



Fairfield Museum

EXPLORE *the past*, IMAGINE *the future*

370 Beach Road, Fairfield, CT | 203-259-1598

www.fairfieldhistory.org

American Revolution & Colonial Life Programs **Pre and Post Lesson Plans & Activities**

Teacher Information: The Burning of Fairfield

On the morning of July 7, 1779, over 2,000 British soldiers made landfall on Fairfield Beach. Over the course of the next two days, the town of Fairfield, which had supported independence, was raided and almost completely destroyed.

In depositions given almost three weeks later, several women described the events of those two days following the landing of the British. The full testimonies are in Royal R. Hinman's *A Historical Collection* and utilized throughout the "Burning of Fairfield Drama" that students will read during their field trip to the Fairfield Museum.

The total list of losses includes 97 dwelling houses, (17 barns, 48 stores, 2 school houses, 1 county house, 2 meeting houses, and 1 Episcopal church. Damage was done to other individuals not mentioned aforesaid, to the amount of £1,855, by the destruction of personal property, a large share of which was owned by widows and other females.

Essential Question:

How did the American Revolution affect the perspectives, and change the freedom and opportunities, for various groups?

Supporting Question: How did geography play a role in the American Revolution?

Procedure:

Print pages 2 and 3 for students to read (or teacher can read aloud and students can follow on a Smartboard or hand-out).

Options:

- 1) Have students complete the Timeline during or after the article is read (underlined words relate to Timeline). ANSWER KEY is on Page 5.
- 2) Review vocabulary list on Page 4.
- 3) Have students trace the "burning of Fairfield" events with the places listed on the map on Page 7.
- 4) Discuss Wakeman's "list of losses" from the burning of Fairfield on Pages 9 & 10.

What did he own? What does this tell us about his life?

- 5) Discuss the informational panel on Page 10. This is from a panel that is located at St. Mary's by the Sea. It describes the fort that was once there. **Where is that now? What does this information tell you? What more do you want to find out?**



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The Burning of Fairfield

On July 2, 1779, **British General William Tryon** and 2,600 soldiers left New York to begin their attack on Connecticut. They sailed across Long Island Sound, also known as the “**Devil’s Belt**” and attacked **New Haven** on July 5, 1779. The people of Fairfield heard about the attack and many men in the **militia** went to go help. No one knew where the British would attack next.

On July 7, 1779, the **Fairfield Coast Guard** spotted four British ships heading their way on 4:00 a.m. The ships were named the *Camilla*, *Scorpion*, *Halifax*, and the *Hussar*. A patriot at **Black Rock Fort**, Isaac Jarvis, fired a warning shot. The townspeople heard the warning and they prepared for the worst. Many people packed or hid their things and fled the center of town. William Wheeler helped his father moved their **livestock** to **Toilsome Hill**. A fog came in and the British fleet disappeared. At 10:00 a.m. the fog lifted and people could see the British ships anchored off **McKenzie’s Point**.

At 3:00 p.m. Tryon and his men finally began coming ashore in small boats, right near **South Pine Creek Road**. Tryon and his men began to march his troops **east** and by 4:00 p.m. they were near a spot called **The Pines**. Guided by Fairfield resident and local **loyalist** George Hoyt, the brother of Mrs. Jonathan Bulkley, the troops continued to march until they came to **Fairfield Beach Road**. The militia at **Black Rock Fort** tried to stop the British by firing their **twelve-pounders** (cannon) at the marching soldiers coming up Beach Road. The British flagship, *Camilla*, began firing on the fort. The men at the fort suddenly had to turn their attention to the **gunboats** firing at them and the British soldiers were able to continue marching up **Beach Road**. General Tryon quickly took over the Bulkley house as a base for operations.

Tryon waited for reinforcements under **General Garth**, who began coming ashore at 5:30 p.m. about a mile west of McKenzie’s Point and began to march over **Sasco Hill**. The Fairfield **militia**, under the leadership of **Colonel Samuel Whiting**, had moved to **Round Hill**. Captain Thomas Nash

took several men and marched through the woods to the **Fairfield Green**. They sneaked behind the **meetinghouse** and fired upon the British force and retreated back to **Round Hill**. They didn't have enough men to scare the British, though! Colonel Whiting was successful in **thwarting** the British at **Ash Creek** by destroying a bridge.

At 6:30 p.m. Garth's and Tryon's forces met at the **Fairfield Green** and decided to burn a few houses. The home of **Isaac Jennings** is set on fire. This would be the first, but unfortunately not the last home to be torched in Fairfield. That night, a thunderstorm cracked and flashed while cannon fire burst and houses around the **Fairfield Green** burned.

