



Women in the Military

Deborah Sampson

- Born in Plympton Massachusetts in 1760.
- Before the Revolutionary War, Sampson worked first as an indentured servant and later as a schoolteacher.
- In 1782, Sampson joined the Continental Army's 4th Massachusetts Regiment under the name "Robert Shurtleff."
- During her service, she was nicknamed "Molly" by her fellow soldiers because of her beardless features.
- Sampson fought for America's freedom until discharged in 1783 after she got a fever which led to her identity being discovered.
- She was later given a small pension from Congress for her service and in 1838 Congress passed an act providing a pension for her heirs.
- Sampson also lectured people about her experiences in the Army and is quite possibly the first woman to lecture professionally in the United States.



Civil War Women

- During the war, more than 400 women disguised themselves as men and fought in both the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War and thousands of women joined the volunteer brigades and signed up to work as nurses.
- In the Northern states, women organized ladies' aid societies to supply the Union troops with food, clothing, and cash. These women organized door-to-door fundraising campaigns, county fairs and performances of all kinds to raise money for medical supplies and other necessities.
- In the South, women cooked and sewed, providing uniforms, blankets, sandbags and other supplies for entire regiments. They wrote letters to soldiers and worked as untrained nurses in makeshift hospitals and even their own homes.
- For African American women, the Civil War promised freedom, but it also added to these women's burden. In addition to their own plantation and household labor, many slave women also had to do the work of their husbands and partners.
- These wartime contributions helped expand many women's ideas about what their "proper place" should be in society.



Mary Walker

- Walker enrolled at Syracuse Medical College, graduating with a Doctor of Medicine degree in 1855. Thereafter, she relocated to Columbus, Ohio, where she started a private practice.
- During the Civil War, Walker began volunteering as a nurse.
- In 1862, she took a break from her volunteer service to earn a degree from the New York Hygeio-Therapeutic College.
- After her return to volunteering, she worked on the battlefield in tent hospitals in Warrenton and Fredericksburg, Virginia.
- In the fall of 1863, Walker traveled to Tennessee, where she was appointed assistant surgeon in the Army of the Cumberland by General George H. Thomas.
- In April 1864, Walker was captured and imprisoned by the Confederate Army. She was released that August, after being held in Richmond, Virginia, for several months.
- In the fall of 1864, she received a contract as an "acting assistant surgeon" with the Ohio 52nd Infantry and soon began supervising a hospital for female prisoners and later an orphanage.
- Walker retired from government service in June 1865.
- In recognition of her courageous war efforts, she was awarded the Medal of Honor for Meritorious Service, becoming the first woman to receive the honor.



Harriet Tubman

- Born in 1820 as Araminta Ross, she later adopted her mother's first name, Harriet.
- From early childhood she worked variously as a maid, a nurse, a field hand, a cook, and a woodcutter.
- In 1849, Tubman fled to Philadelphia, leaving behind her husband, parents, and siblings because she feared she was going to be sold.
- In December 1850, she made her way to Baltimore, Maryland and led her sister and two children to freedom. This was the first of 19 forays into Maryland in which she conducted upward of 300 fugitive slaves along the Underground Railroad to Canada.
- From 1862 to 1865 she served as a scout, as well as nurse and laundress, for Union forces in South Carolina.
- For the Second Carolina Volunteers, Tubman spied on Confederate territory relaying information about the locations of warehouses and ammunition.
- For her wartime service, Tubman was paid so little that she had to support herself by selling homemade baked goods.



Sanitary Commission

- Women wanted to work on the front lines alongside the men. In 1861, the federal government agreed to create “a preventive hygienic and sanitary service for the benefit of the army” called the United States Sanitary Commission.
- Its objective was to combat preventable diseases and infections by improving conditions in army camps and hospitals.
- By war’s end, the Sanitary Commission had provided almost \$15 million in supplies—the vast majority of which had been collected by women—to the Union Army.
- Some 3,000 middle-class white women joined and worked as nurses.
 - Dorothea Dix: An activist and superintendent of Army nurses.
 - She put out a call for responsible, maternal volunteers who would not distract the troops or behave in unseemly or unfeminine ways.
 - She requested women who were “past 30 years of age, healthy, plain almost to repulsion in dress and devoid of personal attractions.”



