



# Fort Wooster Park

Bridging Connecticut's Native American and Revolutionary Past

STATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVE



CONNECTICUT STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



# Acknowledgments



Panoramic photograph of the Earthworks at Fort Wooster (photo courtesy of Friends of Fort Wooster)

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On the cover: Artist Patricia Corbett's rendering of the British attack at New Haven on July 5, 1779  
(Source: Patricia Corbett and Friends of Fort Wooster)

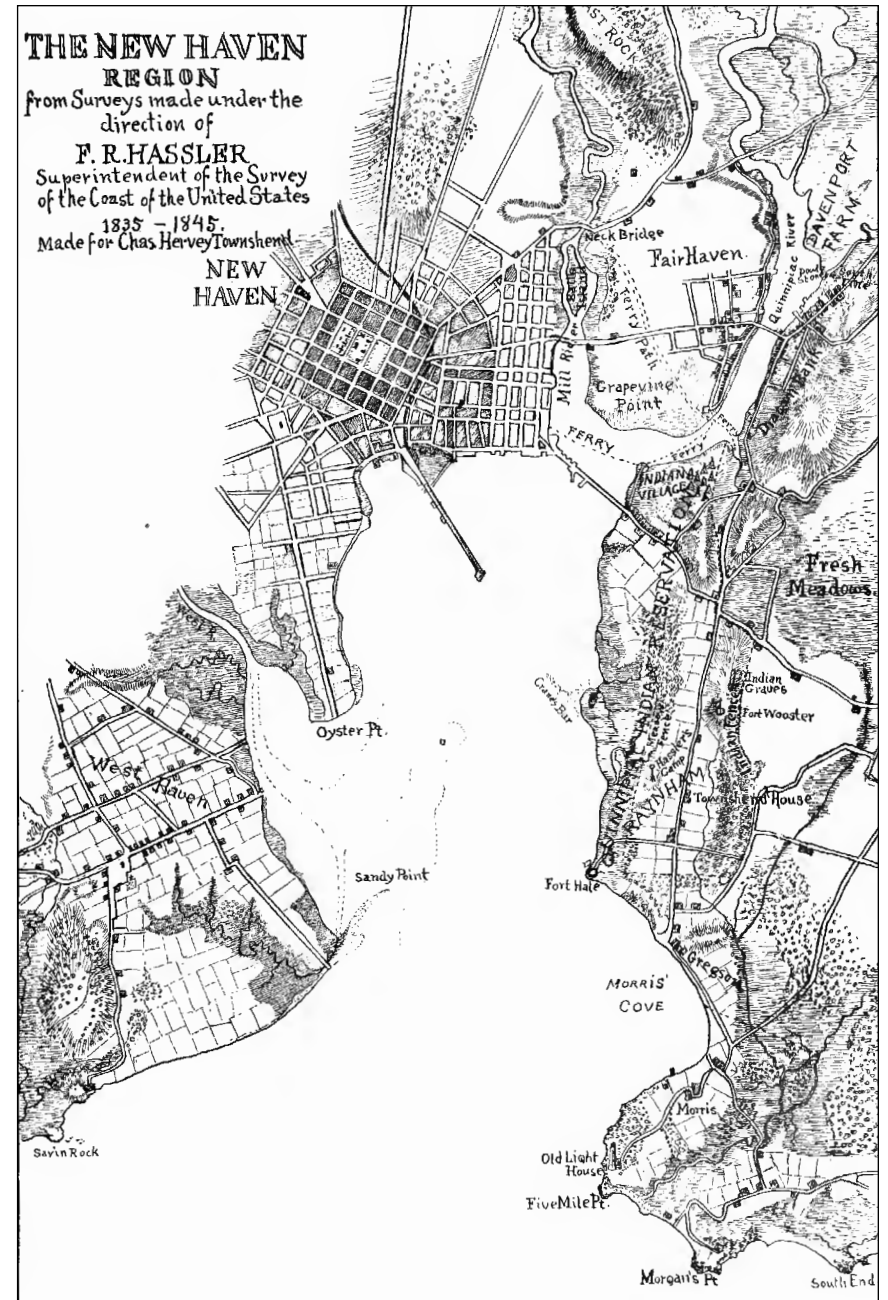
Authors: Dave D. Davis and Jeffrey Maymon  
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## Overview

Fort Wooster, as it is known today, served in the defense of New Haven and its environs during the Revolutionary War, and again during the War of 1812. However, human activity at the site on New Haven's East Shore has a much longer history, beginning with a Native American village and fortification prior to European colonization. Indeed, the Native Americans who resided there were instrumental in the survival of the European settlers of New Haven during the early years of the colony. Later, colonists erected a signal beacon at the site on the high point of a hill overlooking the entrance to New Haven Harbor. Prior to the Revolutionary War, this was referred to as Indian Hill, Fort Hill, Grave Hill, Signal Hill, and finally Beacon Hill, a name later abandoned as it was eclipsed by the similarly named signal point in central Boston. In the summer of 1779 the beacon served as a warning to the citizens of New Haven of an impending British naval attack, and on July 5 of that year the site was the locus of a battle between British troops and citizens of New Haven. During the War of 1812, the installation was reinforced with additional fortifications and a powder magazine. In August 1814, it was renamed Fort Wooster in memory of Revolutionary War hero Major General David Wooster. The fort was abandoned the next year.



Photo of Earthworks at Fort Wooster (Photo by John Stanton, Fortwiki.com)



New Haven Harbor in the mid-nineteenth century; Fort Wooster is in New Haven's East Shore section, adjacent to former Quinnipiac Indian reservation (Townshend [1900], *The Quinnipiac Indians and Their Reservation*)

## Indigenous History

At the time of European settlement of the New Haven area in 1638, the site that would become Fort Wooster was inhabited by 250 to 400 members of the Quinnipiac tribe, a coastal Algonkian group whose name, directly translated, meant Long Water People. Their language, *Quiripi*, was a dialect of Eastern Algonkian. Although the English modified “*Quiripi*” to “Quinnipack” or “Quillipiack,” members of the tribe referred to themselves by the more broadly used Algonkian term *Ean-sketambawg*, meaning “Original People.” Their village, situated at what the English initially called Indian Hill and the Native Americans called *Mioonhktuck*, was palisaded as a defense against attack from other Native American groups (Townshend 1900a; Menta 2003).



The Quinnipiac people lived in wigwams, a common house type among Native Americans in New England (Photo: Lost Towns Project, Inc.)



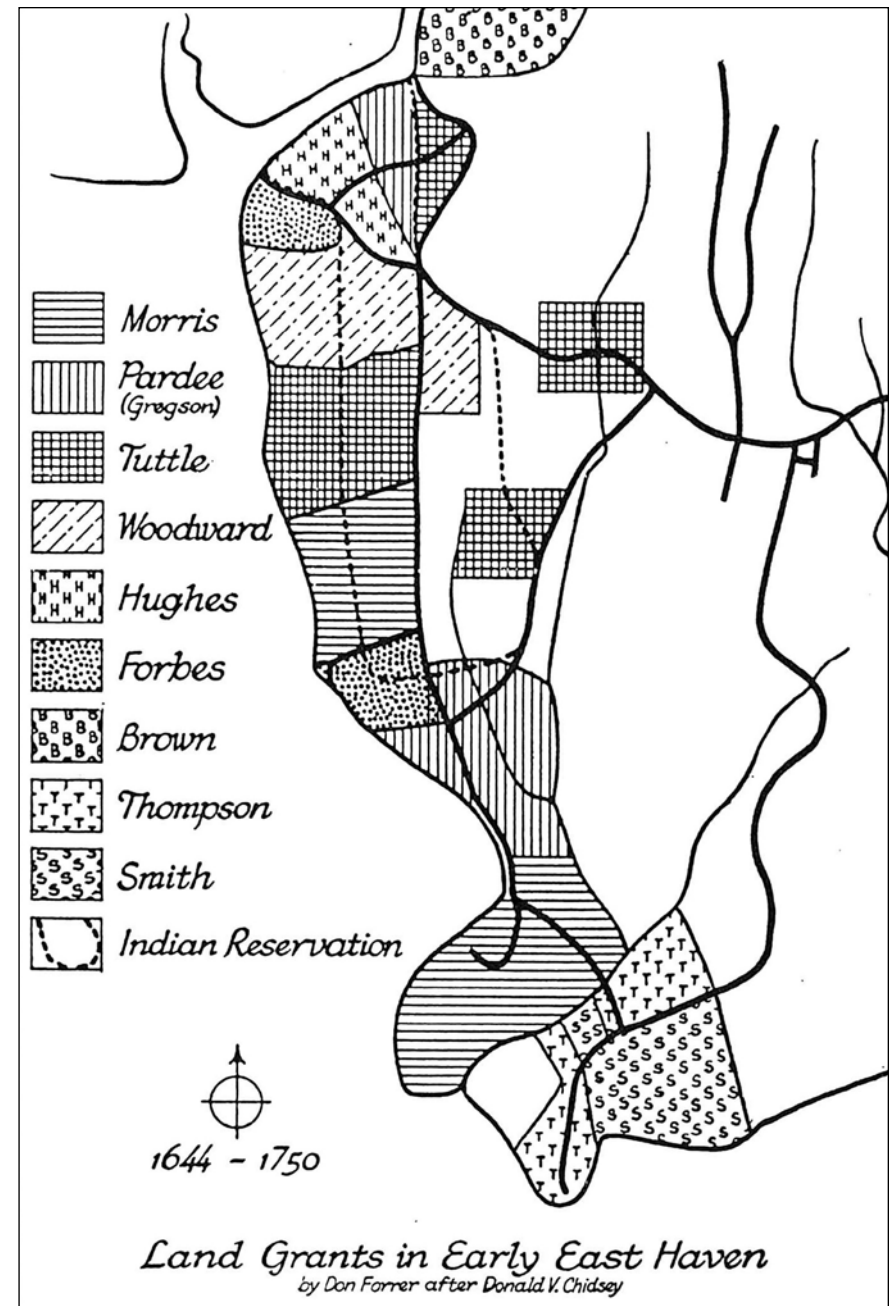
The Quinnipiac were one of a number of culturally related Native American groups in colonial Connecticut (UConn Map and Geographic Information Center)

The Quinnipiac people subsisted on a range of cultivated plants, including maize, squashes, and beans. They obtained fish and clams from Long Island Sound, hunted deer, and gathered a variety of wild plants. They lived in wigwams, a common Native American house type characterized by a round floor plan and a domed cross-section created using a framework of poles covered with wood, bark, or hides. During winter months, the Quinnipiac departed the village for their winter grounds in the interior, where hunting became the dominant subsistence activity.



