

ELMER BITGOOD (c.1870-1938)

VOLUNTOWN, CT

Elmer Bitgood has been called the “Paul Bunyan of New England” and “the local Sampson.” He was by all accounts an extraordinarily large and strong person. Paul Bitgood, one of his brothers, was a practitioner of natural healing in New London and recorded the size and habits of his sibling. In adulthood, Elmer weighed 340 pounds and stood five feet nine inches tall. He lived a simple life working on the family farm; he consumed no other drinks except milk and water, never married and was a strong and faithful Baptist. Elmer was good natured, gentle, quiet but quick to laugh. He was much loved by those in his community.

Legends of Elmer abound and seem to grow exponentially as each is repeated. However, there are a number of legitimate articles that appeared in contemporary publications that included interviews with his family and acquaintances, justifying Elmer’s amazing notoriety.

An article in the *Providence Sunday Journal* in 1916 recorded Bitgood’s feats of strength, including “lifting a 180-pound keg with both hands over the head, lifting 175 pounds of good solid Connecticut rock with one hand straight up above the head and . . . raising a dumbbell weighing 416 pounds with both hands over the head.” Elmer himself explained to the reporter how he backlifted

huge weights, adding rocks to a platform in his backyard “until the weight is 4,200 pounds. How often do I lift that? O, sometimes three or four times a day and sometimes not for a week. It all depends; if I need exercise I try it and if visitors come along and won’t believe I can do it. I just show them.” Elmer had a pet red Devon calf that he would hold on his lap and carry around on his shoulders, even when the beast was full grown.

Elmer’s uncle, Dr. Ellsworth Marshall Bitgood, a veterinarian, recounted to another Providence reporter in 1946, “how when Elmer was thirsty he would place one hand on each end of a keg of cider and drink the contents.”

Elmer lived his whole life in Voluntown, but his death is a bit of a mystery. There is no death certificate recorded in the town hall. The Robbins Cemetery holds the remains of many generations of the Bitgood family, but no marker has been found for Elmer.

American Heritage. “Bitgood Power.” http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/1978/2/1978_2_108.shtml (accessed March 27, 2008).

Fair, John D. “The Search for Elmer Bitgood: The Paul Bunyan of New England.” *Journal of Physical Culture* (October, 1998): 5-17.
Erwin Goldstein



Soldiers, Statesmen & Spies ★

THOMAS L. TAYLOR (1848-1932)

PUTNAM, CT ★ SITE 8

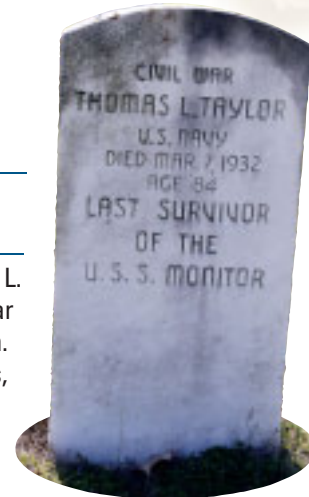
Grove Street Cemetery, Rte. 12, Putnam, CT.

Although his specific duties are not known, Thomas L. Taylor, an African-American, served in the Civil War on the *U.S.S. Monitor* at the tender age of fourteen. He participated in the notorious battle of the ironclads, the *Monitor* vs. the *Merrimac*. The battle is more correctly called the Battle of Hampton Roads and it was the first fight between two armored vessels. One was the Union’s *Monitor* and the other was the *C.S.S. Virginia*, built from the salvaged hull of the *U.S.S. Merrimac*.

The battle took place on March 8 and 9, 1862, near Sewell’s Point not far from Hampton Roads, VA. During the first day of fighting, the “*Merrimac*” pummeled the wooden Union fleet. The *Monitor* arrived the following day and a duel began between the ironclad ships. The encounter was a draw but garnered worldwide publicity.

When Taylor died at the age of 84, he was the last survivor of the great battle. His grave in the Grove Street Cemetery in Putnam, CT, is marked by a simple rectangular marble stone.

Connecticut Freedom Trail

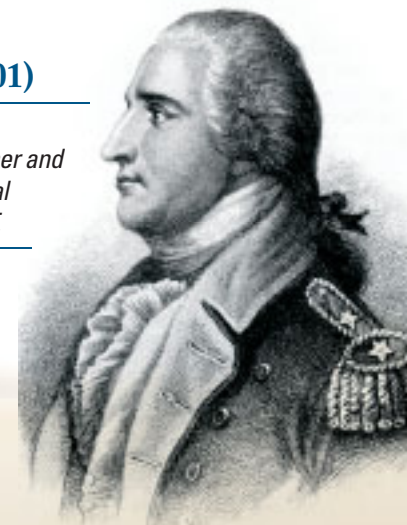


BENEDICT ARNOLD (1741-1801)

NORWICH, CT ★ SITE 9

His birthplace is in private ownership but his mother and siblings are interred in the Old Norwichtown Burial Ground, between Town and Elm Sts., Norwich, CT.

Benedict Arnold – famous or infamous? The Arnolds were an affluent family in Norwich that suffered a reversal of fortunes precipitating Benedict’s removal from school before graduation. His passion to regain financial security and position coupled with

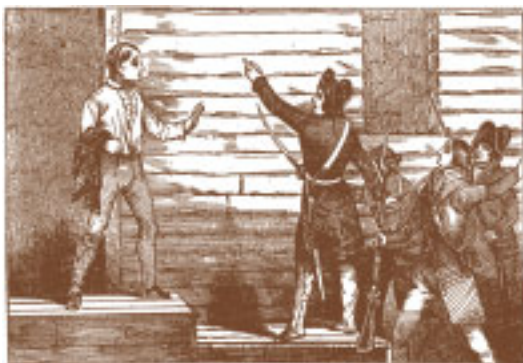


an abundance of energy and propensity for finding trouble eventually led him to commit an act of treason.