After a night of fighting and burning, Tryon, Garth, and their men decided to head back to their ships. Part of the British force began to **bombard Black Rock Fort** at 4:00 a.m. and continue for 3 hours. Jarvis and his men at Black Rock fired back, even shouting insults at the British through a **speaking trumpet!** The fighting continued until 7:00 a.m. Tryon realized that he could not march his troops past the Fort directly towards **Long Island Sound**. Instead, he ordered his troops to march towards **west**, towards **Sasco Hill**, where General Garth had landed. At 8:00 a.m. the remaining Crown Forces began marching from the Green back to their ships that were stationed by the **Mill River** in **Southport**. All of the British troops were on their ships and departed by 2:00 p.m. that day.

Some people thought the British fleet would head east and attack **New London** next. Some thought they would head west and attack **Norwalk**. Indeed, the British aimed at Norwalk next. On that same day, they sailed a few miles down the coast and first burned parts of **Greens Farms** (now part of present-day Westport). On July 11, 1779 the British attacked **Norwalk** before leaving the coast of Connecticut.

General Tryon did not **intend** to burn the town of Fairfield. After the British left, there were other forces helping the British, including the "Jaegers" – German **mercenaries**. Reverend Andrew Eliot wrote, "The rear guard, consisting of a banditti of the vilest that was ever let loose among men, set fire to everything which General Tryon left.

The total number of buildings destroyed in Fairfield includes:

97 dwelling houses, 17 barns, 48 stores, 2 school houses, 1 county house, 2 meeting houses, and 1 Episcopal church.



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The Burning of Fairfield – Word Bank

Bombard: To bombard is to attack a town from the outside. This involves cannons firing at specific military targets such as forts and barracks.

Devil's Belt: Another name for Long Island Sound because it was used by the Americans and the British to transport secret messages and supplies. Raiding parties who were Loyalists, Patriots or just looking to gain favor also attacked the shorelines of Connecticut and New York.

Fairfield Coast Guard: The Fairfield Coast Guard was a group of ships that patrolled the waters off Fairfield to make sure that she was safe from a seaborne invasion.

Gunboats: Ships equipped with cannons on their sides.

Livestock: Livestock are animals that you would find on a farm such as pigs and cattle.

Loyalist: This is someone who is loyal to the British Crown. They helped British soldiers in invasions of towns.

Meetinghouse: This is where the townspeople gathered to hear the news of the week.

Militia: Militia are regular men that when called to duty, picked up their guns and protected their towns, also known as "Citizen Soldiers."

Twelve-Pounder: This is a type of cannon that was used in forts. It gets the name twelve-pounder from the twelve-pound iron ball that it hurled into the air.

Thwarting: To prevent something from happening.

Speaking Trumpet: This is like a modern-day megaphone. It magnifies your voice so people farther away can hear you better. People on ships would use them to talk to each other and to get the latest news.

Intend: To want to do something.

Mercenaries: A mercenary is someone that is hired to fight. Usually mercenaries come from a completely different country than the two that are fighting.



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The Burning of Fairfield Timeline

July 2, 1779 – British General Tryon leaves New York with _____ troops.

July 7, 1779

4:00 a.m. – Fairfield Coast Guard spots _____ off the coast

Isaac Jarvis fires a warning shot from _____ then a fog sets in over Fairfield

William Wheeler and his father move their cattle to _____

10:00 a.m. – The fog lifts and the British ships are seen off _____

3:00 p.m. – Tryon and his men come ashore, near _____ and their troops march _____.

4:00 p.m. – Tryon and his men near the spot called _____.

British troops march east on _____ and then march up _____.

5:30 p.m. – British reinforcements arrive, led by General Garth, and begin to march over _____.

The Fairfield militia wait at _____.

Some of the militia march to the _____ and fire upon the British

The militia also destroy a bridge at _____.

6:30 p.m. – The first houses are burned near the Fairfield Green. One of them is the home of _____.

That night, there was a _____ that cracked and flashed

July 8, 1779

4:00 a.m. – The British start to bombard _____ so that they could retreat

7:00 a.m. – The British stop attacking Black Rock Fort

8:00 a.m. – The remaining _____ began marching back to their ships

Throughout the day, German _____ destroy the buildings around the Fairfield Green by setting them on fire.

