

Classroom Spice

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Patience Lovell Wright

Who, you ask, is Patience Wright? She was an American artist and patriot during the American Revolution. Born in the colonies, Patience became the first recognized American-born sculptor. Surprisingly, the media in which she sculpted may not be what you think. Interestingly, Patience was best known for her “wax” sculptures, and was actually a precursor to the well-known Madam Tussaud.

Patience was born in 1725 into a large Quaker family. She was one of nine girls and one boy. Unlike most colonists, Quakers believed in educating girls and encouraging a belief in women’s rights, both of which helped Patience become an independent, successful woman. She married when she was twenty-three and although she still dabbled with her clay sculpting she proceeded to become a somewhat typical housewife and mother to five children. However, when her husband died in 1769 she had to become the breadwinner, and did so by moving in and working with her widowed sister who taught her the technique of wax sculpting. Patience took to the new technique easily and together the sisters set up a waxwork business. They conducted waxwork tours, and earned commissions for sculpting three-dimensional framed wax por-

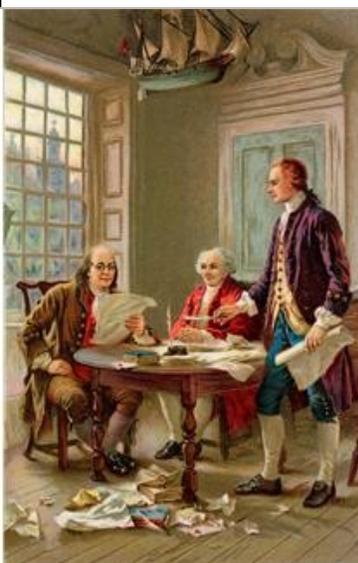
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The Founding Fathers and Slavery

In the Declaration of Independence, we find the words, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” This raises the question why was the concept of slavery not abolished in U.S. Constitution as originally adopted? Did the Founding Fathers support slavery? The answer is complicated. Many of the Founding Fathers opposed slavery, many others owned slaves, and some who once owned slaves would later become advocates for the abolishment of slavery. In short, the Founding Fathers could not agree to a position on slavery.

During the time of the writing of the Constitution, and earlier while drafting the Articles of Confederation, many issues were tied to the issue of slavery, including private property rights, limited government, racism, and harmony between Southern, Middle, and Northern colonies. In the 1780s most states, except South Carolina and Georgia, prohibited the im-

portation of “foreign” slaves into individual states and also supported Jefferson’s proposal to ban slavery in the Northwest Territory. However, both of these well-meaning actions backfired. They ultimately allowed: a) existing slaveholders to sell slaves born in the colonies, raising the price of



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Patrick Henry, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington. Among those not owning slaves were John and Samuel Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Paine. Even as the Founders were struggling with slavery as a national issue, some of the Founding Fathers Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton were acting as officers in their respective state antislavery societies helping to eventually abolish slavery in those states. This was an easier action in the North than in the South. Washington was the only Southern plantation-owning Founding Father to free a large number of his slaves. He would have freed more, but the others belonged to his wife and she did not share his attitude toward the abolition of slavery. In fact, of the nine presidents who owned slaves in our early history, only Washington freed his.

Even as author of those famous words in the Constitution quoted earlier, Jeffer-

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Colonial Games

Even during Colonial and Revolutionary times children would have time to play some of the following games.

Reference— https://greatactivities.net/index.php?action=pf_article&id=859&SID=htfkp47n6lodf91ba47vqvhi3&bypass=1

QUOITS—An ancient game that English settlers brought to the colonies. Originally it was played with iron rings that weighed about 3 pounds each and were thrown at a stake. It was adapted to include throwing rope rings, and, ultimately, into pitching horseshoes.

JACKSTONES—This is a very ancient game found in some version in most cultures of the world. It is essentially known as “Jacks” today, and parts of it are played very similarly to how it was played even in colonial times. However, it was not played with our metal/plastic jacks, but with six small stones, pumpkin seeds, or other small objects of similar size. Instead of bouncing a ball as we do today, they designated one stone as the jack that would be thrown up into the air while grabbing the other items. However, in an older version, before children got to this part of the game (ones, twos,...), they had to throw all six stones into the air and try to catch as many as they could on the “back” of their hand. Then the player would toss up those stones which had landed on his hand, scoop up the ones he had missed and quickly turn his hand over and catch the ones that were tossed in the air, hopefully now having all six in his hand. This was feat one. Once it was mastered they could go on to the traditional ones, twos, ...