Benedict's cousins, Daniel and Joshua Lathrop, apprenticed him to their apothecary and Benedict worked with them for several years, punctuated by brief military stints in the French and Indian War.

Arnold established his own apothecary and bookshop in New Haven, and a lucrative partnership trading in the West Indies. But he was also rumored to be associated with smuggling.

When the Revolution broke out, Arnold eagerly sought combat. He was commissioned a colonel and took his company to capture Fort Ticonderoga. Arnold had an uneasy alliance with Ethan Allen, who commanded the Green Mountain Boys, but the campaign was successful and the fort was taken in a surprise attack. Benedict took part in many of the major battles of the Revolutionary War – Saratoga, Ticonderoga, Montreal, Quebec and West Point. He had a brilliant military mind and was most courageous. But his military prowess was always subject to his ultimate aim to regain family position.



Arnold insisted on his point of view, and often argued so adamantly with peers and commanding officers that he risked censure. His constant disagreements brought him public admonishments and legal problems. Arnold was plagued by envy and outrage over the promotions of younger men over his head. He continued to fight for independence but was overlooked, reprimanded and demoted after a succession of disagreements with his superiors and Congress. It is speculated that his anger and his feelings of justifiable indignation resulted in a mind set that led to treason.

Arnold began to negotiate for a place in the British army. He was reportedly offered £10,000 and a commission if he secured West Point as his contribution to the new partnership. Arnold did defect and was given money and lands in Canada and pensions for himself and his family. Neither side trusted him after his treasonous act. Arnold moved to London but could find no work. He tried to establish a shipping concern in Canada but had trouble getting business. He returned to London where he died in 1801, a failure.

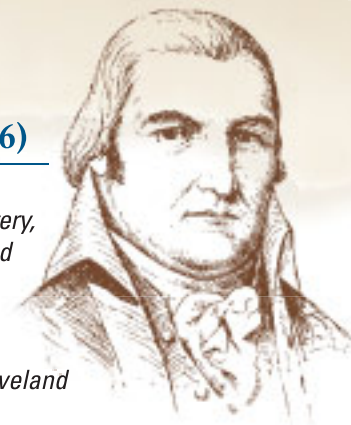
The American Revolution. "Benedict Arnold." <http://www.theamericanrevolution.org/people/barnold.asp> (accessed March 5, 2008).
Oat, David. "A Walking tour of Old Norwich Burial Ground.", Norwich Office of Tourism, 1997.
U.S. History, Historic Valley Forge. "Who Served Here? Benedict Arnold." <http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/served/arnold/.html> (accessed December 14, 2007).

MOSES CLEAVELAND (1754-1806)

CANTERBURY, CT ★ SITES 10 & 11

Site 10: Cleaveland is buried in the Cleaveland Cemetery, west side of Rte. 169, Canterbury, CT. Although he died in 1806, the citizens of Cleveland, Ohio, erected a monument on his grave in 1906 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his death.

Site 11: A sign marks the birthplace of Moses Cleaveland on the east side of Rte. 169 in Canterbury, CT.



Moses Cleaveland was an intelligent and industrious person who made notable achievements as a soldier, lawyer, public servant and surveyor. He was born in Canterbury on January 29, 1754, studied law at Yale and graduated in 1777 during the American Revolution. Cleaveland joined the 2nd Connecticut Regiment and became the captain of the Army Corps of Engineers, a newly-formed support unit.

When he left military service in 1781, Cleaveland returned to Canterbury to practice law. He married Esther Champion in 1794 and they had four children. Moses served in the Connecticut General Assembly and was a brigadier general of the militia.

It was Moses' experiences as a surveyor and investor that led to his fame. He was one of 36 founders, and one of the seven directors, of the Connecticut Land Company. Congress had "reserved" an area of land for the state on the western frontier. The Connecticut Land Company purchased from Connecticut some of the area of present-day northeastern Ohio, known as the Western Reserve, for \$1.2 million. Cleaveland personally invested \$32,600 in the venture.

Moses Cleaveland was asked to head the expedition of 50 people to survey the land and conduct negotiations with the Native Americans. The Mohawk, Seneca and Iroquois were persuaded with goods and gifts of paltry value to allow Cleaveland's party to cross their land and travel along the shores of Lake Erie.

On July 22, 1796, Moses landed near the Cuyahoga River and noted a beautiful site between the river and the lake. He surveyed the area into lots for settlement and members of his party named the place "Cleaveland." Moses returned to Connecticut and never saw the place again.

Eventually the first "a" in the name was dropped; supposedly when the town's first newspaper was designed, the name was one letter too long to fit the masthead. The abbreviated spelling passed into common use.

The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History. "Cleaveland, Moses." <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=86> (accessed June 18, 2007).
Ohio History Central. "Moses Cleaveland." <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/entry.php?rec=86> (accessed June 18, 2007).



THOMAS KNOWLTON (1740-1776)

ASHFORD, CT ★ SITES 12 & 13

Site 12: Knowlton Memorial Hall, Rte. 44 in Ashford, CT, was built as a memorial to Thomas Knowlton.

Site 13: Norcross Webster Boy Scout Camp, Rte. 44, in Ashford, was the site of his farm.

