

## Mary “Polly” Penrose

Mary was born on February 18th, 1746 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to parents Bartholomew Penrose, Jr. and Mary Kirl. She had four siblings, three of which survived to adulthood. The Penroses were one of the wealthier, highly influential families in Pennsylvania, and she grew up with wealth. Mary met her future husband, Anthony Wayne (1745-1796), most likely first during his years at the Philadelphia Academy as she was a friend of his younger sister. But it was not until a military ball in the city when she was about sixteen years old that the two of them began to have eyes for each other. She was described as having “a small neck, curly hair, and big eyes,” and she was considered overall to be “cheerful and enthusiastic.” Mary fell in love with Anthony quickly, and Philadelphia society believed that they made “a handsome couple”. While he did take a few years to ask for her hand in marriage, he wrote her letters frequently and pined after her when they were apart. Mary and Anthony were wed on March 25th, 1766 at Christ Church in Philadelphia. The couple settled at Wayne’s farm in Chester County, and she became a prominent figure at social gatherings in the area. She and her husband would have at least two children together.

In 1776, Anthony Wayne was named colonel of the 4th Pennsylvania Regiment, which he himself raised. Anthony and his regiment were sent to assist Benedict Arnold in the invasion of Canada. He led a successful attack at the Battle of Three Rivers, where he was wounded. He then led troops against Fort Ticonderoga and Mount Independence. His successes in this region facilitated his promotion to brigadier general in February 1777. From there, Wayne fought in the Battles of Brandywine, Germanton, Monmouth, and Stony Point. He was ordered south by George Washington in 1781 and assisted in the defeat of the British at Yorktown. In October 1783, he was promoted to major general. After the war, he returned to Pennsylvania and served in the state legislature in 1784. President George Washington then nominated Wayne to be Commander-in-Chief of the Army, which he accepted after the Senatorial approval process in 1792.

Mary was widely considered to be “a young lady of modest demeanor and amiability.” While her husband was away at war, Mary was a leader in providing “patriotic assistance” to the soldiers around her in Philadelphia. According to her biographical sketch, many soldiers were “recipients of her thoughtfulness and characteristic benevolence.” One neighbor wrote her husband that she had been undeterred by British troops surrounding the family home in search of General Wayne, her overall demeanor imploring them to be polite to her and leave her and family unharmed. Additionally, she managed the Wayne household, property, and a tannery.

Unfortunately, when Wayne returned home, he was not as attentive as in the past. Mary’s relationship with her husband deteriorated quickly due to his attraction with many other women

and his neglect of his children. She died at the family home, estranged from her husband, on April 18th, 1793 in Pennsylvania.

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## **Lady Harriet Acland**

Lady Harriet Acland was born Christian Henrietta Caroline Fox-Strangways on January 3rd, 1750 in Kilmington, Somerset, England to parents Stephen Fox-Strangways and Elizabeth Horner. Her father was the Baron of Ilchester and eventually raised to earldom, giving Harriet the title of "Lady." Overall, she was described as "highly graceful and delicate" with "elegantly feminine" manners and "outward personal charms being in harmony with those of her mind."

She married her husband, Major John Dyke Acland (1746-1778) around 1770 when she was twenty years old. Together, they would have two children, Elizabeth "Kitty" Acland and John Dyke Acland.

John Dyke Acland was a member of Parliament in 1774 where he supported Lord North's belief in taking strong measures of war against the American colonies. He joined the 33rd Regiment of Foot as an ensign on March 23rd, 1775 and through the intervention of King George III, purchased a company in March 1775. By December 1775, John Acland was a major in the 20th Regiment of Foot and served with General Burgoyne's expedition in America.

Lady Harriet was one of six known women to travel with her husband and the 20th Regiment of Foot during the American Revolution. She was accompanied by her waiting-maid, Hannah DeGraw. She kept a diary during this time that is one of the few surviving accounts of the Northern Campaign and one of the only ones written by women. Lady Harriet nursed her husband frequently throughout the war. She tended to him when he took ill in Canada before he set off for Fort Ticonderoga, staying behind at Crown Point only on his express orders. In battle at Hubbardtown, however, he sustained severe injuries, and she rushed to his side across Lake Champlain in a small boat with four seamen to tend to him again.

During this time, Lady Harriet did not shy away from the hardships of traveling through the wilderness despite her luxurious upbringing. She traveled on the march of the army in a two-wheeled cart drawn by one horse. At one point, on the way to Fort Edward, the tent where Lady Acland was staying caught fire, and she and her husband made a narrow escape. None of these events changed her kind and magnanimous nature. She frequently gave little presents to the officers and the privates of her husband's corps whenever she found things in their stores that she thought they would like.

A few weeks later at the second Battle of Saratoga on October 7th, 1777, Lady Harriet was sequestered away with the other ladies in a vacant hut, listening to the battle take place. Her husband was badly wounded in both legs during the battle and taken prisoner. She reached out to General Burgoyne and received permission and a letter of protection from him to General Gates on the American side to venture across the Hudson River to the enemy to join her husband and

nurse him back to health. Once she was at her husband's side, she was treated with the greatest kindness by the American leadership. The two of them ended up in Albany, New York on parole until they returned to England.

After her husband died in 1778, Lady Harriet remained a widow until her death on July 21st, 1815 in Somerset, England.

