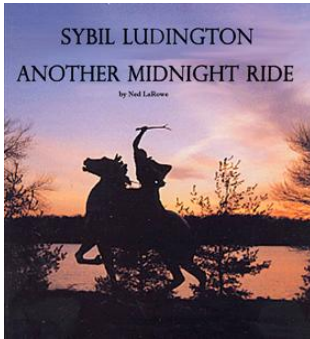


Another Midnight Ride

By Ned LaRowe



Listen my children and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

Introduction:

How well do you recall that epic poem of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere? Possibly just the first two lines. But, in spite of its flaws and after 150 years since it was written, we still reverently read the whole poem to our children. But what about the midnight ride of Sybil Ludington. Who is she, you say. What did she do? Why is her ride significant?



Well, for starters, let's compare the two rides. **CLICK** The purpose of both rides was the same: To warn the citizens of a raid by British Regulars and to call out colonial patriots who were ready to push back the invaders. Sybil Ludington's ride was on April 26, 1777, two years (almost to the date) after Paul Revere's ride of April 18, 1775. Independence had been declared by the time of Sybil's ride. Paul Revere rode about ten miles, whereas Sybil's ride covered about 40 miles. The night of Paul

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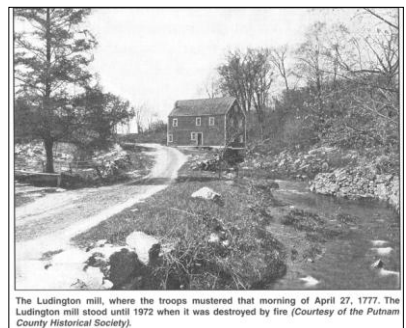
Revere's ride was clear enough to see two lanterns glowing in the North Church's steeple from across the Charles River. A thunderstorm raged throughout Sybil's ride making it difficult to see darkened houses, let alone tree branches that would scratch her face. Paul Revere mostly rode on easy and well-traveled roads. Sybil's ride was through unmarked woods and muddied trails, across farmer's fields, and besides rivers, ponds and lakes with only a few roads on which to travel. Paul Revere was captured and even though he escaped, he never completed his ride to Concord. Sybil Ludington completed her ride. And finally, Paul Revere was a mature man of forty whereas Sybil was but a girl of sixteen.

What about the significance? After all, Paul Revere's ride marked the dawning of our Revolutionary War. What was Sybil's ride all about? To answer that question, let's get on with the story of Sybil Ludington.

Who was Sybil Ludington?

CLICK Sybil Ludington was born on April 5, 1761 in Dutchess County, New York (presently Putnam County). ¹ Her mother was Abigail Knowles Ludington and her father was Henry Ludington. They were

first cousins. Henry met her when he was sixteen and she was ten. He was marching through her county



The Ludington mill, where the troops mustered that morning of April 27, 1777. The Ludington mill stood until 1972 when it was destroyed by fire (Courtesy of the Putnam County Historical Society).

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during the French and Indian war in which he participated and I guess he was smitten. They were married in 1760.

CLICK Sybil was the eldest of twelve children (but only 8 had been born by the time of her ride.). Many of the references describing Sybil's life, often written for young people, described the typical life of a girl growing up in the country



with chores that were typical of girls in that era. They would plant and tend to a garden where and would later pick fruit and vegetables. They would make butter, candles and soap. They would spin yarn, weave cloth, sew clothing, cook meals, bake bread and pastries, and importantly, they would care for their younger siblings. ³

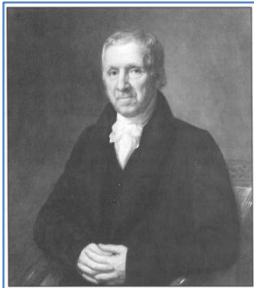
Now, I am sure Sybil performed these duties at some point. But, Sybil did not grow up facing the hardships of typical colonial farm. Her father had been a very successful farmer and business man. The gristmill, which was constructed in 1776 and solely by women (as the men were often away in their military service) was the first in the region and highly successful. He also was a prominent figure in the local politics. He was a Commissioned Officer in the British County Regiment, at least until he resigned his commission in favor of the revolutionary cause. He was a member of the New York

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Assembly in the 1770s and 1780s, a justice of the peace, and a member of the revolutionary Committee of Safety. And during this period-of-time, the provincial congress of New York appointed him to the rank of colonial of the Seventh Regiment of Dutchess County.