The Quinnipiac tribe occupied the area around Fort Wooster at the time of European settlement (Source: Mathias Spiess [1934], *The Story of Wunnee-neetunah*)

Accounts from early European colonists reveal that the Quinnipiac played a vital role in the young colony's survival. The Quinnipiac traded deer meat to the English settlers and taught them how to create and use weirs to catch fish in nearby tidal waters. On November 24, 1638, Theophilus Eaton and the Reverend John Davenport signed a treaty with seven Quinnipiac leaders designating 1,200 acres on the eastern side of New Haven Harbor as a reservation for the Native American tribe, making it one of the first Native American reservations in North America. That document granted the reservation lands, required the Native Americans to leave the colonists to the enjoyment of their own settlement and homes, and promised the Indians sanctuary within the English



Map showing seventeenth and eighteenth century land grants in East Haven; the stippled line depicts the boundary of the Quinnipiac reservation (Source: Hayward [1938], *The East Side of New Haven Harbor*)



Monument to the Quinnipiac Indians at Fort Wooster Park (Photo: Michael Herrick, HMdb.org)

settlement in the event that they were attacked or otherwise frightened from their reserved lands. Although the reservation lands eventually were ceded to the English in return for cash payments, remains of the “Indian fence” that enclosed the reservation could be seen as recently as 1893 (Townshend 1900a: 164).

## ✧ Ezra Stiles and Connecticut's Native Americans ✧

Reverend Ezra Stiles (1727-1795) was one of the major intellectuals in America during the late eighteenth century. Born in North Haven, Connecticut, Stiles followed his father into the ministry. He graduated from Yale in 1746, studied theology and was ordained in 1749. He briefly resigned from the ministry to

study and practice law in New Haven. Returning to the Congregational church, Stiles became pastor of Second Congregational Church in Newport, helped establish the College in the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations (later Brown University), and eventually returned to New Haven to assume the presidency of Yale College.

Stiles had wide-ranging intellectual pursuits, which he recorded in a journal that he kept most of his life. In addition to his biblical scholarship, which led him to learn Hebrew, he was an amateur scientist who corresponded with Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, among others. His observations about daily life in eighteenth century New England are among his greatest contributions. Stiles's detailed journals and records provide historians information about the local temperatures; population growth; births, deaths, and marriages; the Jewish community; and, the region's Native American tribes.

Stiles recorded information on all aspects of Native American life in New England. His notes include maps of communities, description of historical events, and even illustrations of the native houses. Stiles visited the Western Niantic Indian community in autumn 1761 and recorded information about the dwellings and people that he met. Stiles's sketches of two of the wigwams that he saw provide a firsthand description of East Coast Algonquian Native architecture. His illustration and plan of Eliz. Mohege's wigwam at Niantic notes its size and construction as well as the layout of the interior space. The less detailed illustrations of Geo. Wawkeet's wigwam show it “*stript of its Matts & left for the Winter at Nihantic.*” Stiles also prepared a census of the people living at Niantic and recorded Quinnipiac and Pequot vocabularies from his interviews and sources.

N <sup>o</sup> . OF NYHANTIC TRIBE OF INDIANS, TAKEN OCT. 7, 1761, BY E. STILES				
unmarried				
Æt.	Families	Sons	Daughters	
75	Jno. Moheeges	0	4	2 Wigwams
55	Jno. Lethercotes	1	5	W.
50	Geo. Waukeete	2	4	W.
45	Philip Kewish	4	3	House
40	Jacob Kewish	0	0	H.
40	Jno. Tatsen	4	1	H.
25	Dan. Waukeete	1	1	W.
22	Sam <sup>l</sup> . Waukeete	0	0	
40	Thos. Sobuck	2	1	H.
26	Ben.	2	1	W.
		16	20	
WIDOWS				
	Widow Sobuck	6	1	H.
	Nonsuch	3	1	H.
	Tupsha	0	0	H.
	Sue	0	0	H.
	Piunko	4	1	H.
	Tatson	3	0	H.
	Waukeete	1	0	
70	Kewish, Mother to Philip			
	Ann Chesno	0	0	H.
		17	3	

Ezra Stiles's 1761 Census of Niantic Tribe of Indians (from Dexter (1916) *Extracts from the Itineraries and Other Misc of Ezra Stiles 1755-1794*, p132, 155)

Ever the collector of information, Stiles compiled extracts from seventeenth century records of the New Haven colony on the local Indian groups, including the purchase of land from Quinnipiac leaders by Theophilus Eaton and John Davenport, faithfully rendering their names and marks. His sketch of an Indian Fort in East Haven depicts the ruins of a fort, graves east of the old fort, and other features that are believed to have been located in the vicinity of Fort Wooster Park.

In his *Itineraries and Memoirs*, Yale President Stiles provided detailed information about the Quinnipiac settlement and its environs in the 1760s. A sketch by Stiles shows the boundaries of the Native American fort, which encompassed the top of Signal Hill. Stiles's notes indicate that the principal burial ground of the Quinnipiac was nearby. Another sketch map by Stiles depicted the locations of seven Quinnipiac burial grounds in the area (Townshend 1990a: 72).

In the early eighteenth century the Quinnipiac sold portions of their 1,200-acre reservation to English settlers. These sales appear to have required approval of the township:

*Upon motion of Mr. John Woodward for liberty to purchase a piece of land of New Haven Indians on the east side of New Haven Harbor, adjoin to his ... Farm for his necessity to build an house on that, so he may have a dry cellar and also for watering of his cattle, which his Farm will not afford. The Town having considered the motion do grant unto Woodward liberty to purchase of the said Indians one acre for his necessary as aforesaid ... (New Haven Proprietors Records, April 26, 1720, p. 316).*

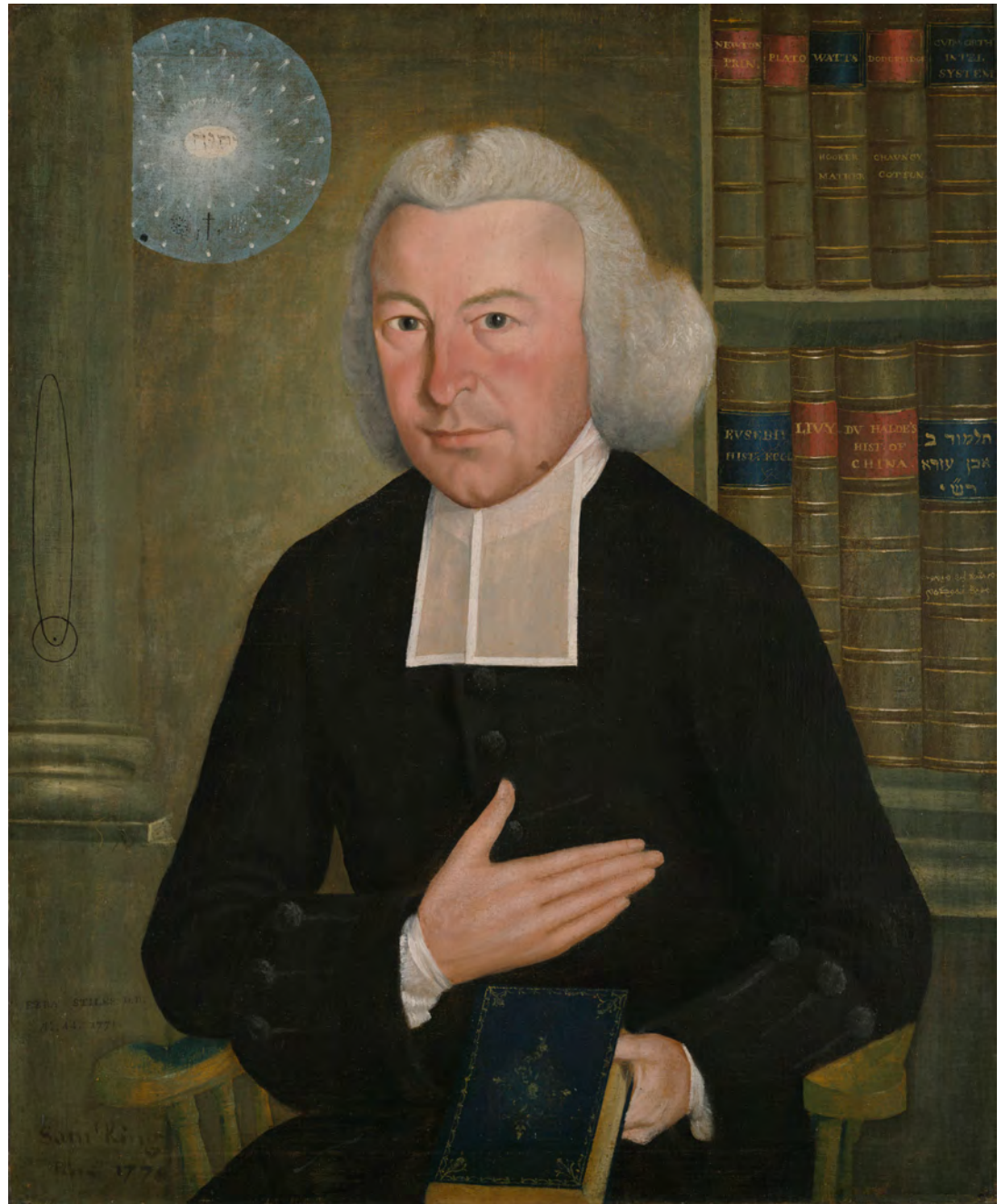
However, some of the Quinnipiac land was purchased by the town for municipal purposes: "Voted that there be some persons chosen as a committee to purchase what land of the Indians is not purchased within our Town bounds and for the Towns use" (New Haven Proprietors Records, Jan. 7, 1705, p. 178). According to Charles Hervey Townshend, the last of the Quinnipiac land, amounting to some 30 acres, was sold to Timothy Tuttle on June 2, 1773 (Townshend 1900a: 72).

