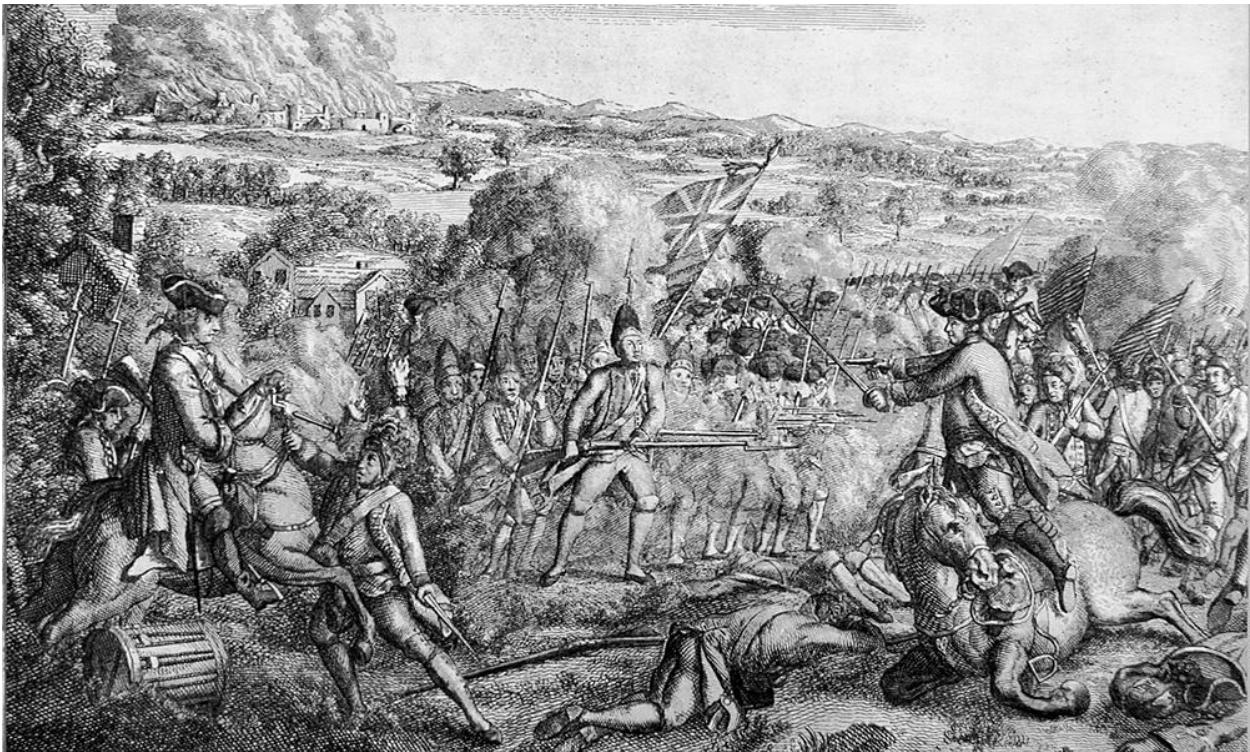


Battle of Ridgefield April 27, 1777 **Technical Report**

**Department of the Interior,
National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program
1849 C Street NW – Room 7228
Washington, DC 20240
P20AP00199**

*Site Identification and Documentation Plan:
Research Survey, Mapping, and Reporting Project*



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Cover Illustration:

Detail from engraving titled “A Skirmish in America between the King’s Troops and Genl. Arnold.”

