

# Revolutionary War Research: Tracing Patriot and Loyalist Ancestors

## *Class 2: Researching Service to the Cause*

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### **Patriotic Service**

- An act or series of actions that demonstrate loyalty to the American cause
- Examples: Signing oaths of fidelity (allegiance) to the new government, rendering aid to wounded (nurses and doctors), furnishing supplies, lending money or munitions, giving a patriotic sermon, etc.
- These acts cannot be self-serving and had to be rendered towards the patriots only.
- The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) accepts the following examples of patriotic service: <https://www.dar.org/national-society/accepted-revolutionary-war-service>
- The Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) accepts the following examples of patriotic service: <https://www.sar.org/how-to-apply/>

### **Revolutionary War Taxes**

- Congress has no authority to levy taxes. Money and supplies were requested from the states.
- Taxes went towards raising supplies, paying troops, building ships, providing clothing, raising bounty money, and providing relief for families of soldiers in service.
- The laws that were passed to levy taxes must state in the statute that they were addressing a request of the Continental Congress and/or to support the war or achieve independence.
- Each state has different tax assessments that were levied. Consult the DAR and SAR guides on which taxes count for patriotic service.

### **Oaths of Allegiance (Loyalists)**

- Oaths of allegiance were not a new practice – they were required for free males in the various colonies
- In 1775, an updated oath of allegiance towards King George III was created to uphold the crown against “all traitorous [sic] attempts and conspiracies”. Over 3000 individuals took this oath.
- The lists of oath takers can be found in various state, and local archives. There is not one consolidated list across all colonies.

### **Town Records and Newspapers**

- Town records may note when someone has left the town and state, “joining them to our Enemies” (i.e. supporting the Crown)
- Notable Loyalists or Tories (as they were more widely known as) may be published in local newspapers, which may include those who were imprisoned

## Published Town Histories

- Detailed accounts given through correspondence and interviews with residents may discuss Tories who were brought before the town committees, arrested, etc.

## How Did Women Show Patriotic Service?

- Making home spun clothes
- Boycotting British goods
- Paying taxes
- Fundraising money for supplies for soldiers

## Home Spun Cloth

- The Wool Act of 1699 forbade colonists from selling wool and wool cloth outside of the colony it was produced in. It also increased taxes for import/export.
- Daughters of Liberty was founded in 1765. They boycotted British goods and made their own cloth.
- Spinning bees were very popular and were a way to get communities together. Many got competitive and published in the newspapers how much yarn they produced during these gatherings.

## Boycotts

- Foreign tea was not allowed in social gatherings
- “Liberty teas” were created from herbs and fruits
- Edenton Tea Party (October 25, 1774) - 51 women gathered to sign a statement of protest to give up tea and boycott other British products

## Taxes

- Beef and supply taxes passed by the colonial government to support the cause
- Tip: Look for the widows in the town records

## Fundraising

- Funds were needed to support the Continental Army
- Philadelphia Ladies Association canvassed the city of Philadelphia to ask for money from each woman
- Donation amounts reported in the *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed, Military Secretary of Washington*

## What Actions Made a Woman a Loyalist?

- Per author Kacy Tillman in her article “What is a Female Loyalist?”
  - Married a Loyalist man

- Importing and selling British goods
  - Delivered intelligence to the British
  - Housing or supplying British soldiers
  - Resisted edicts from Committees of Safety or other local militias
  - Declared pacificism
  - Fled their homes to live with other Loyalist exiles
- Female merchants were impacted heavily with nonimportation agreements being passed, which forbid importing goods from Great Britain or other parts of Europe.
    - In 1774, Virginia's nonimportation resolution laws were approved by the First Continental Congress. Due to the reliance on imported goods, every single female milliner and dressmaker who arrived to Williamsburg between 1766 and 1771 decided they would leave the colony off Virginia. Many female merchants left for England and posted advertisements selling off their remaining stock.
- Petitioning was one of the only ways for women to be active politically. Many wrote their colonial legislatures in response to how Loyalist families were being treated.
    - For example, in 1782 twenty-one Women of Wilmington, North Carolina signed a petition against the 48-hour eviction of Loyalist families.
    - These petitions can be found in the respective state papers collection of the state archives.