Even before settlement of the New Haven Colony, the Quinnipiac suffered population losses from diseases such as smallpox and cholera that had been introduced by earlier Europe-

an settlers along the Atlantic seaboard. After the arrival of the English in New Haven, the Quinnipiac continued to decline in number. In the 1760s the remaining members of the tribe migrated north to Farmington and merged with the Tunxis, so that by the time the Beacon Hill signal was erected in 1775 the Quinnipiac people no longer were present in the New Haven area. Descendants of the Farmington group are said to have migrated to Green Bay, Wisconsin, in the nineteenth century (Menta 2003). By the early part of that century, farmers had plowed parts of the Quinnipiac burial grounds, disturbing some of the graves. In the 1820s and 1830s teams of professors and medical students from Yale opened several graves and removed the corpses and accompanying grave goods (Townshend 1900b:24-25).

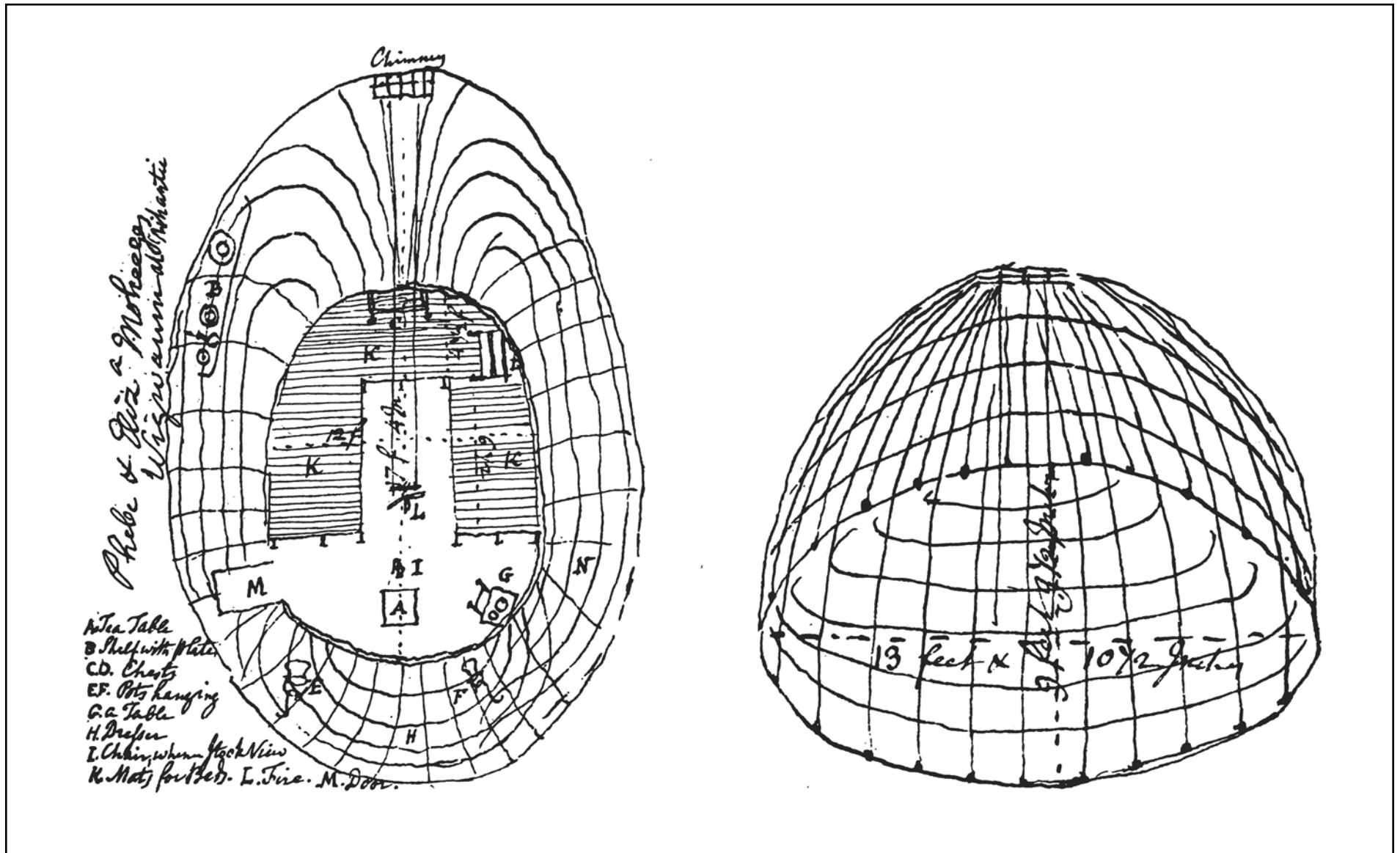
## Ezra Stiles's Account of the British Attack on New Haven

*At 5 morning, Gen. Garth's division landed at West Haven and marched to the meeting house, one mile, and formed upon a green, where they halted two hours. About 9 or 10 o'clock Gen. Tryon landed his division at 5 Mile Point. Both divisions became engaged in their respective operations at the same time. Col. Sabin, with 2 pieces of artillery, went to West bridge. Capt. Hillhouse, with 20 or 30 brave young men, together with many others, crossed the bridge over the Milford hill, and within 100 rods or a quarter of a mile of the meeting*