I. Introduction

This technical report summarizes the research, methods, and results of the Site Survey and Documentation Plan associated with the April 27, 1777, Battle of Ridgefield. The Battle of Ridgefield was one action of what is known as the “Danbury Expedition” (April 25-28, 1777) in which over 1,800 British troops invaded western Connecticut to destroy Continental stores warehoused at Danbury, Connecticut. The National Park Service (NPS), American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) awarded the Ridgefield Historical Society (RHS) and the Connecticut State Office of Historic Preservation a Research and Documentation Grant (P20AP00199) in March 2020 to study the engagement.¹ The overall goal of the grant was to conduct a pre-inventory research and documentation project to identify the probable locations of all engagements and ancillary sites related to the Battle of Ridgefield. This battle (or more accurately, a series of engagements) was the second largest of the Danbury Expedition and the second largest battle that occurred in Connecticut during the American Revolutionary War. The Battle of Ridgefield ABPP project resulted in historically chronicling a series of actions between the British Army under the command of General Tryon and American troops under the command of General Wooster and General Arnold on April 27, 1777; it also identified properties suspected to retain a moderate to high degree of depositional integrity and therefore may potentially yield evidence of the battle.

Project Goals and Results

The goals of the Battle of Ridgefield Documentation Plan were to:

1. Identify archives and institutions which may contain primary sources relevant to the battle
2. Identify and analyze primary and secondary sources relevant to the battle
3. Visit historical societies, libraries and archives which may hold battle-related objects
4. Identify the Battlefield Boundary and Core Areas of the battlefield
5. Conduct a Windshield Tour of the Battlefield Boundary
6. Identify battlefield landscape and key terrain features
7. Conduct KOCO analysis (military terrain analysis) to identify key terrain features
8. Integrate battlefield landscape and key terrain into USGS maps
9. Develop presentations and hold public informational meetings
10. Create GIS mapping of battlefield terrain and cultural features
11. Draft a Technical and Performance Report

¹ The NPS ABPP promotes the preservation of significant historic battlefields associated with wars on American soil. The purpose of the program is to assist citizens, public and private institutions, and governments at all levels in planning, interpreting, and protecting sites where historic battles were fought on American soil during the armed conflicts that shaped the growth and development of the United States, in order that present and future generations may learn and gain inspiration from the ground where Americans made their ultimate sacrifice. The goals of the program are: 1) to protect battlefields and sites associated with armed conflicts that influenced the course of American history, 2) to encourage and assist all Americans in planning for the preservation, management, and interpretation of these sites, and 3) to raise awareness of the importance of preserving battlefield sites for future generations.

The American Revolutionary War began in April 1775 following years of growing resentment towards the British Parliament and the King of England over the relationship of the North American colonies with London. This included a series of grievances including colonial representation in parliament, access to western lands off limits to Americans since the Royal Proclamation of 1763, and taxation of the colonies, among other issues. Tensions further increased in the early 1770's as British troops were sent to the colonies to ensure the acquiescence of an increasingly rebellious and vocal colonial leadership in protests of royal policies. Additional British regiments were sent to Boston to enforce the Coercive Acts following the destruction of West India Company cargo in Boston Harbor by the Sons of Liberty during the "Boston Tea Party." The British crown appointed Sir Thomas Gage as the Governor of Massachusetts and dissolved the colonial legislature to impose direct royal rule. This resulted in the mobilization of many northeastern colonies in the form of "Minute Man" units, Coast Guards, or other militias in fear of similar acts of martial law. When the legislature of Virginia showed solidarity with Massachusetts they too were dissolved by the Royal Governor, Lord Dunmore. General Gage's efforts to confiscate public and private weapon stores belonging to town militias in the vicinity of Boston in late 1774 and early 1775 resulted in increased local resentment. These resentments boiled over on April 19, 1775 and British troops fired on town militia at Lexington, Massachusetts. The fighting at Lexington and nearby Concord signaled the first time English North American colonists returned fire on British government forces, sparking events that ultimately lead to the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783).

