

## **DOCENT GUIDE: Gallery & Walking Tour**

### **Colonial Life & American Revolution**

All of the Fairfield Public Schools 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes participate in a visit to the Fairfield Museum for a field trip that will encourage students to make connections to the past and to learn about Fairfield's history in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Other schools are also visiting who are studying Colonial Life and American Revolution. In general, please follow this outline for the Gallery & Walking Tour:

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Fairfield Public Schools activities:

##### **1) Old Burying Ground Orienteering Adventure**

In teams of 5 or 6, students will complete a Scavenger Hunt challenge using a compass to guide their way throughout the Old Burying Ground. The challenges will direct students to various headstones. The group will read the challenge questions and answer them, discovering more about life in colonial times and the people buried there.

**SUGGESTED PRE-ACTIVITY (Optional):** How to use a compass YouTube video (3 minutes):

<https://youtu.be/7MQUIYsmQhc>

##### **2) Gallery & Walking Tour led by Museum Docents**

Students investigate the section in the main exhibition *Creating Community: Exploring 375 Years of Our Past*, which features objects, information and stories of the 1700s in Fairfield and the Revolution. The docent educator will lead an inquiry-based discussion about the objects and items in the exhibit. Students will learn more about two families, the Burr's and the Silliman's.

**PRE-ACTIVITY: "Two Fairfield Families" Hand-Outs & Questions**

##### **3) "Burning Drama" in the Sun Tavern - Reader's Theatre**

**PRE-ACTIVITY: "Burning of Fairfield" Hand-Outs & Reader's Theatre**

Pre and Post Teacher Materials are on a private link on the Fairfield Museum website:

<https://www.fairfieldhistory.org/education/teacher-resources-2/>

**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?



### **Gallery / Walking Tour: Docent Guide & Script**

Please make sure that the movable Loyalist/Patriot section of the gallery is moved to the corner behind the Silliman letters. Please ask a Museum Staff person for help moving it!

#### **Pacing:**

##### **1) In "Creating Community: gallery**

(just American Revolution section): 15- 20 minutes

##### **2) Proceed to Old Academy**

(they may have visited here in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade): 15 - 20 minutes

### 3) Walk past the Sun Tavern to Beach Road: 15 minutes

End at Old Burying Ground

#### Ground Rules (Especially cover this info if you have the first group!)

Ask students if they have ever been to a museum before. What should they remember when visiting a museum?

- Respect the artifacts and exhibits. Even the Old Burying Ground is an artifact!
- Walk – don't run.
- Stay together as a group.
- Raise your hand if you have a question.
- Don't touch anything unless the guide / docent says it's ok.
- Respect your classmate's comments & opinions
- Make sure chaperones understand that students need to be respectful.
- When reviewing guidelines, chaperones are also participants!

**Previous Knowledge:** The students have been studying Colonial Times and the American Revolution. Encourage students to share their previous knowledge. *What do they know about... ..?*  
*OR "I heard that you are learning about Colonial times and the American Revolution. What have you learned? What more do you want to learn?"*

#### Using Inquiry in the Gallery:

*"This section of the gallery relates to what you have been studying about in school. Quietly look around this room. What do you notice?"*

**Burr Wall:** Many families who settled in Fairfield acquired more and more land. This brought them great wealth. **WHY?** Ask students. **Why does land = wealth?** *Relate to the economy - people had land to farm, raise cattle, grow and sell crops, etc.* Growing wealth enabled people to build bigger houses and churches, purchase new luxury items such as full-length mirrors, silver, and clocks, and trade.

In the 18th century, corn, rye, wheat, potatoes, and flax were the main crops grown for export as well as local consumption. Flax seed was in demand to make linseed oil, and was shipped to Ireland where flax was grown to make fine linen cloth. Local farmers carted their produce to merchants and shippers located along the wharves at Mill River (now Southport) and Black Rock harbor. Bartering was the common method of exchange, and farmers often brought dairy and poultry products such as butter, cheese, eggs, and sacks of feathers to trade for credit.



## Burr Wall

*Symbols of wealth; grandfather clock, mirror, imported goods, textiles, etc.*

*Section underneath Burr portraits represent the triangle trade.*

Fairfield became the third wealthiest town in Connecticut, with one of the highest proportions of African-Americans enslaved. Slavery in Connecticut was not abolished until 1848.



## Mary Silliman

*What do you notice about this painting?*

### Books:

Mrs. Silliman was a prolific letter writer, which helps us understand life a long time ago. Her writings are also rare - women were not always taught how to read and write in those times.

Fancy Dress/Clothes/Cap: display of her wealth and prominence

### Docent / Educator:

*Briefly tell the story of Gold Selleck Silliman's kidnapping.*

Long Island Sound was known as the "Devil's Belt." Raiders and spies were constantly going back and forth in whaleboats to kidnap people, steal supplies and find out information about the enemy.