Born with a military heritage, Thomas Knowlton began his illustrious service at the age of fifteen in the French and Indian War, participating in several dangerous forays behind enemy lines. In 1760, at the end of six campaigns, he was promoted to lieutenant. Knowlton then served in Israel Putnam's company in the Battle of Havana, Cuba, in 1762; he survived although nearly 80% of his comrades died in a shipwreck. Thomas returned home to Ashford three years later, settling to a peaceful life and marrying Anna Keyes. Together they raised a family of nine children. A popular and respected figure in his town, Knowlton was appointed selectman at the age of 33.



At the outbreak of the Revolution in April, 1775, militias mobilized throughout the Connecticut Colony to join in the Boston area conflicts. Knowlton volunteered and was chosen captain of the Ashford Company, part of the 200-man 5th Connecticut Regiment. In just two months, Knowlton was promoted to major by the Continental Congress for his bravery providing the rear guard at Breeds Hill. Within a few more months, he had led an incursion into Charlestown, destroying a house used by British officers, and, in the process, discovering important plans.

Washington acknowledged Knowlton's bravery and espionage talents by raising him to lieutenant colonel in August of 1776. Knowlton received orders to carry out a spying mission with a select group of men. They were the first American spies - Knowlton's Rangers; Nathan Hale was one of these chosen men. On September 16, 1776, the Rangers, disguised as light infantry, scouted a position in advance of Washington's army at Harlem Heights, NY, and discovered the presence of the Black Watch and a Hessian unit. The Rangers fell back, supported by Major Leitch's unit from Virginia. Knowledge of the enemy positions allowed Washington to reconfigure his lines but Knowlton was fatally wounded in the battle and died shortly after.

In 1995, the Knowlton Award was established by the Military Intelligence Corp Association to recognize individuals who have provided significantly to the promotion of Army Intelligence.

The Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. "Lt. Col. Thomas Knowlton, Connecticut's Forgotten Hero." http://www.connecticutsar.org/articles/scarlet_no.3.htm (accessed November 12, 2007).

Rose, Alexander. Washington's Spies: The Story of America's First Spy Ring. New York: Random House, 2006.

CAPTAIN CHAUNCEY PAUL (1798-1888)

UNION, CT ★ SITE 14

Union Historical Society, 583 Buckley Hwy. (Rte. 190), Union, CT.

Chauncey Paul lived all his life in Union. He was educated at the district school and learned about the law by attending local legal proceedings. His only legal experience was serving as a deputy sheriff.

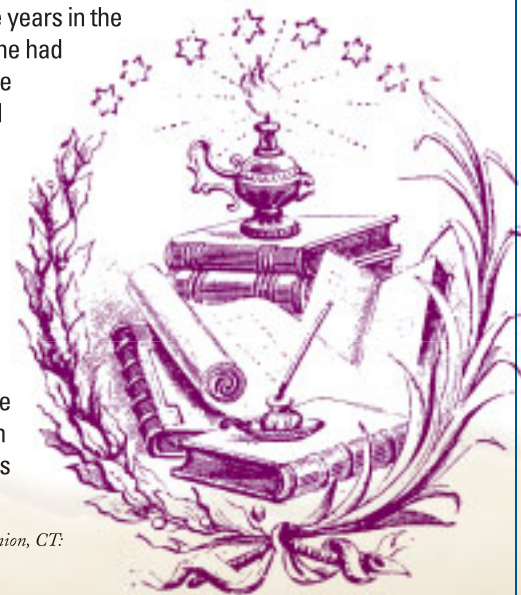
Captain Paul was a man of strong convictions and an outspoken nature. He had great personal faith but belonged to no church. He hated rum and slavery. Chauncey signed a temperance pledge after a drunk friend was thrown out of a tavern. He became a staunch advocate of temperance and, together with the local minister, held many neighborhood meetings to encourage others to sign a similar pledge.

He earned his title from serving as captain of the cavalry from Union and surrounding towns. It stayed with him for the rest of his life.

Chauncey held every important office in town. He was town clerk for three years, first selectman for one, and spent three years in the Connecticut General Assembly where he had a reputation for urging business to move quickly. In fact, he was nicknamed "Old Previous Question" for the number of times he moved the previous question.

Chauncey joined the Republican party when it was formed in 1854. He advised the poor and advocated for widows and soldiers to help them receive their pensions. Captain Paul was a director of the Tolland County Mutual Fire Insurance Company for 50 years. He was a man who lived a simple life and helped his neighbors improve theirs.

Hammond, Charles. History of Union, Connecticut. Union, CT: Price, Lee & Adkins, 1893.



WILLIAM EATON (1764-1811)

BRIMFIELD, MA ★ SITES 15 & 16

Site 15: A modest gravestone marks Eaton's resting place in the Brimfield Cemetery, Rte. 19, Brimfield, MA.

Site 16: Although his estate was destroyed by fire in the early 20th century, the Brimfield Library, Rte. 20, Brimfield, MA, has photographs of Eaton's home.



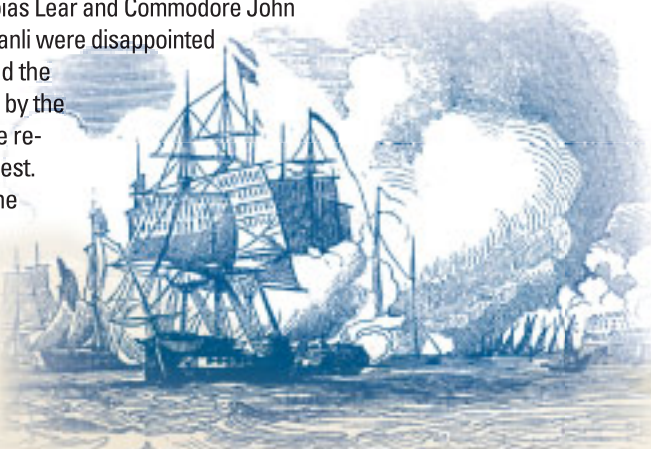
William Eaton was notably involved in one of the first U.S. military actions in the Muslim world, and, in fact, the first recorded land battle on foreign soil. He was born in Woodstock, CT, and later transplanted to Brimfield, MA. Enlisting during the Revolution, he spent three years as a young officer before returning to school. Eaton graduated from Dartmouth College in 1790 where he studied Arabic. Two years later he returned to the military, accepting a captain's commission in the army which he held until 1797.