During the first year of the Revolutionary War, American forces enjoyed some initial successes, including those at the Battle of Lexington and Concord (April 19, 1775), the taking of Fort Ticonderoga (May 10, 1775), the Battle of Bunker Hill (June 17, 1775), and the successful Siege of Boston that resulted in British evacuation of the city on March 17, 1776. The following year turned in favor of the British, who brought their forces to bear on the rebellious Thirteen Colonies. The American Army was defeated, and nearly destroyed, during the Battle of Long Island (August 27, 1776) but General George Washington was able to evacuate his remaining forces to Manhattan where they were able to defeat a subsequent British assault during the Battle of Harlem Heights (September 16, 1776). After losing New York City, the lower Hudson River, and much of New Jersey to the British, General Henry Clinton led an expedition that conquered Newport, Rhode Island in December of 1776. Although the Colonies had announced their independence on July 4,

1776 it was not clear these “United States” would survive the year. It was largely due to General Washington’s victories at Trenton (December 26, 1776, January 2, 1777) and the Battle of Princeton (January 3, 1777) that allowed the American Army to remain in the field and fight another year. It was within this context that New York’s British Governor William Tryon proposed the Danbury Expedition (April 25 – 28, 1777) to destroy American military stores stockpiled, during which the Battle of Ridgefield (April 27, 1777) was fought.

II. Preservation & Documentation of Battlefield Sites

Preservation

The long-term preservation goals set by the Ridgefield Historical Society (RHS) are to raise public awareness of the existence of the battlefield site and its historical significance through battlefield research, lectures, educational programs, publications, and community-based preservation initiatives. The immediate goal is to identify potential Battlefield Boundary and Core areas to be confirmed through subsequent battlefield archeological surveys and to eventually nominate the Battle of Ridgefield to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

Battlefield surveys are an important aspect of historic preservation, as many of them are destroyed or negatively impacted through failure to identify their locations and/or significance. Many battlefields might be preserved if the property owner or community were aware of their existence and were informed of their significance and their potential contribution to a broader understanding and appreciation of American history. Preserved battlefields and related historical sites can add to a community’s sense of identity and foster a greater interest in history and preservation efforts. The identification, documentation, and mapping of a battlefield’s historical and cultural resources are an essential first step for preservation efforts. Another important step in this direction will be the eventual formulation of a National Register of Historic Places nomination associated with the Battle of Ridgefield (April 27, 1777).

Documentation

The first steps in documenting a battlefield is to identify and delineate the extent of the battlefield based on terrain (e.g., hills, swamps, rivers and other natural terrain features relevant to the battle), the distribution of battle-related objects (e.g., musket balls, cannonballs, firearms/firearm parts, dropped and broken equipment) associated with critical terrain features,

relevant cultural features (e.g., roads, stonewalls, bridges, towns, houses and fortifications from the time of the battle), and an assessment of the physical and visual integrity of the battlefield. This process requires establishing a boundary around the battlefield that encompasses all relevant battle-related artifacts and cultural and physical features into an appropriately scaled topographic base map using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The delineated battlefield boundary must be defensible based on historical and archeological evidence (i.e., documents, field survey, terrain analysis and archeological surveys), and encompass legitimate historical resources. The three boundaries are created for a battlefield include:

- Battlefield Boundary: Currently understood boundary of the battlefield
- Core Area: Defines the area of direct combat
- Potential National Register of Historic Places Boundary: Contains only those portions of the battlefield that have retained integrity.

The Battlefield Boundary is a concept recently introduced in the NPS ABPP's revised Battlefield Survey Manual to replace the earlier concept of the Study Area (Figure 1: Battle of Ridgefield Battlefield Boundary). A weakness of the original concept of the battlefield "study area" was that it was too broad and vague as it was defined as the furthest extent of the battlefield. Many grantees equated the "study area" to the Project Area or Vicinity Area of a general study which may include buffers in the boundary of land that really had little value to understanding the battlefield and served to devalue the historical resource. In addition, many investigators used this term to indicate that there was no historic value outside of the Core Area of the battlefield. For these reasons, the ABPP changed the term to indicate that the battlefield boundary is indeed the currently understood boundary of the battlefield.