After the death of her first husband, Reverend Noyes, 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.



“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.”

Silliman and Mary were married on May 24, 1775.

## **The Silliman Kidnapping**

About one o’clock on the morning of May 2, 1779, Mary and Gold Selleck Silliman were jarred from sleep by a noise at their door ... Silliman immediately reached for his gun, but it was too late. There were at least 8 men outside his house. The raiders broke through a window to kidnap him! They accompanied him to his bedroom so that he could dress, and withdrew when they saw his pregnant wife, Mary, trying to comfort their 18-month old son. The general put on his clothes, embraced his wife and baby and reluctantly went with his captors.

He was held captive on Long Island, where the British were headquartered, for over a year. Two of his friends helped to kidnap a loyalist on Long Island, Thomas Jones, who was a chief justice of the Superior Court. Mary Silliman even entertained him in her home, finding him “very unsociable.” However Mrs. Jones sent Mary a thank you letter, along with a pound of tea, for hosting Mr. Jones.



After months of waiting, Mary hired a boat to take Jones to New York to exchange for her husband. She could watch the events unfolding from her home in the Holland Hill section of Fairfield. She writes,

When our vessel came within call of our fort ... near Black Rock, one called to know if they had General Silliman on board. He then leapt on deck and waved his hat! ... loud shouting [and cheering followed] that we heard them plainly at our house (two miles away). Then all the cannon fired off [to welcome him home].  
(Thomas Farnham, page 86)

In the gallery, the educator may also point out letters from Mary Silliman to her sons at Yale (in bottom of case) and a letter from General Silliman to a fellow soldier in captivity.

*Letters damage easily when on display and may be swapped out accordingly.*

## **Wall with Silliman portrait, Eliot desk – items of interest:**

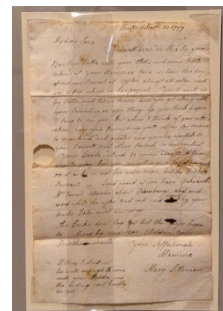
### **Silver Tankards:**

When the British invaded Fairfield, one of these mugs were thrown down a well so that the British would not steal it. The British and soldiers that they hired raided people’s homes, stole the buckles off of women’s shoes and plundered the town.

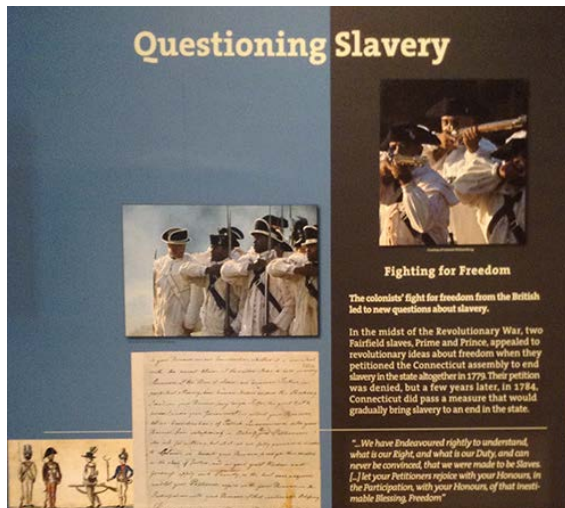
**Telescope:** Used on ships or at the fort.

**Desk:** This is Reverend Andrew Eliot’s desk. It was saved from the burning of Fairfield. Can you image saving this giant desk? Why would he want to save it?

*It probably contained very important papers and other documents.*



## Slavery / Patriots & Loyalists



The British promised freedom to those enslaved who came under their protection or to fight in the Revolutionary War.

*For example:*

**Edward Lloyd**, a teenager during the war, joined the British forces.

Other Fairfield slaves joined the patriot forces.

**Jack Sanford** enlisted in 1777, with his owner's permission. After the war, he changed his last name to Freeman.

**Peter Nash** served in a company of guards patrolling the Fairfield coast.



**DOCENT/EDUCATOR:** You may utilize 2 or 3 of the Loyalist / Patriot examples.

**The conflict with Britain divided communities and eventually forced people to take sides, whether or not they wanted to.** Many New Englanders were devoted to the patriot cause, and others joined in as the struggle gained strength. On the other side, some felt it was wrong to rebel against their king and the social order he stood for.

**Question 1:** Are you a member of the Anglican (Episcopal) church? **ANSWER:** Loyalist.

The church was closely tied to the British crown.

**Question 2:** Are you a moderate person who thinks breaking with England is an extreme act? Loyalist.

Moderates wanted to avoid violence and tried to resolve problems with Britain peacefully.

