



HALIFAX WOMEN'S
HISTORY ♦ SOCIETY

Halifax Women's History Society Monthly Newsletter

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Woman of the Month: Almira Paul (1790-?)

We're going in a slightly different direction with our woman of the month this time. There is something that sets Almira Paul aside from our previous featured women: it is unclear if she actually existed! Despite this, we are featuring Almira because her story was massively popular in the early 1800s and has a lot to say about that fascinating 18th- and 19th- century phenomenon of women disguising themselves as men to go to war or sea.

Almira's adventures are recounted in the 1816 text *The Surprising Adventures of Almira Paul, A Young Woman who garbed as a Male, has for there of the last preceding years, actually served as a common Sailor, on board of English and American armed vessels, without a discovery of her sex being made.*

According to this allegedly autobiographical book, Almira Paul was born in 1790 in Nova Scotia and married a sailor, William Paul, at age fifteen and had two children. In 1811 her husband was killed in battle at sea, and she decided to leave her children with her mother and go to sea to avenge him. This is a common theme in crossdressing women narratives - going to sea or war to rescue/avenge/reclaim a lover.

Under the name Jack Brown she joined the British ship the *Dolphin* as a cook, and saw action numerous times in the war of 1812. Her story is full of ups and downs, including murdering another crew member, a flogging, being captured by Algerian pirates and escaping, marrying a woman then going back to sea, being a sex worker in Boston, and countless sea voyages in between.

As was mentioned above, it is unknown if Almira Paul was a real woman or a fictional character created to profit off the massively popular literary genre of crossdressing female soldiers, such as the famous Hannah Snell, Mary Anne

publisher, in order to capitalize on the genre's popularity and boost sales. Her story does sound somewhat too fantastical to be entirely accurate, but that does not mean that it was completely false. It is unlikely that we will ever know for sure, but that shouldn't stop us from enjoying this incredible Nova Scotian woman's adventures.



Happening in Halifax

New Ferry Naming Contest!

Voting has closed for the new ferry naming poll, but one name in particular may have looked familiar to newsletter readers! The woman of the month from our October 2016 newsletter was one of the candidates:

them! Another candidate is Ruth Goldbloom, who is very likely to be a woman of the month herself in the coming years. The metro article with all the candidates is [here](#).

Hidden Figures Film Screening

Halifax Central Library, room 301

Friday, June 16, 10am

Book Launch On the Author's Stage

Pantry and Palate: Remembering and Rediscovering Acadian Food

Simon Thibault

Halifax Central Library, room 301

Tuesday, June 20, 6:30pm

Society News!



"The Volunteers/Les Bénévoles"

Contribute to the Woman on the Waterfront!

While we are well on our way to erecting the first historical monument celebrating women in Halifax, we still have much to do. If you would like to be a part of this groundbreaking endeavour, consider making a donation to the society.

Any amount helps, and we are always appreciative of community support.

To donate via Pay Pal, please follow this link to our website:
<http://halifaxwomenshistory.ca/donations/>

story of the remarkable contributions that women have made to the history of Halifax. “A Woman on the Waterfront” is the Society’s first project.

Membership is available for anyone who wishes to support us. Lifetime membership is \$25 for adults and \$5 for students, purchasable by paypal on our [website](#).

Women’s work is too often invisible to the public, especially in the history of the Second World War, which focuses on men and rarely mentions women’s volunteer work. Without the work of countless volunteers, Halifax would not have been able to meet the needs of the huge influx of people into the city or support the military personnel and their families who made Halifax home during the war. There are more than 100 cairns, steles, sculptures and plaques in Halifax. Less than a dozen are of female figures and most of these are from mythology or are symbolic. A monument – The Volunteers/Les Bénévoles – to women volunteers would honour them and provide public acknowledgement of their numerous contributions.



Newsletter Submissions

Have something you would like to see in our next newsletter? An event, news story, picture, piece of writing or historical figure that is relevant to our cause? Please send us the information and we would be delighted to consider it for next month. We ask that submissions be consistent with our mission of sharing the untold stories of women in the history of Nova Scotia and Halifax - any that do not will not be included.



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