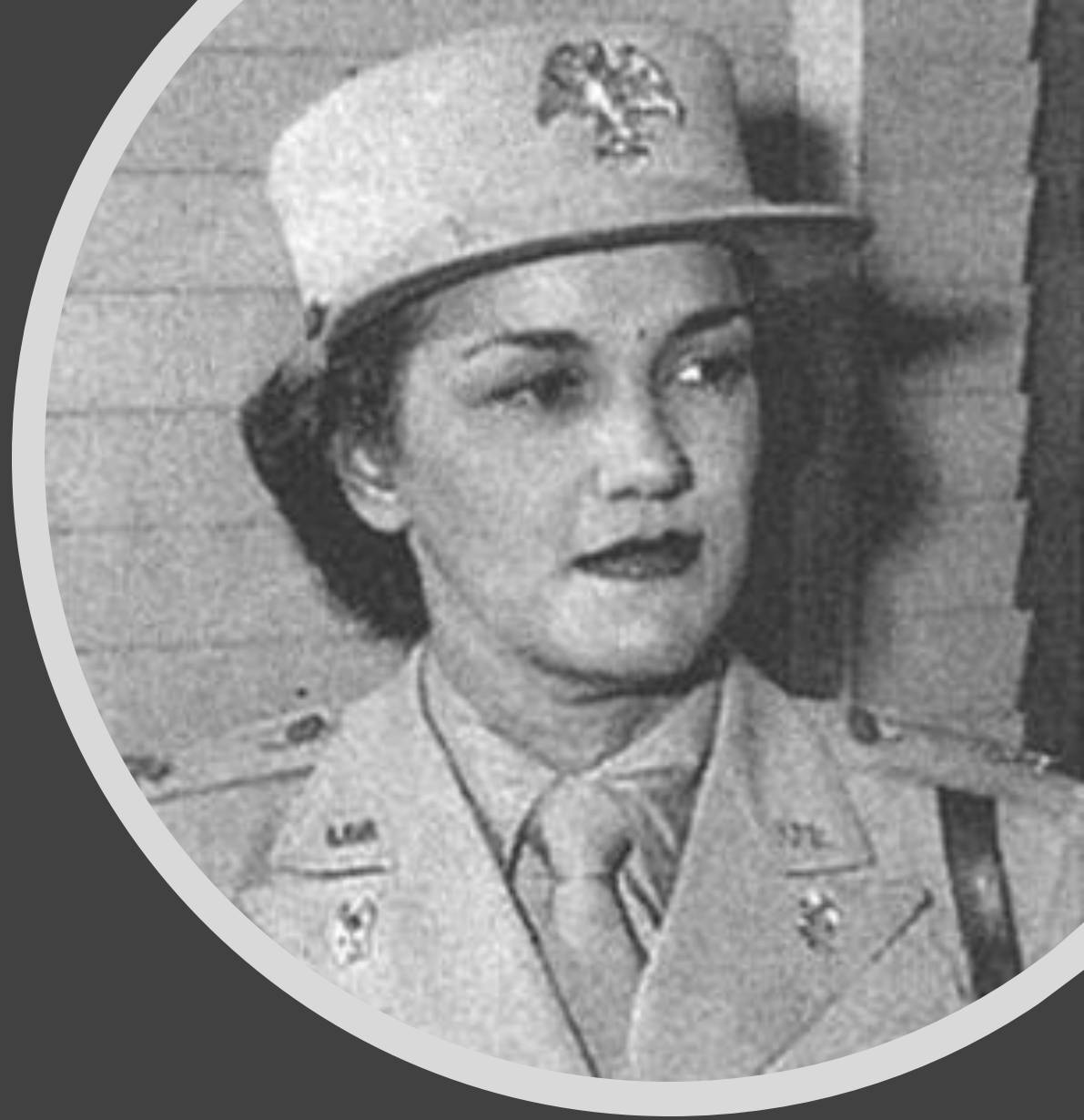
Women's Army Corps (WACs)