**Question 3:** Do you have strong family or business ties to England? Loyalist. You have personal ties and also want to have the protection of the British Empire for military and business reasons.

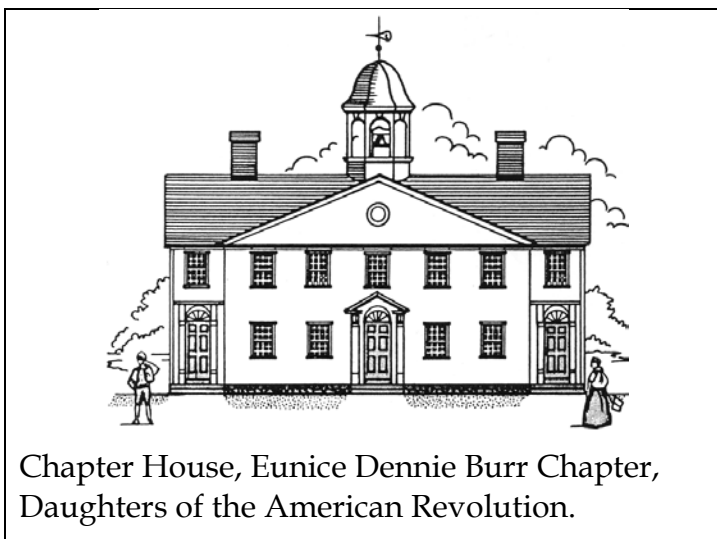
**Question 4:** Are you a recent immigrant from Holland, France, Germany, or Scotland? Loyalist. You may not feel part of the American rebellion.

**Question 5:** Are you an enslaved African-American? Loyalist. The British have promised to free the enslaved who leave their masters and come into British controlled areas.

**Question 6:** Are you a leader in your town? Patriot. As a town selectmen or colonial representative, you are used to governing Connecticut and are angry at the British for trying to replace you.

**Question 7:** Are you an artisan – such as a weaver, shoemaker, blacksmith, or silversmith? Patriot. You want to be able to make goods in Connecticut and develop your economy instead of being forced to buy only British goods.

**Question 8:** Are you involved in shipping – building ships, trading goods, working at the harbor? Patriot. You want to be able to trade freely, and British regulations threaten your livelihood.



Chapter House, Eunice Dennie Burr Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

## **Academy Schoolhouse**

Before entering, ask the students what they notice about this building:

- founded in 1804
- separate entrances for boys & girls
- bell at the top

Outside: you may have the students line up in two lines, one for boys and one for girls. Have either group enter and leave first.

Inside, have the students sit on separate sides. Have students quietly observe the space and raise their hands to report any observations or questions.

### **About the Academy:**

Academies, or specialized private schools, became popular at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries.

In 1802, some prominent Fairfield citizens founded the Fairfield Academy in order to prepare their sons for Yale and to give their daughters a classical education. There were 43 people, including Eunice Dennie Burr, wealthy widow of patriot Thaddeus Burr, who bought shares.

- Boys and girls had separate recesses, stairs, and cloakrooms.
- Boys were given studies that would eventually lead them to become a minister, lawyer or perhaps a ship captain. They learned geography, math and Latin. Often they would attend Yale University, even when they were as young as 15 years old!
- The students ranged in age, with younger students at the front and older students along the perimeter or in the center.
- Girls were instructed in what was seen as more practical applications such as needlework and sewing. Making beaded purses was popular, as well as Spelling Bees.
- The children played on the Green, an untidy place frequented by geese, who were often teased. The children also played on Edward's Pond, behind the school, popular for boating and skating.
- Some students came from as far away as New York and boarded in the town.
- Guess where the teacher lived? The teacher probably lived in one of the students' homes!
- The Academy was heated by the fireplaces, and later a stove in the center. The children whose family's gave wood to the school got to sit closest to the heat!





## Fairfield Museum

EXPLORE *the past*, IMAGINE *the future*

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

[www.fairfieldhistory.org](http://www.fairfieldhistory.org)

- Teachers never tired of devising new rules and punishments for their students! Corporal punishment was considered acceptable. Other punishments included a dunce cap, or making a student sit away from the stove.
- In 1804, the year the Academy was founded, our flag had 15 stars. That is why we have a 15-star flag in the schoolroom.

### **The Town Green**

Inside the Academy, also mention the **Town Green**. This was the center of Fairfield, founded in 1639 with the four squares (corner of Old Post and Beach Roads). When Roger Ludlow began the settlement of Fairfield, one part was reserved for a public meeting area, one section for the meeting house and one section for the minister.