The NPS ABPP has developed an approach to research, document, and map battlefields that has proven highly successful.² These methods were originally developed for Civil War battlefields and later applied to many Revolutionary War battlefields. In New England, this methodology was applied to seventeenth century battlefields of the Pequot War (1636-1637) and King Philip's War (1675-1676) as well as War of 1812 battlefield sites. The methods outlined in Chapter V. Methods, Site Identification & Documentation have proven highly successful in

² American Battlefield Protection Program, *Battlefield Survey Manual* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, revised 2007).

documenting seventeenth century and War of 1812 battlefields, and will be effective in documenting the Battle of Ridgefield.

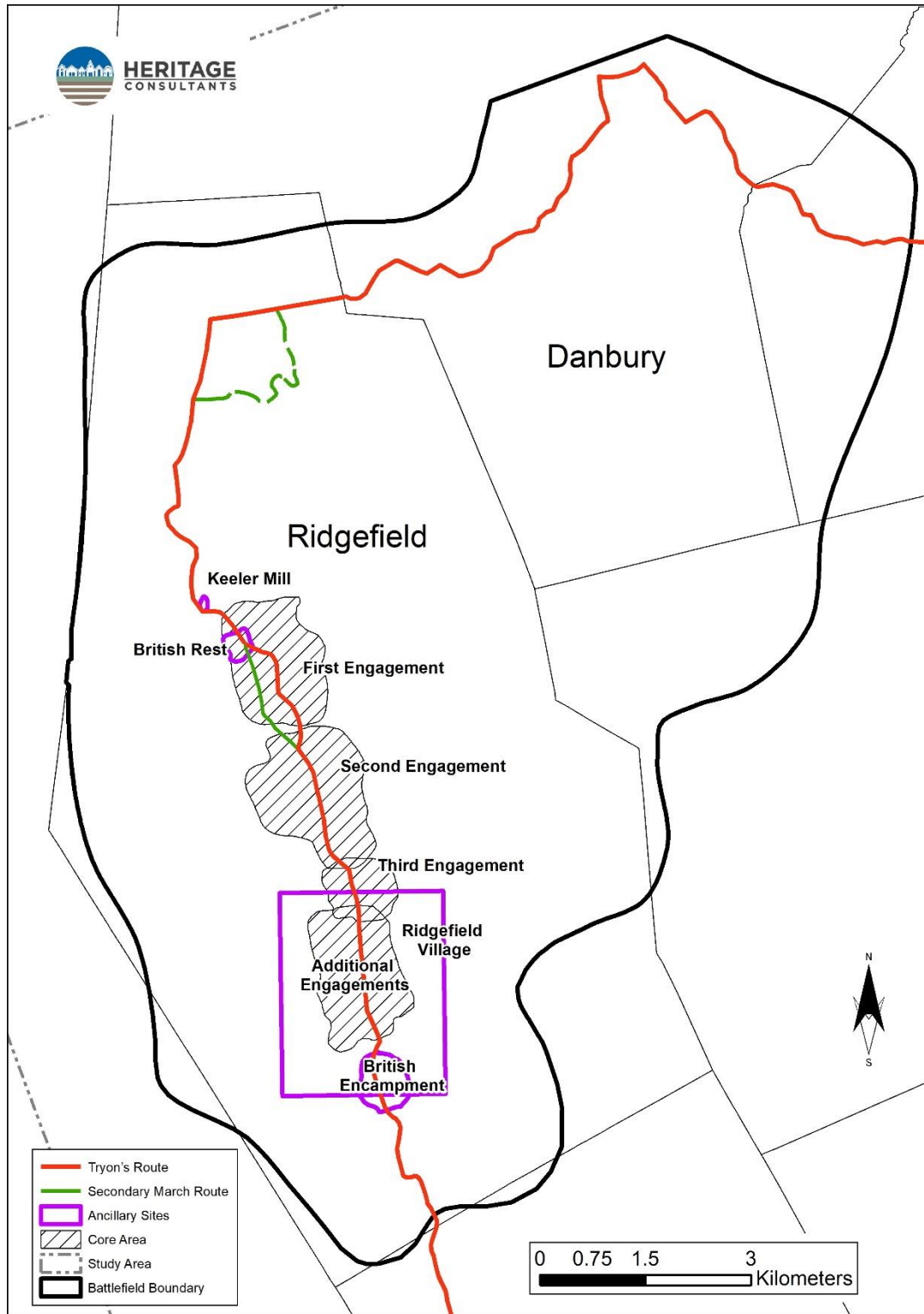


Figure 1: Battle of Ridgefield Battlefield Boundary

Defining Battlefield Boundary and Core Areas

Defining the Battlefield Boundary and Core Area(s) of the battlefield site is a critical part of the documentation process.³ The battlefield boundary, also referred to as the Study Area, is defined as the area that encompasses the ground over which units maneuvered in preparation for combat and within which combat action(s) took place. The Battlefield Boundary area functions as the tactical context and visual setting of the battlefield. The natural features and contours on relevant USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle maps are used to outline the battlefield Boundary and include those locations that directly contributed to the development and conclusion of the battle. The Battlefield Boundary should include the following:

- Core Areas of combat
- locations of all deployed units of the combatants on the field, even reserves
- preliminary skirmishing if it led directly to the battle, and
- logistical areas of the armies (supply trains, hospitals, ammunition dumps, etc.).

The Battlefield Boundary is restricted to the immediate flow of battle after one side or the other has moved to initiate combat. For example, in terms of the Battle of Ridgefield, the battlefield boundary begins at the town's eastern border with Danbury on the present-day George Washington Highway. This is because General Tryon's forces followed that route during their march from Danbury to their ships anchored off Cedar Point in present-day Westport, Connecticut. The fighting associated with the Battle of Ridgefield began on the morning of April 27, 1777 when the British began to receive scattered musket fire