

March 17 – New Providence Raid

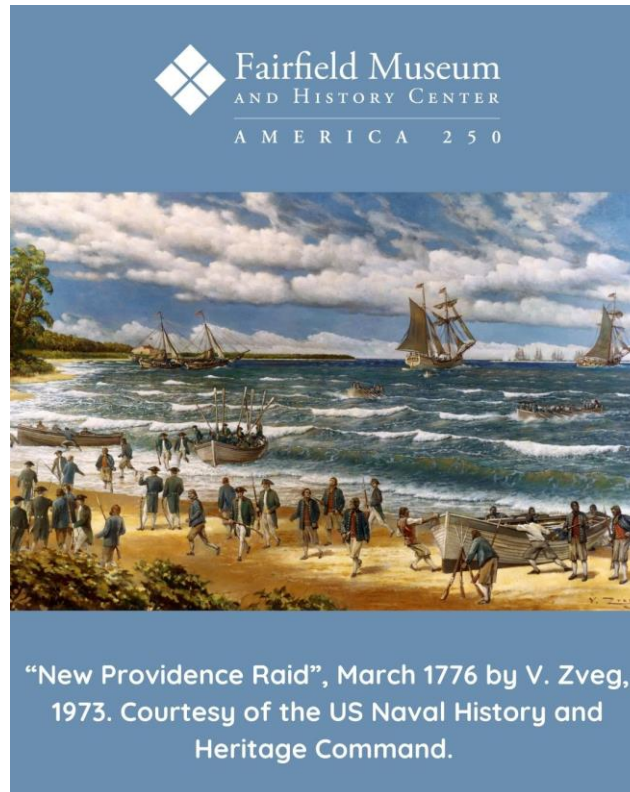
(Originally posted on social media on March 17, 2026)

As we commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence throughout 2026, the Fairfield Museum will periodically share Fairfield's fascinating connections to significant moments during the American Revolution.

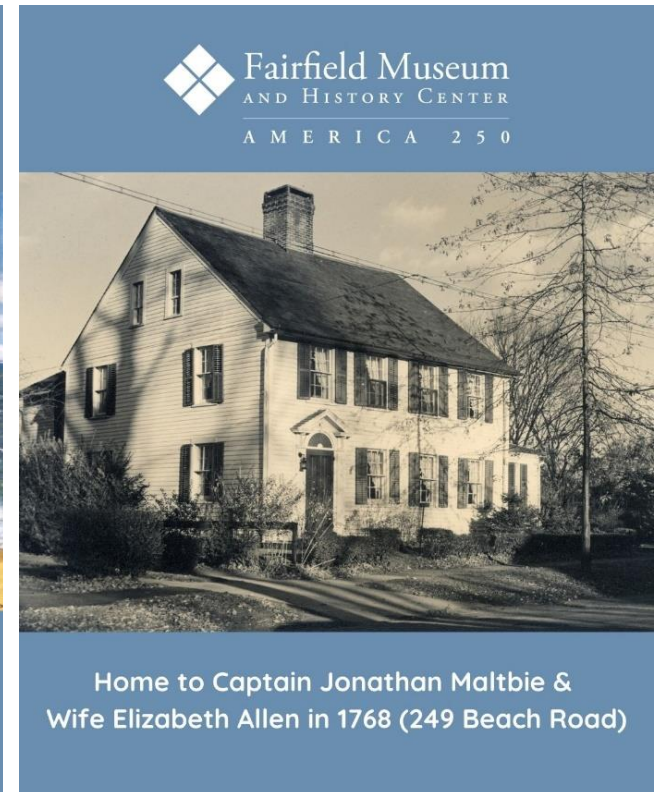
During the initial outbreak of war in 1775, Lord Dunmore, the Royal Governor of Virginia, sought to keep the colony's previous supply of gunpowder out of patriot hands and organized its removal to the island of New Providence in the British colony of the Bahamas. In desperate need of gunpowder by early 1776, the Continental Congress ordered a naval expedition to seize British military supplies stored in Nassau, the capital of New Providence. By March 1 a Continental fleet commanded by Esek Hopkins reached the Bahamas. On March 4, 200 Continental Marines captured Nassau—considered the first successful amphibious assault in American history. After loading as many supplies as possible, including 38 casks of gunpowder, the fleet set sail for Block Island on March 17, 1776.

Among the men involved in that dramatic raid was Captain Jonathan Maltbie of Fairfield. Just weeks earlier, in February 1776, he was assigned to the Continental Navy ship *Alfred*, one of the vessels in Hopkins' fleet. Born in 1744 in Stamford, Jonathan made a living as a sea captain in the East India trade. Jonathan married Elizabeth Allen in 1768, and settled down in Fairfield in a house located at the corner of the King's Highway (now Old Post Road) and Beach Road. The Revolutionary War reached Fairfield in July 1779, when British forces burned much of the town during a coastal raid. Christopher "Kit" Maltbie was an enslaved Black child in Jonathan Maltbie's household at this time. British forces attempted to burn the Maltbie's house multiple times, but Kit helped put the fire out. Jonathan Maltbie's house survived the Burning of Fairfield and serves as one of the few remaining examples of the town's colonial architecture.

Images: *New Providence Raid, March 1776* by V. Zveg, 1973. Courtesy of the US Naval History and Heritage Command; Jonathan Maltbie House. Fairfield Buildings, Fairfield Museum Photographic Collection.



"New Providence Raid", March 1776 by V. Zveg, 1973. Courtesy of the US Naval History and Heritage Command.



Home to Captain Jonathan Maltbie & Wife Elizabeth Allen in 1768 (249 Beach Road)