### Where can I find these records?

- Town records
- FamilySearch Catalogue (Search by Place>Name of Town>Town Records)
- Ancestry.com (ex. Massachusetts U.S. Town and Vital Records database)
- For those that aren't consult your town clerk on their collections that may be stored in their Vault.
- Published resources – see bibliography below.
- Newspapers
- Early American Newspapers, Series I (1690-1876)
  - Available from American Ancestors' Partner Databases at Home web page <https://www.americanancestors.org/Search/External-Databases>
- Key repositories:
  - Allen County Public Library – Fort Wayne, IN
  - American Ancestors Research Center – Boston, MA
  - State Archives
  - DAR Library – Washington, D.C.
  - FamilySearch Library – Salt Lake City, UT
  - SAR Genealogical Research Library – Louisville, KY
  - National Archives – Washington, D.C.



## Sources

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Emily J. Arendt, "Ladies Going about for Money" *Journal of the Early Republic* (Summer 2014, Vol. 34, No. 2). Available on JSTOR at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24486686>

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Jack Darrell Crowder, *Women Patriots in the American Revolution: Stories of Bravery, Daring, and Compassion* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co, 2018).

Kacy Tillman, "What is a Female Loyalist?" *Common Place*, Issue 13.4 (Summer 2013) - <https://commonplace.online/article/what-is-a-female-loyalist/>

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Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 1976). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1921540>

Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Cornell University Press, 1996). Available to borrow on Internet Archive at <https://archive.org/details/libertysdaughter0000nort/page/n5/mode/2up>

William Bradford Reed, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed, Military Secretary of Washington*, at Cambridge (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1847). Available on archive.org at <https://archive.org/details/lifeandcorrespo02reedgoog>

## Online Resources

American Ancestors – <https://www.americanancestors.org>

ArchiveGrid – <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid>

Boston Tea Party Participant Biographies - <https://www.americanancestors.org/search/databasearch/2821/boston-tea-party-participant-biographies>

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Genealogical Research System (GRS) - <https://www.dar.org/grs>

Divided Hearts, Massachusetts Loyalists, 1765-1790 - <https://www.americanancestors.org/search/databasearch/80/massachusetts-divided-hearts-massachusetts-loyalists-1765-1790>

FamilySearch – <https://www.familysearch.org>

Index to Loyalist Connecticut Court Records, 1776-84 - [https://data.ct.gov/History/Index-to-Loyalist-Connecticut-Court-Records-1776-8/ixt5-wjus/data\\_preview](https://data.ct.gov/History/Index-to-Loyalist-Connecticut-Court-Records-1776-8/ixt5-wjus/data_preview)

Maryland Loyalism Project - <https://ctsdh.org/kroberts/maryland-loyalism-project-redux/index>

North Carolina Land Grants – <https://www.nlandgrants.com>

Reports of the Subcommittee on Revolutionary Taxes, National Society SAR Genealogy Committee, 2013 - <https://www.sar.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Revolutionary-War-Tax-Law-Records-Multiple-States.pdf>

A state-by-state breakdown on which county and local taxes count for patriotic service - Revolutionary

Taxes as Evidence of Patriotic Service - <https://www.sar.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Revolutionary-Taxes-as-Evidence-of-Patriotic-Service.pdf>

Signers of the Declaration of Independence – <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/signers-factsheet>

Signers of the Declaration of Independence: Short Biographies on Each of the 56 Declaration Signers – <https://www.ushistory.org/declaration/signers/index.html>

Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) Patriot Research System (PRS) – <https://www.sar.org/patriot-research-system>

[Virginia] Revolutionary War Public Service Claims Index - <https://lva-virginia.libguides.com/public-service>

Note: The original records can be found on FamilySearch at <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/412767>