

CHESTER TIMES – September 15, 1915 – REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN OF
NOTE – Subject of an Address at Brandywine Day Celebration by Miss Lydia Eyre Baker

Miss Lydia Eyre Baker of this city, delivered an interesting address at the celebration of Brandywine day at Birmingham Friends' Meeting on Saturday. Miss Baker is the Registrar of the Delaware County Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution and the subject of her address was, "Some of the Revolutionary Women." She said:

"We can never forget the brave men who suffered, fought and died to gain us our independence. Each man was a hero. At the same time, we must remember the brave women who made their sacrifices at home and by their unfailing courage and loyalty stimulated these men to go forth to battle and do the deeds of heroism which made our cause a success.

"The incidents that I am about to relate are not so well known in the annals of the War of Independence as are the stories of Deborah Sampson, the warrior-maiden of Massachusetts, who for three years served in the Continental Army before her sex was discovered; nor that of Sally St. Clair, who, as a soldier in battle, gave her life to save Sergeant Jasper; nor Emily Giger, who volunteered to carry a message from General Greene to General Sumpter and when captured by the enemy, as the letter she bore, that it might not fall into the hands of Lord Rawdon or Molly Pitcher, the women-artillerist at Monmouth; or Rebecca Mott, who gave into the hands of Light Horse Harry Lee, the burning arrow with which to destroy her home that sheltered the enemy at Fort Mott; nor that of many courageous women of the Revolution whose deeds are closely interwoven with the story of the struggle from which a new nation was born to the world. The incidents that I shall recall are all associated with the old county of Chester, two of which are closely connected with the story of Brandywine Field, which we are this day celebrating.

WOUNDING OF LAFAYETTE – "The young Marquis de Lafayette, a General in the Continental services, was wounded at Brandywine, when a musket ball, as he describes it, went through and through my left foot. The surgeon prepared his dressings, but the shot fell so thick around us had we remained, we should both have been past surgery. Being mounted on my horse, I left the field and repaired to the bridge near Chester – where I halted and placed a guard to stop fugitives and soldiers and direct them to join their respective regiments. I could do no more. I was becoming faint. I was carried into a house in Chester and laid on a table, where my wound received its first dressing. That house was the 'Plough and Harrow' tavern, which occupied the site of the present Cambridge Trust Company building. She, for it was a woman dressed his wounds, was Mary Gorman, of Chester. At the time there was no resident physician in the town – the nearest practitioner being Dr. John Smith, who was located in Lower Chichester. In case of accident the townspeople would call upon Mary Gorman, a young woman of steady nerve and considerable skill, to dress the wounds of the injured and she, it was, who waited upon the young Marquis in this emergency. One of the men who entered Chester that night was Jedediah Lyons, a native of New Jersey, and one of the 'Jersey Blues' who had been with Washington in his retreat – through the Jerseys had shared his triumph at Trenton, had fought at Brandywine, and whose feet were frozen during that dreary winter at Valley Forge. He, it was, to whom Mary Gorman was married. They built the house still standing on Fifth Street, facing the post office, Chester, where they resided most of their married life, and it is still in the ownership of a descendant.

“It was five o’clock in the afternoon at Saturday, September 13, 1777, when Lord Cornwallis and his staff reached Village Green, where they drew rein before the wide porch of the Seven Stars. James Pennell, despite his political bias, bid his chagrin with a landlord’s smile and watched with interest the unusual spectacle. Cornwallis naturally was the center of attraction. His tall, portly form, in scarlet coat, loaded with gold lace and decorations, white buckskin breeches, top boots, and his superior horsemanship, all combined to render him a figure never to be forgotten by those who saw him on that occasion.

“His Lordship stood on the porch and watched his soldiers of the Second Battalion of British Infantry, Second Battalion of Grenadiers, which accompanied him, and the first and Second Brigade, under General Grant, as they entered the field south of Concord Road, their left resting at Mount Hope, and their right extending a short distance east of the road leading to Marcus Hook. The few Hessians who accompanied the troops were objects of the utmost curiosity to the onlookers, for they for the first time, saw those men of bad repute who wore their beards on the upper lip at a time when all the men of the colonies were closely shaven.

“On Sunday evening, the fourteenth, three soldiers, who had been of a party of foragers, strayed away from the main body and crossed Chester Creek above Dutton’s Mill, now Bridgewater. Here they entered a dwelling of Jonathan Martin, where they plundered the family of many articles of value, among them some personal trinkets belonging to a daughter, Mary Martin, a lass of eighteen years, who fearlessly upbraided the marauders as a disorderly and cowardly set of men. One of them became so enraged at the girl’s words that he struck at her with his bayonet, inflicting a wound on her hand with which she had attempted to ward off the blow.

