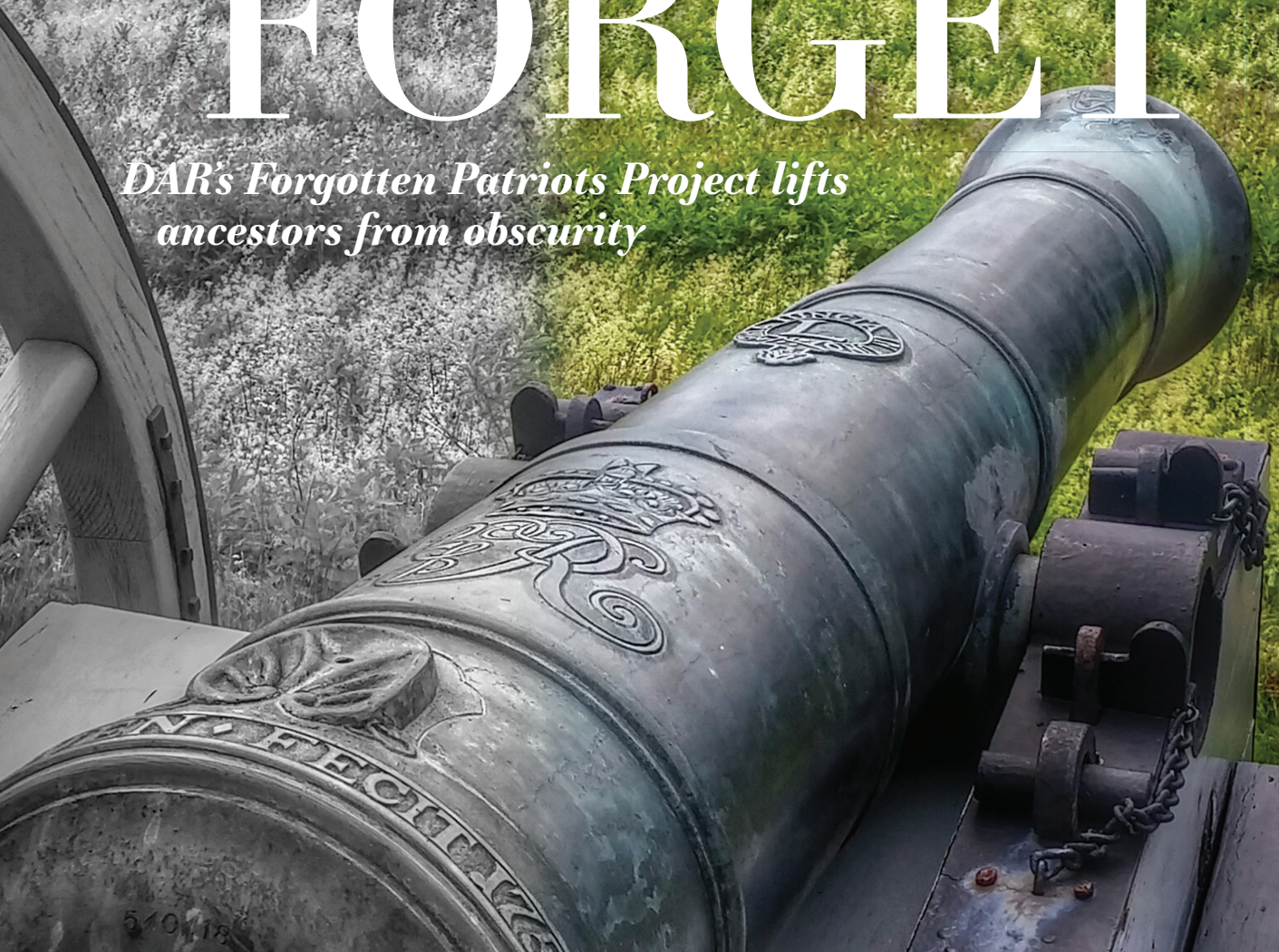


# 'LEST WE FORGET'

*DAR's Forgotten Patriots Project lifts  
ancestors from obscurity*



Since its founding in 1890, more than 1 million women have joined NSDAR by establishing their kinship to Revolutionary War Patriots. The National Society has verified approximately 148,000 ancestors, and the list grows each year as members establish new links to their past.

