bet." Her husband was killed fighting as a Patriot in the Revolution.

One day in 1781, Mumbet and her sister were in the kitchen with Mrs. Ashley. For some reason, Mrs. Ashley got angry at Lizzy. She swung a heated kitchen shovel at her. Mumbet put up her arm to protect her sister. The hot iron shovel landed. It burned and crushed her arm. The scar never went away. She never had full use of her arm again.

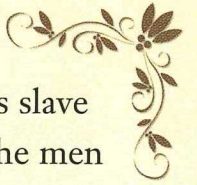
Mumbet was furious. Why should she put up with such treatment? She left the house, determined never to go back.



### The Massachusetts Bill of Rights

Colonel Ashley wouldn't allow that. To him, Mumbet was just a slave. She belonged to him. She couldn't just leave if she wanted to. Colonel Ashley went to the law to force her to come back.





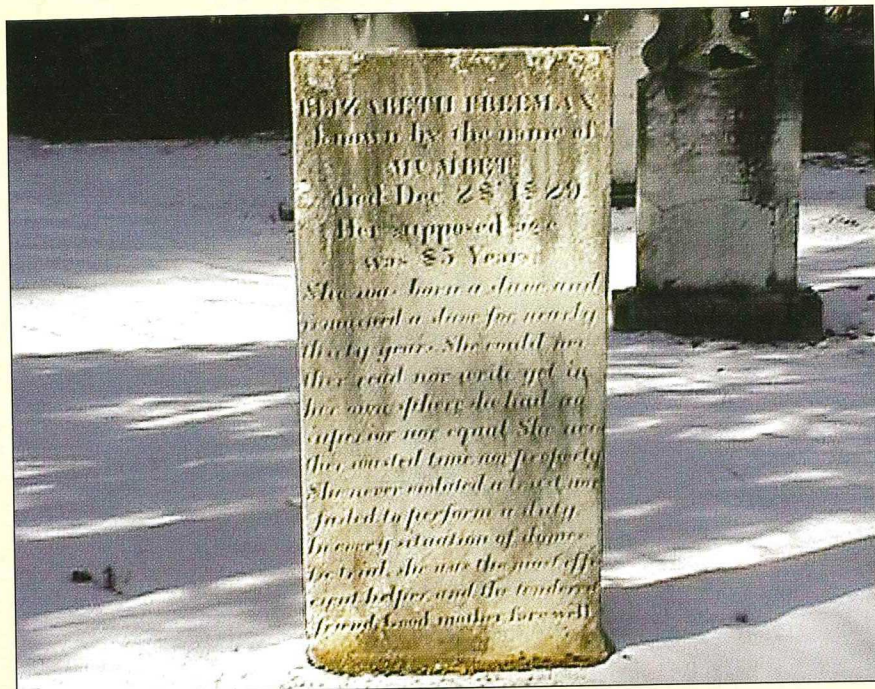
Colonel Ashley had the legal right to get his slave back. Or did he? Mumbet remembered one of the men who had visited the Ashley house. His name was Theodore Sedgewick. He was a lawyer from Stockbridge, Massachusetts. More importantly, he might be on her side. Mumbet had listened to him talk. He sounded like he was opposed to slavery. Maybe he could help.

Mumbet went to Theodore Sedgewick and told him what had happened. She wanted him to take her case to court. Didn't the Massachusetts Bill of Rights guarantee freedom and equality to everyone? And didn't that include her too? Mr. Sedgewick thought about what she said. It made sense. He agreed.

On the third Tuesday in August 1781, Mr. Sedgewick presented her case to the county court in Great Barrington. A man named Brom, another of Colonel Ashley's slaves, took part in the case too.

The jury agreed with Mumbet's argument. They set her and Brom free. And they ordered Mr. Ashley to pay them thirty shillings and their legal costs.

Colonel Ashley wanted Mumbet to come back and work for him again. He said he would pay her. She refused. She went to work for the Sedgewicks instead.



**Gravestone of Elizabeth Freeman**

Elizabeth Freeman and Brom were the first enslaved African Americans to be freed under the Massachusetts Constitution. Their case led to other cases of the same kind. Within a few years, slavery was abolished in Massachusetts. The enslaved had become free, just as the Constitution of Massachusetts said.



### Think About What You Have Read

- 1** What did the three women featured in the book have in common?
- 2** Why was Sybil Ludington chosen to rally the militia in Connecticut?
- 3** Why did Elizabeth Freeman choose Theodore Sedgewick to help her win against Colonel Ashley?

**Activity** Work with a group of classmates to present a play about a part of this selection. Choose one of the women featured in the selection. Dramatize an event in the woman's life, with some classmates taking roles. Each group can present its play to the class.

The American Revolution  
The New Nation



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