- U.S. Army created this unit to enable women to serve in non-combat positions during World War II.
- With the establishment of WACs, more than 150,000 women were able to serve in the Army in other capacities besides nursing. Women served as radio operators, electricians, and air-traffic controllers.
- On May 15, 1942, a bill introduced by Representative Edith Nourse Rogers established the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) and gave them a salary. The term "Auxiliary" was dropped in July 1943 after thousands of women enlisted. At this point, members of the Women's Army Corps were given full Army benefits.
- It was not until 1980 that sixteen thousand women who had joined as WACs were granted veterans' benefits.



Harriet M. Waddy

- During World War II, approximately 6,500 black women signed on with the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.
- Despite their willingness to serve, many women were relegated to positions as glorified housekeepers.
- Despite the inequality, Waddy completed her Women's Army Corps (WAC) training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa.
- During her WAC service, she graduated from The Adjutant General's School of the Army and was placed in charge of 50 civilian typists.
- It was Waddy's responsibility to see that letters were written to notify families of soldiers who were killed, wounded, or missing in action.
- She was one of only two African American women to attain the rank of major in the WACs during World War II.
- As a major, she was able to take an active role in changing the status of "colored" women in the military.
- Despite her work towards equality for African American women, Waddy was criticized for remaining in uniform while her fellow sister soldiers suffered.
- Waddy once stated that joining a segregated military "which does not represent an ideal of democracy" was not "a retreat from our fight" but a contribution to realizing the ideal.



Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs)

- The Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) and the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFD) merged into the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) on August 5, 1943.
- In the first 16 months, more than 25,000 women applied for training, but only 1,879 were accepted. Among those who passed, 1,074 successfully completed their training through the grueling program at Avenger Field.
- Jacqueline Cochran, a well-known aviator, pressed for full militarization of WASP, but was adamant that they are not a part of the Women's Army Corps. Her reasoning centered around that fact that WAC required women to be at least 21 with no children under 14. Many WASP pilots were mothers of young children.
- Congress voted against the WASPS being fully militarized on June 21, 1944 and, on December 20th, the WASPS were disbanded.
- On Sept. 20, 1977, a bill which recognized WASP service as active duty in the armed forces and entitled them to veterans' benefits was passed into law.



Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES)

- A US Navy unit comprised of female members. Some 100,000 WAVES served in a variety of capacities including essential clerical duties and serving as instructors to male pilots-in-training.
- The WAVES was considered fairly progressive because, unlike the Army, women in the Navy were not auxiliary and were given a status comparable to the male members of the reserves.
- However, African American women were excluded until the final months of the war when President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered racial integration.
- In 1948, the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act made the WAVES a permanent component of the navy
- In 1978, the once separate women's units of the armed forces were integrated with formerly all-male units.



Grace Hopper

- A mathematician, rear admiral in the US Navy and a member of the WAVES.
- She was a mathematics teacher before joining the Navy Reserves in 1943. She had many achievements during her service in the Navy including as a pioneer in developing computer technology and helping to devise UNIVAC I (Universal Automatic Computer), the first commercial electronic computer and naval applications for COBOL (Common-business-oriented language).
- Hopper coined the term bug to refer to unexplained computer fails after a moth infiltrated the circuits of the Mark I automatic calculator.
- In 1949, Hopper joined the Eckert-Mauchly Computer Corp. where she designed an improved compiler which translated a programmer's instructions into computer codes. Hopper retired in 1986 at the age of 79 as the oldest officer on active US naval duty.



Lynda Van Devanter

- Devanter completed six weeks of basic training at an Army base in Texas before being assigned to the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku province, Vietnam to serve as a nurse.
- She worked long grueling twelve-hour shifts in poorly equipped hospitals during the Vietnam War. She treated soldiers with horrifying wounds which no amount of training could prepare anyone to experience.
- The experience took such a toll on Devanter that she began to lose faith in the US forces' reason for being in Vietnam.
- After a year of service, Devanter returned to an America embroiled in antiwar demonstrations and hostility from the American people. Even the US government did not provide support programs for women Veterans. This left her feeling isolated and angry until she met Bobby Muller and joined the Vietnam Veterans of America.
- The group encouraged her to found the Vietnam Veterans of America Women's Project to bring recognition to female nurses and other women Veterans and provide them support.