along their route of withdrawal from Danbury from behind areas of cover, including stone walls, trees, thickets, houses and outbuildings. The skirmishing that took place along the present-day George Washington Highway in Ridgebury constitutes the initiation of the fighting that occurred during the Battle of Ridgefield and, therefore, the battlefield's eastern boundary. The battlefield boundary encompasses George Washington Highway to Ridgebury Village, south along Ridgebury Road to North Salem Road (Route 116), to Main Street (Route 35) through Ridgefield Village including all areas between High Ridge Ave to the west and East Ridge Road to the east, south along Wilton Road (Route 33) until reaching the northern border to the Town of Wilton (Figure 1: Battle of Ridgefield Battlefield Boundary).⁴

³ ABPP. *Battlefield Survey Manual*. 28-29.

⁴ See Chapter III: Historical Context.

The Core Area as identified by the NPS should always fall within the Battlefield Boundary. (Figure 1: Battle of Ridgefield Battlefield Boundary). The cultural and terrain features and contours on the USGS 7.5 series topographic quadrangle help to define a Core Area(s), which may encompass the areas of direct conflict and where casualties were sustained. Natural barriers, such as rivers, creeks, swamps, hills and ridges often restrained or facilitated the movement of the armies, sometimes providing a natural or topographical boundary for the battlefield. Generally, Battlefield Boundaries can be reasonably well defined in Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields based on better documentation and maps compared to earlier seventeenth century Pequot War or King Philip's War battlefields. An important aspect of the Battlefield Boundary and Core Area(s) is the delineation of portions of the historical battlefield landscape that still convey a sense of the historical scene (retain visual and physical integrity) and can be preserved. Any areas of the Battlefield Boundary or Core Area that have been impacted or otherwise compromised by modern development, erosion, or other destructive forces and can no longer provide a feeling of the historical setting, are excluded from areas of integrity. However, some battlefields in suburban areas may still retain physical (i.e. below-ground) integrity, significant artifacts or other archeological information (e.g., campfires, ditches, etc.). In such instances, modern development may affect the feeling of the historical setting but information is present that will contribute to the significance of the battlefield.