2:00 p.m. – The _____ depart in their ships

Later that day, _____ is attacked

July 11, 1779 – The British attack _____.

The total number of buildings destroyed included:

97 _____

17 _____

48 _____

2 _____

1 _____

2 _____

1 _____



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The Burning of Fairfield Timeline: Answer Key

July 2, 1779 – British General Tryon leaves New York with 2,600 troops.

July 7, 1779

4:00 a.m. – Fairfield Coast Guard spots 4 British ships off the coast

Isaac Jarvis fires a warning shot from Black Rock Fort then a fog sets in over Fairfield

William Wheeler and his father move their cattle to Toilsome Hill

10:00 a.m. – The fog lifts and the British ships are seen off McKenzie's Point

3:00 p.m. – Tryon and his men come ashore, near South Pine Creek Road and their troops march east

4:00 p.m. – Tryon and his men near the spot called The Pines

British troops march east on Fairfield Beach Road and then march up Beach Road

5:30 p.m. – British reinforcements arrive, led by General Garth and begin to march over Sasco Hill

The Fairfield militia wait at Round Hill

Some of the militia march to the Fairfield Green and fire upon the British

The militia also destroy a bridge at Ash Creek

6:30 p.m. – The first houses are burned near the Fairfield Green. One of them is the home of Isaac Jennings

That night, there was a thunderstorm that cracked and flashed

July 8, 1779

4:00 a.m. – The British start to bombard Black Rock Fort so that they could retreat

7:00 a.m. – The British stop attacking Black Rock Fort

8:00 a.m. – The remaining Crown Soldiers began marching back to their ships

Throughout the day, German mercenaries destroy the buildings around the Fairfield Green by setting them on fire.

2:00 p.m. – The British troops depart in their ships

Later that day, Greens Farms is attacked

July 11, 1779 – The British attack Norwalk

The total number of buildings destroyed included:

97 Dwelling Houses

17 Barns

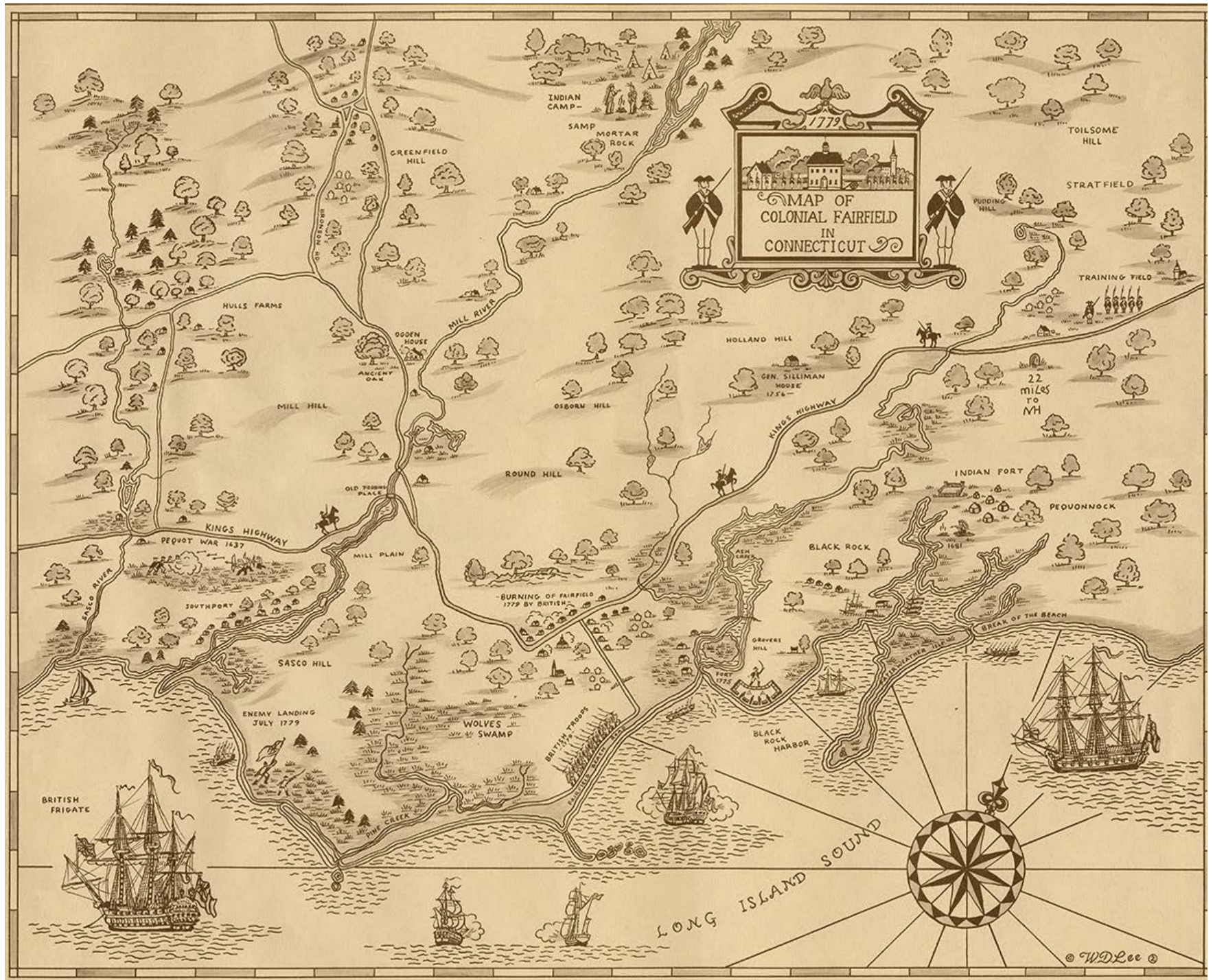
48 Stores

2 Schoolhouses

1 County House

2 Meeting Houses

1 Episcopal Church



And Wakeman Account of things Destroyed by the Enemy
in Burning the town of Fairfield July 8th 1777

1 Dwelling House —
1 bed Bolster 40 — 2 pillows 5 — 1 bed & bolster 55 £5:0:0
1 bed quilt 40 2 per Chest 24 — 3 per pillow Case 12 1/2 16
1 shirt 12 8 Check Aprons 27 short gown 4 1/2 — 2:3
6 shifts 30 1 1/2 yard new flannel 4 1/2 15 per stocking 4 1/2 11
3 Hoghead 30 — 100 pound salt pork 30 4 Chest 46 — 5
(Chest with 2 man's 40 1 1/2 10 1/2 10 1/2 10 1/2)
1 Corn basket 2 1/2 — shoe maker tools & bench 20 — 1:1
10 Pounds of tanned Leather 13 1/2 2 fider Barrels 7 — 2:0
3 square tables 38 1/2 10 Chaire £5:2 1/2 Looking glasses 20 1/2 8:0
Cup & soap 15 1/2 Candles & box 6 1/2 tub & pit 5 — 1:6:0
4 basket 6 1/2 — 6 quart ram 3 1/2 Cloth Jacket 3 1/2 breadings 1:6:0
10 pewter 13 1/2 tin pans 2 1/2 Candle box 2 1/2 — Cullender 2 1/2 0:19:0
1 stone pot 2 1/2 pudding pans 1 1/2 — 1 Candle stick 1 1/2 — 0:5:0
7 silver platters plates & bowl 7 1/2 1 vinegar Cruet 7 1/2 0:28:0
2 wine glasses 1 1/2 1 per 1 1/2 1 per butter boat 1 1/2 — 0:3:0
1 stone pot 2 1/2 tin Caster 1 1/2 4 knives & forks 3 1/2 — Coffee 10 1/2 7:0
1 stone 7 1/2 3 beets & bottoms 60 1/2 Couch 14 1/2 — 4:1:0
1 Dutch wheel & reel 22 1/2 1 per Wool Card 1 1/2 1/2 Wool 1 1/2 14:6
15 of flax 6 1/2 1 basket & thread pitch 1 1/2 — flannel Coat 10 1/2 1:33
1 handkerchief 3 1/2 Colouring tub & indigo 4 1/2 1 pail 2 1/2 — 0:9:0
1 tin tunnel 6 1/2 paper box 4 — 1 bible 3 1/2 — 0:3:10
Watts permons English Dictionary & 2 Psalm books 0:1:0
1 flannel gown 12 1/2 2 warm beer 40 Curtain frame 2:18:0
1 per of flaps 6 1/2 1 hat 12 1/2 stone pot 2 1/2 — 3:14:0
1 Beker glass 3 1/2 one pair of shoes 3 1/2 — 0:6:0
1 Pair of boots 12 1/2 — 0:12:0
£ 57:1:3

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MS53:

Andrew Wakeman accounts of things Destroyed By the Enemy in Burning the town of Fairfield July 8th 1779