“That same evening, the same men had gone to the home of Mr. Cox, about one mile distant, where they committed similar acts of pillage. Among the articles stolen was a silver watch. Martha Cox was about the same age as Mary Martin.

CULPRITS IDENTIFIED “Early Monday morning she went to the Martin house, where she told what had happened at her home the previous evening. Informing no one of their intention, they went to the British headquarters at Village Green, which point Lord Howe had reached with his escort of Dragoons on his visit to Cornwallis outposts at Cartertown. The British commander-in-chief listened to their complaints, and as it chanced, the troops encamped the Green were then mustered for inspection. Howe told the girls if they could identify the men who had been guilty of the theft they should be as prescribed in his general orders. The General, with the women beside him, walked in front of the line its entire length, and they pointed out the men whom they declared were the culprits. That there should be no mistake in the identification. Howe ordered that the troops be marched to the given point where he stood with the girls, and again they pointed out the three men, and a third trial resulted in them being recognized out of two or three thousand soldiers there assembled. The three were put under arrest, some of the stolen property was found in their possession and they were immediately tried by a drumhead court martial, found guilty and sentenced to death; but only two of the three men were to be hanged, the third was to act as executioner of his companions, that to be decided by drawing lots. Late that afternoon, when Howe returned from Cartertown, the sentence of the court was carried into the effect. An apple tree near the roadside was used for the gallows, in full sight of the officers, who stood on the porch of the tavern, witnessing the

ghastly sight. Capt. John Mountveson, chief engineer of the British Army, records in his diary under date of September 15: When the British troops broke camp and marched from the 'Seven Stars' to the 'Turk's Head' near West Chester. General Grant, who four days thereafter perpetrated the massacre at Paoli, gave no attention to the dead men and their lifeless bodies were left dangling from the limb, fearfully silhouetted against the leaden sky. A few years later, Mary Martin died, and was buried in a now unknown grave in old St. Paul's graveyard, Chester.

CALL ON MILITIA – “In the early part of December, 1776, the militia of the counties of Philadelphia, Berks and Chester were called into service and ordered to New Jersey to aid in repelling the threatened invasion of Pennsylvania by the victorious British troops. A company of the Fifth Battalion of General Cadwallader's Brigade assembled at the White House Tavern, Ridley Township, to be mustered into service. In less than half an hour after the muster, a private, enraged at a harsh remand of Captain Culin, shot the officer, who died almost immediately. John Crosby, the first lieutenant and brother-in-law of the murdered man, (his second wife being Ann Culin), succeeded to the command, and as the orders were urgent, the company was hurried forward and took part in the campaign of Trenton and Princeton. A year subsequent to this incident, and after the occupancy of Philadelphia by the British Army Captain Crosby was on leave at his home on Ridley Creek, where the Post road crosses that stream a short distance northeast of the bridge, where is now the residence of the Leiper family. The sturdy patriotism of Crosby had given offense to his Tory neighbor, and tradition says that Henry Effinger, Jr., who then owned the farm where is now the Eddystone Print Works and adjoining the great Baldwin plant, informed the officers of one of the British men-of-war lying off Chester, of the captain's presence at home. In the dusk of the evening, Effinger piloted a boat's crew of the enemy up the creek to Crosby's home. The American officer was at the pump, washing his face, when arrested. He was forwarded to New York on a transport, where he was confined for six months on the prison ship Falmouth. His wife, Ann Culin Crosby, after several weeks, learned of his whereabouts, and despite the earnest pleadings of her family and friends, who urged the difficulties attending such a journey and the hopelessness of her visit, made her way to New York where by constant importunity she finally obtained from the British authorities the discharge of her husband on parole. The vigorous treatment to which he had been subjected and the want of proper nourishment during his confinement, although a young man of twenty-nine years, had caused his dark hair to turn an ashen white, and while he lived many years thereafter, the peculiar color of his hair was throughout his life a distinguishing feature of his personal appearance. He, too, lies in St. Paul's graveyard, Chester.

My theme is not exhausted, although the time allotted us is, or I might tell of many more of the noble women who lived in the old county of Chester at the times which tried man's soul, and I may add, those of women, as well.

“All hail to the men and women of the Revolution. The memory of those heroes, heroines and martyrs will never be effaced from the memory of our people, while this glorious Republic stands one of the greatest in the galaxy of nations.”