CAT'S CRADLE—An ancient game, believed to have originated in Asia, played by both colonial and Native American children. It involves a string that is knotted and formed into a loop and placed on the fingers of two hands of a player. Then different designs were formed, some with the help of a partner, and at times included transferring the designs from player to player.

HOOP GAME—A Native American partner game. One child would roll a willow hoop across the ground and the other child would attempt to throw a wooden spear through the rolling hoop. It was designed to hone small animal hunting skills.

KICK THE STICK— Native Americans did this in a relay with a 12-inch long crooked stick in front of each team. The first player on each team had to kick the stick (on the ground not in the air) to the goal and back, which was then repeated by the rest of his team.

WOODEN TOPS—Both colonial and Native American children liked to play with tops. Tops were made of wood, stone, or bone. Sometimes they spun them on frozen ponds in the winter, sometimes they spun them on the open ground, or sometimes inside a hoop seeing whose top spun the longest.

LACROSSE—Native American game played with a long stick with a net at the end used to catch and fling a ball into a goal.

OTHER COMMON GAMES:

Hopscotch—Ancient game, played throughout the world . Believed to have originated in Asia.

Blind Man's Bluff—If playing this blindfolded form of tag colonists from Sweden called it Blind Buck, from France they called it Colin-maillard, or from Germany they called it Blinderkuh.

Bubble Blowing—particularly popular on wash day.

(Patience Wright—cont'd from page 1)

traits, busts, and even life-sized figures of their clients. Unfortunately, when they were out on one of their wax tours there was a fire, and while the family and house were fine, most of the wax figures were destroyed. The following year, Patience made a business decision to temporarily relocate to London to find new subjects to sculpt. With the assistance of Benjamin Franklin and his sister she successfully did so. Combining Ben Franklin's assistance and her talent, Patience was soon able to have distinguished members of English society, London's nobility, and political leaders to her studio. Her ability to mold hollow heads of wax on her lap under an apron was intriguing to her clients, and her attention to detail such as wrinkles and veins, supplemented by glass eyes and wigs made the wax pieces incredibly lifelike. In addition, she somehow seemed to convey the person's character or soul through the wax figure.

Take a moment and think about the amount of time that Patience spent with each client. Being an avid patriot, she decided to use the time and conversation to find out valuable information from the Loyalists for the colonists and their English supporters. There is a question as to how timely and beneficial her information was, but there is little doubt that she did gather and disseminate information in an attempt to assist the colonists.

In 1778, she was commissioned to do a wax effigy of William Pitt the Elder, Earl of Chatham, which is the only remaining undisputed example of her work and is located in Westminster Abbey. In 1784 George Washington was interested in Patience returning to America and making his wax portrait, but she died before she was able to do so.

An excellent informative upper elementary book about Patience is entitled *Patience Wright: America's First Sculptor and Revolutionary Spy*, by Pegi Dietz Shea, ISBN 10-0-8050-6770-1.

The Literature Connection

Whether you are a golfer or not, you will appreciate the book, *Twice as Good: The Story of William Powell and Clearview, The Only Golf Course Designed, Built, and Owned by an African-American*, by Richard Michelson, ISBN 978-1-58536-466-4. Bill Powell overcame racial barriers and became a pioneer in American golf. Even though he started caddying at the age of 9, played on his high school team, and served in World War II, when he returned home to Ohio he was not allowed to play on any public golf courses. His passion for golf drove him to purchase an old dairy farm with financial help from two physicians and his brother, with the dream of building a course that anyone could play on. It took him two years working during his spare time from his factory job to build a nine-hole golf course. Ten years later he was able to purchase additional land and expand the course to 18-holes. This course, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places, is nicknamed "America's Course." William Powell was inducted into the National Black Golf Hall of Fame in 1996 and became a PGA Life Member in 1999.



