



GROUP 1

Actors:

Narrator 1	Citizen 1	Patriot General Silliman
Narrator 2	Citizen 2	Reverend Andrew Elliot

Narrator 1: Reverend Andrew Eliot was the enthusiastic preacher of First Church in Fairfield. His sermons and writings were clearly in favor of the Patriot cause. In 1781 he said:

Reverend Andrew Eliot (Pretend you are writing in a journal):

“we are in frequent alarm and constantly uneasy. Those loyalists are constantly attacking our shores, coming across Long Island Sound under the cover of darkness at night our situation is very uncertain!!!!”

Narrator 2: On December 14, 1775 the Connecticut General Assembly passed an act that allowed for **“restraining and punishing persons who are against the liberties of this and other of the united colonies.”**

AUDIENCE: BOO!!!! (OR) Huzzah!!!

Citizen 1 (Sounding distressed and worried): “A gang of **Tories** has been discovered in the neighborhood of Fairfield. They were taken and imprisoned! If these enemies proceed in their schemes, **our ruin is certain.**”

Citizen 2 (with a heroic voice): “Rise up then, my countrymen, and bring the **TORIES** to the punishment they merit!”

Narrator 1: Soon the community was under threat during the **Battle of Ridgefield** on April 21, 1777.

Citizen 1: General William Tryon has attacked Danbury!

AUDIENCE: BOO!!!! (OR) Huzzah!!!

Citizen 2: I have just heard the news! They say he and his men burned the town to the ground. Homes, Farmhouses, storehouses... everything is ash.



Citizen 1: The Patriots were too weak to stop them. They needed more men. We must send word to the militia in New Haven.

Narrator 2: The British destruction continued for nearly a week before messages reached the Patriot leaders. Benedict Arnold, General David Wooster and General Gold Silliman led 500 American troops in a surprise attack on the British forces as they began withdrawing from Danbury.

Citizen 1: Benedict Arnold and his men have stopped the British from destroying Connecticut!

AUDIENCE: BOO!!!! (OR) Huzzah!!!

Citizen 2 (sadly): But they were unable to prevent the complete destruction of Danbury, nor could they stop the retreat.

Narrator 1: The British continued marching through Ridgefield towards their ships anchored off Long Island Sound.

Narrator 2: General Silliman wrote a letter to General Wooster:

General Silliman: (pretend to write a letter)

Fairfield April 25th 1777

Honored Sir:

We are alarmed by many ships off Compo Point. 40 or 50 boats are manned and plan to land ... We are in great need of help, pray, send forward assistance as fast as possible! Immediate help may be of Great Service ... 200 or 300 Redcoats have landed at Compo Hill. Send your assistance without Delay.

I am your most obedient and humble servant,
Gold Selleck Silliman, Brigadier General

P.S: As I write, another messenger has come to say that 1,000 Redcoats have landed and that the boats are constantly going and coming. Send help quickly!



GROUP 2

Actors:

Narrator	Citizen 1	British General Tryon
Reverend Andrew Elliot	Citizen 2	British Soldier

Narrator: By 1778 the townspeople of Fairfield had become weary of the war and fearful of another attack. Reverend Andrew Eliot wrote:

Reverend Andrew Eliot (pretend you are writing)

“we are very much troubled on the Connecticut shore by the enemy, who pay us almost a weekly visit to steal and plunder! Every day we live and sleep in **CONSTANT FEAR!!!!**”

Narrator: On May 2, 1779, General Silliman is kidnapped from his home in Fairfield! The rebel general is taken to the British on Long Island. He is held prisoner for over a year!

On July 7, 1779 Fairfield’s worst nightmares were about to come true.

General Tryon: Men, we have been ordered to raid the coast of Connecticut. I will take 2,600 troops and a fleet of ships and raid the coastal towns of New Haven, Fairfield, and Norwalk.

British Soldier: What is our purpose, sir?