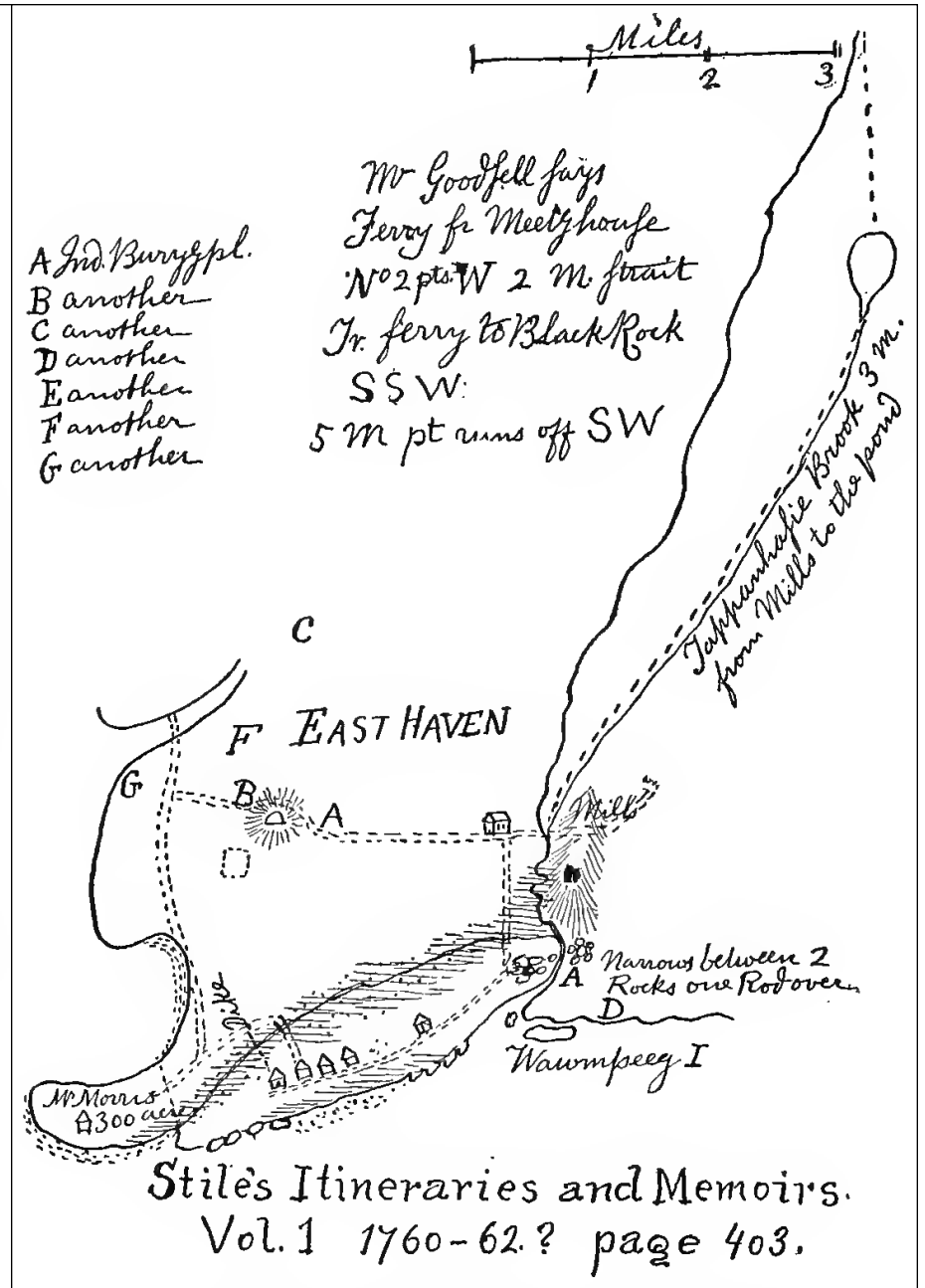
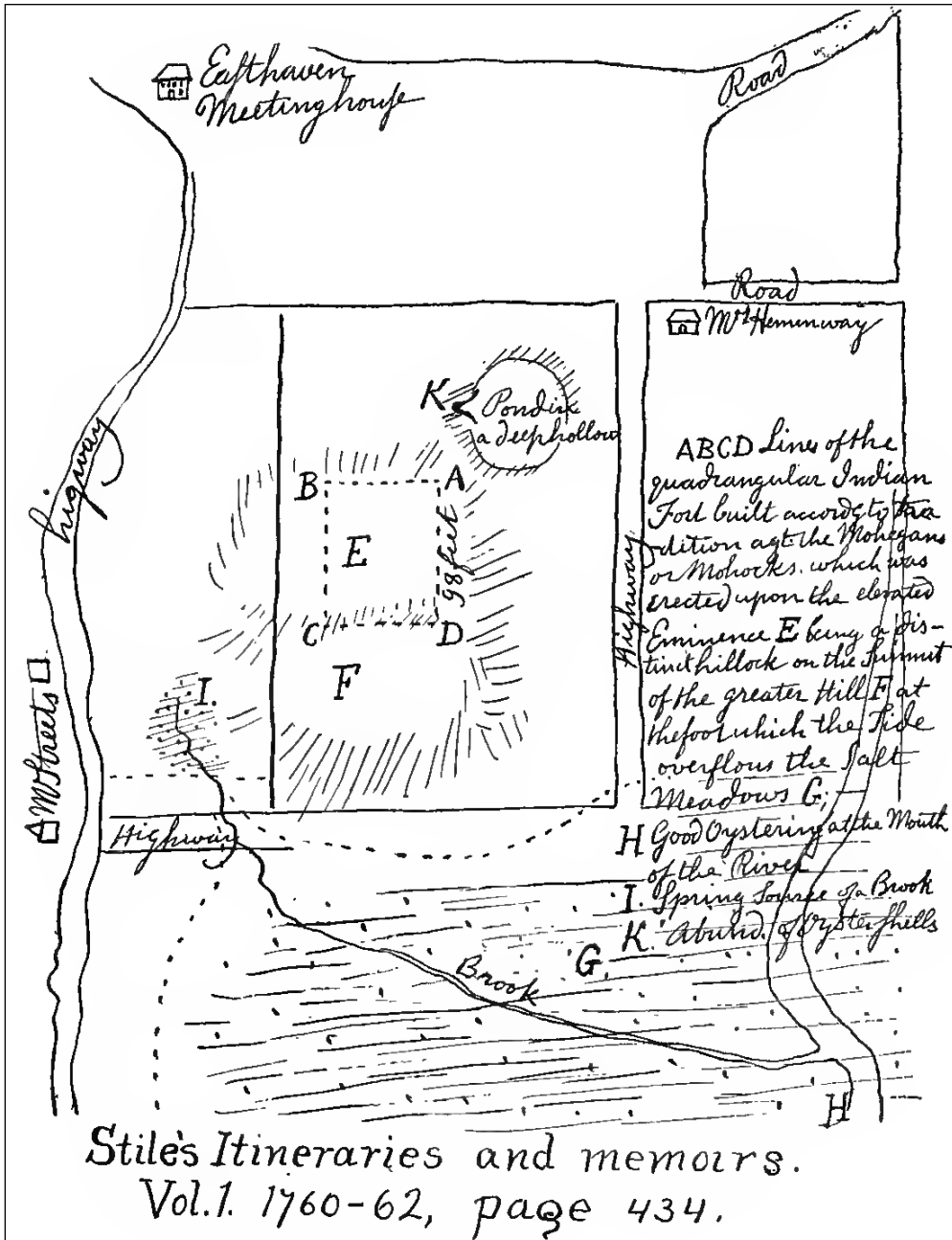


Ezra Stiles, shown here in a painting by Samuel King in 1771, was president of Yale University from 1778 until his death in 1795 (Image source: Yale University Art Gallery)

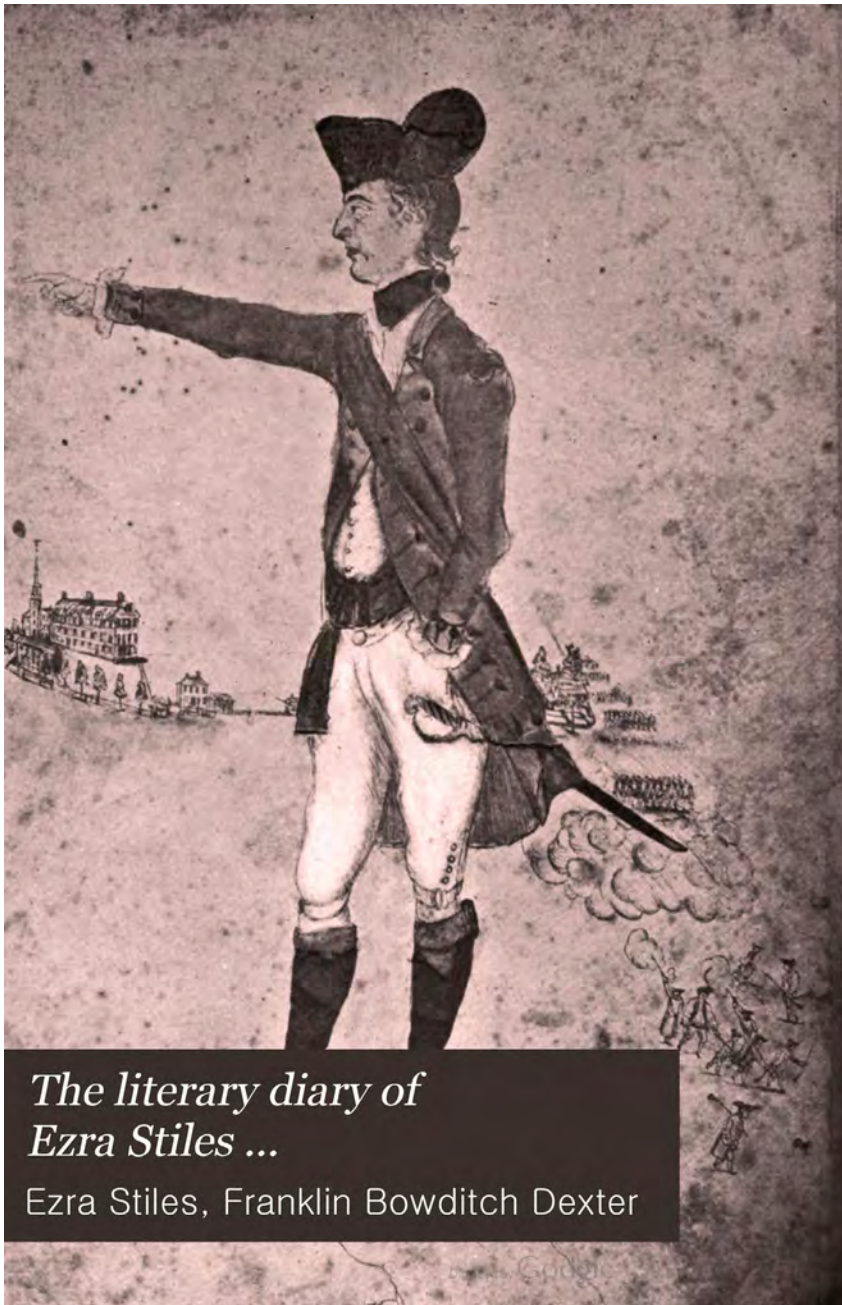




Ezra Stiles's sketches of wigwams belonging to Phoebe and Elizabeth Moheege and George Wawkeet (from Dexter (1916) *Extracts from the Itineraries and Other Misc of Ezra Stiles 1755-1794*, p132, 155)



[Left]: Ezra Stiles's sketch map depicting the remains of an Indian fort on Beacon Hill where Fort Wooster was later built (Source: Townshend [1900a], *The Quinnipiac Indians and Their Reservation*) [Right]: Ezra Stiles's 1760s sketch map of 'Indian burials' at East Haven and Fort Wooster (Source: Townshend [1900a], *The Quinnipiac Indians and Their Reservation*)



## The literary diary of Ezra Stiles ...

Ezra Stiles, Franklin Bowditch Dexter

George Welles, Captain of the company of Yale College Students that responded to the Invasion of New Haven (from a water-color drawing by St. John Honeywood reproduced in Dexter (1901) *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* Vol II 1776-1781-2

house, where the enemy were paraded. Upon their beginning the march, Capt. Hillhouse fired upon the advance guard so as to drive them into the main body. But coming in force the enemy perceived others besides Hillhouse's party had by this time passed the bridge and reached the hill to perhaps the number of 150 men. These kept up a galling fire on especially their out-guards, extending perhaps to 40 or 50 rods each side of the column, and yet the column marched in a huddled confusion in about 30 companies and three divisions thus;

The northern militia and those from Derby by this time crowded in and passed on all sides and some behaved with amazing intrepidity. One captain drew up and threw his whole company (the Derby Company, probably) directly before the enemy's column and gave and received their fire. We fought upon a retreat into the town. Just at the northwest (Ditch corner) entrance the battle became very severe and bloody for a short time, when a number were killed on both sides. The enemy, however, proceeded along in force and entered the town at 40 minutes after 12 or a little before 1 o'clock P.M. From their first entrance till 8 in the evening the town was given up to ravage and plunder, from which only a few houses were protected. Besides what was carried off, great damage was done to furniture, etc., left behind.

