



General Gold Selleck Silliman & Mary Fish Silliman

Daniel Sillimandi was the first of his family to settle in Fairfield in the mid-1600s. He was originally from Italy, but where they settled in Fairfield became known as **Holland Hill**. Some say they picked the name Holland because Daniel left Europe on a ship from Holland!

The land where Daniel settled was handed down over generations and the Silliman family became very influential. After many generations, Gold Selleck Silliman (1732 – 1790) followed tradition. He studied law like his father, Ebenezer Silliman, graduating from Yale in 1752. He became a **king's attorney** for Fairfield County in 1768. This position is similar to a **district attorney** today, however Silliman probably was an advisor. His experience was mainly used when a matter before the court involved **royal** interests. In 1772 he became a **justice of the peace**, a position he held for the rest of his life. In 1754 he married Martha and they had one son. Unfortunately Martha became ill and died on August 1, 1774. They had 20 years of marriage.

Silliman and his father, a British **sympathizer**, did not agree on politics. As Gold Silliman became older, he joined the patriot cause. In May of 1774 Silliman began his military career and became the rank of major in the 4th Regiment of Militia for the patriots. A year later, he became a colonel. In December, 1776, Silliman became **Brigadier General of the 4th Brigade**. He was a very important member of the **militia**.

Silliman's second wife, Mary, was a **widow**, too. She was a very devout and religious person. Her father was a minister and she also married a minister, Reverend John Noyes, in 1759. Together they had four children. Reverend Noyes suffered from poor health and died of “consumption” in 1767. Mary became a widow and a single mother at the age of thirty one.



Mary remained a widow for many years. She was very concerned about the future of her children. If she remarried, their inheritance, mostly property, could be at risk. A new husband could legally take away her children's property. She was very careful about remarrying. She also held ideal expectations about marriage. At a time when many people did not marry for love, she wanted love and security. She wrote about her ideal husband below. Silliman married Mary Fish Noyes on May 24, 1775.

“May he love to see his table furnished with the good things”

“May his library be ever free for my ... improvement”

“Imperfections ... should be told to me in private with all that faithfulness that becomes a husband.”

Mary Fish Silliman was always reading or writing. She wrote many letters to her parents, sons, and husband, especially when he was away leading the militia. At the age of sixty-four, she also began writing her memories. She hoped that they would be “instructive and entertaining to my dear children.”

On the next page is a letter from Mary Silliman to her parents in Milford. Although an easy distance today, she could not visit her parents during the Revolutionary war, it was too dangerous. In the letter below, she describes receiving news by “express” or a rider, about the **Battle of Ridgefield in 1777**.

“intelligence came to my dear Partner [Gold Silliman] that a formidable Fleet [of British ships] were making this way ... He went up ... saw them near the shore against the place called Compo”



"the enemy had burnt not only the stores, but the town ... yesterday our People [the militia] had an engagement, headed by the Generals Silliman and [Benedict] Arnold ... though our people were vastly inferior they drove the enemy and some were killed on both sides ..."

"Rejoice and Bless God with me, my dear Parents and dear Child, for my dear Husband and dear Son live, and not a hair of their heads have been touched by any of the instruments of death they have been surrounded with, and we are all once more at our own house and well, while others are mourning over their dead."

On page 5 you will see a photograph of the Silliman house, called **The Orchard**, as it stands today. You may have driven by this house! It's located at 506 Jennings Road.

When you visit the Fairfield Museum, you will find out more about Silliman family, including the story of how General Silliman was kidnapped!

Vocabulary:

Ideal – A person or thing regarded as perfect

Imperfections – A fault, an undesirable feature or trait

Inheritance – After someone dies, these are things that are passed down to children, relatives, or other people, such as land, a house, items from the house, etc.

Justice of the Peace – a judicial officer who performs marriages, administers oaths and they help determine minor cases

Royal – relating to a King or Queen

Sympathizer – A supporter or an advocate

Widow – A women whose spouse died. A man whose spouse died is called a **widower**.

Colonial Fairfield Connecticut

Stratford Ferry Milford Side Apr⁸-29
1777

My dear Hon^d Parents,

As many have done before us,
it now comes to our turn to flee before our Enemies.
The 25th first intelligence came to my dear Partner
that a formidable Fleet were making this way ^(at head quarters of town) just
as he set down to dinner, from the westward. he went
up on an eminence and saw them close in with the
shore against the place called Lumbro about two miles
from Mr. Phipps. he immediately sent orders to his son
Pregado, and his deffice to the Generals, Wardsworth
and Woolcock to lend him what assistance they could.

About 5 o'clock P.M. the enemy landed, before any force
could be collected to oppose them. Mr. Silliman sent forward
all he could get under the command of Col^c Dennison
and ran home to prepare to go himself; got home about
10 o'clock A.M. had just laid him down to get a moments
rest when he was called by express, and informed that the
enemy drove our people; he went to their assistance im-
mediately, and I have not seen him since. about 7 in
the same morning, he sent Billie home to tell us to go
off as fast as possible to North Stratford, for the enemy
had got as far as Greenfield, I staid however, and put
up a load of things, but dare not stay a moment
longer, and set out with all my ~~severne~~ family
My dear Husband and Billie excepted, and our stock.

But had got no farther than Stratfield, when an express over
took us, and told us to go over this Ferry, as the Enemy
were making towards North Stratford, we got here about
noon, but could not content my self to go from hence
till some of my family who went on foot got over

J.S. my love to Anna
and all other engagings
friends

Dear Love to dear Son we
are all now well & safe
in New Haven



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Questions:

Where did Gold Silliman's ancestors come from?

Did Gold Silliman agree with his father on politics? Why or why not?

Why was Mary cautious to remarry after her first husband died?

Why did she eventually marry Gold Silliman?

What more do you want to know about General Silliman and Mary Silliman?