III Historical Context

The Campaign of 1777

During the winter of 1776 to 1777 American troops under the command of General George Washington defeated British forces at several engagements in New Jersey at the Battles of Trenton (December 26, 1777), Assunpink Creek (January 2, 1777), and Princeton (January 3, 1777).⁵ Although the British considered these battles minor losses, the Americans desperately needed morale-boosting victories to encourage military reenlistments in a rapidly dwindling army. The Americans suffered significant losses throughout 1776; however, the winter victories over veteran German Hessian mercenaries, British Loyalist troops, and British Regulars fostered a renewed sense that the "United States of America" could win the war.⁶ Through the rest of the winter

⁵ Michael Stephenson, *Patriot Battles: How the War of Independence was Fought* (New York, NY: Harper's Collins Publishers, 2007). 254-266.

⁶ Stephenson, *Patriot Battles*. 32.

General William Howe, Commander-in-Chief of British troops in North America, planned his strategy for the spring campaign of 1777. This included efforts to fortify and hold Newport, Rhode Island, an expedition to take control of the Hudson River and New York, and a campaign to take Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.⁷ Early in the year General Howe received intelligence of American military stores on the Hudson River at Peekskill, New York, and another at a depot in Danbury, Connecticut. These attracted his attention, and he planned the invasion of those depots as well.

On March 23, 1777, General Howe organized a raid on the depot at Peekskill that included 500 British regulars, Loyalist troops and at least two 3-pound cannons from the Royal Artillery.⁸ American General Alexander McDougall's force of 250 Continental and New York Militia forces destroyed whatever military stores they could not remove from the depot and entrenched themselves on nearby Fort Hill before the larger British force entered Peekskill. The British burned what was left of the stores along with mills, warehouses, and military barracks around town. Once local New York militia arrived some light skirmishing began against the British as they marched back to their ships.⁹ The British lost about a dozen troops and claimed victory against the Americans, although the supplies they destroyed at Peekskill were not critical to General Washington's army. The Americans suffered a handful of casualties during the skirmishing and claimed victory by driving the British out of the upper Hudson for the time being and salvaged what they could from the Peekskill depot. With Peekskill neutralized, the British turned their attention to the other Continental supply depot in the region at Danbury, Connecticut.

Planning the Danbury Expedition

Less than a month after the Peekskill Expedition General Howe planned an even more daring raid that involved a 20-mile march deep into American territory in Western Connecticut.¹⁰ Unlike Peekskill, Western Connecticut was more densely populated and could mobilize their militia more rapidly; however the region also was known to harbor loyalist sentiments that General Tryon believed could benefit the British during the expedition to Danbury.¹¹ General Howe

⁷ Stephenson, *Patriot Battles*. 267-269.

⁸ Michael O. Logusz, *With Musket & Tomahawk Volume III: The West Point-Hudson Valley Campaign in the Wilderness War of 1777* (New York, NY: Carrel Books, 2016). 26-27.

⁹ Logusz, *Musket & Tomahawk*. 27-28.

¹⁰ Keith Marshall Jones III, *Farmers Against the Crown: A Comprehensive Account of the Revolutionary War Battle in Ridgefield, Connecticut April 27, 1777* (Tucson, AZ: Connecticut Colonel Publishing Company, 2017). 37-38.

¹¹ Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 22-28.

selected newly commissioned Major-General of Provincials William Tryon to lead the expedition along with Brigadier General Sir William Erskine and Brigadier General James Agnew, both of whom were also veteran British officers.¹² On April 20, 1777, Captain-Lieutenant Archibald Robertson of the Corps of Royal Engineers learned that he would accompany the Danbury Expedition and noted in his journal that “the Rebels had Collected a Great Magazine of Stores and Provision at Danbury in Connecticut” and that “a secret Expedition was set on Foot to Destroy it.”¹³ General Howe authorized an invasion force under Major-General Tryon that was three times the size of the one sent to destroy Peekskill. To keep the mission truly secret, Howe planned a diversionary operation on the Hudson River to draw American attention from the true target.¹⁴