On July 11, 1797, William Eaton was appointed U. S. Consul at Tunis. He developed expertise in dealing with the delicate politics of the region and became Navy Agent for the Barbary Regencies in 1804.

Eaton was authorized by the U.S. Government to create an alliance with deposed Tripoli leader Hamet Karamanli and return him to the throne by waging war against the coastal nation, a part of the Ottoman Empire. Karamanli had been ousted by his brother, Yussif. Eaton and Karamanli gathered a mercenary force of Christians and Muslims to combine with a small detachment of U.S. Marines. They commenced a 500-mile march to Derne, the capital of the province of Cyrenaica. The trip was punctuated with numerous disputes among the culturally mixed force. The attack on Derne commenced on April 27, 1805, with land forces supported by the naval warships *Argus*, *Nautilus*, and *Hornet*. The attack was the inspiration for the Marine's Hymn; "from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli..." The successful campaign against Derne and the threat to all of Tripoli influenced a peaceful end to the conflict. A treaty with the Pasha of Tripoli was negotiated by Tobias Lear and Commodore John Rodgers, but Eaton and Karamanli were disappointed with the diplomatic solution and the mercenary army was angered by the end to the attack on Tripoli. The resulting peace was uneasy at best. Cultural clashes would mark the region for centuries.

Eaton died in Brimfield, MA, on the first of June, 1811.

*Larry Lowenthal
London, Joshua E. Victory in Tripoli.
Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley &
Sons, Inc., 2005.*

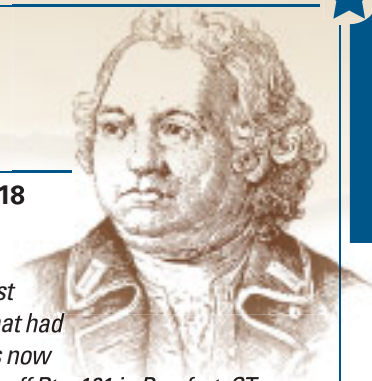


ISRAEL PUTNAM (1718-1790)

BROOKLYN AND POMFRET, CT ★ SITES 17 & 18

Site 17: Putnam is buried beneath a large monument in the center of historic Brooklyn, CT, on Rte. 169.

Site 18: Folk tradition recounts that Israel cornered the last wolf in Windham County in her den and slew the beast that had been wreaking destruction on area herds. The location is now Wolf Den Park, a unit of Mashamoquet Brook State Park, off Rte. 101 in Pomfret, CT.



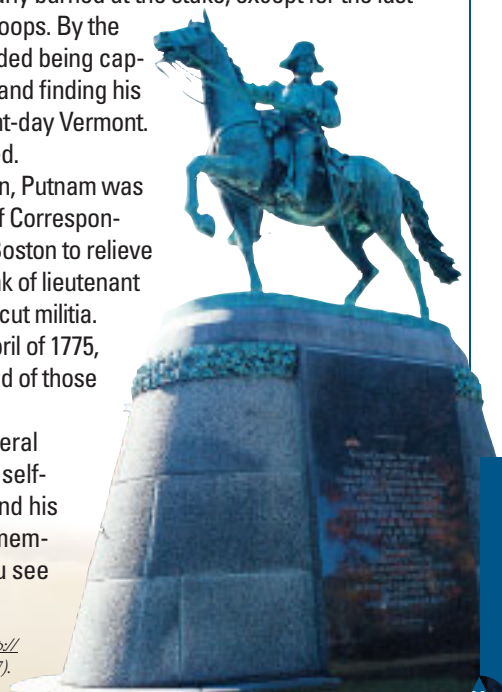
In the center of Brooklyn is an imposing monument to Revolutionary War hero and adventurer Israel Putnam. He was born in Salem Village in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Shortly after his marriage to Hannah Pope, they moved to Pomfret (now part of Brooklyn), where the couple raised their ten children. Putnam, while not well educated, was a prosperous farmer, for, in the mid-18th century, the greatest wealth was concentrated in the farming communities.

Putnam's great adventures began in the French and Indian War when he served as a second lieutenant with volunteers from Connecticut, participating in battles for Fort Ticonderoga and Montreal. He was dispatched on an expedition to Albany and served with Robert Roger's Rangers on numerous forays. Israel was one of only a few who survived a shipwreck during an expedition he commanded to capture Havana in 1762. Six years later, Putnam was promoted to major and during a campaign he was captured by the Caughwagas and was nearly burned at the stake, except for the last moment rescue by General Marin and his troops. By the end of the war, his notable escapades included being captured and imprisoned in Quebec, escaping, and finding his way home through the wilderness of present-day Vermont. Putnam's knack for survival was unparalleled.

After resuming farming back in Brooklyn, Putnam was elected chairman of the town's Committee of Correspondence in 1774. He drove a herd of sheep to Boston to relieve its beleaguered residents. He rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel of the 11th Regiment of the Connecticut militia. Upon hearing the news from Lexington in April of 1775, he rallied the militia and charged off to the aid of those fighting in the Boston conflict.