Stephanie Kwolek

- Stephanie Kwolek was born in 1923 to two Polish immigrants.
- In 1946, she obtained her bachelor's degree in chemistry and began her search for a lab job to help pay for medical school.
- She eventually got a job working at the Dupont Chemical company where she joined the workforce trying to create a light, strong, rigid fiber to replace steel wires used in car tires.
- Part of her work at Dupont consisted of dissolving long chains of molecules called polyamides and then running them through a machine that spins it into a fiber.
- The molecules developed needed to be melted at nearly 400 degrees Fahrenheit before being spun. However, all the previous fibers had been too weak and floppy to form a solid fiber. Kwolek was tasked with finding a fiber that could be spun at a lower temperature.
- In 1971, during one attempt, a batch dissolved into a milky white, runny liquid solution instead of the usual clear, syrup-thick solution. Instead of throwing it out, Kwolek salvaged the solution.
- The result was the strongest, stiffest fiber that has ever been created: Kevlar.
- Kevlar works as a protective fiber because it is five times stronger than an equal weight of steel, lighter than fiberglass, and can withstand high temperatures.



Rhonda Cornum

- Born on October 31, 1954 in Dayton, Ohio, Cornum served as an Army Flight Surgeon in the U.S. Army during the Persian Gulf War.
- After giving a lecture on the results of a research project at a scientific conference, Cornum was approached by a man in uniform and offered a job conducting medical research for the U.S. Army. She accepted the job and received the rank of First Lieutenant.
- On her final day of combat (February 27, 1991), the Black Hawk helicopter she was on was shot down behind enemy lines. Cornum survived, but suffered two broken arms, a broken finger and a bullet wound to the shoulder.
- Cornum was captured by Iraqi soldiers and held as a prisoner of war (POW) for eight days. During that time, she was sexually assaulted and subjected to mock executions.
- After her release, Cornum wrote a book about her experiences and became a spokesperson for expanding combat roles for women in the military.
- She later became an Assistant Surgeon General for the Army.



Leigh Ann Hester

- On March 2005, Hester's military police unit of Kentucky National Guard came under attack by Iraqi insurgents while providing security for a convoy of trucks.
- Hester's unit cut off the attackers' line of escape and Hester along with her squad leader led a counterattack by assaulting two enemy trenches.
- Hester earned the Silver Star for her actions and is the first woman since World War II to earn the medal.



Jaspen Boothe

- Boothe joined the Army in 2000, hoping to provide a legacy of service for her son, Brandon.
- In 2005, two terrible events changed her life:
 - Hurricane Katrina destroyed her home.
 - She learned she had an aggressive form of cancer.
- After she received treatment, she remained in the Reserves.
- In 2010, she founded Final Salute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving homeless women veterans.
- Since its founding, Final Salute has assisted over 3,600 women veterans and children in over 30 states and territories.



Tammy Duckworth

- Duckworth joined the Army and became a member of the National Guard, training as a helicopter pilot. While working on a doctorate at Northern Illinois University, she was called to active duty and sent to Iraq in 2004.
- While in Iraq, her helicopter was shot down by a rocket-propelled grenade. Duckworth lost both her legs and almost lost her right arm, which was saved after a 13-hour-long emergency surgery.
- Duckworth was awarded (2004) the Purple Heart.
- After the accident, Duckworth retired from the Army and went on to work for the state of Illinois and later the federal Department of Veterans Affairs.
- In 2008, Duckworth won a seat in the U.S. House and then in the Senate four years later making her the first female veteran with a disability in either chamber.