In 1639, Roger Ludlow returned to Uncoway and acquired all the land west of the Pequonnock River to Mill River and north seven or eight miles into the interior. By 1640, four roads had been laid out creating the Four Squares with Town Hall Green at the center. **The earliest homes on and around the Green were built from a combination of mud and salt hay.** The structures were called English Wigwams, because they combined methods and styles of Native American and English traditions.

Colonists would meet on the Green to talk to each other and to **discuss the news** of the day. **The militia** would also drill on the Green. The **signpost** would inform townspeople of any important news or meetings.

### **Exit the Old Academy**

Ask the students if they have any further questions or observations.

#### **Other tidbits:**

- Bad boys found that red pepper sprinkled on a hot surface causes cold symptoms.
- The stove heated only those children fortunate enough to sit in its vicinity, and this seems to have been determined by the amount of wood that a family gave to the school.
- Punishment for all misdemeanors was unpleasant. “Feruling,” or striking the palm of the hand with a ruler, and isolation in a cloakroom were common.
- Bust of Paul Revere and prints of George Washington reflect the history they learned.
- The piano = music class.

### **Docent Instructions:**

Next give instructions on how the students should leave (either boys or girls first, get in line when downstairs on the sidewalk outside).

Proceed across the driveway, walk past the Sun Tavern and stop at the Tucker House and the Morelands.

## **Beach Road Houses**



### **249 Beach Road**

Built by Isaac Tucker in 1766.

Captain Maltbie purchased the house in 1773 and occupied it during the Revolutionary period. There is no record of where his wife was at the time of the burning, it is assumed that the family was not home.



Isaac Tucker, who had a shop just behind his former house, fired a shot at the British troops. The British thought the shot came from the house and attempted to burn the house down.

“It is said that a colored servant, devoted to the family of Justin Hobart, Jr., hid in the attic of the house, when the British marched up Beach lane and began their historic bonfire. Although Tryon had promised to spare the house, it was set on fire three times and three times the fire was put out by the servant who was in hiding.

There is still a great, burned section in the floor of one of the first-story rooms, which tradition says was the result of the alternate firing and rescuing” (Harrison)

Eventually the British used the house as a “cook-house” for the troops.

When Capt. Maltbie returned from sea, he found all his valuables swept off the shelves and broken into pieces. In the big pot in the kitchen fireplace was a large brass kettle filled with ‘their hams.’ They were afraid to eat them, fearing they were poisoned.” (Miner)



## 290 Beach Road – Site of Bulkley Tavern



Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Bulkley were the owners of the Bulkley tavern on this site. Mrs. Bulkley (Sara Hoyt) was the sister of a Mr. Hoyt (first name not certain at this point), who was probably part of a larger group of Loyalists who led the British up Beach Road. Mrs. Bulkley is presumed to have negotiated with the British General Tryon to spare the houses on Beach Road. The Tavern served some of the British officers as their headquarters.

When the British had left, the returning Colonial troops trained a cannon on the house and threatened to blow the house and Mrs. Bulkley to pieces as a Tory, but their commanding officer prevented this act of destruction.

**CT Social Studies Frameworks** *The activities in this lesson plan reinforce the following Frameworks:*

**HIST 5.2** Compare life in specific historical periods to life today.

**HIST 5.3** Use information about a historical source, including the maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose to judge the extent to which the source is useful for studying a particular topic.

**HIST 5.4** Explain why individuals and groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.

**HIST 5.5** Explain connections among historical contexts and people's perspectives at the time.

**HIST 5.6** Compare information provided by different historical sources about the past.

**HIST 5.7** Generate questions about multiple historical sources and their relationships to particular historical events and developments.

**HIST 5.8** Use information about a historical source, including the maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose to judge the extent to which the source is useful for studying a particular topic.

**HIST 5.9** Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments.

**HIST 5.10** Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.

### Civic and Political Institutions

**CIV 5.1** Explain how groups of people make rules to create responsibilities and protect freedoms.

**CIV 5.2** Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.

**CIV 5.3** Identify core civic virtues and democratic principles that guide government, society, and communities.

**CIV 5.4** Explain how policies are developed to address public problems.

#### Economic Decision-Making

**ECO 5.1** Identify positive and negative incentives that influence the decisions people make.

#### Geographic Representations: Spatial Views of the World

**GEO 5.1** Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their environmental characteristics.

**GEO 5.2** Explain how culture influences the way people modify and adapt to their environments.

**The “Inquiry Arc” from the Frameworks reinforces the following Common Core standards:**

Developing questions and planning inquiry	R1, W7, SL1
Applying disciplinary concepts and tools	R1-10, W1, W2, W7, SL1, L1-3, L6
Evaluating sources and using evidence	R1-10, W1, W2, W7-10, SL1, L1-3
Communicating conclusions and taking informed action	R1, W1-8, SL1-6, L1-3