Putnam had several clashes with General Washington. History records that his great self-confidence combined with a position beyond his abilities created a poor strategist. He is remembered for the battle cry, "Don't shoot 'til you see the whites of their eyes!"

Travel & History: "Wars and Battles, Israel Putnam, 1718-1790." <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1294.html> (accessed October 10, 2007).



NATHAN HALE (1755-1776)

COVENTRY, CT ★ SITES 19 & 20

Site 19: Nathan Hale Homestead, South St., Coventry, CT.

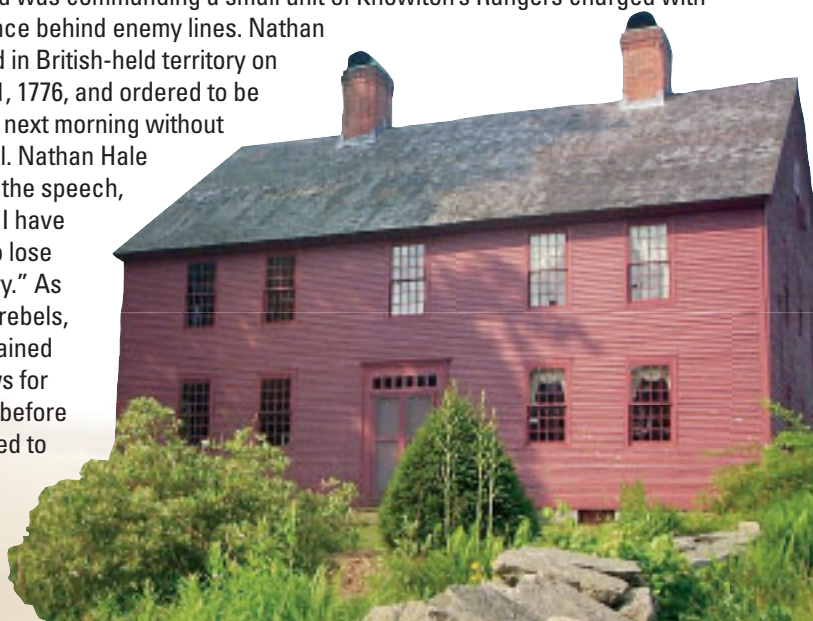
Site 20: Nathan Hale Monument marks his burial site in the Nathan Hale Cemetery, off Lake St. from Rte. 31, Coventry, CT.

Nathan Hale is famous for his patriotism and untimely death. He was hung as a spy by the British after being apprehended behind enemy lines during the Battle of Long Island.

Nathan was born in Coventry, CT, in 1755. His father, Richard Hale, was a prosperous farmer, patriot and deacon. Nathan was the sixth of twelve children; he and his brother, Enoch, were schooled by Rev. Dr. Joseph Huntington for entry into Yale University. While in New Haven, he was a member of the Yale literary fraternity, Linonia, where he debated subjects such as the ethics of slavery. Hale graduated with honors and became a teacher; his first post was in East Haddam, later in New London. He was popular with his students and controversial with their parents. Nathan believed in rewarding success and praising students who showed good effort, not a customary way to deal with children in the 18th century.

When the Revolutionary War began in 1775, young Hale joined the Connecticut militia as a first lieutenant. His unit was called to participate in the Siege of Boston, but Nathan stayed behind, joining the Continental Army's 7th Connecticut Regiment commanded by Colonel Charles Webb. By the next year, Hale had been promoted to captain and was commanding a small unit of Knowlton's Rangers charged with reconnaissance behind enemy lines. Nathan

was captured in British-held territory on September 21, 1776, and ordered to be executed the next morning without benefit of trial. Nathan Hale is famous for the speech, "I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." As a warning to rebels, his body remained on the gallows for several days before it was removed to an unmarked grave. He is considered the Father



of the Central Intelligence Agency and a great American hero. Nathan Hale was officially named the State Hero of Connecticut in 1985.

Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. "Captain Nathan Hale 1755-1776." http://www.connecticutsar.org/patriots/hale_nathan.htm. (accessed December 6, 2007).

NATHANIEL LYON (1818-1861)

EASTFORD, CT ★ SITE 21

Burial site is on General Lyon Rd., off Rte. 198, Eastford, CT.

Although born on a farm in Ashford (now Eastford), Nathaniel disliked agriculture. He was enthralled with his ancestors who had fought in the Revolution and wanted to step into those military shoes. He attended the United States Military Academy from 1837 to 1841 and graduated 11th in his class. Nathaniel's military service included action with the 2nd U.S. Infantry Regiment in the Seminole Wars and the Mexican-American War, although he was outspoken in his denouncement of the latter.

Lyon also served on the western frontier and participated in the Bloody Island Massacre of 1850 and in Kansas during the border wars known as "Bleeding Kansas."

He became a strong abolitionist and Lincoln Republican. Writing in January, 1861, he opined on the secession of southern states, "It is no longer useful to appeal to reason, but to the sword." Two months later, Lyon arrived in St. Louis with his command, Company D of the 2nd U.S. Infantry. The state of Missouri and its residents were neutral in the disagreement between the North and the South, but Governor Claiborne F. Jackson supported the South. There was a large arsenal of federal weapons in St. Louis and General Lyon was concerned that Governor Jackson would seize them for the Confederacy. In a secret maneuver to thwart Jackson's purpose, Lyon took control of the arsenal, armed members of the St. Louis Wide Awakes (pro-North organization) and moved the bulk of the weapons to Illinois. An elaborate interplay ensued involving espionage, riots, killings, pursuit of Governor Jackson and his pro-South Missouri State Guard, skirmishes and take over of the state government where Lyon installed pro-North leadership.