While these things were transacting on this side of the harbor, Gen. Tryon was pursuing his desolation on the East side. Upon landing he set fire to Mr. Morris' elegant seat. He was molested by the Fort on Black Rock, 3 miles from town, under the command of Lieut. Bishop, and also by a field piece under the gallant Lieut. Pierpont. At length the fort was evacuated and the enemy reached Beacon hill in the afternoon. The enemy pushed out almost to East Haven meeting house. But the militia collecting in from every part pressed upon them. The enemy drew nearer on to water on the west or town side. The confluence of militia accumulated chiefly at three places, at Neck bridge (which the enemy

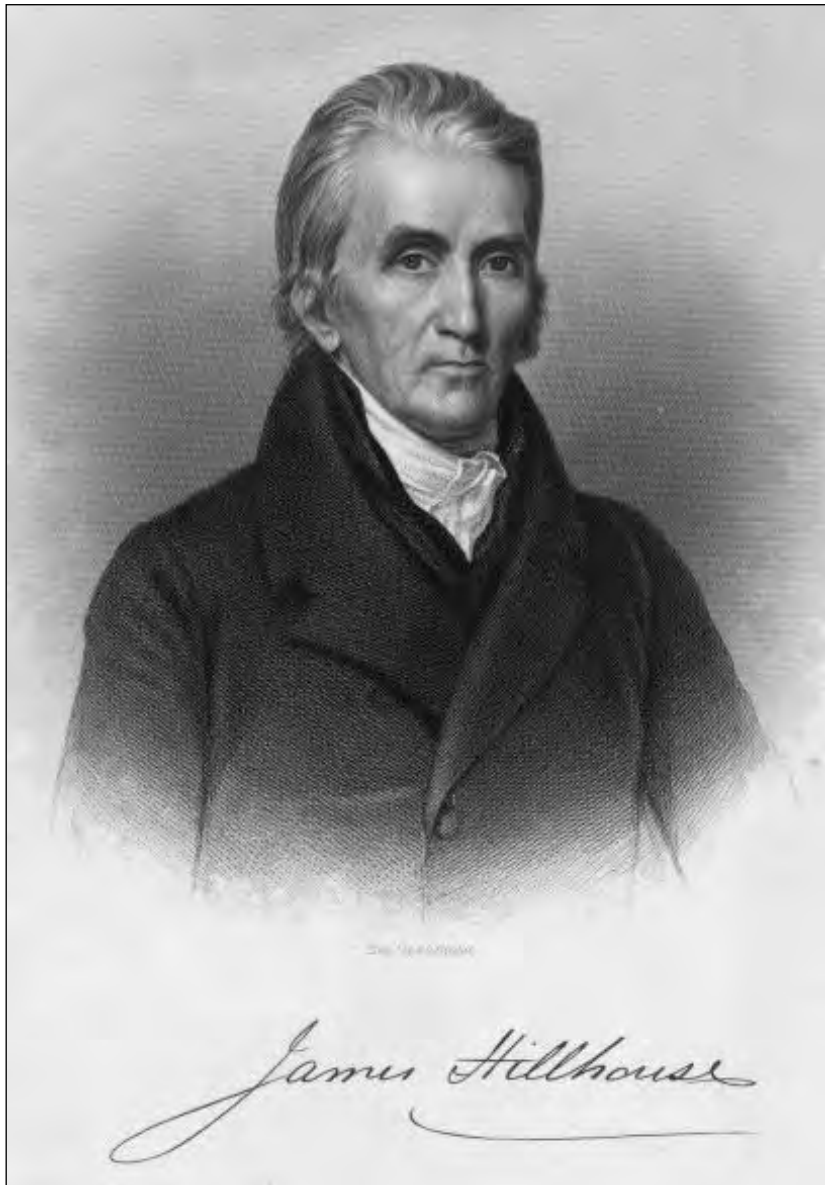


Illustration of Capt. James Hillhouse, who resisted Brig. General Garth's forces during the British attack on New Haven (Illustration by A.H. Ritchie courtesy of the manuscripts & Archives Digital Images Database, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut)

*had pulled up and retired), Mill lane and Ditch corner. At the last place was incessant firing on both sides all the afternoon, and sundry were slain, and at length the firing on both sides ceased in the evening.*

*In the afternoon of Monday, 28 large boats came ashore from the shipping with about one thousand seamen to share in the plundering. But General Garth absolutely forbid them landing and sent them back, all but six boats which landed, alleging that it would be dangerous should the boats be left on the flats at low water. Gen. Tryon kept chiefly on the east side of the harbor (Beacon Hill). He was, however, over on this side in the course of the afternoon. (Met at council of war.) Garth feared lest his men would become too drunk to remain safe on shore, and proposed to Tryon going on board that night, but Tryon refused it. The troops were ordered to parade at 1 o'clock next morning, and the Tories were notified of the departure. Four families (Messrs. Chandler, Camp, Botsford and \_\_\_ ) accordingly prepared and went off with them next morning.*

*Though they began to call in their outposts, etc., and march the main body a little before sunrise of the morning of the 6th of July, yet they left 150 men to set fire to several stores on the wharf and the vessels. These (troops) resumed plundering while their galleys kept up a fire. The ships and stores were fired between vi and vii morning. At the distance of three miles north of the town I espied this conflagration, when we supposed the whole town was destined to the flames. But a merciful God ordered it otherwise.*

**Excerpt from *Diary of President Ezra Stiles* probably from a brief found in his diary Vol 14, p.66 (reprinted in Townshend 1879: 43-46 *British Invasion of New Haven, Connecticut*).**

## ❧ New Haven and Signal Hill in the Revolutionary War ❧

The New Haven Colony was founded in 1638 by a group of Puritan businessmen from London led by Eaton and Davenport. From its founding until 1664, the colony existed as an unchartered entity independent of the larger (and duly chartered) Connecticut Colony to the north centered around Hartford. Initially containing only the township of New Haven, the colony expanded in 1643 to include Milford to the west, Guilford to the east, and their environs. The colony's founding document, known as the Fundamental Agreement, decreed that only members "... of some or other of the approved Churches of New England" could vote in the colony's affairs. The Agreement further provided that "the word of God shall be the only rule to be attended unto in ordering the affairs of government ...". (New Haven Colony Historical Society 1865: 19).

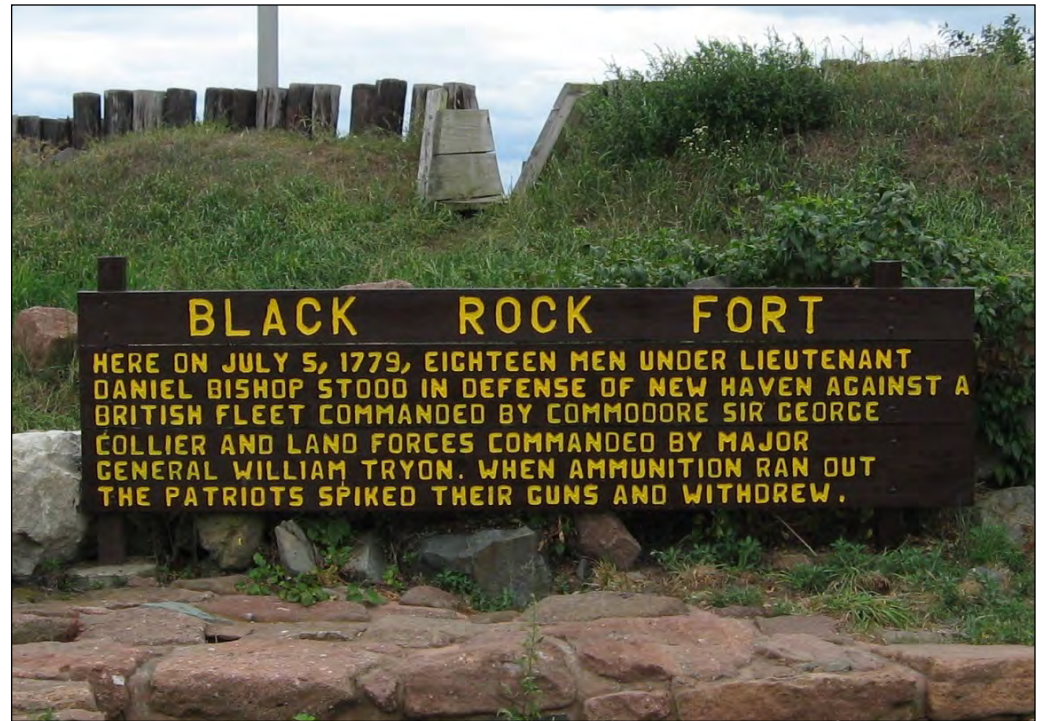


Theophilus Eaton (left) and John Davenport led the founding of New Haven in 1638 (Statue of Eaton by Paul Wayland Bartlett on the Connecticut State Capitol [Photo: Waymarking.com]; Engraving of Davenport by Amos Doolittle, 1797 [Source: National Portrait Gallery])

For a variety of reasons, including relatively poor farmland and unproductive mercantile ventures, the New Haven Colony was not economically successful. The lack of oceangoing vessels and the Crown's refusal to grant a charter aggravated the colony's problems and made it necessary for the New Haven leadership to negotiate a middleman relationship with the Connecticut Colony, which provided shipping support for commerce between the New Haven Colony and England. In 1664 the New Haven Colony ceased to exist, and its townships were absorbed into the Connecticut Colony. However, until 1873, New Haven served as co-capital of Connecticut with Hartford.