Most of those ancestors were of European origin and male. But not all. Many women materially aided the cause. American Indians, especially members of the Oneida Nation, played critical roles. African-Americans, both enslaved and free, fought for the prospect of liberty, which was often denied to them.

Since the mid-1980s, DAR's Forgotten Patriots Project has worked to identify the African-Americans, American Indians, individuals of mixed heritage, and women who supported the struggle for independence.

In April 2008, DAR published *Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War*, an 874-page report on its findings and research. DAR continues to expand this work as new findings come to light. A free downloadable copy is available at [dar.org/ForgottenPatriots](http://dar.org/ForgottenPatriots).

In 2020, DAR launched its five-year "E Pluribus Unum Educational Initiative" to increase awareness of nontraditional Revolutionary War Patriots, including African-Americans, American Indians and women. DAR is uniquely positioned to research and explain the astonishing diversity of those who created our nation.

The E Pluribus Unum Educational Initiative has three primary goals:

- ★ Expand research on the experiences of people of color, including Patriots of African, Indigenous and non-European or mixed-heritage descent.

- ★ Discover additional names and stories of Patriots of color who supported the American Revolution and contributed to the cause of independence.

- ★ Provide more historical, educational and genealogical resources about people of color and women during the Colonial period on the DAR website.

The following article presents a small sample from the research already carried out by DAR.

## ★ Sampson Battis ★

As Kevin J. Weddle explains in *The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2021), the Battles of Saratoga actually comprised widely scattered clashes over several months before the final confrontation September 19–October 17, 1777 (see "Bookshelf" on page 10). The Patriot victory helped persuade France to become the Colonists' ally, enabling the Patriots to triumph.

The outcome of the War of Independence was profoundly important to Sampson Battis of Canterbury, N.H. Battis, believed to be born between 1750–1752, was enslaved to Canterbury farmer Colonel Archelaus Moore, who promised to free Battis if he would fight well in the war. Battis agreed, and Col. Moore volunteered him to fill the local quota of men for the army, according to a history of Battis presented in the Town of Canterbury 2020 Annual Report.

Battis grew up on Col. Moore's farm in Warren, R.I., where the Windswept Farm equestrian center now stands. He enlisted on April 19, 1775, into a local militia group commanded by Captain Benjamin Sias. They spent a month aiding in the Siege of Boston before returning home.

Battis reenlisted in September 1777 in Brigadier General John Stark's militia, which played a key role in the Battle of Bennington, Vt., on August 16, 1777. Together with the Vermont militia, Brig. Gen. Stark's forces assaulted a smaller British unit intent on raiding Patriot supplies. The battle helped hobble British General John Burgoyne's forces, contributing to the stunning Patriot victory at Saratoga.

Brig. Gen. Stark's militia then marched to Fort Edward, N.Y., a key post in the American defense against Gen. Burgoyne. The militia raided British supply lines and reported on the enemy's movements. In October 1777, Gen. Burgoyne sent a force of 7,000 men against the outnumbered Patriot forces at Fort Edward. The militia withdrew to Saratoga, where they reinforced the Continental Army, the town report states.

Battis enlisted once more in July 1781 into a militia unit commanded by Captain Nathaniel Head. They were en route to West Point, N.Y., when they learned of the victory at Yorktown. They returned to a fort at Charlestown, N.H., where Battis received his discharge on November 22, 1781.

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Brigadier General John Stark's militia played a critical role in the Battle of Bennington, Vt., on August 16, 1777. Brig. Gen. Stark's army assaulted a smaller British unit intent on raiding American supplies.

