



Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier

By Alfred F. Young

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Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier

By Alfred F. Young

The remarkable story of the woman who fought in the American Revolution as Robert Shurtliff—and got away with it.

Serving for seventeen months during the period between the British surrender at Yorktown and the signing of the final treaty, a time when peace was far from secure, Deborah Sampson accomplished her deception by becoming an outstanding soldier. Alfred Young shows us why she did it and exactly how she carried it off. He meticulously reconstructs her early life as an indentured servant; her young adulthood as a weaver, teacher, and religious rebel; and her military career in the light infantry—consisting of dangerous patrols and small-party encounters, duty that demanded constant vigilance—followed by service as an orderly to a general at West Point.

Young also examines her postwar life as a wife—Mrs. Benjamin Gannett—and mother on a hardscrabble farm in southeastern Massachusetts, her collaboration with Herman Mann on the book that made her a celebrity and sent her on a pathbreaking yearlong lecture tour through New England and New York in 1802—03, and her relentless and partially successful quest for veterans' benefits. He looks, too, at how Americans have dealt with Sampson in public memory and have appropriated her for a number of causes over the past two hundred years.

Throughout we are aware of the historian as detective, as Young carefully sifts through layers of fact and fiction to reveal a fascinating, complex, and unusual woman who lived in an era that both opened opportunities to and imposed limitations on women.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This meticulous biography presents one of the classic examples of a woman in disguise serving in the nascent U.S. armed forces. A particularly prolific and gifted editor and scholar of the American Revolution, Young (*The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*) follows his subject as closely as possible given scanty evidence, beginning with Sampson's birth in 1760 on a small farm in Massachusetts. Sampson was virtually orphaned as a child, but after turning 18 supported herself as a weaver, before serving from 1782 to 1783 in the light infantry company of a Massachusetts regiment, seeing combat and being wounded. Discharged after her gender was revealed, she married, had three children, received a bonus and lobbied for a pension with the help of such notables as Paul Revere. She also made the first-ever speaking tour by an American woman, both lecturing on her experiences and sometimes appearing in uniform to demonstrate the use of arms. Never well-off, Sampson died in 1827. She has been viewed in many different lights in American historiography and even in the chronicles of her own family ever since. Young, a senior research fellow at the Newberry Library in Chicago, set out to check every previously recorded "fact" about Sampson and questions most of them, discussing his research at considerable length. The result is two threads in one book: a biographical narrative and a detailed discourse on the methodology of researching the lives of people for whom sources are few. The author achieves success with both threads at some cost in readability, but it is a loss suffered in a good cause, particularly for serious students of history. 31 illus., 3 maps.

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From [Booklist](#)

Historian Young meticulously reconstructs the life of a woman who, disguised as a man, fought in the American Revolution. Virtually orphaned as a child, Deborah Sampson supported herself as a weaver and served in the light infantry company of a Massachusetts regiment in 1782-83, seeing combat and being wounded. Discharged when her disguise was penetrated, she afterwards married, had children, and lobbied for a pension with the help of such notables as Paul Revere. She was the first American woman to tour as a lecturer, recounting her experiences, and she cooperated with a biographer whose final product was as accurate as Parson Weems on Washington but is still the primary source on her life. Young discusses in great detail his fact-checking about Sampson and his rationale for discounting much of what was supposedly known about her. An authority on the Revolutionary period, he puts her life into a well-realized context as he well exemplifies the methodology of researching the lives of subjects for whom sources are scanty, dubious, or both. *Frieda Murray*

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Review

"Move over, Molly Pitcher! At last we have a solid, scholarly biography of the best documented woman soldier of the American War for Independence. Meticulous scholarship combined with an engaging literary style guarantee a warm welcome for *Masquerade* by everyone interested in the history of women in war."

--Linda Grant De Pauw, author of *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present*

"Meticulous detective work has enabled Alfred Young to separate fact from fiction and finally reveal the true story of Deborah Sampson, the fabled female revolutionary war soldier. A remarkable tale, engagingly written, this is surely the definitive biography."

--Mary Beth Norton, author of *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692*

"In *Masquerade*, Alfred Young adds another tour de force to his remarkable career as an historical detective, piecing together virtually forgotten aspects of Revolutionary warfare. Young also provides fresh insights into the role of common people who made their own unique contributions to the American Revolution."

--Don Higginbotham, author of *George Washington: Uniting a Nation*

"After years shrouded by myth and history's tendency to write women out, soldier Deborah Sampson Gannett's real again. I feel I've met her and shared war stories as we old soldiers are wont to do."

--Brig. Gen. Wilma L. Vaught, USAF (Ret.), President, Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Herman Ovalle:

Now a day folks who Living in the era just where everything reachable by interact with the internet and the resources included can be true or not involve people to be aware of each facts they get. How individuals to be smart in obtaining any information nowadays? Of course the solution is reading a book. Reading through a book can help folks out of this uncertainty Information particularly this *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* book because book offers you rich details and knowledge. Of course the details in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it as you know.

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Dean Rakestraw:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation or perhaps go to the outside with them family or their friend. Did you know? Many a lot of people spent these people free time just watching TV, as well as playing video games all day long. If you would like try to find a new activity that is look different you can read a book. It is really fun for you personally. If you enjoy the book that you just read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a e-book. The book *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* it is very good to read. There are a lot of people who recommended this book. These folks were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space to create this book you can buy the particular e-book. You can m0ore quickly to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not too expensive but this book possesses high quality.

William Wood:

Exactly why? Because this *Masquerade: The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier* is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will surprise you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who have write the book in such awesome way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book get such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking means. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I had been you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

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