The final conflict for Lyon was the Battle of Wilson's Creek. He gallantly led his men in the first charge but was mortally wounded and died. He was the first general killed in the Civil War. Lyon is remembered for his quick thinking, and, at the same time, criticized for his role in the events that unfolded in Missouri. He was buried in his hometown of Eastford where 15,000 people attended his interment.

Nicholas Bellantoni

*National Park Service. "Wilson's Creek N.B.: Nathaniel Lyon." <http://www.nps.gov/archive/wicr/lyon.html> (accessed March 12, 2008).
Ulysses S. Grant Camp, No. 68. Historical Information. "General Nathaniel Lyon." <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/mol/county/stlouis/lyon.htm> (accessed March 12, 2008).*



URIAH TRACY (1755–1807)

FRANKLIN, CT

Distinctive contributions were made by politicians from The Last Green Valley. One such individual was Uriah Tracy, born in Franklin on February 2, 1755. Like most professional men of his day, Tracy was educated at Yale (class of 1778) and was admitted to the bar in 1781.

Uriah settled in Litchfield, CT, where he practiced law for many years and was a major general in the militia. He served as a member of the state legislature (1788-1793) and Speaker of the House in 1793. Tracy was appointed the State's attorney for Litchfield County in 1794 and acted in that capacity for five years.

Uriah Tracy was elected to the Congress of the United States in 1793 and served three years in the House of Representatives. He was then elected as a Federalist to replace Senator Jonathan Trumbull. Tracy spent eleven years in the Senate, serving as President Pro Tempore in the 6th Congress.

But in the annals of history these are not his great claim to fame. Uriah Tracy died on July 19, 1807, in Washington, D.C. at the age of 52. He was the first member of Congress to be buried in the newly-designated Congressional Cemetery. In fact, Uriah was interred one week after the opening of the burying ground. He was not, however, the first person to be buried there. One other, a stone mason working on the Capitol, was laid to rest in the new site just days earlier.

The Congressional Cemetery is located in the southeastern section of Washington, D.C. with views of the Anacostia River. It was the sole burying ground for the United States Congress and other political notables until the Civil War when Arlington National Cemetery was created. It is the final resting place for two vice presidents, 68 congressmen, and sixteen senators, Uriah included.

Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress. "Tracy, Uriah, (1755-1807)." <http://www.bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=T000348>

*(accessed March 12, 2008).
The United States Senate.*

"July 19, 1807, First Senator Buried in Congressional Cemetery." http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/First_Senator_Buried_in_Congressional_Cemetery (accessed March 12, 2008).



JONATHAN TRUMBULL, SR. (1710-1785)

LEBANON, CT ★ SITES 22 & 23

Site 22: War Office and Governor Jonathan Trumbull House, on the Green at the junctions of Rtes. 87 and 207, Lebanon, CT.

Site 23: Gov. Jonathan Trumbull Memorial, Old Trumbull Burying Ground, Rte. 207, Lebanon, CT.

Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., was the only colonial governor to support the Revolution. After graduating from Harvard in 1727, Trumbull operated a successful retail and wholesale enterprise at his store on the Lebanon Green; he imported goods from Europe; he was an exporter of meats and had the largest meat packing operation in the colony. Trumbull earned a reputation for his merchant's acumen and logic. He was elected to the General Assembly where his abilities continued to be recognized, quickly ascending to prominence. Jonathan Trumbull began to voice his disagreement with England in the early 1760s, opposing taxes and other policies. In 1766, he became deputy governor and governor three years later. Trumbull remained in that office throughout the Revolution until 1784.

Jonathan Trumbull supported the Revolution even in its darkest hours. He established an important supply line to provision the Continental Army and was a close friend and ally of George Washington. His store became known as The War Office, the headquarters that hosted more than 500 meetings of the Council of Safety in which Connecticut's defense was strategized. The Governor not only provisioned Washington's army through the bleak days at Valley Forge, but the French Army, as well. He supplied privateers who interfered with English shipping by capturing hundreds of enemy ships. At the same time Trumbull commanded Connecticut's militia and navy. Because of his efforts, Connecticut became known as "the provision state."

Wayland, Alicia. [Around the Lebanon Green](#). Lebanon, CT: Town of Lebanon, 1999.

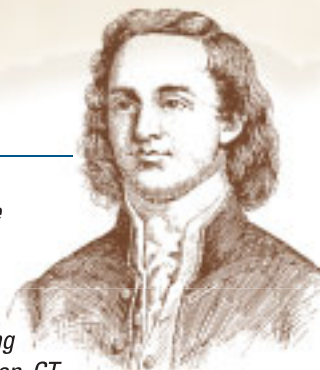


WILLIAM WILLIAMS (1731-1811)

LEBANON, CT ★ SITES 24 & 25

Site 24: The Welles House (Williams birthplace) and the William Williams House (National Historic Landmark), both on the Lebanon Green at the junctions of Rtes. 87 and 207, Lebanon, CT. Privately owned.

Site 25: William Williams is buried in the Old Trumbull Burying Ground, next to Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., Rte. 207, Lebanon, CT.



Another Harvard graduate, William Williams extended his studies with his father and planned on continuing the family tradition of becoming a minister. His career was sidetracked as he joined the military and served in the French and Indian War, including an expedition to Lake George. However, his great interest was politics, beginning with his election as town clerk at the age of 21. Later he decided to become a merchant. During the French and Indian War, he went to Crown Point on behalf of Trumbull and Company, a military supplier.