Col. Moore freed Battis as promised and also gave him 100 acres of land near the present-day Northfield town line and Battis Crossing Road. Battis approached a William Coffin in Boscawen, and said he wanted to buy the freedom of Lucy Carey, a West Indian woman. Battis agreed to work for Coffin for a year to obtain her freedom.

Coffin kept his side of the bargain. The couple settled down on their 100-acre tract and had many children, most of whom lived nearby, as would many of their descendants. In 1800, the state gave him command of a militia battalion, and Governor John Gilman bestowed the honorary rank of major on him, the town report notes.

It is not clear when Battis died—sources suggest between 1847–1853—but he is buried in the southwest corner of the Moore burial plot in Canterbury's Center Cemetery. The epitaph on his headstone reads, "Sampson Battis, Head's Company, Reynolds's New Hampshire, Rev. War."

## ★ Juan Francisco Ruiz del Canto ★

On April 29, 2017, the Maria Jefferson DAR Chapter, St. Augustine, Fla., dedicated a marker at Tolomato Cemetery honoring Patriot Juan Francisco Ruiz del Canto (November 13, 1730–February 20, 1802).

Born in St. Augustine to Spanish parents, Ruiz del Canto supervised the Castillo de San Marcos, which protected Florida and the Atlantic trade route and is now a U.S. National Monument, according to the "Tolomato Cemetery and the American Revolution" entry on the Tolomato Cemetery blog

on May 11, 2017. (Read more about the Castillo de San Marcos in the May/June 2020 issue.)

Spain was France's ally in the Seven Years' War. When France lost, Britain took Florida from Spain, dividing it into East and West Florida. The new governor appointed Ruiz del Canto to a committee overseeing sales of former Spanish properties to the newly arrived British.

In this position, Ruiz del Canto dealt extensively with Florida American Indian tribes, as well as the Spanish colonial government headquarters in Havana, Cuba. As tensions rose between the American Colonies and England, he successfully worked to persuade the tribes to remain neutral, the blog post states.

When Spain became America's ally in 1779, Ruiz del Canto left the city and entered Spanish service. Thanks to his prewar contacts, he served as an important liaison between the Spanish government in Havana and the Yuchi tribe.

Ruiz del Canto went on two missions to meet with the Creeks, one in 1779 and the other in 1780. On these missions, he informed them that Spain had entered the war against England. He distributed gifts to the group and received assurances that the Spanish could operate freely in Florida, according to "Bring Them What They Lack: Spanish-Creek Exchange and Alliance Making in a Maritime Borderland, 1763–1783," an essay by James L. Hill (*Early American Studies*, Winter 2014).

In 1780, Ruiz del Canto captured a British ship whose captain divulged details about Britain's military presence around Pensacola. Spanish General Bernardo de Gálvez used this intelligence to besiege Pensacola from March 9–May 8, 1781. The British subsequently abandoned West Florida.

After the war, Spain recovered Florida, and Ruiz del Canto returned to St. Augustine. He and his second wife, Francisca de la

Hita Salazar, lived in a house that is now known as the St. Photios Greek Orthodox National Shrine on St. George Street.

Ruiz del Canto died in 1802, and the location of his remains is sadly unknown. His DAR marker lies in Tolomato Cemetery's "Revolutionary War Corner," near markers for Don Juan McQueen, which the Maria Jefferson DAR Chapter erected in 2012, and Francisco Xavier Sanchez, presented by the Sons of the American Revolution in 2013.

## ★ Lilly McIlhaney Bowen ★

In 1997, the Royal Oak DAR Chapter, Marion, Va., erected a memorial at the Smyth County, Va., courthouse to honor the many soldiers and civilians who fought in or contributed significantly to the fight for independence.

One of the names carved into the north side of the pedestal is Lilly (also spelled Lily) McIlhaney Bowen, who supported the cause by lending money and providing food and military supplies in 1777. The names of four of her children—Henry, Arthur, Charles and Robert—who fought in Smyth County units are also cut into the granite monument.

