

CONNECTING WITH THE **PAST** IN TODAY'S PRESENT



SALLY KELLOGG MARKHAM

Some women drive change, others survive it. Moving with her family from Connecticut to Addison in 1770 at the age of 3, Sally Kellogg was part of the wave of migrants from southern New England who settled on Abenaki lands after the French and Indian war and were driven out during the Revolutionary War. She left an account of their struggles in a pension application. When they saw Benedict Arnold's defeated fleet coming up Lake Champlain in 1777, the family gathered what they could carry and made their way to Bennington, where 10-year-old Sally saw General Stark's men trotting by on the eve of the Battle of Bennington and the wounded afterwards.

Her father returned to Addison in October to spy for Vermont with the family following him the next spring, not knowing that he had been captured by the British and died in captivity over the winter. Her older brother, the head of the family, was soon captured and imprisoned by the British. Sally's mother with her four daughters stayed on until November, when a British raid burned the settlers' houses in much of Addison County, killed their livestock, carried off their belongings, and captured all the men and boys in the area, leaving the women and children to starve with no shelter.

After three days, word was sent that the women could have one boat to carry the 52 women and children to settlements further south. With two loyalist men assigned to

help them, the women rowed south and across the lake to Wood Creek, seeking shelter for the night. As rain and sleet fell, they pulled the boat along by the bushes growing on the bank until they finally sighted an inhabited house. Having been refused admittance, the Tories hid in a hay stack. The women and children waded through the water and marched up to the house, which was guarded by a man with a bayonet threatening to use it if they tried to enter. Sally's mother announced that she knew who they were, that they were conspiring against the patriots, and that she would inform against them when she got to Fort Ann.

"After many threats they let us in, where we were sheltered from rain and cold for the night; but we were rebels, they Tories. We had no food, no refreshment to strengthen our bodies. They refused us wood but we took it and dried our garments as much as we could and went on our journey next morning and down to Fort Ann, where my mother informed against them."

Her determined mother got the family back to Bennington where they had to live as servants in other people's homes. They "had to seek a shelter where we could find one. We never after that time kept house; some of the time we fell into humans hands. At other times we had to suffer all the abuse and censure of a Tory faction... I had one sheet of paper given me to learn to write on... Our sufferings were intolerable."

And yet she seems to have learned and passed on to her children valuable lessons.

Though never wealthy — Sally married an older man, Ebenezer Markham, who had also lost everything in the war and was perpetually in debt — she was very capable, well-informed about the world, raised

accomplished and principled children, and continued to be witness or participant in major events. Her family owned a tavern in Middlebury when political passions again ran high in the early 1800s. While customs agents were staying there during the War of 1812, those who opposed the embargo on trade with Canada and Britain planned an attack on them that came to be known as the Smugglers Riot. Warned by a neighbor woman that they were coming, Sally Markham lit up the tavern with candles so the rioters couldn't be anonymous and got in touch with the wife of one of leaders about to launch an assault. The woman sent an urgent message to her husband that the baby was sick and he needed to get home fast, thus defusing the situation. The experience of women relying on themselves and each other, as well as her mother's determination and resourcefulness had taught her well.

She may have only had one piece of paper — as well as slate and chalk — to learn to write on, but Henry Sheldon said of her: "Mrs. Markham's keen insight in various public matters was remarkable. Her letters were clear and distinct and forcibly expressed. A United States Senator used to say they were the ablest he received from his constituents." She ended the account of her life with the words, "My whole life has been a political warfare."

Contributed by the Research Center Committee of the Henry Sheldon Museum. Excellent as the Research Center documentation is, it doesn't include everyone. Which courageous women of the past come to your mind? Who deserves recognition for their part in surviving or driving change? Why? Would you tell us about them? What about the Abenaki and people of color who've been ever-present but little recognized? Share your knowledge and stories with info@HenrySheldonMuseum.org.

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