Despite these challenges, the colony's townships survived and grew. At the start of the Revolutionary War, New Haven had some 3,500 residents, and the need to provide for the town's defense against British attack was evident to the town's leaders. In 1775 they authorized the construction of a signal or beacon tower atop the former Indian Hill overlooking the mouth of New Haven Harbor:

*The town of New Haven having this day erected a Beacon on Indian [Hill] of the town, and ordered us, their Committee, to give public notice thereof, we now inform the public in general and the neighboring towns in particular, that the Beacon will be fired on Monday evening next, the 30th instant, at 6 o'clock; all persons are then desired to look out for the Beacon and take the bearings of it from their respective places of abode, that they may know where to look for it in case of an alarm, which will be announced by the firing of three Cannon. If our enemy should attack us and we be under necessity of making use of this method to call in the assistance of our brethren, we request that all persons*

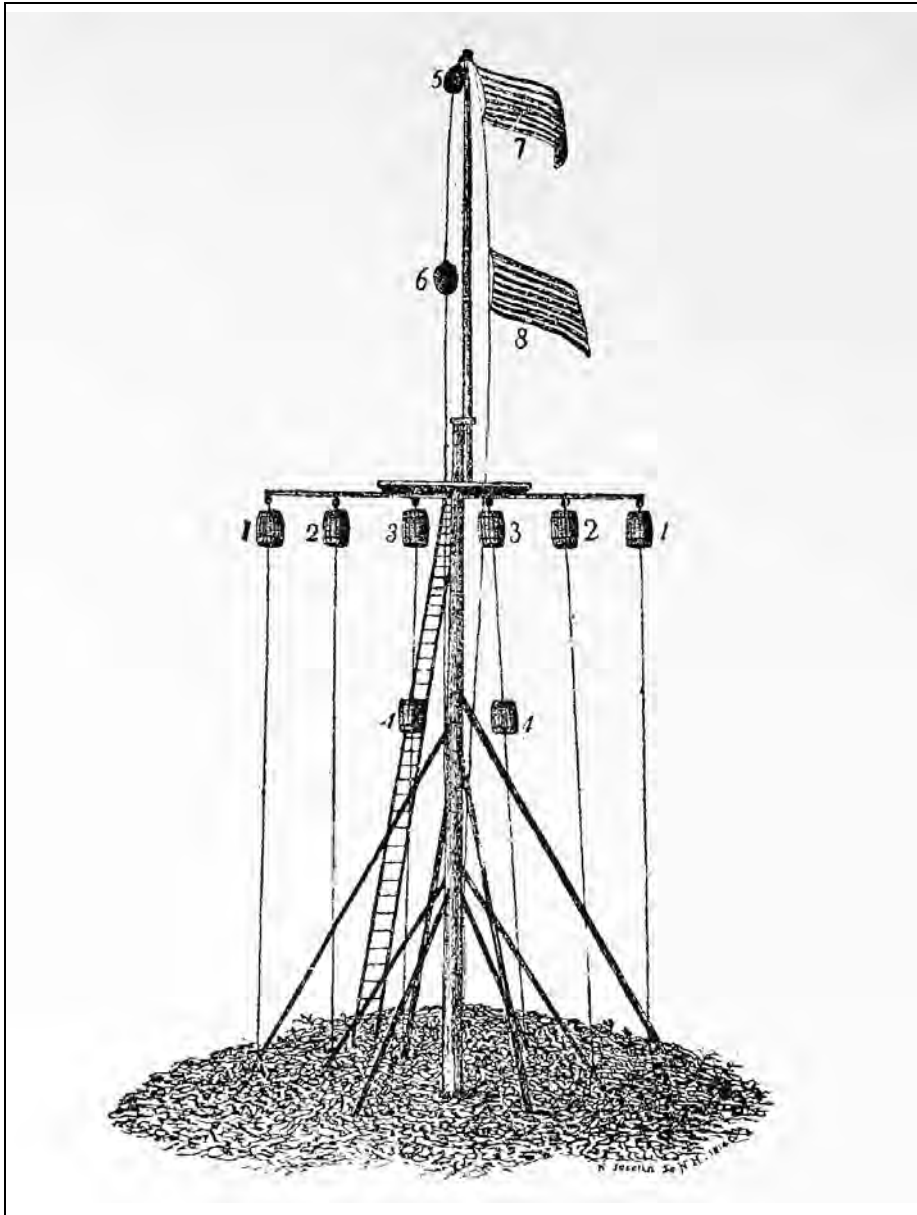


Fort Black Rock, later to be named Fort Nathan Hale, was constructed at Lighthouse Point just below Signal Hill. British forces attacked on July 5, 1779 (Photo: Michael Herrick, HMdb.org)

*who come into the town will take care to be well armed with a good musket, bayonet and cartridge box well filled with cartridges, under their proper officer, and repair to the State House, where he will receive orders from Col. Fitch what post to take.*

*The ministers of the several parishes of this and the neighboring towns are requested to mention to their respective congregations the time when the Beacon will be fired."*

*Phineas Bradley,  
Isaac Doolittle, \- Commissioyers.  
James Eice,  
New Haven, 14th November, 1775.*



During the Revolutionary War, signal masts and beacons were common means of spreading the word that British were approaching. The signal at Beacon Hill reportedly reportedly was a striped mast and a topmast 40 feet from the ground with a yard 20 feet long, crossed shipshape and halyards, constructed to hoist balls by day and lights by night on each yard arm (Source: Townshend [1900b], *A Pictorial History of Raynham and its Vicinity*)

During the Colonial era, signal beacons were widely employed to warn residents of impending attack and rally them to action. Fire (and the smoke that accompanied it) could be visible from a considerable distance, especially if a beacon were situated on a relatively high elevation. As long as those conditions were met, the form of the signal beacon could vary. Some were created from barrels of tar or other flammable substances mounted atop poles. Others were pyramidal structures comprised of tree branches, while others were towers of wood-plank frames filled with hay or dried grasses. Unfortunately, available documentary sources do not seem to contain information about the specific character of the signal beacon at what would become Fort Wooster. However, C.H. Townshend did offer a record of the telegraphic signaling system that the colonists devised for the East Haven beacon:

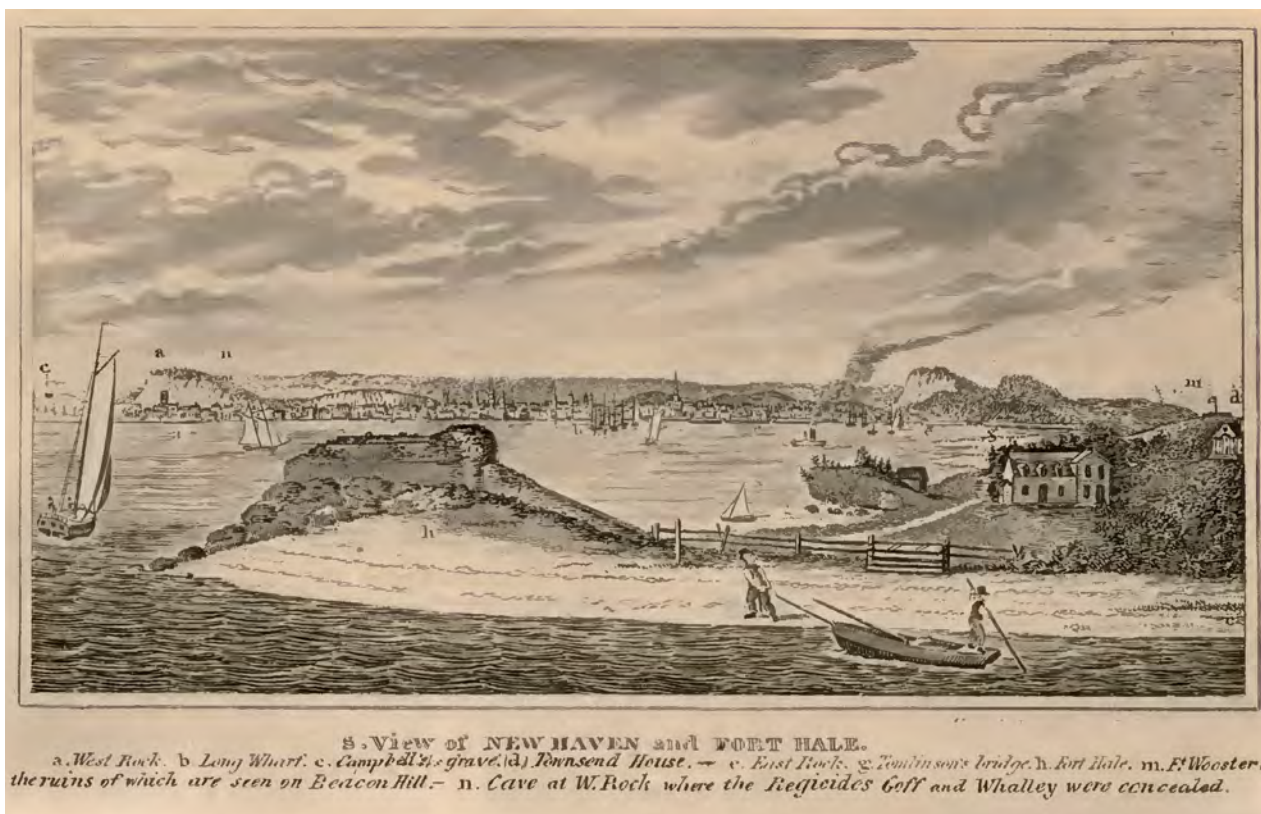
- No. 1, N. E. arm, 1 Ship to Eastward.
- No. 2, N. E. arm, 2 Ships to Eastward.
- No. 3, N. E. arm, 3 Ships to Eastward.
- No. 1 & 3, N. E. arm, 4 Ships to Eastward.
- No. 1, N. E. arm, Halfmast, Fleet to Eastward.
- No. 5, Topmast Head, Brig to Eastward.
- No. 5 & 6, Topmast Head, 2 Brigs to Eastward.
- No. 6, Half Topmast, 1 Schooner to Eastward.
- No. 5 & 6, Half Topmast, 2 Schooners to Eastward.
- No. 4, N. E. arm, Halfmast, 1 or more Sloops to Eastward.
- No. 3, N. E. arm, Halfmast, Barges to Eastward.
- No. 1, S. W. arm, 1 Ship to Westward.
- No. 2, S. W. arm, 3 Ships to Westward.
- No. 3, S. W. arm, 3 Ships to Westward.
- No. 1 & 3, S. W. arm, 4 Ships to Westward.
- No. 1, S. W. arm, Halfmast, Fleet to Westward.
- No. 7, Topmast Head, Brig to Westward.
- No. 7 & 8, Topmast Head, 3 Brigs to Westward.
- No. 8, Half Topmast, 1 Schooner to Westward.
- No. 1 & 5, Half Topmast, 2 Schooners to Westward.
- No. 4, S. W. arm, Halfmast, Sloop to Westward.
- No. 2, S. W. arm, Halfmast, Barges to Westward.