He was an ardent supporter of independence and a member of the Council of Safety, serving as its clerk. Williams married Mary Trumbull, daughter of Governor Jonathan Trumbull, Sr. Along with Samuel Huntington, Williams was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and served briefly in the Continental Congress. Noted for fiery orations in support of the cause for independence, Williams toured Connecticut to enlist recruits in the Continental Army and rally resources for the Revolution. He was involved in sending supplies to Washington, including donating his personal stores of meat to the relief of Valley Forge. His empathy extended to soldiers passing his home and he often helped them with food and money.

Williams was dedicated to his town and state and worked on behalf of the public for decades: he was Lebanon's town clerk, selectman, judge and also served as a member of the General Assembly for more than 50 years.

Declaration of Independence. "William Williams." <http://www.thedeclarationofindependence.org/WilliamWilliams.com/> (accessed March 13, 2008).

Wayland, Alicia. [Around the Lebanon Green](#). Lebanon, CT: Town of Lebanon, 1999.

EBENEZER CRAFT (1740-1810)

STURBRIDGE, MA ★ SITE 26:

The Publick House, Rte. 20 on the Common, Sturbridge, MA.

Ebenezer Craft was a merchant, born in Pomfret, CT. He married Mehitable Chandler in 1762 and they had three children: two daughters named Lucretia Matilda and Augusta, and a son, Samuel Chandler Craft who would become the Governor of Vermont and a U.S. Senator.



In 1771, Craft built "The Elms," (now the Publick House) on the common in Sturbridge. The inn and tavern has served the public for 237 years. The common was also the location where Craft drilled the local militia.

When hostilities commenced in 1775, Ebenezer Craft commanded a company of cavalry and they rode to join the army at Cambridge. He remained in the military until the British troops evacuated Boston. Ten years later, Craft was the first colonel of a regiment of cavalry raised in Worcester County. In the winter of 1786-87, his regiment served under General Lincoln suppressing Shay's Rebellion.

Craft and his family moved to Vermont in 1791 where he helped establish the town of Minden, later renamed Craftsbury in his honor. He also established Leister Academy in Massachusetts, and another institution for learning on the common in Craftsbury, Vermont.

Robert Briere

CHRISTOPHER LEFFINGWELL (1734-1810)

NORWICH, CT ★ SITE 27

Leffingwell House Museum, 342 Washington St., Norwich, CT.

In the mid 18th century, Christopher Leffingwell had a successful business trading colonial goods with markets in the Caribbean and Europe. However, economic regulations and new taxes imposed by England on the Colonies spurred him to establish manufacturing facilities that would help replace costly imported goods with domestic products. Leffingwell began a pottery business,



Bean Hill Pottery, and a paper mill in 1766, harnessing the Yantic River for power. He later started Connecticut's first chocolate mill, a fulling mill (process in creating woolen fabric) and a stocking mill using knitting machines.

During the American Revolution, Norwich was an advantageous locale for privateers wishing to thwart English shipping and coastal installations. Leffingwell supported such privateers. As a colonel in Connecticut's militia, Christopher Leffingwell also raided English territory on Long Island and patrolled Connecticut's coastline against enemy raids.

Like Governor Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., Leffingwell was an important provisioner of the Continental Army, serving as a deputy commissioner. His paper mill produced paper for cartridges.

Leffingwell House Museum

SAMUEL HUNTINGTON (1731-1796)

NORWICH, SCOTLAND, CT ★ SITES 28 & 29

Site 28: Samuel Huntington Homestead, birthplace of Samuel Huntington, Rte. 14, Scotland, CT. National Register of Historic Places.

Site 29: Tomb in the Old Norwichtown Burial Grounds, between Town and Elm Sts., Norwich, CT.

Samuel Huntington was an important figure in the Revolutionary War period and in the early years of the United States of America. He was born in Scotland, CT, one of nine surviving children of a prosperous family. Huntington studied with the Rev. Devotion and became an attorney, but his place in history is secured by service to his beloved Connecticut and the young Republic.

His illustrious career began in 1760 when he moved to Norwich to practice law. Samuel was elected to the Connecticut Assembly in 1764, and appointed the King's Attorney for the Colony of Connecticut the next year.

Named to the Council of Safety in 1775, he was appointed a delegate to the Continental Congress. During the course of his service, he was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence from Connecticut. He was chosen by his peers as president of the Continental Congress in 1779, and again in 1780. As he left his term he wrote to George Washington on July 10, 1781, "I am now to take

leave of your Excellency with respect to my official correspondence but be assured, Sir, my warmest wishes still continue to attend you, that our military operations may be prospered and crowned with the most desirable event, a speedy and honorable peace. . . Whatever my future Situation in Life may be, I shall always love my country. In her Happiness and Prosperity will consist my own personally."

Huntington's successor as president of the Continental Congress was Thomas McKean who wrote on that same date, "I am immediately to succeed a President of so indefatigable an industry, so invincible a patience, so exemplary an integrity, and so staunch yet polite a republican, I confess I am almost discouraged."

It should be noted that Samuel Huntington was president of the Continental Congress on March 1, 1781, when the last state ratified the Articles of Confederation and our country became "The United States in Congress Assembled." In this sense, it can be claimed that Samuel was the first president of the United States.

After his tenure with the Congress, Samuel was elected lieutenant governor in 1784 and then governor of the new State of Connecticut in 1786, serving in that highest office for ten years until his death in 1796.