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**“She had a strong, discriminating mind. She lived 20 years longer than her husband, was administratrix of his will and had many important decisions to make regarding property settlements, and management of their large farm.”**

Lilly was born in Ireland around 1705 to Henry and Jane McIlhaney, but Henry died while she was still an infant. Her mother remarried a man with the last name Hunter, and they had a large family, according to *The Bowens of Virginia and Tennessee, Descendants of John Bowen and Lily McIlhaney* by Jamie Ault Grady (self-published, 1969). The family immigrated around 1722 and settled in Lancaster County, Pa.

John Bowen, the son of Moses and Rebecca Reese Bowen, who emigrated from Wales around 1698, was a wealthy planter in Lancaster. He met Lilly soon after she and her parents arrived, and they married sometime in 1730. He was 12 years older than Lilly.

John and Lilly moved to Augusta County, Va. The date is uncertain—family lore indicates around 1730, though Grady wrote that their first documented presence was a bond in Augusta County dated April 15, 1748.

After John died in May 1761, Lilly ran their farm. She “was known to be a very remarkable woman,” according to Grady. “She had a strong, discriminating mind. She lived 20 years longer than her husband, was administratrix of his will and had many important decisions to make regarding property settlements, and management of their large farm.”

In 1779, she and some of her family moved farther southwest to the middle fork of the Holston River and built a new home. According to family tradition, the first missionaries in the area held services in Lilly’s ballroom. Her home also became the meeting place for local militia. Lilly died sometime between April 4, 1780, when her will was dated, and June 1, 1780, when it was probated.

The Bowens had eight sons and five daughters, Grady writes. Their son Moses died in 1774 during what is known as Lord Dunmore’s War against American Indians along the Virginia frontier.

Sons William and Rees Bowen were lieutenants in the Washington County, Va., militia. The unit was part of the Overmountain Men who defeated a Loyalist force at the Battle of Kings Mountain, according to *Pendleton’s History of Tazewell County and Southwest Virginia* by William C. Pendleton (W.C. Hill Printing Co., 1920). William was bedridden with a severe fever and unable to go on the expedition, so Rees led their company. He was killed leading an attack at the Battle of Kings Mountain.

## ★ Lydia Barrington Darragh ★

George Washington ranks as America’s most prominent spymaster, having learned the importance of intelligence while serving under British military leaders, according to “The Founding Fathers of American Intelligence” by P.K. Rose on the Central Intelligence Agency’s website. About 10% of Washington’s military funding in the Revolutionary War was spent on intelligence activities, according to Rose.

Washington built espionage networks in and around major concentrations of British troops, such as their headquarters in New York City and Philadelphia, which the British occupied from September 1777 to June 1778. The Continental Army was at Valley Forge, Pa., from December 1777 to June 1778.

Quaker seamstress Lydia Barrington Darragh was one of these agents. Around one-third of Philadelphia’s population had fled ahead of the British occupation. But because the Religious Society of Friends in 1776 declared it was officially neutral, many Quakers remained in the city. Secretly, however, the Darraghs supported the Patriot cause.