But, this did not mean that Sybil's life was a cake walk. As described in James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Spy: A Tail of the Neutral Ground*, this was a period in American History of a complex maze of uncertainty when enemies could be living next door, or on the next farm, or hiding behind the next rock or tree. She was aware of the ravages of war and that there was a 300 English guineas bounty on her father's life as his regiment was very successful in disrupting the British Army supply trade in the surrounding counties. Vigilance was constantly necessary, even at the family dinner table, to avoid her father's capture.



An 1830 portrait of Enoch Crosby. By 1830 Enoch Crosby was famous for his role as a spy for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, some fifty years earlier. He claimed that his exploits as a young man were the basis for the popular novel, *The Spy*, by James Fenimore Cooper (by Samuel Lovell Bardo and William Sweett, Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution).

CLICK Sybil was familiar with not only her father's regiment members and families, but also his network of spies. She knew Enoch Crosby, or Harvey Birch he was described in Cooper's novel. And she knew the secret codes which would identify a friend or foe in encounters with strangers who might show up at her home or during her rides. An article by the DAR describes this uncommon connection with Enoch Crosby:

One of the few people who knew the secret of Enoch Crosby was Colonel Henry Ludington ...

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*Crosby often found needed rest at the Ludington house. Col. Ludington's eldest daughter Sybil, helped out on several occasions acting as a sentinel guard and liaison between her father and his secret agents. Crosby had a code of secret signals, which were known to Sybil and her sister Rebecca. The two girls were always on guard during their father's absence*⁴

All-in-all, her teenage years were not those of an innocent colonial daughter of a prominent father with a tranquil and refined life. An article, "A Call to Arms," by V.T. Dacquinto, describes one of possibly several dangerous episodes of her teenage years.

One night, Ichabod Prosser, a notorious Tory, came with hopes of getting the large reward posted on the Colonel's head. Prosser's men surrounded the house and prepared to attack, but Sybil and her sister Rebecca outsmarted them:

These fearless girls, with guns in hand were acting as sentinels, pacing the porch to and fro in true military style and grit to guard their father against surprise and to give him warning of any approaching danger. They discovered Prosser and his men and gave the alarm. In a flash, candles were lighted in every room of the house and the few occupants marched and

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counter-marched before the windows and from this simple and clever ruse, Prosser was led to believe that the house was strongly guarded and did not dare to make an attack. He kept his men concealed behind the trees and fences until daybreak, when with yells they resumed their march and hastened southwards toward New York City, ignorant of how they had been foiled by clever girls. The Colonel's most vigilant and watchful companion was his sentinel daughter, Sybil. Her constant care and thoughtfulness, combined with fortuitous circumstances, prevented the fruition of many an intrigue against his life and capture. ⁱⁱ

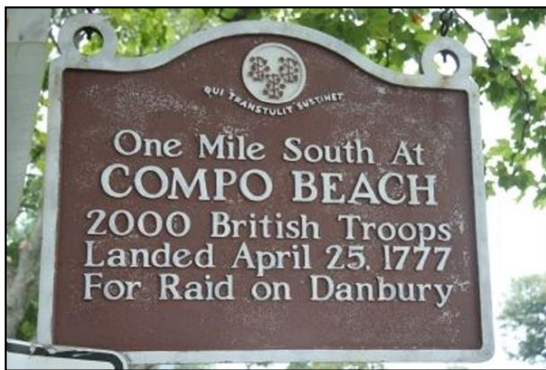
While asking a sixteen-year-old girl to act as an intermediary between an American Colonel and his spy or as an armed sentinel may seem like unusual tasks for such a young person, you must remember the times. Both boys and girls at that age at that time in history were considered young adults. It was not unusual for such young women to be married at that age. In fact, Sybil's mother, Abigail, was married to Henry and had her first child, Sybil, all before she reached the age of sixteen. (Abigail was born on May 8, 1745 – Sybil was born April 5, 1761, 27 days before Abigail's 16th birthday) ⁵

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And one final aspect of her life that is not included in most of the written accounts is that she must have had many horseback rides with her father to know where his regiment's men lived and which of the homes and families had loyalist leanings. It does not make any sense that one rain-swept evening she would volunteer to arouse his regiment if she did not have this understanding and knowledge of the land she had to travel through well in her mind.

With this biography of Sybil completed, we need some additional background to set the stage of her midnight ride.



