



Virginia C.A.R. Patriots of the Round Table

Anna Maria Lane

One of only three women to earn a pension in the Revolution

The victory at Yorktown would not have been possible without the innumerable contributions of countless women. During the Revolutionary War, women managed businesses and farms while men were away at the front lines. They served as nurses and as spies. Some followed the Continental Army, mending uniforms and cooking meals. A few even fought in battle. While perhaps not as famous as Deborah Sampson or Molly Pitcher, Virginia's own Anna Maria Lane is an example of such a woman.

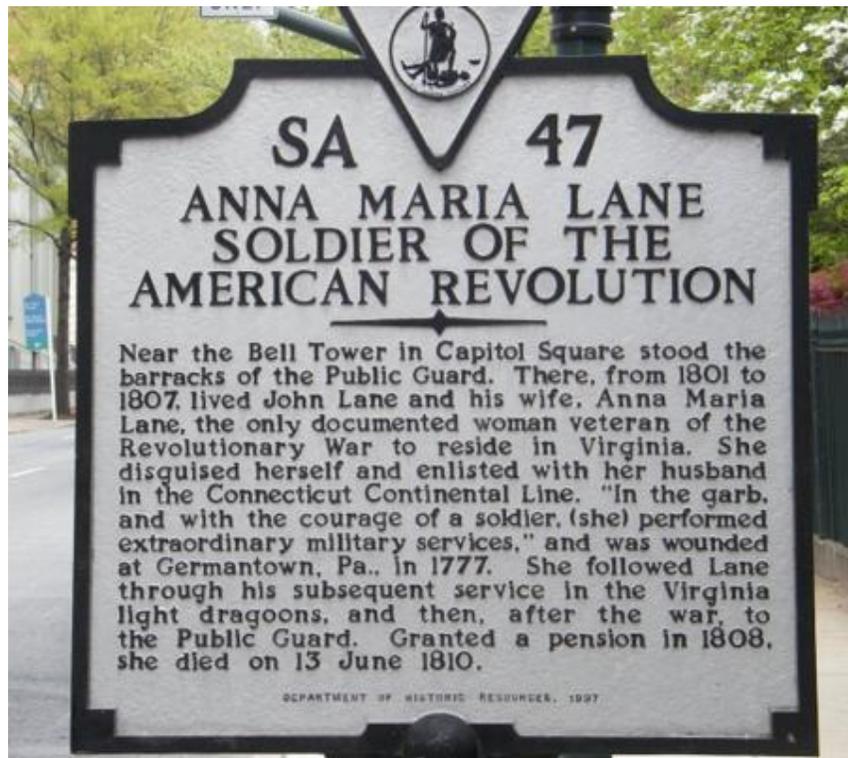
Originally from New England and born sometime in the 1730s, Anna Maria Lane is the first documented female soldier from Virginia to fight in the Continental Army. Historians believe that she became a "camp follower" when her husband, John, enlisted in the Continental Army in 1776. At some point, she decided to put on a man's uniform and serve as a soldier. She reportedly fought in battles in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Anna Maria was wounded in the leg on October 4, 1777, during the Battle of Germantown in Pennsylvania. This injury left her with a permanent disability.

Despite this injury, Anna Maria continued fighting alongside her husband when he re-enlisted in the Virginia Light Dragoons. She was with him when he was wounded in the Siege of Savannah in 1779. They both served until the end of the major fighting in 1781.

After the war, Anna Maria and her husband settled permanently in Virginia. John Lane worked as part of the Public Guard protecting Virginia's capitol, while Anna worked as a nurse in a military hospital. In 1808, at the request of Governor William H. Cabell, the Virginia General Assembly awarded her a veteran's pension, and she became one of only three women in the United States to receive a pension for service during the Revolutionary War. Her pension record explains: "In the Revolutionary War, in the garb, and with the courage of a soldier, [she] performed extraordinary military service at the Battle of Germantown." The details of this "extraordinary military service" are lost to history, but they must have been impressive. She was awarded a pension of \$100, 2 ½ times more than the typical pension for veterans. She continued receiving the pension until her death in 1810.

Legacy:

Anna Maria Lane should be remembered for her heroism and bravery, as well as her personal sacrifice in the effort to achieve our independence. In 1997, a historical marker was erected for her at Ninth Street near Capitol Square's Bell Tower in Richmond. The Anna Maria Lane DAR Chapter in Swea City, Iowa, is named in her honor.



Discussion Questions for Local Societies

How could a woman hide the fact that she was a woman for years and fight as a soldier?

Why would she want to do that?

What was the significance of the Battle of Germantown, in which the Lanes fought and Anna Maria was wounded?

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/germantown>

What was the significance of the Siege of Savannah, where the Lanes were serving in the Virginia Light Dragoons?

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/savannah>

Resources

For more about Anna Maria Lane's background and life:

<https://emergingrevolutionarywar.org/2019/03/18/womens-history-month-the-story-of-anna-maria-lane/>

For more about Anna Maria Lane and her life in Virginia after the war, watch this video by the former Librarian of Virginia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCCg3LiyyCY>

Look at the pension application – investigate with a primary source:

<https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/dbva/items/show/255>

“Anna Maria Lane, Commendation and Pension Award from William H. Cabell, 1808,” Document Bank of Virginia, accessed July 23, 2022.