General Tryon: We will destroy those **rebel supplies** and attack! Their rich farm land will supply us with **much needed food**, and we will take their **fine** horses and supplies away from their grasps.

British Soldier: And what about the militia?

General Tryon: Let them follow us! If we can lure George Washington’s army away from its defensive position at West Point, then we can weaken them!

AUDIENCE: BOO!!!! (OR) Huzzah!!!



Narrator: Using his fleet of ships, Tryon attacked New Haven on July 5, 1779, and then turned towards Fairfield without warning. Local militias had little time to organize.

Citizen 1: We have received a message that the British have **attacked** New Haven! We do not know if they will go east towards New London, or west towards us. We must prepare for an attack!

Citizen 2: A British ship has been sighted at anchor off the coast of Fairfield!

AUDIENCE: BOO!!!! (OR) Huzzah!!!

Narrator: Troops under General Tryon land on shore.

General Tryon: Men, take control of the Town Green and then spread out through the town.

Narrator: A British soldier addresses the people of the town.

A British Soldier (unrolling a scroll):

Good people of Fairfield, we call upon you now to swear allegiance to the king of Great Britain, whereupon we will offer you refuge!

Reverend Eliot and Citizens, all together: **Never!!!**

Narrator: Colonel [pronounced KER-nel] Whiting of the Patriot Militia sends a messenger with a reply to the British General Tryon saying:

Messenger: Connecticut has dared to take up arms against the cruelty of Britain. We will continue to resist your attacks and protect our land!

AUDIENCE: BOO!!!! (OR) Huzzah!!!

Narrator: On the morning of July 7, 1779 British troops continue to march towards the center of Fairfield. Isaac Jarvis, the commander of Black Rock Fort, orders his men to fire cannons on the troops.

General Tryon: Fire your muskets and return their rebel fire!



GROUP 3

Actors:

Narrator	Citizen 1	William Wheeler
British General Tryon	Citizen 2	Priscilla Burr
		Mary Silliman

Narrator: Meanwhile, the Fairfield men do not give up! They destroy a strategic bridge at Ash Creek so that the British troops cannot attack the Black Rock Fort. British troops under the command of General Garth land near Mill River and they march towards the Black Rock Fort, but they encounter the damaged bridge. The British plan to attack the Fort are ruined by the Patriot militia!

AUDIENCE: BOO!!!! (OR) Huzzah!!!

General Tryon: How can this be? Men, begin burning their homes! One by one, we’ll show them!

Citizen 1: What are we supposed to do? Do we stay and defend our town, do we defend our homes, or do we flee from the enemy?

Citizen 2: How will we fight? Our men are off fighting for our independence. Our town is home to women, children, and the elderly.

Narrator: William Wheeler, 17 years old at the time, made a quick decision and helped his family bring their valuable herd of cows to a pasture on higher ground. From a few miles away, he writes about the destruction in his journal:

William Wheeler (pretending to write in a journal):

The first building that appeared on fire was the guardhouse at McKenzie’s point, the next one at Barlow’s plain. From Black Rock, we see the fire.

The town burned all night. A cloud was fixed in the west and huge flashes of lightning cracked in the sky. There was a scene so shocking that Fairfield will never see again.



We could hear the frequent shots of cannon and muskets from the British throughout the center of town. We knew that the townspeople had to flee.

My distress was nothing compared to my sister, who decided to stay in her home in town. The day after the town was destroyed, we went down to see the ruins. When I finally saw my sister, I could hardly recognize her, she was so shaken up. She was treated very badly.

Priscilla Burr says:

Soldiers came into my house and said it was a fine place, as if they were going to move in! They ended up destroying my home, ripping curtains, breaking furniture and stealing the silver. I gave them **everything** to make them go away!

William Wheeler:

Several women stayed in town to save their houses, but were so frightened, they said they would never stay again.

Jonathan Bulkley, living on the Green, stayed, got a protection form General Tryon and saved his house and three adjoining houses.”

AUDIENCE (whispering to each other): Maybe they were British sympathizers!