Townshend (1900a: 18) also notes that there was a signal master's watch house in the fort.

On the shore of New Haven Harbor, Black Rock Fort (later renamed Fort Nathan Hale) was built in 1776 as another element in the city's defense against attack from the sea.

Several years passed before the beacon atop Signal Hill was put to use. In the summer of 1779, as the country prepared to celebrate its third birthday, the war for independence from Britain continued. Observers were positioned at intervals along the coast to keep watch for any British approach from the sea. On the evening of July 4, from his position on the west side of New Haven Harbor, colonist Thomas Painter spied an approaching British ship. It turned out to be the flagship *Camille*, sailing in the company of three other vessels under command of Commodore Sir George Collier. The Signal Hill beacon was ignited, along with beacons on East Rock and West Rock, the two highest points in the New Haven area.

The British landed troops on both sides of the harbor the following morning. At 5 o'clock, General Garth's First Division, comprising 1,500 men and four field pieces, landed at Savin Rock in West Haven. Five hours later, General Tryon's Second Division of 1,500 men and two cannon



View of New Haven and Fort Hale circa 1879 (Source: Townshend [1879], *British Invasion of New Haven*)

landed at Lighthouse Point in East Haven. Both divisions rapidly moved inland circling the harbor toward New Haven. Garth's troops moved north meeting resistance from the Americans along the way. The crossing at West Bridge was blocked by American guns, so they continued north to Derby Bridge before turning east toward New Haven.

Tryon's forces met with patriot cannon fire as they tried to land on the beach at Morris Cove and changed landing sites to avoid fire from the three guns at Black Rock Fort. A small group of patriots held the fort until their ammunition ran out, then spiked and dismantled the guns and attempted to retreat northward to Beacon Hill. The 19 Patriot militiamen stationed at Black Rock were captured and taken as prisoners. Americans streaming into battle resisted Tryon's troops and inflicted significant casualties from their positions in the bushes and hedges along the road leading to Beacon Hill.

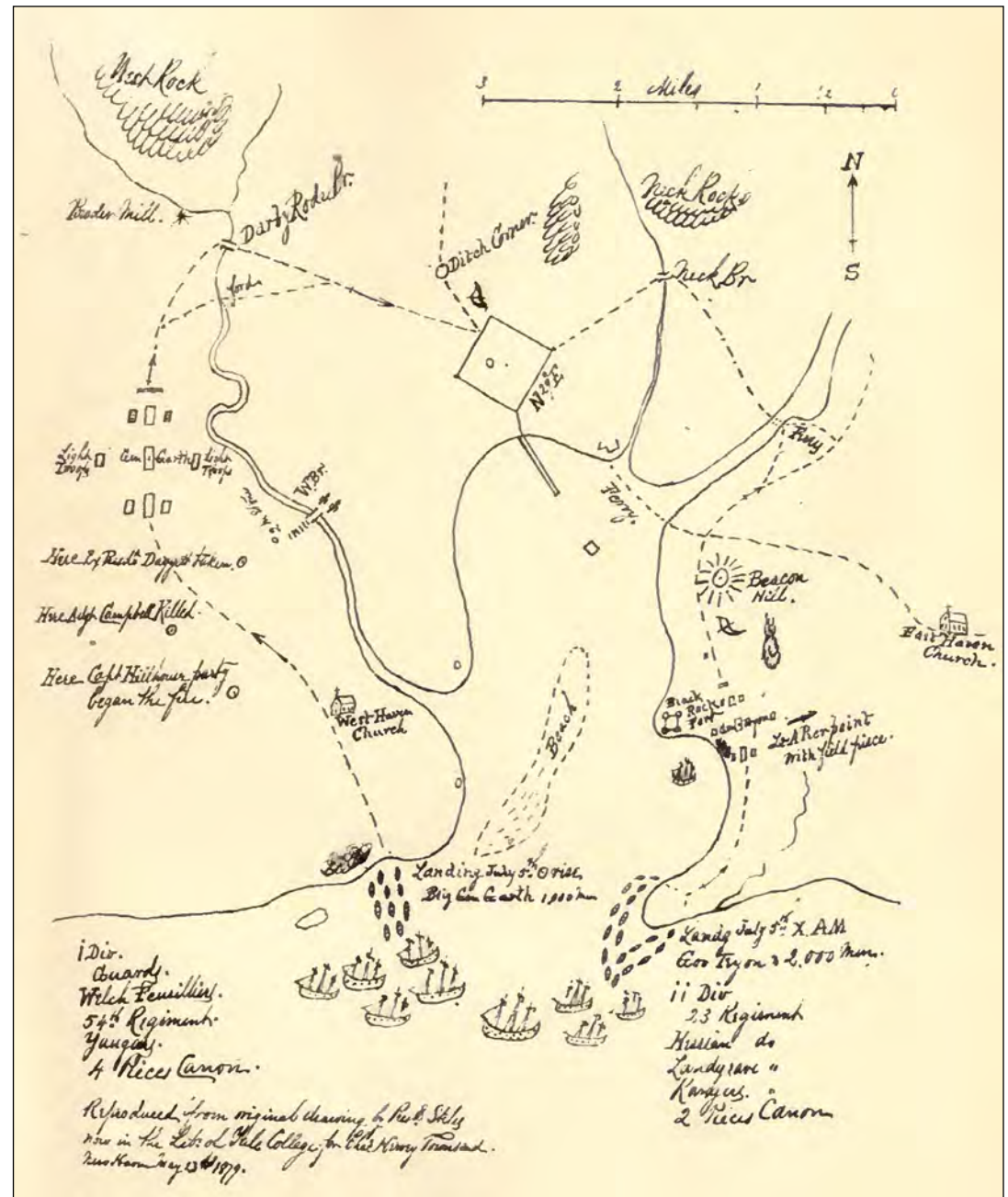


The British eventually overwhelmed the earthworks on Beacon Hill, but not without losing numerous soldiers to American gunfire from their entrenched positions on the hill (Townshend 1879).

Commodore Sir George Collier detailed a squadron of light draft vessels from the fleet anchored offshore to support Tryon's troops in East Haven. At high tide that afternoon they sailed into the harbor and took positions along the shoreline with their guns ready to fire on the town should the order be given. The order never came.

Upon the capture of Beacon Hill, General Tryon crossed over the lower ferry to the town of New Haven, where he met with Sir George Collier, General Garth, and other officers of the expedition. Along the way, Tryon's troops, drunk on rum stolen from local shops and inns, burned homes and businesses and killed a number of citizens (Hughes 1908:252).

The British had experienced heavy losses at the hands of the Patriots, who were better armed and put up a more stubborn resistance than expected. The British commanders learned that Patriot reinforcements were streaming into the area, strengthening American positions in the high ground north of the city and decided it was unsafe to go far inland to forage. By this time, the tide had receded and the ships in the harbor were lying on the bottom, unable to move. The tired and drunken soldiers were collected on the Green or Market Place for the night. With the flood tide later that evening and morning, the British troops were reloaded on the ships; the last ship in the fleet sailed from the harbor in the afternoon of July 6.



Reproduction of an original drawing by Ezra Stiles showing the British attack on New Haven in 1779. Beacon Hill, later the site of Fort Wooster, is located in the center right (Source: Townshend [1879], *British Invasion of New Haven*)

The raid on New Haven was over in little more than a day, leaving 23 people dead and 15 wounded, many homes and buildings burned, and a great deal of personal wealth plundered from Patriots and Loyalists alike. The British fleet went on to attack Fairfield and Green's Farm on July 8 and Norwalk on July 12. The British destruction was extensive. Townshend (1879) estimated that the British burned a total of 240 dwellings, 158 barns, 36 stores, 40 shops, 12 vessels, and 4 mills, including seven places of public worship. News of the British treatment of colonists in coastal Connecticut spread through the colonies, helping to stiffen support for the revolutionary cause. The raid also failed to accomplish its primary goal of drawing Major General George Washington's Continental Army out of its well-defended positions in New Jersey and at West Point.