Why the "Twice as Good" title? It came from a remark his principal once made. At the time Bill was the only African-American student in his school and the principal told him he couldn't be as good as the white children, he had to be twice as good. A great resource to go with the book is available for teachers at from Sleeping Bear Press and includes both language arts and math activities. See

www.sleepingbearpress.com

An excellent book related to women and the Revolutionary War is *Phoebe the Spy*, by Judith Berry Griffin, ISBN 978-0-698-11956-7. (Its original title was *Phoebe and the General*.) It is based on the historical events of 1776 surrounding thirteen-year old Phoebe Fraunces. Although Black, Phoebe and her family were not slaves. Rather her father owned the Queen's Head Tavern and he and his family were staunch supporters of the Patriots. In an effort to gather information to protect George Washington from suspected assassination attempts, Phoebe was recruited and, disguised as a housekeeper, she become a spy. Although a mere child Phoebe bravely faced the challenge

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Daughters of Liberty

Many have heard of the Sons of Liberty, but what about the Daughters of Liberty? Did women play a role in the American Revolution? It may surprise many to know that even though women had few rights in the patriarchal pre-revolutionary society, they were a vital part of the war effort. They had to work the farms, businesses, and homes when the men went to war. In addition, they helped to successfully boycott all British goods. Some were even involved in tarring and feathering British merchants. Women made substitutes for the dearly loved British tea, and formed spinning societies to make their own yarn, linen, and clothes which were used at home and by the soldiers. Some women started fundraising societies, including Ben Franklin's daughter

Sarah Franklin Bache and Esther De Berdt, which raised \$300,000 for the war effort. Patriot women refused to accept gentleman callers unless the suitors supported the Patriots. Sarah Bradlee Fulton "Mother of the Boston Tea Party," helped disguise Bostonians as Mohawks. Women also acted as spies during the war. They outfoxed the British by hiding military materials. Many disguised themselves to take up arms against the British. Sixteen year-old Sybil Ludington rode forty miles in the dark to awaken the Minutemen. Discovering their power and ingenuity, women started petitioning for the inclusion of women's rights in the new constitution as Abigail Adams wrote, "Remember the Ladies." Unfortunately it was not to be.



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In This Issue...

Founding Fathers & Slavery; Patience Wright; Colonial Games; Daughters of Liberty; Lit. Connection

**What is a
Slave Tag?**

A slave tag, also called a slave badge, was a kind of work license “**worn**” by slaves in the Charleston area from 1800-1865. They were designed to legislate the practice of hiring a slave from a master to work for another person as needed for part-time labor. Tags had to be renewed yearly and were engraved with the date, a number, the year, and a job category. Slaves turned over most of their earnings to their master, but were allowed to keep some.

(Slavery—Cont’d from page 1)
son had conflicted feelings about slavery. Did he ever free his slaves? Actually he freed nine, which were only a few of the many slaves he owned. His primary reason for not freeing his slaves was economic. Owning a large plantation and being deeply in debt, he could not financial afford to free his slaves. However, there was another reason for his actions. He did not believe in a biracial America, and actually advocated “colonization,” removal of the black population to outside the United States. His mixed feelings are evident when in 1784 he drafted a congressional ordinance declaring slavery illegal in all Western territories after 1800. Unfortunately, the law failed by a single vote and slavery expanded to Illinois

and Indiana, much to Jefferson’s displeasure. It is also interesting to note that slavery was not the only civil rights issue that Jefferson was unsure how to handle. When the issues of Native American and Women’s rights came up, he left both to be addressed by future generations.

Thus the Founding Fathers were caught in a dilemma. Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, as did many of the other Founding Fathers, believed that slavery should be abolished in time, but could not be done during the formation of the Union. Did they take the easy way out by not addressing the issue directly? Perhaps, but that leaves the question if they had taken on the issue directly, would there have been a United States of America?

(Lit. Connection—Cont’d from page 3)
and thwarted the plot to assassinate the General.

Another book which highlights women’s contributions is *A is for Abigail: An Almanac of Amazing American Women*, by Lynne Cheney (historian and wife of former Vice President Cheney), ISBN 0-689-85819-1. It discusses American women from the colonial period up through Laura Bush, and includes some of the Daughters of Liberty, such as Abigail Adams and Mary Katherine Goodard. This book introduces women of differing backgrounds and differing time periods. It includes inventors, athletes, actresses, business women, writers, social activists, trail blazers, scientists, musicians, educators, and politicians. It can easily be flipped open to any page for fascinating information.