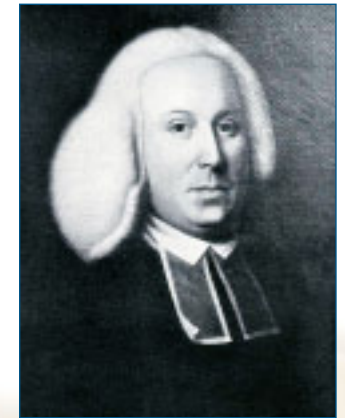
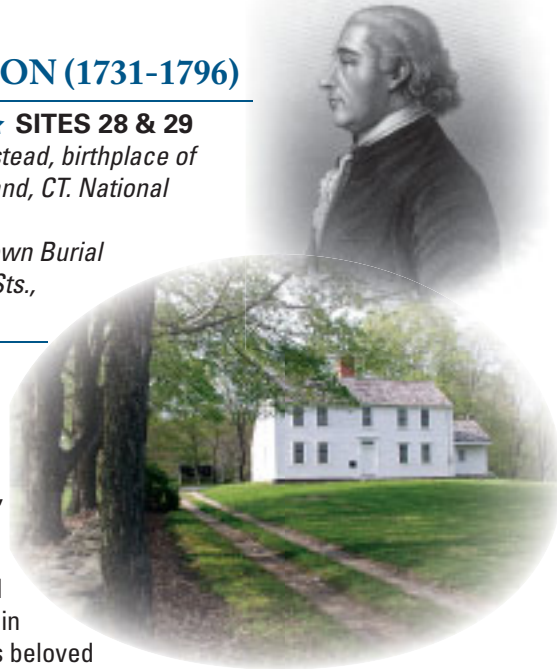
Governor Samuel Huntington Trust

ABIEL LEONARD (1740-1777)

WOODSTOCK, CT ★ SITE 30

First Congregational Church of Woodstock, Rte. 169, Woodstock, CT

Abiel Leonard was the son of the minister at the old Pilgrim Church of Plymouth, MA. After graduating from Harvard in 1759, he became the pastor of the First Church of Woodstock. He was an articulate speaker, popular with his congregation. When conflicts broke out early in the Revolutionary War, Leonard accompanied 140 men from Woodstock who joined the 3rd Connecticut Regiment under the command of General Israel Putnam. His term of service was six months. During that time, his sermons on special occasions to the troops were well received and he was noticed by George Washington.



After Leonard returned to Woodstock, Washington and Putnam wrote to the Woodstock congregation requesting that they allow their beloved pastor to once again minister to the needs of the army. "Mr. Leonard is a man whose exemplary life and conversation must make him highly esteemed by every person who has the pleasure of being acquainted with him... His usefulness in the army is great as he is employed in the glorious work of attending to the morals of a brave people who are fighting for their liberties, the liberties of the people of Woodstock, the liberties of all America. We therefore hope that, knowing how nobly he is employed, the congregation of Woodstock will cheerfully give up to the public a gentleman so useful."



The Woodstock congregation honored the special request and voted to permit Rev. Leonard to reenlist. He was assigned as chaplain to Colonel Knox and Colonel Durkee. Abiel conducted the burial service for fallen Major Thomas Knowlton after the Battle of Harlem Heights. His ministry to the army was appreciated so much that despite his discharge in December of 1776, the Woodstock congregation was once again asked to give their beloved pastor leave to rejoin the army. The parishioners notwithstanding, Rev. Leonard also left behind a family; he and his first wife Dorothy Huntington had one daughter; his second wife Mary Greene gave birth to five other children.

Over the years there have been several accounts of his suicide by a self-inflicted wound to the neck, after becoming depressed. However, recent scholarship has concluded that Abiel Leonard had become ill after being inoculated for small pox. It was a dreadful disease that took many soldiers. The inoculation process was risky; virulent discharge was gathered from a poxed patient, and then forced into an open cut on a healthy person. Sometimes other compounds were added to the inoculation. Many people became ill from the process and it appears that Leonard's death was the result of such an inoculation. He died on August 14, 1777.

Bowen, Clarence Winthrop. The History of Woodstock Connecticut. Norwood, MA: The Plimpton Press, 1926.
Wakely, Cheryl. "A Woodstock Clergyman in the Revolution: Documenting the Tragic Story of Abiel Leonard." Woodstock Historical Society (newsletter), March 2007.

SAMUEL MCCLELLAN (1730-1807)

WOODSTOCK, CT ★ SITES 31 & 32

Site 31: McClellan House, currently an antique shop, on the South Woodstock Common, Rtes. 171 and 169, Woodstock, CT.

Site 32: Woodstock Hill Cemetery, on the Common, Rte. 169, Woodstock, CT.

Samuel McClellan's family immigrated from Kirkcubright, Scotland, after participating in the First Jacobite Rebellion. Sam was born on a farm near Worcester and then settled in Woodstock, marrying Rachael Abbe from Windham Center.

McClellan raised horses from his farm in South Woodstock. In 1773, Samuel was made captain of a troop of horse, part of the 11th Connecticut Regiment. The company was dispatched to Boston after hearing the news of the Battle of Lexington.

To mark the departure of McClellan, Rachael had elm saplings brought by horseback back from her childhood home in Windham and planted them on the South Woodstock Common in April, 1775.

One hundred and forty Woodstock men under Samuel's command fought at Bunker Hill; 48 lost their life. He was promoted rapidly, becoming brigadier on June 10, 1779.

Samuel McClellan served on the Committee of Correspondence for the town. After the massacre at Fort Groton and the incursion on New London, he was made commander of the posts defending the mouth of the Thames River where he remained until the close of the war.

McClellan returned home to Woodstock, serving in the General Assembly. He died in 1807 and was buried in the cemetery on Woodstock Hill.

Bowen, Clarence Winthrop. The History of Woodstock Connecticut. Norwood, MA: The Plimpton Press, 1926.
Virtual Biographies. "Samuel McClellan." <http://famousamericans.net/samuelmcclellan> (accessed December 17, 2007).