## ❧ Signal Hill and Fort Nathan Hale in the War of 1812 ❧

For 30 years after the end of the Revolutionary War, Signal Hill played little role in the history of New Haven. Similarly, Black Rock Fort lay abandoned following the burning of the barracks there by British troops. With the revival of tensions between Britain and the United States in the early nineteenth century, however, the fort was reconstructed as Fort Nathan Hale in 1807, the same year the U.S. Congress passed an embargo forbidding American sailing vessels to depart for foreign ports. The embargo was in retaliation for French and British laws that prohibited neutral parties from trading with the opposing power. Not surprisingly, the New England states generally were opposed to the American embargo: Britain and France were their major trading partners. Nevertheless, with rising frustrations in Congress over seizures of American ships and



Fort Wooster Park at the turn of the twentieth century (Source: Townshend [1900a], *A Pictorial History of Raynham and its Vicinity*)



A statue of Nathan Hale, Connecticut's official state hero, stands watch over the fort that bears his name (Photo: David Pelland, CTMonuments.net)

sailors, the United States declared war on England in 1812. The next year the British retaliated by blockading Long Island Sound, effectively eliminating ocean-born trade originating in Connecticut. Apprehension about a potential attack on New Haven escalated when two British ships were spotted in Long Island Sound in the fall of 1814. Out of concern that Fort Nathan Hale might not be sufficient to guard the harbor from attack, another fortification hastily was built on the higher elevation of Beacon Hill. That fortification consisted on a ridge of earth in the center of which was a semi-subterranean powder magazine constructed of brick. Signal Hill was then renamed Fort Wooster to honor the memory of Major General David Wooster, a Connecticut patriot who was killed in action at Ridgefield, Connecticut, in 1777.

## ✦ Fort Wooster After the War of 1812 ✦

Fort Wooster was abandoned as a military installation after the War of 1812, and there is no record of military activity there after 1815. In 1890 the New Haven Parks Commission purchased the site as a recreational spot for city residents and visitors. In those years tree cover on the site was relatively sparse, and the park afforded a panoramic view of New Haven, its harbor, and Long Island Sound. However, maintenance of the park declined in later decades, and by the turn of the current century it suffered from extensive overgrowth and ongoing deterioration of what little remained of the fortifications and magazine.

Rejuvenation of Fort Wooster Park began in 2012, when a small group of interested residents formed the Friends of Fort Wooster. With financial assistance and volunteer labor from the Masonic Lodges of New Haven and local citizens, the organization has revitalized the park by clearing and maintaining paths as well as installing passive recreational equipment. Their work continues today.

## Major General David Wooster

David Wooster was born in Stratford, Connecticut, in 1711. In 1735 he entered Yale College, from which he graduated three years later. He soon volunteered for the militia and in 1741 was named lieutenant of the coast guard, which at that time was charged with defending Connecticut against Spanish attack. Records do not indicate that Wooster saw action against the Spanish. In 1745, just before his 35th birthday, Wooster married Marie Clapp, the daughter of Yale University President Thomas Clapp. They had four children, one of whom, Charles Whiting Wooster, joined his father in service in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Prior to the outbreak of the Revolution, however, Wooster continued to serve the British in the colonial militia. During the French and Indian War (1754-63), he was promoted to colonel and commander of the 3rd Connecticut regiment. In 1758, Wooster's regiment, under the overall leadership of General James Abercrombie, was decisively defeated by the French at the Battle of Carillon (also known as the Battle of Ticonderoga) on the shores of Lake Champlain. British losses were high—some 2,000, vs. 400 on the French side. After the battle, the French substantially reduced the number of troops defending the fort, and the following year a much larger British force, including Wooster's 3rd Connecticut regiment, won control. The renamed Fort Ticonderoga saw military action for the final time in 1775, when it was captured from the British by American revolutionary militia.

Wooster also participated in the Siege of Fort St. John in 1775, and in December of that year was given command of all Continental Army forces in Quebec. His tenure in that role was brief, and he returned to Connecticut in 1776 to become commander of the entire provincial militia, serving as Connecticut's first major general. In April 1777, Wooster led Continental Army troops to confront General William Tryon, who later would co-lead the British assault on New Haven. During the course of the attack on Tryon's forces, Wooster was gravely injured by artillery fire. He was transported to a home in Danbury, and as he lay wounded there he reportedly said, "I am dying, but with a strong hope and persuasion that my country will gain her independence." (Douglass 1876:283). Wooster is buried in Danbury, Connecticut, at the Wooster Cemetery.



*Mezzotint of Major General David Wooster, 1785 (from the Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection at Brown University Library)*

## FRIENDS OF FORT WOOSTER

The Friends of Fort Wooster is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Elm City Parks Conservancy. Founded in 2012 by a group of neighbors and history lovers, the Friends of Fort Wooster are working to care for and promote the history of the fort after years of neglect. The group has enlisted the help of the Masonic Lodges of New Haven, DeMolay, Boy Scouts of America, Farnum Neighborhood House, the Mary Clapp Wooster Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Marine Cadets of America, students from Yale University and Southern Connecticut State University, and many other volunteers in cleaning up the park, maintaining trails, and studying its historic role in the protecting New Haven.

Visit the Friends of Fort Wooster's website at [www.fortwooster.com](http://www.fortwooster.com) or look for them on facebook for information about the fort and how you can help.



Friends of Fort Wooster assist in preserving and protecting the fort (Courtesy of Friends of Fort Wooster)



Volunteers from the Friends of Fort Wooster give walking tours of the site (photo by the Friends of Fort Wooster)



Photo of volunteer in the entrance of Fort Wooster's powder magazine (photo by the Friends of Fort Wooster)

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## State Archaeological Preserves

The Connecticut Legislature established the State Archaeological Preserve program in 2000 as a way to protect significant archaeological sites. Sites that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and/or the State Register of Historic Places qualify for designation as a Preserve, whether private or public property. The National Register is the official Federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture worthy of preservation. Similarly, the State Register of Historic Places is a census of historic and archaeological resources that are integral to the development of Connecticut's distinctive character.

The State Historic Preservation Office, in the Department of Economic and Community Development, is empowered to designate archaeological sites as Preserves (C.G.S. Section 10-384). SHPO, in coordination with the Office of State Archaeology and, when appropriate, the Native American Heritage Advisory Council, works with property owners to nominate significant archaeological sites as Archaeological Preserves. SHPO also maintains the master list of Archaeological Preserves.

Preserves recognize the educational and cultural value, as well as the fragile nature, of archaeological resources. Many of Connecticut's Preserves are on private land and fall under the protection of property owner rights. Connecticut law provides that, regardless of whether a Preserve is on private or public land, no person shall "excavate, damage, or otherwise alter or deface the archaeological integrity or sacred importance of a preserve. Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-390 provides significant penalties for vandalism and the unlawful collecting of archaeological remains from State Archaeological Preserves.

### Connecticut's Archaeological Preserves as of January 2019

1. Putnam Memorial State Park, Redding and Bethel (1/01)
2. Axle Shop-Spring Factory Archaeological Site, Hamden (2/01)
3. Kent Iron Furnace, Kent (3/01)
4. Newgate Prison and Copper Mine, East Granby (4/01)
5. Fifth Camp of Rochambeau's Infantry, Bolton (6/01)
6. Fort Wooster Park, New Haven (7/01)
7. Fourth Camp of Rochambeau's Army, Windham (12/01)
8. Small Pox Hospital Rock, Farmington (9/02)
9. New London Engine House & Turntable, New London (4/03)
10. Quinebaug River Prehistoric Archaeological District, Canterbury (5/03)
11. Aunt Polly, East Haddam (5/03)
12. Cornfield Point Light Ship LV51, Old Saybrook (5/03)
13. Bridgeport Wood Finishing Company, New Milford (5/03)
14. John Brown Birthplace, Torrington (8/03)
15. Air Line Railroad, Colchester and East Hampton (12/03)
16. Governor Samuel Huntington Homestead, Scotland (2/04)
17. Cady-Copp House Archaeological Site, Putnam (5/05)
18. World War II "Hellcat" Sites, Preston (11/05)
19. Henry Whitfield State Museum, Guilford (4/06)
20. Dividend Brook Industrial Archaeological District, Rocky Hill (4/06)
21. Fort Griswold State Park, Groton (10/06)
22. Ebenezer Story Homestead & Tavern, Preston (10/06)
23. Fort Stamford, Stamford (10/06)
24. New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society Synagogue and Creamery Archaeological Site, Chesterfield (Montville) (9/07)
25. Prudence Crandall House Museum, Canterbury (8/08)
26. LeBeau Fishing Camp & Weir Site, Killingly (8/08)
27. Lighthouse Site, Barkhamsted (12/08)
28. CCC Camp Filley, Haddam (12/08)
29. Pine Island Archaeological Site, Groton (02/09)
30. Ash Creek Corduroy Road, Fairfield (3/09)
31. West Parish Meeting House, Westport (2/10)
32. Middle Encampment, Redding (08/13)
33. Charcoal Mound, Barkhamsted (3/15)
34. Walt Landgraf Soapstone Quarry, Barkhamsted (4/15)
35. Gail Borden Condensed Milk Factory Site, Torrington (5/15)
36. Midway Railroad Roundhouse Archaeological Complex, Groton (6/15)
37. Nike Missile Site - HA-36, Portland (8/15)

Engagement between British Forces and Patriots at New Haven, July 5, 1779 (Source: Townshend [1900a], *A Pictorial History of Raynham and its Vicinity*)



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