

## THE BRITISH ARE COMING

May 03, 2021

By Eric Gross



The night was April 26, 1777, when a 16-year-old girl hopped onto her father's horse and rode 40 miles through what is now known as Putnam County, calling out Colonel Henry Ludington's regiment, which traveled to Danbury and helped defeat invading British soldiers.

Two hundred forty four years later to the day, a group gathered to recreate that heroic feat of American history by participating in an artist's motorcade that began in Kent at the Ludington homestead and traveled through the county seat, stopping at the world renowned Sybil Ludington statue overlooking Lake Gleneida, before completing the teenager's history making ride to Mahopac, Kent Cliffs, Patterson and back to the farmhouse in the Pecksville section of Kent.

The event was coordinated by Melanie Armer, a theater director who will be presenting a performance at the Tompkins Corners Cultural Center in Putnam Valley this summer.

Armer decided to gather the troops to "celebrate the feminist achievement which is part of the Revolutionary history of our great country."

She explained the goals of her journey were to "share one's artistic expression and vision along with heroic female acts and civic pride in addition to ushering in spring. I mentioned the idea to a group of artists who were meeting weekly on zoom during the pandemic and suggested that driving the route seemed like a fun, pandemic-safe and simple way to celebrate this really exciting piece of history. A member of the group mentioned her brother, Lenny Harrington's horse-made-of-bicycles sculpture and set up a meeting for us. I borrowed my next door neighbor's trailer, picked up the statue and asked another friend to hitch it to his truck. Another member of the group suggested I should speak with the author of Sybil's autobiography Vin Daquino. He joined the event and invited more artists to join from his writing group. Someone reached out to another friend whose daughter, Leila Bahssain, dressed herself as Sybil and joined us."

Armer added: "Because of the ongoing pandemic I knew this year's event needed to stay grassroots and small. I alerted the local police and fire departments some of whom lined up their vehicles and turned on lights and sirens as we passed them as well as shop owners along the route to come out and wave. It's my hope that next year folks can freely gather and will want to stand along the route to cheer us along."

Armer called Sybil a heroine: "So many people in this area love her story and the fortitude of this very young woman. It was an enormous joy to bring people together as a community to celebrate her bravery with our own artistic creations."

More than a dozen vehicles were decorated with streamers, flowers, American flags and bows of every color for the journey last Monday afternoon.

The focal point of the day came when Carmel High School junior Leila Bahssain, dressed as Sybil, mounted a trailer containing Harrington's unique sculpture.

Bahssain, 17, called it "important to highlight women's stories especially historically. Many times they become forgotten. I felt connected to Sybil's story. She was my age when she made that heroic ride. It's empowering to know that young women can step up and change the course of history."

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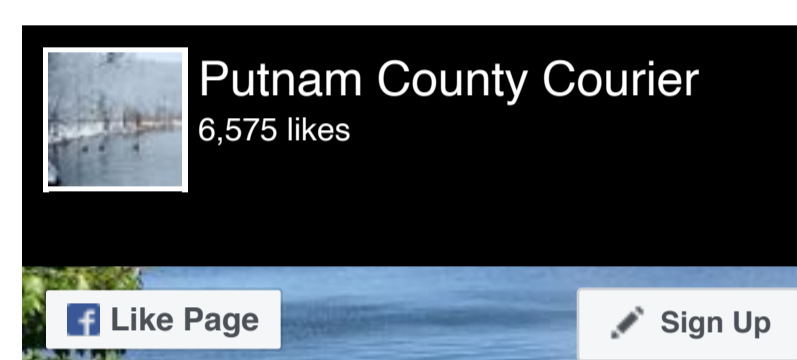


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