Six British Regiments of Foot stationed around New York were ordered to detach 250 troops each for the Danbury Expedition. Captain Robertson specifically wrote in his journal that the force consisted of “250 men from each of the Following Regts Vzt. The 4th, 15th, 23rd, 27th, 44th, 64th, making 1500 men, also 300 Provincials of Governor Browne’s Corps, a Detachment of Artillery, and 6 3-Pounders and 10 17th Dragoons.”¹⁵ The 4th, 15th, 23rd, 27th, 44th, 64th Regiments of foot each selected their best men, perhaps from their Grenadier and Light Infantry Companies, or even some Pioneers, for the operation for a total of 1,500 British Regulars. To increase his offensive capabilities Major-General Tryon requisitioned a 3-pound cannon of the 4th Royal Artillery that were assigned to each regiment.¹⁶ By 1777, two of these light guns were attached to each Regiment of Foot in North America and were often referred to as the “battalion guns.” These “3-Pounders” were highly mobile, light cannon mounted on gun carriages that were well suited for use along difficult New England roads.¹⁷ Each gun crew consisted of approximately six artillerists, 10 reserve artillerists, and one hired civilian teamster to drive the ox or horse drawn caisson. The artillery used during the expedition included approximately 98 troops. Finally, a small

¹² Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 37.

¹³ Harry Miller Lydenberg, Ed., *Archibald Robertson, Lieutenant General Royal Engineers. His Diaries and Sketches in America, 1762-1780* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1930). 126.

¹⁴ Records of the Admiralty, Naval Forces, Royal Marines, Coastguard, and Related Bodies, National Archives, Kew. Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, Esq., ADM 1/487 f375.

¹⁵ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 126.

¹⁶ Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 33.

¹⁷ These cannons were designed as light battalion guns used for close infantry support. They were moved by a gun crew using ropes and wood shafts like a handcart. A 3-pound gun fired a three-pound (1.4kg) solid ball or the same weight in grape or canister shot. Ammunition was often carried in ox drawn carts. See: Chapter IV: Weaponry, Tactics, Order of Battle; Adrian B. Caruana, *Grasshoppers and Butterflies: The Light 3 Pounders of Pattison and Townshend*. (Ottawa, Canada: Museum Restoration Service, 1979).

detachment of 10 or more mounted troops from the 17th Light Dragoons accompanied Tryon's force to serve as scouts and the advance guard in Danbury.¹⁸

A total of 300 Loyalist troops supplemented Tryon's numbers and were under the command of Major Monfort Browne, who was the former governor of the Bahamas. The regiment included men hailing from New York and New Jersey, but also a core from Connecticut. Some of the Connecticut loyalists had been residents of the very towns Tryon planned to march through on his way to Danbury. Major Browne argued early on of the need to recruit loyal colonists into the King's Army as they were cheaper than German mercenaries and had a vested interest in fighting for their country and homes. Browne's unit, referred to as the "Prince of Wales' American Regiment," or more commonly as "Browne's Corps," was organized in November 1776. At that time the Corps numbered 1,740 troops making it larger than the standard British Line regiment. Browne's Corps was first tested during the March 1777 Peekskill depot raid and was considered an important component of the Danbury Expedition. Although they were considered less disciplined and experienced than British Regulars, the Loyalists served as the vanguard of Tryon's force. General Tryon expected that other loyal Connecticut citizens would be moved to join his army at the sight of their neighbors returning at the head of the King's army.¹⁹

Within a day, British troops in New York City equipped themselves and loaded onto naval transports for the journey to Connecticut although the destination remained a secret to the men. General Howe, wrote Philip Stephens, Secretary to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, regarding the impending Danbury Expedition. On April 21 he reported that troops from "several regiments were embarked in 12 transports" destined for Connecticut. Howe noted that he authorized a diversionary expedition with a similar number of ships to sail up the Hudson River towards Peekskill, New York that same day. He wrote that "A diversion was thought fit to be made at the same time up the North River, 12 transports in which a small corps of troops are embarked

¹⁸ A small contingent of Dragoons were attached to Tryon's Army and their numbers vary in period sources including 10 from Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers, 12 from General Tyron's aid-de-camp, Captain Hutchinson, and "a subalterns command" from the *London Chronicle* which was around 17 troopers. See: Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 126; "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 284; "News," *London Chronicle*, (London, England), June 5, 1777 - June 7, 1777. 514.