	Pounds	Shillings	Pence
1 bed Bolster 40 – 2 pillows 5s – 1 bed & bolster 55s	L5:	0:	0
1 bed quilt 40 s 2 per Sheets 24s / 3 per pillow cases 12s/	3:	16	
1 shirt 1s 8 check Aprons 27s short gown 4s/	2:	3	
3 Hogsheads 30s/ - 100# pound salt pork 30s / 4 Chests 46s	5		
1 Corn basket /shoe maker tools & bench	1:	1	
10 pounds of leather	1:	0:	7
3 square tables / 18 chairs / 3 Mirrors	8:	0:	
Cask & soap / 18 pounds of candles & box / tub & fat	1:	6:	0
4 baskets / - 6 quarts rum / Cloth jacket / bread tray	1:	6:	0
10 pounds of pewter / 3 tin pans / Candlebox	0:	19:	0
1 stove pot / 2 pudding pans / 1 Candlestick	0:	5:	0
7 delft (Dutch) platters plates & bowl / 1 vinegar cruet	0:	8:	0:
2 wine glasses / 1 butter boats	0:	3:	6
tea pot / tin toaster / 4 knives & forks / coffee pot	0:	7:	6
stand / bed / 1 couch	4:	1:	0
1 Dutch wheel & reel / 1 pair Wool Cards / 6 pounds of Wool	1:	14:	6
15 pounds of flax 6 / 1 basket & pitcher / flannel coat	0:	13:	9
1 handkerchief / Coloring tub & indigo	0:	9:	6
1 tin / 1 bible	0:	3:	10
English Dictionary & 2 Psalm books	0:	18:	0
1 Flannel gown / 2 swarms bees / Curtain frame	2:	18:	0
1 hat / stove pot	3:	14:	0
1 glass / one pair of shoes	0:	6:	0
1 pair of boots	0:	12:	0
	L57:	1:	3

The Black Rock Battery 1776

During the American Revolution the Black Rock Battery (Fort) was one of the most important coastal defense locations in Connecticut.

It protected the entrance to Black Rock Harbor with its productive shipbuilding community, Grovers Hill pasture land bordering the inland waterway of Ash Creek, the Penfield Mills, and the Town of Fairfield, the County seat.

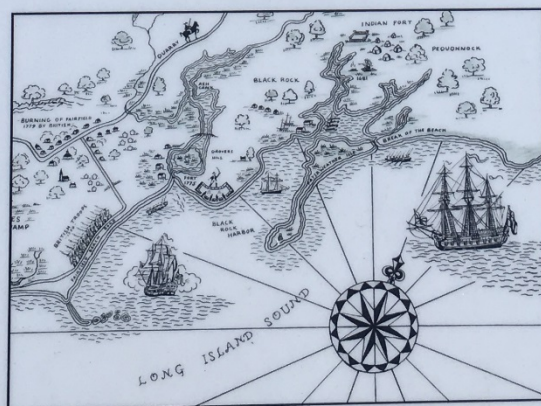
In February, 1776, The Black Rock Fort was authorized with the appointment of twenty-five men under the command of a Lieutenant and two Sergeants.



Continental Privateer Ship
"Defense" sailing past the Black Rock Battery



Painting of Black Rock Battery 1776, by William D. Lee



Colonial Map of Black Rock Harbor, by William D. Lee

Coastal artillery defense required forts and gun positions to be as near as possible to attacking enemy ships. The battery consisted of four field cannons with a one-thousand-yard range with exceptional accuracy.

This firepower included a form of incendiary that was most effectively called, "Hot Shot." It consisted of a standard (6 pound, 8 ounce) solid shot cannon ball heated red hot in a furnace and then fired by the cannon. Red hot, they could skip on the water and yet set a ship on fire. There was not a British ship's Captain that would ever challenge this most threatening weapon.

A major requirement in the construction of this fort was the creation of a firm roadbed, allowing maneuverability of the cannons. Present existing cut quarried stone is still visible. The original fort location, however, has been obscured after more than two centuries of seawall construction, causing coastal erosion.

Historic records confirm the outstanding defense record of the Black Rock Garrison (Fort) during the entire American Revolution.

SOURCES:
Black Rock: Seaport of Old Fairfield Connecticut, 1644-1870, by Cornelia Penfield Lathrop, The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company, 1930
The Book of the Continental Soldier, by Harold L. Petersen, Stackpole Company, 1968
Naval History of Fairfield County Men in the Revolution, by Elsie H. Danenberg, Fairfield Historical Society, 1977
The Fort of Colonial North America, by Rene Chartrand, Osprey Publishing, 2011