CLICK On April 25, 1777, a British General William Tryon arrived at a place called Campo Beach, near the mouth of the Saugatuck River that runs to the Long Island Sound, in Fairfield, Connecticut. A fleet of 20 transports and six war ships carried the general and approximately 2000 troops,ⁱⁱⁱ including field pieces and a few dragoons.^{iv} Their purpose was to raid the town of Danbury, about 24 miles inland. Along the way they met mild resistance, suffered a few casualties, but never stopped their advance on Danbury. In fact, the British Regulars did not try to conceal themselves and marched as if on parade. In the

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face of so many Redcoats, the town folks sent messengers to Generals Benedict Arnold, David Wooster and Selleck Silliman asking for protection. ^v



CLICK At three o'clock in the afternoon, April 26, 1777, General Tryon and his troops arrived at Danbury. About 150 local men, attempting to move and hide some of the stores, fled with the approach of British Regulars. Orders were given to search for the rebel's supplies. Houses were raided and those believed to belong to rebels were burned. Those belonging to Loyalists were saved. At some point, General Tryon began to suspect that the Connecticut militia was closing in on him. He gave orders to destroy all the supplies and homes, except those of the loyalist. In the rain-filled night, the sky was a glow with the reflection of the town on fire. At some point, a rider went off to inform Colonel Ludington ^{vi}

Background to Story:

Why was Danbury selected as a British target? Part of the answer, I believe, lies in the character of General William Howe.

CLICK General Howe was the Commander of the British Army in America beginning in October 1775 when he replaced General Thomas Gage. In the early years of the Revolutionary war,



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General Howe was involved in such actions as the Battle of Bunker Hill (6/75), the Siege of Boston (4/75 – 3/76), the Battle of Long Island (8/76), the Battle of White Plains (10/76), and the Battle of Fort Washington (11/76). And while General Washington chased General Gage out of Boston, General Howe chased General Washington out of New York.

However, it is said that while General Howe was praised as an excellent tactician, he was criticized for his lack of strategic sense.^{vii} For example, he failed to establish a command post on Bunker Hill after the very costly British victory. He failed to recognize the strategic position of Dorchester Heights during the siege of Boston, which ultimately led to the British withdrawal. And, more importantly, he failed to follow up on his victory of the Battle of Long Island that allowed General Washington's escape. Later, he was also criticized for not supporting the Burgoyne plan to split off New England from the rest of the colonies, which resulted in the Patriot victory at Saratoga and France formally entering the war.

While the British held New York, Connecticut was always a possible target. And with the British loss of the Battle of Trenton, more and more criticism of General Howe was mounting. Additionally, his troops in New York were running out of supplies and food. He needed an easy victory and Danbury, CT. became his objective.

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Danbury also was known to have large storehouse of food and supplies for the American Army. Moreover, these supplies at Danbury just were lightly guarded. Consequently, the order went out to Major General William Tryon to march against Danbury and to capture these supplies and bring the back to New York. ^{viii}

The Midnight Ride: ^{ix}



CLICK In the early evening on April 26, 1777, a messenger arrived at the Ludington home. He pounded on the wooden front door and was shouting to get the attention of the

colonel. Sybil's father responded and gazed upon a rain-soaked, weary messenger, **CLICK** who told of the attack



on Danbury. The rider told Colonel Ludington to call out his regiment and save Danbury. The colonel, realizing the dire situation, had, at first, a feeling of helplessness. His troops had been

furloughed for spring planting. Secondly, if he were to muster his troops upon arrival at his house, he needed to stay at his house. He had no close neighbors, so there was no one who could notify the troops of the emergency. The messenger could not go. He was exhausted and did not know the roads or trails to the homes of the regiment's men.

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Historians are uncertain how Sybil got involved. Did she or her father initiate the plan? Regardless of how it came about, she was the only logical choice. She was an excellent horseback rider. Her horse, a big bay yearling, named Star, was a strong runner. Sybil knew the homes of the militia members and those of loyalists. She knew the roads and trails to her father's men's homes. She was prepared. She was unhesitant. And, time was of the essence!