Narrator: Mary, the wife of General Silliman, heard about the British soldiers coming and quickly left town. She could see the destruction from the safety of her family's land on Jennings Road.

Mary Silliman:

As we retreated from the town, I realized why the British had attacked now. They wanted to burn all of our crops in the hope that General Washington’s army would starve this coming winter. But the brutality they showed against the town, even as they were unopposed, was never to be expected. I wondered what they intended by this carnage and desolation, and I wondered what I should do.



GROUP 4

Actors:

Narrator 1 & Narrator 2	British Soldier
Eunice Burr, wife of Thaddeus Burr	General Tryon
A Friend of Eunice	George Washington

Narrator: Eunice Burr reads her testimony regarding the enemy at Fairfield on July 7 and 8, 1779, including Eunice Burr, wife of Thaddeus Burr.

Eunice Burr: On Wednesday morning, some friends visited my home, the Burr Mansion, on Old Post Road. They believed that the enemy’s ships were nearby and they might land.

I have known many British officers, and I **knew** that they were polite. Despite the pleading of my friends, and although I knew I may risk my own life, I decided to remain. I wanted to save my pleasant mansion house with its valuable furniture, food, and supplies in storage.

During the raid, a pack of rude soldiers came rushing into my house. They shouted at me:

British Soldier: “You rebel, where is your husband? He is a **town official!**”

Eunice Burr: The soldiers ripped the buckles off my shoes! They tore the curtains, broke our precious furniture!

Friend of Eunice: “Get out of this house at once! Don’t you know who Eunice Burr is?”
 (British soldier rushes out of the room)

Narrator: No sooner had they left when more British soldiers came back into the house,

British Soldier (returning back in): Bring me cider! (Pretend to break the china)

Narrator: In the middle of this confusion, General Tryon himself came into the house.



General Tryon (in a loud voice): “I **demand** your husband's papers!”

Eunice Burr: “There are none! Only a few papers from our old estates.”

General Tryon: “**THOSE** are what we want! We intend to have those estates!!!”

Eunice Burr: I pleaded for his mercy. The General changed his mind and promised me that he would protect my property. He wrote a proclamation to post on our front door. (The General pretends to write something down and posts on the wall)

My house was still standing, and I quickly ordered the servants to collect water. Instead of saving anything, I turned my attention to the suffering of my neighbors.

No sooner had the horn blew for the retreat, a band of those savage creatures were left as a **rear guard** to complete the destruction; some of whom, unperceived by me, came into the house.

A friend of Eunice:

I saw my friend Eunice showing the soldiers the protection order from General Tryon, but they ripped the paper from her hands. They started to take our pocket books, so we both turned around and ran as fast as we could from the Burr Mansion.

Eunice: As I turned back to look, the awful soldiers began to set my home aflame. My poor house and things suddenly caught fire and soon the giant mansion was engulfed in a huge, burning fire. Some soldiers offered my comfort, and I sincerely thank them for it.

Narrator 2:

The greatest damage was inflicted on the following day as the British left Fairfield. A rear guard of hired German soldiers were ordered to leave last. The German soldiers set fire to all the remaining buildings, including the churches and ministers’ homes, even though the British General Tryon had given them protection!

Connecticut’s defenders, guessing that Norwalk would be Tryon’s next target, appeared in large numbers to fight the enemy on July 12, 1779. However, the fighting led to the almost complete destruction of the town.

Narrator: Fairfield never fully recovered from the destruction. In 1789, ten years after the fire and six years after the war ended, President George Washington stopped at Penfield’s Sun Tavern in Fairfield. He observed,



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George Washington: “The destructive evidences of British cruelty are yet visible both in Norwalk and Fairfield; as there are the chimneys of many burnt houses standing in them yet.”

Narrator 2: Fairfield’s stature as one of the most influential and prosperous towns in the region diminished in the slow process of rebuilding. In the decades following the war, the economic center of coastal Fairfield County shifted to nearby Bridgeport.