



# SARAH BRADLEY FULTON

## ‘A Heroine of the Revolution’

/ By Abbey Dean /

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**Our  
Patriots**

**B**orn on Christmas Eve 1740 in Dorchester, Mass., Sarah Bradley’s (also spelled Bradlee) parents likely never imagined the long, adventurous life that lay before their newborn daughter. Sarah would live to be 94 years old, passing away in her sleep just a month shy of her 95th birthday.

In her lifetime, Sarah would become a political activist and leader, serve as a field nurse during the American Revolution and even entertain George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette. A true Patriot, Sarah’s service was nothing short of exemplary.

### **A Daughter of Liberty**

In 1762, at the age of 21, Sarah married John Fulton. The couple lived in Medford, Mass., along with their

children, but would often travel to Boston—about 6 miles away—to visit her brother, Nathaniel Bradlee, and his wife. According to the *Medford Historical Society Papers, Volume 1*, Nathaniel was a carpenter who used his shop as a meeting place to discuss politics with his friends and fellow Bostonians. It was likely in these gatherings that Sarah was first introduced to and inspired by other passionate Patriots.

By 1770, Parliament had repealed most of the Townshend Acts first passed in 1767, except for the tax on tea. The Daughters of Liberty, a group of politically active and patriotic women first organized in response to unfair British taxation, pledged to stop drinking tea in protest. Instead, according to the New England Historical Society, Daughters of Liberty drank “liberty tea,” a concoction made from mint, basil, currant and raspberry.

*continued on page 48*



John Trumbull's  
"The Death of General  
Warren at the Battle  
of Bunker's Hill, 17  
June, 1775"



continued from page 46

In *Understanding the American Promise, Volume I: To 1877* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011), the co-authors explain: "The Townshend duties thus provided an unparalleled opportunity for encouraging female patriotism. During the Stamp Act crisis, Sons of Liberty took to the streets in protest. During the difficulties of 1768 and 1769, the Daughters of Liberty emerged, embodying the new idea that women might play a role in public affairs. Any woman could express affiliation with the colonial protest through conspicuous boycotts of British-made goods."

The New England Historical Society identifies Sarah as not only a Daughter of Liberty, but also a leader within the group. Furthermore, after the passage of the Tea Act of 1773, Sarah is credited with devising the plan to disguise the protesters who participated in the infamous Boston Tea Party the evening of December 16, 1773.

### To Serve and Protect

Never one to remain on the sidelines, Sarah served as a field nurse during the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. Surgeons were scarce, but able nurses like Sarah did their best to help bandage and treat the soldiers.

In *Women Patriots in the American Revolution: Stories of Bravery, Daring, and Compassion* by Jack Darrell Crowder (Clearfield, 2018), the author alleges that Sarah was placed in charge of caring for the wounded. At one point, she "removed a bullet from the cheek of a wounded soldier." Sarah had forgotten that particular soldier, wrote Crowder, until he came to her home many years later to extend his gratitude.

Tales of Sarah's bravery and perseverance also appear in March 1776. During the siege of Boston, she volunteered to carry a message across enemy lines from Major John Brooks to none other than General George Washington.

The New England Historical Society suggests that Fulton believed, and rightly so, that the British would not suspect a woman. In the dead of night, Sarah walked to nearby Charlestown, found a boat and rowed across the river to deliver her dispatches. She was home by dawn the next day.

Crowder wrote that General Washington would later visit the Fultons' home in Medford to thank Sarah in person for her courage and dedication to the Patriot cause. Sarah reportedly served



The Fultons' punch bowl that is now part of the Mount Vernon Museum collection

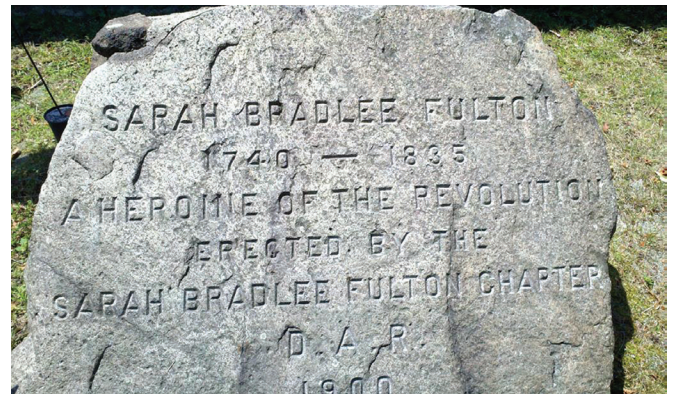
the General punch from a delicately painted porcelain punch bowl that is now part of the Mount Vernon Museum collection.

Years later, during the Lafayette's Farewell Tour of the United States in 1824–1825, Lafayette met with Sarah at her home. (Read more about Lafayette in the July/August 2007 issue and about his Farewell Tour in the July/August 2019 issue.) During that visit, Sarah is said to have served Lafayette from that same punch bowl.

### A Life Remembered

Sarah died on November 9, 1835 in Medford. In 1900, just 10 years after the Daughters of the American Revolution was founded, the Sarah Bradlee Fulton Chapter, located in Medford, Mass., erected a stone marker to honor their namesake's memory and her service.

Etched on the stone, the DAR tribute says it all: "A Heroine of the Revolution." ☀



The DAR marker honoring Sarah Bradley Fulton