Again, historians are not clear what she wore on the ride. Some articles said that she wore a pair of her father's britches,^x but in most artwork, she seems to be wearing a long dress. In some other articles, it said that she used her father's saddle, and in artwork she is usually depicted riding with her feet in both stirrups. However, in other articles and a locally famous statue she is depicted as riding side saddle.^{xi}



CLICK

What historians do seem to agree on is that she was given a riding crop from her father to use to rap on doors and windows so that she did not have to get off her horse. **CLICK** Another area of agreement is her route. Starting at the mill house, Sybil galloped south along a trail besides the middle branch of the Croton River and down the Horse Pound Road to Carmel. She instructed families to spread the word of the

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British invasion. At Mahopac Pond, she turned west to Red Mills and then north to Mahopac Mines. She continued north to Kent Cliffs, Farmers Mills and Stormville. Throughout her ride, a fierce thunder storm raged. Her ride was near over as she arrived at Pecksville and then back to her father's grist mill. ^{xii & xiii} All along the way she would wake slumbering soldier families at their homes, explaining the emergency and asking that the word be spread. By the time she arrived home the next morning, soaked by the rain, covered with mud, and nearly exhausted by the ride, there were approximately 400 men mustered and ready to march on to Danbury

The Battle of Ridgefield:

CLICK Unfortunately, Colonel Ludington's regiment arrived too late to save Danbury. The troops under General Arnold's command, following Tryon's rear echelon, had stopped at Bethel and did not pursue the British into Danbury. Arnold was concerned that the thunderstorm would get his army's gunpowder wet. He also believed that the British would return through Bethel on their way back to their ships. General Arnold's plan was to set up an ambush in Bethel.



While in Danbury, General Tryon was forced to make several decisions. He had received information that Colonel Ludington was on his way from Dutchess County

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and General Arnold was in Bethel. **CLICK** Earlier hopes to take captured supplies to New York City for British use were abandoned. Additional supplies would slow him down and make it impossible to fight those on their way to engage him. He chose instead to burn as much of the stores as possible to prevent their use by the revolutionaries. He was also forced to abandon any plans of invading Dutchess and Westchester Counties. ^{xiv}

The next morning, Sunday, April 27, General Tyron realized that he would have to make it back to Compo by way of Ridgefield and get his men aboard the ships as quickly as possible to avoid the troops at Bethel. ^{xv} However, before their withdrawal, nineteen homes, twenty shops, a meeting house, and several barns and storage buildings were set afire and destroyed. Most of the stores were destroyed including over four thousand barrels of pork, beef and flour, five thousand pairs of shoes, two thousand bushels of grain, and sixteen hundred tents. A large quantity of rum, which was then considered as medical supplies, was discovered, but it was consumed instead of destroyed. ^{xvi}

CLICK Taking a page out of the Minute Man's handbook, Colonel Ludington's men sniped at the redcoats as they proceeded to Ridgefield. Joined by about two hundred men from Arnold's army, the patriots delayed Tryon's advance to Ridgefield sufficiently enough to allow the rest of Arnold's army to set up a barricade at the northern end of town. Outnumbered and out gunned, the British broke

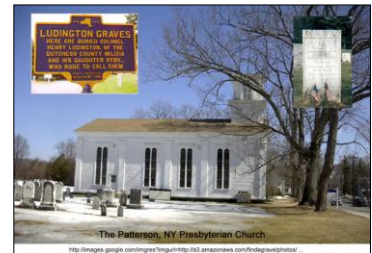
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the barricade and the militia retreated. ^{xvii} **CLICK** The patriots continued their harassing fire on the British all the way back to their ships. And, although Tryon's raid on Danbury destroyed much of the town, the raid's the objective of securing needed war supplies failed and the British never again attempted a landing by ship to attack inland colonial strongholds for the rest of the war. And, General Howe would be recalled within a year and replaced by Major General Henry Clinton.

Sybil's Life after the war:

After the war, Sybil married Edmond Ogden (1755 – 1799) and lived in Unadilla, New York in the Catskills. Edmond is reported to be a tavern owner and lawyer and to have served with John Paul Jones on board the ship, the Bonhomme Richard ^{xviii} He may have taken part in the raiding party on Whiting, England on April 22, 1778. But, when Sybil applied for a widow's pension in 1838, she could not prove either her husband's involvement in the war or their marriage and the U.S. War Department turned down her application. (http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/TNEQ_a_00452 pg. 190)

