

## Impact Statement

Grace Li, Grade 9

***A Leader Beyond the Battlefield*, 2025**

Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 24 inches

Lakeside School, Seattle, WA

Unsung Hero: Sarah Bradlee Fulton

What does it mean to be a leader? Is it fame, speeches, or titles that make someone worthy of being one? What initially drew me to my hero was quite the opposite: despite clearly having achieved a great deal in her lifetime, almost all accounts of Sarah Bradlee Fulton were minimal and lacked significant detail, showing her quiet contribution in a time when women had little to no political voice. Amidst a sea of celebrated revolutionaries and renowned founding fathers, it can be easy to forget those like Sarah who worked just as hard behind the scenes to shape the future of our nation. From her work as a nurse, housing revolutionaries, and even organizing the Daughters of Liberty to protest British policies, Sarah's selflessness is undeniable, a truly inspiring quality about her. But what I admire most about Sarah is her boldness under pressure and willingness to risk her life even without recognition, delivering an urgent message to General George Washington in place of her husband.

Sarah Bradlee Fulton's influence may not be as widely known, but she has made a tremendous impact even to this day. One of her most influential acts was helping orchestrate the Boston Tea Party, even earning her the nickname "Mother of the Boston Tea Party". It is said that Sarah and her husband provided disguises for the men who participated, using soot and charcoal to make them look like Mohawk warriors. This act of resistance later became one of the most iconic moments leading up to the Revolution. Her service as a nurse during the war also showed her compassion, as she tended to wounded soldiers during the war and encouraged others to do the same. Finally, her work as a messenger carrying sensitive information demonstrated her commitment to her cause. It was dangerous work, yet she continued to serve, knowing that her efforts would help lead her nation toward independence.

When capturing Sarah's story, I sought to emphasize her heroic yet hidden bravery. I painted in muted, earthy tones to reflect the secrecy and subtlety of her work. I also spent time researching what items in Colonial America looked like to be as historically accurate as possible, such as when designing her dress, the ship in the background, the kerchief around her neck, and even the lantern. This is with the exception of her hair, which I deliberately chose to leave loose, symbolizing how she decided to go beyond what women at the time were typically expected to do. Having no real image of Sarah's face and very few references to take inspiration from proved to be both a challenge and an advantage for me. On one hand, I had to create something without a

reference, something I had never done before. However, this also gave me much more creative freedom, allowing me to imagine a personal interpretation of my hero. By painting Sarah's face in detail instead of the men of the Boston Tea Party in the background, I chose to represent a different, often overlooked perspective of a well-known historical event. To further show her importance in the movement, I painted the early American flag draped on Sarah's shoulder, the future of America literally falling on her shoulders as she braves the harsh winter through the dark to deliver Washington's letter. This entire process helped me immerse myself in her narrative, allowing me to gain a better understanding of the world through her lens.

During a time when women were constantly being told “no”, Sarah always found other ways to continue fighting for what she believed in, a mindset I have learned to apply in my own life. This February, I suffered an injury just before the start of my school's tennis season. I had been looking forward to playing tennis at school for years, and I was devastated as I felt like everything I had worked so hard for was suddenly put to waste. However, remembering Sarah's story, I came across an epiphany: I spent so long researching and painting a hero I had grown to admire and now was my chance to finally put my insights to use. Though I had no choice but to sit on the sidelines, I chose to take advantage of this opportunity instead of feeling hopeless and giving up the tennis team entirely. I showed up to nearly every practice, cheered my team on during matches, and helped my coaches lead drills for my team to improve their technique. By doing so, I now have a different view on what it means to show leadership. Thanks to my hero, I learned I have something valuable to bring to my team despite not playing during matches or practicing on the court. Through my consistent efforts to show support and love for my teammates, I was able to create a sense of community within our team, something just as valuable when it comes to sports.

Just like how Sarah's selflessness and undeterred commitment inspired me, I hope to carry on her legacy by empowering those around me as well. Coincidentally, we are learning about acts of resistance throughout history in my World History class at school, and I'm using this chance to share this painting and what I learned about Sarah in hopes of bringing her quiet story to light. By doing so, I hope that I, too, can inspire others to fight for what they believe in, no matter how difficult the circumstances may be. Sarah Bradlee Fulton's story taught me a powerful lesson: leadership is more than how loud you can shout, how many awards you've won, or even how much respect you can earn from others. It's about the choices we make every day to stand up for what's right that makes us true leaders, even when nobody is watching.

#### References:

Hunter, Brittany. "'The Mother of the Boston Tea Party' Risked Her Life to Defend Her Property." *Pacific Legal Foundation*, 22 June 2022, [pacificlegal.org/mother-of-boston-tea-party-risked-life-to-defend-property/](https://pacificlegal.org/mother-of-boston-tea-party-risked-life-to-defend-property/).

“Sarah Bradlee Fulton.” *American Battlefield Trust*, [www.battlefields.org/learn/biographies/sarah-bradlee-fulton](https://www.battlefields.org/learn/biographies/sarah-bradlee-fulton).

“Sarah Bradlee Fulton.” *Boston Tea Party Ships*, [www.bostonteapartyship.com/sarah-bradlee-fulton](http://www.bostonteapartyship.com/sarah-bradlee-fulton).