Serving at Home: Impact on Families

Grace Darling Seibold

- Seibold founded The Gold Star Mothers of Washington, D.C. after her son, George Vaughn Seibold died fighting in World War I.
- George Vaughn Seibold learned to fly British planes since the United States had neither an air force nor planes and was assigned to the British Royal Flying Corps with 148th Aero Squadron.
- Grace Darling Seibold, began doing community service by visiting returning servicemen in the hospitals.
- Even after the mail from her son stopped, Grace continued to visit hospitalized veterans in the Washington area, clinging to the hope that her son might have been injured and returned to the United States without any identification.
- On November 4, 1918, the Seibold family received the news of George's death through a family member in Paris. George's body was never identified.
- Grace organized a group consisting solely of these mothers, with the purpose of not only comforting each other, but giving loving care to hospitalized veterans confined in government hospitals far from home. This group became the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.



Christine Moe

- Christine Moe is the wife of Col. Thomas Moe, a pilot who flew 85 combat missions during the Vietnam War.
- Thomas was captured and held as a prisoner of war for five years in the “Hanoi Hilton,” a notorious North Vietnamese prison camp for American troops.
- While Thomas was a POW, Christine was back in Ohio during the years of her husband’s imprisonment, working, raising their daughter and saving money.
- When he returned, they took that money and bought a plot of land in Lancaster, about 30 miles southeast of Columbus.





Warrior Women in Media

Rosie the Riveter

- As American men left the industrial labor force to enlist during World War II, women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers taking on jobs in manufacturing, utilities, and transport.
- The iconic image of Rosie the Riveter was aimed to change public opinion about women's work.
- The theme of the campaign was to show that the social change required to bring women into the workforce was both a patriotic responsibility for women and an opportunity for employers to support the war economy.
- The Rosie the Riveter campaign stressed the patriotic need for women to enter the workforce and Rosie encouraged women to apply for industrial jobs.
- The American Rosie Movement has worked since 2008 to find and interview these "Rosies" so that their legacy becomes part of America's identity and future, and the stories that these women tell help to highlight the contributions that women made towards the war effort.



Movies

- **Mulan/Disney's *Mulan*:** A young Chinese woman who risks her own life to protect and serve her family and country. The story is based on the story of Hua Mulan, a Chinese warrior woman who lived between 420 and 589 CE.
- **Lieutenant Jordan O'Neil/*G.I. Jane*:** A Navy topographical analyst fights to prove that women can serve their country in the same capacity as men.
- **Violette Szabo/*Carve Her Name with Pride*:** Based on a true historical figure, Szabo served in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) for operations in France during World War II. She was captured, interrogated and eventually executed which led to her being posthumously awarded the George Cross.
- **Leia Organa/*Star Wars*:** A princess, General, a politician and a warrior, Leia is fearless in battle and dedicated to fighting for freedom. She is a perfect example of a strong leader.



Video Games

- **Commander Jane Shepard/Mass Effect Trilogy:** Whether a renegade or paragon, Shepard manages to unite and lead the various species of the Galaxy against their common enemy. She personifies many positive qualities of leadership while serving as a soldier on the front lines.
- **Jill Valentine/Resident Evil:** Former member of the United States Army and an American Special Operations Agent of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance, Valentine proves her resourcefulness and skills in combat fighting alongside her male comrades.
- **Samus Aran/Metroid:** An independent warrior of unparalleled willpower and resourcefulness, Aran manages to succeed where thousands before her failed. She has, on multiple occasions, stood up to protect the helpless and downtrodden.
- **Tracer (Lena Oxton)/Overwatch:** After an accident flying a prototype teleporting fighter plane, Tracer obtained her powers of teleportation. Now, as a time-jumping Overwatch operative, Tracer continues to fight to protect the world.





Comics

- **Captain Marvel/Marvel Comics:** An Air Force major imbued with cosmic powers making her nigh invulnerable in battle.
- **Wonder Woman/DC Comics:** A female warrior who, time and again, breaks the chains of a man's world of inflated pride and prejudice.
- **Katana/DC Comics:** A highly proficient hand-to-hand combatant and swordswoman who has known great sorrow in her life, but never lets it get in her way.
- **The Dora Milaje/Marvel Comics:** A team of warrior women who serve as special forces and bodyguards for the African nation of Wakanda.

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