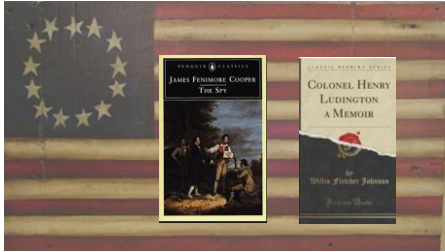


The couple only had one child, Henry. After her husband died, Sybil became an innkeeper. **CLICK** She died on February 26, 1839 at the age of 77 and is buried at the Presbyterian Church in Patterson, New York. ^{xix}

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Even though it is said that General Washington personally thanked her for her heroism,^{xx} Sybil probably never received the public acclaim for her efforts. Her

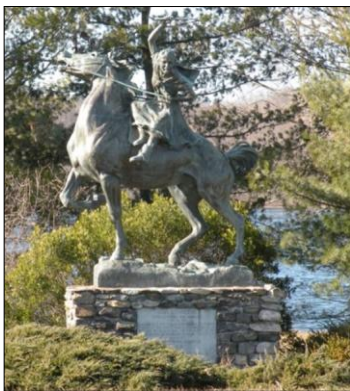


father's role as a supervisor of spies may have been part of the basis for James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Spy*, written in 1821.^{xxi} **CLICK** But, it's likely

that Sybil's role in all these circumstances did not emerge until her great-nephew, a Connecticut Historian, by the name of Louis S. Patrick wrote an article about her in 1886.^{xxii} Later, in a book-length tribute to the Colonel, (*Colonel Henry Ludington: A memoir*) she was depicted as a female Paul Revere.^{xxiii}



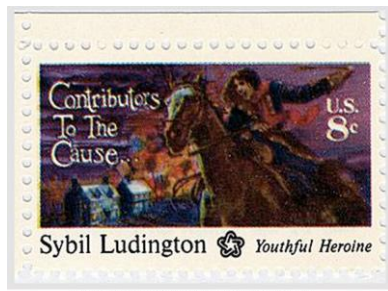
CLICK Then, in 1935 the Daughters of the American Revolution placed road markers along her route. Her hometown was renamed from Frederickburg to Ludingtonville. In 1961,



CLICK Anna Hyatt Huntington created a statue to honor Sybil and had it placed at Lake Gleneida in Carmel, New York.

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CLICK In 1975 an eight-cent stamp was dedicated to Sybil.

CLICK And, in March 2010, a movie of her life premiered in Southlake, Texas.



CLICK TO START VIDEO

Now, I don't remember the movie being honored at the Golden Globe or Academy Awards. But, it is a charming and simple memoir of her life.

There have been a few poems written about Sybil Ludington's ride, but none have reached the popularity of Longfellow's poem, *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*. But maybe that is about to change. And you are among the few to be privileged to hear this new epic poem that was composed just for this occasion ... by me. And, so, with apologies to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and

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possibly to modern-day English teachers, I present to you
Another Midnight Ride.

Another Midnight Ride

By Ned LaRowe

Illustrations from Sybil Ludington's Midnight Ride ^{xxiv}



CLICK Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of another ride that is true and dear.
Of a young girl's brave and heroic ride
Through treacherous woodland and countryside.
The mid-night ride of a girl named Sybil
Was a ride for freedom, and that ain't no dribble.



CLICK In April of seventeen seventy seven

Another Midnight Ride

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Rainclouds let loose in the starless heaven.
A messenger brought to the Colonel's door
Frightful news concerning the war.
In Danbury, redcoats were burning supplies
Having arrived by ships and attacked by surprise.



CLICK “They’re burning the town. The sky glows red,”

The exhausted messenger faintly said.

“You must muster the militia. You must sound the alarms.

Before they burn more houses or barns.

You must gather your troops; it’s our only hope,

To turn back those redcoats. Chase ‘em back to their boats.”



CLICK “I’ll call out my men; there is no time to dwell.

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**We must attack those redcoats; send them all to Hell.
But, I must stay here to assemble my men.
So, who will go get them? Whom can I send?
There are no other men here; none to be seen.
And my oldest child is but a girl of sixteen.”**



**CLICK “I will go, father, I know the way.
I know where they live and I know what to say.
I can ride a horse as well a man,
And, I know the trails like the back of my hand.
I will ride my horse, Star, he is fast and strong.
Don’t worry about me – nothing will go wrong.”**



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CLICK “But, the night is dark and there are no stars at all

Your horse could slip and you could fall.

And the woods are filled with outlaws and thieves
Hiding to jump out from rocks, boulders, or trees.

