

# Early American Heroines – Tarrant, Wright, & Batherick

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The cause for independence by the British colonists of the late 18th century was not limited to the combined efforts of militia units, the [Committees of Safety](#), the night-riding couriers, or even the somewhat elaborate alarms set up throughout the Massachusetts countryside. New England women played a seemingly minor yet actually significant role by demonstrating the will to resist tyrants, in some ways more clearly than their male counterparts. [Contemporary feminists](#) would do well to study the heroic activities of these individuals who participated in the [Battles of Lexington & Concord](#).

As David Fischer explains in [Paul Revere's Ride](#), Sarah Tarrant screamed at the Regulars (during the earlier [Salem Alarm](#)):

*“Go home and tell your master he sent you on a fool’s errand, and has broken the peace of our Sabbath. Do you think we were born in the woods, to be frightened by owls?” [A] frustrated Regular raised his firelock and took aim at her head. [She replied] defiantly, “Fire, if you have the courage, but I doubt it.”*

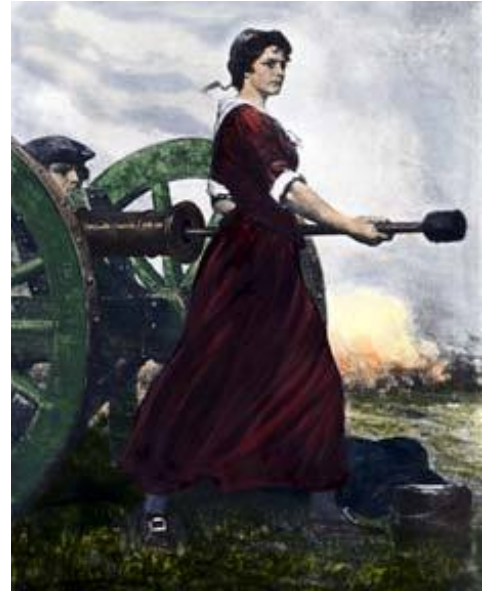
What woman today would mimic Miss Tarrant’s behavior against [our contemporary Standing Army](#)?

Some women even formed their own militia company! Fischer tells how they formed:

*“When the men of Pepperell marched away the women came together and held their own town meeting. They organized themselves into a military company, and elected as their captain Prudence Cummings Wright.....[s]he appointed Mrs. Job Shattuck as her lieutenant, and organized the women into a company called, ‘Mrs. David Wright’s Guard.’ They dressed themselves in their husbands’s clothing, armed themselves with guns and pitchforks, and began to patrol the roads into the town.”*

Captain Prudence Wright’s militia unit was not simply marching around for show. Fischer goes on to describe an intriguing account that occurred on the evening of the 19th:

*“These women of Pepperell kept patrolling even after dark. They were guarding a bridge that night, when a rider suddenly approached. The women stopped him at gunpoint and forced him to dismount. He proved to be a Tory named Captain Leonard Whiting. They searched him, found incriminating papers, marched him under guard to Solomon Roger’s tavern in the town center and kept him a prisoner that night. The next morning he was sent to Groton, and his papers were dispatched to the Committee of Safety for study. The Pepperell town meeting later reimbursed Mrs. Wright and the women of her company for their service. With a hint of condescension, the men voted ‘that Leonard Whiting’s guard (so called) be paid seven pounds*



*seventeen shillings and six pence by order of the Treasurer.’ But on the night of April 19, there was nothing of that attitude in Captain Leonard Whiting, when Prue Wright stopped him at gunpoint and threatened to kill him if he did not obey.”*

How many women today would emulate Cpt. Prudence Wright’s militia against [an agent of our Standing Army?](#)

Last, but certainly not least, is the Mother Batherick incident. Some grizzled old veterans of the [French & Indian War](#) managed to successfully ambush a British ammunition wagon. Fischer details the reactions of the soldiers as well as what happened next:

*“The surviving British soldiers took another look at these old men, and fled for their lives. They ran down the road, threw their weapons into a pond, and started running again. They came upon an old woman named Mother Batherick, so impoverished that she was digging a few weeds from a vacant field for something to eat. The panic-stricken British troops surrendered to her and begged her protection. She led them to the house of militia captain Ephraim Frost.*

*“Mother Batherick may have been poor in material things, but she was rich in spirit. As she delivered her captives to Captain Frost, she told them, ‘If you ever live to get back, you tell King George that an old woman took six of his grenadiers prisoner.’ Afterwards, English critics of Lord North’s ministry used this episode to teach a lesson in political arithmetic: ‘If one old Yankee woman can take six grenadiers, how many soldiers will it require to conquer America?’”*

Indeed. [How many soldiers](#) would it take [to conquer America today?](#)

Sarah Tarrant, Captain Prudence Wright, and Mother Batherick were more than a credit to their sex (or gender, if you prefer); they were indicative of the spirit of Liberty that exists in the souls of all free *individuals*. These women did not cower in fear of government agents, which is so typical of many modern people today; they openly taunted them, or as in the case of Cpt. Wright, threatened to kill one at gunpoint if he didn’t follow her orders. Perhaps we should take documented history a little more seriously and see if there is some way we too can put into action what had worked for our forefathers so long ago by applying it to our current predicament.