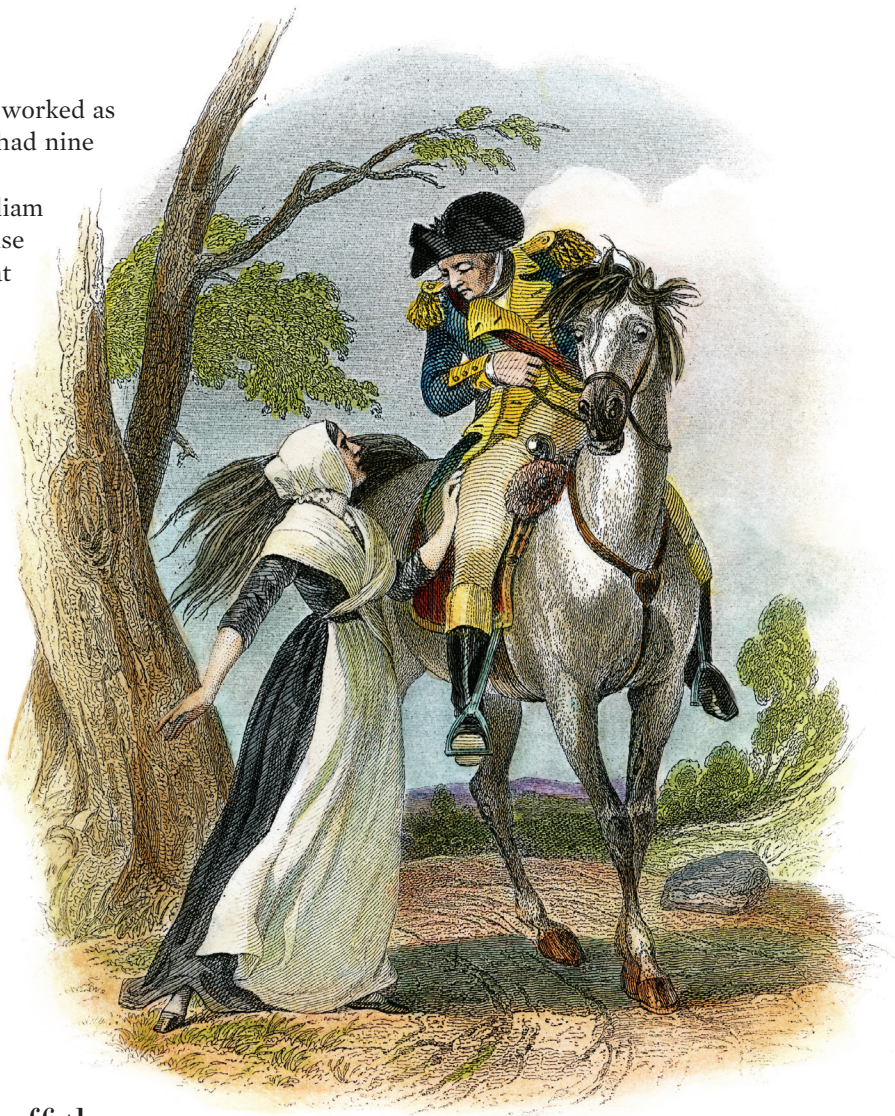
According to her entry on the National Women’s History Museum website, Lydia Barrington was born in 1729 in Dublin, Ireland, and married William Darragh in 1753. They

later immigrated to Philadelphia, where she worked as a midwife while William was a tutor. They had nine children, although only five survived infancy.

After occupying Philadelphia, General William Howe established his headquarters in a house across the street from the Darraghs' home at 177 South Second Street. This enabled Lydia to observe British activities without suspicion. She wrote coded reports that her 14-year-old son, John, would smuggle to his older brother, Charles, who was an American soldier, the biography on [womenshistory.org](http://womenshistory.org) states.

In late 1777, the British wanted to commandeered the Darraghs' home for meetings, but they agreed to let the family remain. In exchange for allowing her to stay, Lydia acquiesced to the use of her parlor as a meeting room. However, for safety's sake, the Darraghs sent their youngest children to stay with friends outside the city.

On December 2, 1777, the British met to plan a surprise attack on the Continental Army at Whitemarsh Township. The British ordered the Darraghs to stay in their bedrooms and told Lydia they would let her know when they



A 19th-century engraving depicting Lydia Darragh warning Thomas Craig, a family friend, about the plans to attack the Continental Army at Whitemarsh Township.