The risk is too great. ... Ah, but the need is greater.
Girl, you must leave now and not a minute later.”



CLICK So, at nine in the evening Sybil began her ride
With the courage and willpower and her patriot pride.
She awoke the slumbering troops of her father’s
command

By rapping on doors with a stick in her hand.

“Wake up, you soldiers, you’re needed to fight,
Danbury needs defendin’, you must go there
tonight.”



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CLICK By dawn the next morning, her task she completed.

Drenched and exhausted, but never defeated.

Four hundred troops had arrived at the mill

All ready to march, their task now to fulfill.



CLICK And the Redcoats retreated to their boats in the bay

Never to attempt another attack that way.



CLICK And, so, my children, another story is told
Of a midnight ride; so courageous and bold.

Another Midnight Ride

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To villages and towns: it was a call to arms.

Over rivers and through woods and across fields to farms.

She's more than just petticoats, when there's work to be done;

This heroine of sixteen, named Sybil Ludington.

Endnotes:

¹ Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Sybil Ludington, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sybil_Ludington

³ Sybil Ludington's Midnight Ride, Marsha Amstel, Carolrhoda Books, Inc, 2000, pg 6

ⁱ The National Biography Online, Sybil Ludington: <http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-01901.html>)

⁴ Historic Patterson, New York, Sybil Ludington, <http://www.historicpatterson.org/Exhibits/ExhSybilLudington.php>

ⁱⁱ The Call to Arms, V. T. Dacquino, Purple Mountain Pr Ltd; 2000, 1st Chapter, <http://ludingtonsride.com/history.htm>)

⁵ Colonel Henry Ludington: a memoir, Willis Fletcher Johnson, Before the Revolution, Printed by his grandchildren Lavinia Elizabeth Ludington and Charles Henry Ludington, New York, 1907, pg 35.

ⁱⁱⁱ Historic Patterson, New York, Sybil Ludington, <http://www.historicpatterson.org/Exhibits/ExhSybilLudington.php>

^{iv} Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Battle of Ridgefield (and Danbury), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_ridgefield

^v Ibid

^{vi} The British Raid on Danbury, 1777, <http://www.skyweb.net/~channy/danraid.html>

^{vii} Battles & Patriots of the Revolutionary War, Sir William Howe, Later Years, http://www.footnote.com/page/1414_battles_patriots_of_the_revolutionary/

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^{viii} Wapedia – Wiki: Battle of Ridgefield – Danbury,
http://wapedia.mobi/en/Battle_of_Ridgefield

^{ix} Sources combined to provide the information about Sybil Ludington's ride are too numerous to mention them all. See the Bibliography to see some of the major sources used for this paper.

^x Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Contributors to the Cause,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contributors_to_the_Cause

^{xi} Sybil Ludington's Ride, (sculpture), by Anna Houghn Hyatt Huntinton, A portrait of the young Sybil Ludington seated side saddle atop her galloping horse, <http://siris-artinventories.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?uri=full=3100001~!17255!0>

^{xii} Sybil Ludington: a Revolutionary Hero, Jennifer Hartwell-Jackson,
<http://traverseforwomen.com/Herstory/SybilLudington.htm>

^{xiii} Map of Sybil Ludington's Ride, [Ride for Freedom](#), Hominick and Spreier, Silver Moon Press, 2001, inside cover

^{xiv} [The Call to Arms](#), V. T. Dacquino, Purple Mountain Pr Ltd; 2000,
<http://ludingtonsride.com/history.htm>)

^{xv} Ibid

^{xvi} The Danbury Raid, The American Revolutionary War,
<http://www.myrevolutionarywar.com/battles/770425.htm>

^{xvii} Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Battle of Ridgefield,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Ridgefield

^{xviii} Sybil Ludington, Sid Luckman, American Natinal Biography Online,
<http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-01901.html>

^{xix} Ibid.

^{xx} Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, Sybil Ludington,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sybil_Ludington

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^{xxi} Sybil Ludington, Sid Luckman, American National Biography Online,
<http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-01901.html>

^{xxii} Ibid.

^{xxiii} Colonel Henry Ludington: a memoir, Willis Fletcher Johnson, Before the Revolution, Printed by his grandchildren Lavinia Elizabeth Ludington and Charles Henry Ludington, New York, 1907, pg 90.

^{xxiv} Sybil Ludington's Midnight Ride, Marsha Amstel, Carolrhoda Books, Inc. 2000

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