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## **Frederika Charlotte Louise von Massow**

Charlotte was born on July 11th, 1746 in Brandenburg, Germany to parents Valentin von Massow and Johanna Friederika Von Krause. She had two younger brothers. Her father was a Lieutenant General in the Prussian army, so she grew up traveling with the army as a child. In 1762, she met her future husband, Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Adolf Riedesel (1738-1800), and tended to his wounds from battle during the French and Indian War. They were married that same year. Charlotte was only sixteen years old.

In adulthood, Charlotte was described as a red-haired woman, “full in figure and possessing no small share of beauty.” She was known to be financially savvy; she budgeted her money carefully and took opportunities whenever they arose to improve the Riedesel fortune. Together, the couple would have nine children together, six of whom would survive to adulthood.

Friedrich Riedesel was a Baron, having gained the title when he reached majority like all his other male relatives. His wife became a Baroness upon marriage. Friederich joined the Marburg battalion at seventeen and fought in the Battle of Minden in 1759 during the Seven Year War (French and Indian War). He served in the Hessian Hussar regiment before taking command of two Brunswicker regiments as Colonel in 1761. During the American Revolution, he was promoted to Major General and supported the British’s push of the American forces out of Canada. Afterwards, he was put in charge of all German and Native American forces during the Saratoga campaign.

Baroness Riedesel was one of six known women to travel with her husband and his troops during the American Revolution. Originally, her husband did not allow her to join him when he left for America in 1776. But she used her own official connections to facilitate her joining him in Canada in 1777 along with three of their daughters, Auguste, Caroline, and Frederika. When she arrived, the army had already left on campaign. She chose to head through the wilderness with her children to meet them and ended up surpassing her husband and the army on their way to Albany. While at camp, she nursed wounded officers while also taking care of her young children. When the army would march, she remained about an hour behind with the other women, who she described as “always contented at being allowed to follow.” She visited her husband every morning in camp and took her noon meal with him, usually at her quarters.

The reason historians know so much about Baroness Riedesel as compared to other women camp followers is that she kept detailed journals about her experience. She captured not only her day-to-day experience, but also her thoughts and opinions on the military. For example, she was critical of the lack of security at camp, drawing from her experience with her father as a child. During the battle of Saratoga, she took shelter at what is now known as the Marshall House with several of the other women. She helped to manage the cellar where they were hiding, which

eventually became a shelter for wounded soldiers as well. One German soldier described her as an “angel of comfort” who “restored order in the chaos.” She describes this experience vividly in her diary.

After the British surrendered on October 17th, 1777, Baroness Riedesel and her children traveled to Boston with the imprisoned army. They were supposed to sail back to Europe, but Congress rejected their terms of surrender. At the end of 1779, the family was allowed to move to New York City. The Baroness had another daughter and nursed the household during a smallpox epidemic. In July 1781, they traveled to Canada before finally returning to Germany in 1783.

After her husband died in 1800, Baroness Riedesel published her journals from the American Revolution. She died on March 29th, 1808 in Berlin and was buried with her husband.

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## Mary “Polly” Worrall Taylor

Mary was born on April 8th, 1745 in Chester, Pennsylvania to parents John Taylor and Sarah Worrall. She married her husband, General Persifor Frazer (1736-1792), on October 2nd, 1766 in Philadelphia. The marriage was objected to by both families, most likely due to conflicts in religious beliefs. However, when asked, Mary was “quite ready to say that she was very sorry to have wounded the feelings of Friends, but nobody should ever hear her say that she was sorry she had married Persifor Frazer.” Together, the couple had ten children, seven of whom reached adulthood.

General Persifor Frazer was first a farmer and an iron manufacturer and merchant in Pennsylvania. He was active in promoting the Revolution in the colony. In early 1776, he was elected captain of Company A of the 4th Pennsylvania Battalion. He became a major in Wayne’s Battalion in September 1776 and was later promoted to lieutenant colonel of the Fifth Pennsylvania Line a few days later. He was present at Fort George and Fort Ticonderoga, from which he wrote letters to his wife. He was captured after the Battle of Brandywine and remained in captivity for six months before escaping. He resigned from the Army in October 1778.

For the first ten years of their marriage, Mary lived “the ordinary life of a prosperous matron of the time.” The only difference was that her husband’s business and public affairs took him away from home frequently, leaving her to manage the estate. When he left to fight, she took care of the farm, the Sarum Iron Works, and the Thorndale Mills. Her daily routine consisted of riding over the farm to give instructions to the various workmen, checking on the iron works at Chester Creek, and then returning home by breakfast to care for her children and the house. She sent letters to her husband frequently to report the state of the property under her wing.

When her husband was taken prisoner in September 1777, she defended their household against the British troops. She rushed many items of value over to a neighbor before soldiers raided her home and took family heirlooms back from the men when they tried to leave with them. When the captain told her that his orders were to take her husband prisoner and burn the house and barn, but he would spare the property for her, she replied “I can’t, sir, thank you for what is my own, and if such were your orders you would not dare to disobey them.” During her husband’s imprisonment, Mary also took care of the soldiers in nearby Valley Forge, carrying comforts to the soldiers there and reporting the state of her husband and other prisoners to General Washington himself. She smuggled a letter to him in the lining of her petticoat, and the contents helped to arrange an exchange of prisoners in 1778.

After her husband’s death in 1792, Mary resided in Thornbury, Pennsylvania for the majority of her remaining life. She died on November 30th, 1830, and was buried with her husband.

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