Lydia's intelligence gave Washington enough time to prepare for the attack and hold off the enemy. When the frustrated British returned to Philadelphia, one of the officers interrogated Lydia. She insisted no one had left their bedrooms. The officer apparently believed her, adding, "I know you were asleep for I knocked at your door three times before you heard me."

were done. Lydia went to her room but soon crept out and eavesdropped as they planned the December 4 attack, according to her biography at [Battlefields.org](http://Battlefields.org).

As the meeting ended, she hurried back to her bedroom and pretended to be sleeping deeply when an officer knocked to announce the meeting was over.

To get the information to Washington, Lydia obtained British permission to leave the city to see her children and buy flour at a mill. After leaving the city, she walked to the Rising Sun Tavern, a known Patriot meeting spot.

There are two accounts of what happened next. Lydia's daughter Ann recalled in 1827 that her mother encountered

the plans. He passed word along to Colonel Elias Boudinot, one of Washington's spy handlers, who relayed it to Washington, according to "Elias Boudinot's Account of the Spying of Lydia Darragh in Autumn 1777," on [ExplorePAHistory.com](http://ExplorePAHistory.com). (Read more about Elias Boudinot in the May/June 2021 issue.)

The second account, described in Boudinot's journal, has come to be regarded as more likely:

*"After Dinner, a little poor looking insignificant Old Woman came in & solicited leave to go into the Country to buy some flour. While we were asking some Questions, she walked up to me and put into my hands a dirty old needlebook, with various*

Thomas Craig, a family friend and Patriot, outside the city. She told him about

*small pockets in it. ... On opening the needlebook, I could not find anything till I got to the last Pocket, Where I found a piece of paper rolled up into the form of a pipe shank. On unrolling it I found information that Genl Howe was coming out the next morning with 5000 Men, 13 pieces of Cannon, Baggage Waggons, and 11 Boats on Waggon Wheels. On comparing this with other information I found it true, and immediately rode Post to head Quarters."*

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The British evacuated Philadelphia the following June. After her husband died in 1783, Lydia raised their children and worked in a store until she died in 1789. They are buried at the Friends Arch Street Meeting House Burial Ground in Philadelphia, though they had been ousted from the Quakers, perhaps for helping the Patriot cause, according to the [Battlefields.org](https://www.battlefields.org) article.

## ★ Nanyehi ★

Nanyehi was born in 1738 at the Cherokee capital of Chota in East Tennessee. Her name means "She Who Walks With the Spirits" or "One Who Goes About." It derives from Nunne-hi, the legendary name of the Spirit People of Cherokee mythology, according to her entry in the online Tennessee Encyclopedia.

Life for the Cherokee was not peaceful at this time. The Cherokee and Creek nations began a prolonged war in the 1740s over control of North Georgia. Nanyehi accompanied her husband, Kingfisher, when he fought at the Battle of Taliwa around 1755. While he fired at the enemy, she chewed on the lead balls. Roughing up the balls' surface was thought to make them more accurate and thus more lethal.

After Kingfisher was killed, Nanyehi rallied the Cherokee warriors and led a charge that enabled them to win the battle, according to "Nancy Ward: The Last Beloved Woman of the Cherokees," by Ben Harris McClary (*Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, December 1962).

The Cherokee tribes recognized her valor by giving her a share from the spoils. More important, they chose her as their Ghighau, or "Beloved Woman," who would sit as a

member of the chief's council. The Cherokee believed their gods communicated through the Beloved Woman, so her counsel carried great weight. The Ghighau also led the powerful and influential Women's Council and controlled the fate of prisoners.

Sometime in the late 1750s, Nanyehi married Bryant Ward, a white English trader from South Carolina. After their marriage, she adopted the anglicized name of Nancy Ward. Bryant was already married to a white woman, but it was not unusual for traders living among American Indians to marry into a tribe or clan.

White encroachment on American Indian land caused increasing friction at this time. Britain's Royal Proclamation of 1763 was supposed to stop settlement west of the Appalachians,

but land-hungry whites ignored it. As they poured into Cherokee lands, Nanyehi increasingly moved between two worlds, trying to prevent violence.

Tensions were also rising between Britain and the Colonies, forcing the nations to decide which side, if either, to support. The Cherokees favored Britain, and McClary suggests they hoped a British victory would end the settlers' land grabs.

In the summer of 1776, the Cherokees planned to attack the frontiers of Virginia, Georgia and the Carolinas to cripple the Patriot war effort. As a council member, Nanyehi was aware of the plans and acted to prevent bloodshed. She told a white trader about the attack and helped him and two other white men slip out of Chota on July 8, 1776, to warn the settlers.

Nanyehi subsequently intervened to save the life of Lydia Bean, whom Cherokee warriors had captured and planned to burn alive. As Ghighau, she controlled the fate of prisoners, and she ordered the warriors to release Bean. Nanyehi then took Bean to Chota to recover from the ordeal.

Besides earning the settlers' trust, Nanyehi's actions spared Chota from destruction in October 1776. Virginia troops who invaded the area to punish Britain's American Indian allies bypassed Chota, though other Cherokee towns suffered greatly.

In 1780, Nanyehi again warned settlers of an imminent Cherokee attack. Many had just returned from the Battle of Kings Mountain, but they set out immediately and camped near Chota.

"The famous Indian Woman Nancy Ward came to Camp, she gave us various intelligence, and made an overture in behalf of some of the Cheifs [sic] for Peace; to which I then evaded giving an explicit answer," Colonel Arthur Campbell reported to Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson. The whites were in no mood to show mercy. They destroyed Chota on December 28 and took Nanyehi and her family as prisoners.

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When she and her family were released, they returned to Chota to rebuild. The settlers eventually forced the Cherokee to a peace council in July 1781. The Cherokee brought Nanyehi to speak for them, which is believed to be the first time a woman had taken part in such a meeting, McClary states.

“Our cry is all for peace; let it continue. This peace must last forever. Let your women’s sons be ours; our sons be yours. Let your women hear our words,” she told them. Colonel William Christian replied, “We will not quarrel with you, because you are our mothers. We will not meddle with your people if they will be still and quiet at home and let us live in peace.”

Nanyehi’s heartfelt plea altered the course of the treaty talks. Instead of taking all Cherokee land north of the Little Tennessee River, the whites settled for the land north of the Nolichucky River—still a painful loss, but less than it might have been.

Nanyehi continued to be a presence in Cherokee diplomacy. In 1783, she saved the lives of two traders who had angered a group of Cherokees. She pleaded for continued peace in 1785 during talks leading to the Treaty of Hopewell in South Carolina, where Cherokee were forced to give up still more land.

As far as it is known, Nanyehi never explained why she helped the white settlers or the American Colonists—even going as far as providing food, resources and beef to soldiers during the American Revolution. Peace and preventing violence seem to have been driving motivators in her life, though some Cherokee regarded her as a traitor. In the end, it was not enough to prevent the Cherokee from being driven out of their remaining homelands by President Andrew Jackson through the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

## ★ Honyere Tewahangarahken ★

The Patriot victory at the Battle of Oriskany, N.Y., on August 6, 1777, helped stop the British from cutting New England off from the rest of the Colonies and contributed to the British defeat at Saratoga.

One of the heroes of Oriskany was the Oneida chief Honyere Tewahangarahken (He Who Takes Up the Snow Shoe), known to whites as Han Yerry or Hanyery. He and his wife, Tyonajanegen (see “Our Patriots” in the November/December 2020 issue) played key roles in the months leading up to the battle and the fight itself.

The Battle of Oriskany pitted a British force composed mostly of Loyalists and Mohawk warriors led by Lieutenant Colonel Barrimore “Barry” St. Leger against Patriots and Oneida warriors at Fort Schuyler near present-day Rome, N.Y.

Before the American Revolution, the Oneida and Mohawk were members of the centuries-old Six Nations Confederacy, which also included the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga and Tuscarora tribes. When war broke out, only the Oneida and Tuscarora supported the Patriots, according to the National Park Service’s history of Fort Schuyler, “The Oneida Nation in the American Revolution.”

The fort stood near the Oneida village of Oriska, which Tewahangarahken and Tyonajanegen helped found. In 1776, Tewahangarahken and other Oneida leaders urged the Patriots to repair and garrison Fort Schuyler in case of invasion.

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The Patriots took the advice, and Lt. Col. St. Leger was surprised to find the fort in good repair and garrisoned when he arrived on August 2, 1777. He decided to besiege the fort rather than attack directly.

Tyonajanegen was at the fort and managed to slip past the besiegers and go for help, David D. Dry states in *An Encyclopedia of American Women at War: From the Home Front to the Battlefields Volume 1* (ABC-CLIO, 2013). She reached Fort Dayton, and the Tryon County militia quickly mobilized. She, Tewahangarahken, their son Cornelius and about 150 other Oneida accompanied the relief column.

Lt. Col. St. Leger learned about the approaching force and sent the Mohawk warriors and a small number of Loyalists to ambush the militia at a steep ravine several miles from the fort.

The ambush caught the relief column completely by surprise. They severely wounded the leader, Brigadier General Nicholas Herkimer, and his men dragged him to shelter. It seemed the Mohawks would slaughter the entire Patriot force.

Despite his wounds, Brig. Gen. Herkimer continued to command his men. He gradually brought the survivors together and organized an effective defense. Tewahangarahken, his wife and their son fought desperately alongside the others. When Tewahangarahken was wounded in the hand and could no longer load his weapon, Tyonajanegen loaded it for him. He is credited with killing nine of the enemy.

After about six hours, the Mohawks and Loyalists pulled back, and the Patriots retreated to Fort Dayton. The Patriots suffered 500 men killed, wounded or captured out of about 800.



The Battle of Oriskany on August 6, 1777, was “by far and away the bloodiest battle of the American Revolution by the percentage of men engaged,” writes Kevin J. Weddle in *The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution*.

The Mohawk lost around 70 killed, wounded or missing, many of them prominent chiefs and warriors.

“The Battle of Oriskany, fought at a spot the Iroquois would forever call the ‘Place for Sorrows,’ was by far and away the bloodiest battle of the American Revolution by the percentage of men engaged,” writes Kevin J. Weddle in *The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

Lt. Col. St. Leger lifted the siege and retreated on August 22 when he learned a large American force was on its way. His forces burned Oriska, including Tewahangarahken’s home and farm, as they withdrew.

Despite their personal losses, the Oneida continued to support the Patriots. About 150 Oneida, including Tewahangarahken and Tyonajanegen, joined General Horatio Gates for the Battles of Saratoga. The couple accompanied an Oneida delegation that brought food to the Continental Army at Valley Forge. While there, they dined with General George Washington.

In 1779, Tewahangarahken was given the rank of captain of Oneida warriors. He also received some land for his service to America. He died in 1793, and Tyonajanegen died in the 1820s. ☀

## A New Podcast From DAR!

Have you enjoyed reading the “Our Patriots” features in the pages of our award-winning *American Spirit* magazine? Now you can listen to these stories, narrated by President General Denise Doring VanBuren! The “Our Patriots DAR Podcast” was announced during the virtual 130th Continental Congress, further demonstrating the National Society’s commitment to embracing technology to honor our ancestors.

Telling the stories of Patriots such as Hannah Tillman, Mercy Otis Warren, Eleazer Blake and Timothy Matlack has been an important theme of the VanBuren Administration, and these episodes will help share these integral stories beyond our pages.

Are you ready to listen? The first episode launched on July 4, and more will be uploaded throughout the summer to [dar.org/OurPatriotsPodcast](https://dar.org/OurPatriotsPodcast). Listeners can also find them on Spotify, Stitcher or wherever you listen to podcasts.