¹⁹ Robert F. McDevitt, *Connecticut Attacked: A British Viewpoint, Tryon's Raid on Danbury*, (Chester, CT: Pequot Press, 1974). 20-21; R. F. A. Fabel, "Monfort Browne's Corps: The Prince of Wales American Volunteers" in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Autumn 1992, Volume 70, Number 283 (Autumn 1992). 157-160.

attended by the Ambuscade, Mermaid, Daphne, Rose and Dependence Galley have been appointed for that service.”²⁰ On April 24, 1777, the small fleet of transports and sloops enroute to Connecticut were joined by “2 transports with Provincial troops from Oyster Bay being part of Governor Browne’s corps.”²¹ The naval force continued east through Long Island Sound, sailed past Norwalk and east along the Connecticut coast towards Compo Beach in the town of Fairfield.

Around this time the diversionary fleet of 12 transports sailed up the Hudson River and anchored in view of Dobbs Ferry on April 24. The *London Evening-Post* informed its readers that General Howe had targeted “some very considerable magazines in Croatland’s [sic] Manor... The object was important, but the execution has proved abortive. He first sent a party up the North River, but they did nothing.”²² The *Evening-Post* described the attempt as a major expedition unaware that it was in fact a feint to draw the attention of the Americans away from General Howe’s true target; Danbury, Connecticut. Considering the British raid on Peekskill a month earlier, General McDougall and other American officers believed the enemy transports anchored south of Dobbs Ferry were a real threat. McDougall sent express riders towards Massachusetts and Connecticut requesting reinforcements for what appeared to be an impending invasion.

April 25, 1777: Disembarking British Forces at Compo

Connecticut coast guard militia companies noticed the presence of another British fleet of at least 20 ships in Long Island Sound on the afternoon of Friday, April 25, 1777. Brigadier General Gold Selleck Silliman of the 4th Brigade Connecticut Militia reported to Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumbull that around 12:30 PM he “was informed that a fleet of shipping were close in with the land off Norwalk” and immediately investigated. From atop Compo Hill overlooking Long Island Sound General Silliman “could see the fleet” but “it was sometime before I was satisfied they intended to stop here.” The general counted “24 sail in the whole 16 of them ships” and “sent out immediately for all the Companies in the 4th Regt. and for the rest of the Brigade to come in as fast as possible and sent also an express to General Wooster to acquaint him with it.”²³

²⁰ Records of the Admiralty, Naval Forces, Royal Marines, Coastguard, and Related Bodies, National Archives, Kew. Admiral Viscount Howe to Philip Stephens, Esq., ADM 1/487 f375; Damon Greenleaf Douglass, *The Bridge Not Taken: Benedict Arnold Outwitted* (Westport, CT: Westport Historical Society, 2002). 4.

²¹ Records of the Admiralty, Naval Forces, Royal Marines, Coastguard, and Related Bodies, National Archives, Kew. Captain’s Log of H.M.’s Sloop Senegal, Capt. Roger Curtis, ADM 51/885; McDevitt, *Connecticut Attacked*. 21.:

²² “News,” *London Evening Post* (London, UK), June 12, 1777. 1.

²³ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

A total of 14 British troop transports and several other armed sloops, brigs, and one hospital ship anchored off the towns of Norwalk and Fairfield. At 5:30 PM the transports moved closer to Cedar Point and anchored off Compo Beach; the armed sloops anchored nearby to cover the troop landings.²⁴ Additional armed sloops were placed at the mouth of the Saugatuck River, around Compo Beach, and as far east as Black Rock anchoring within sight of the American fort there (Figure 2. British Landing at Cedar Point). At 6:00 PM the first wave of British soldiers

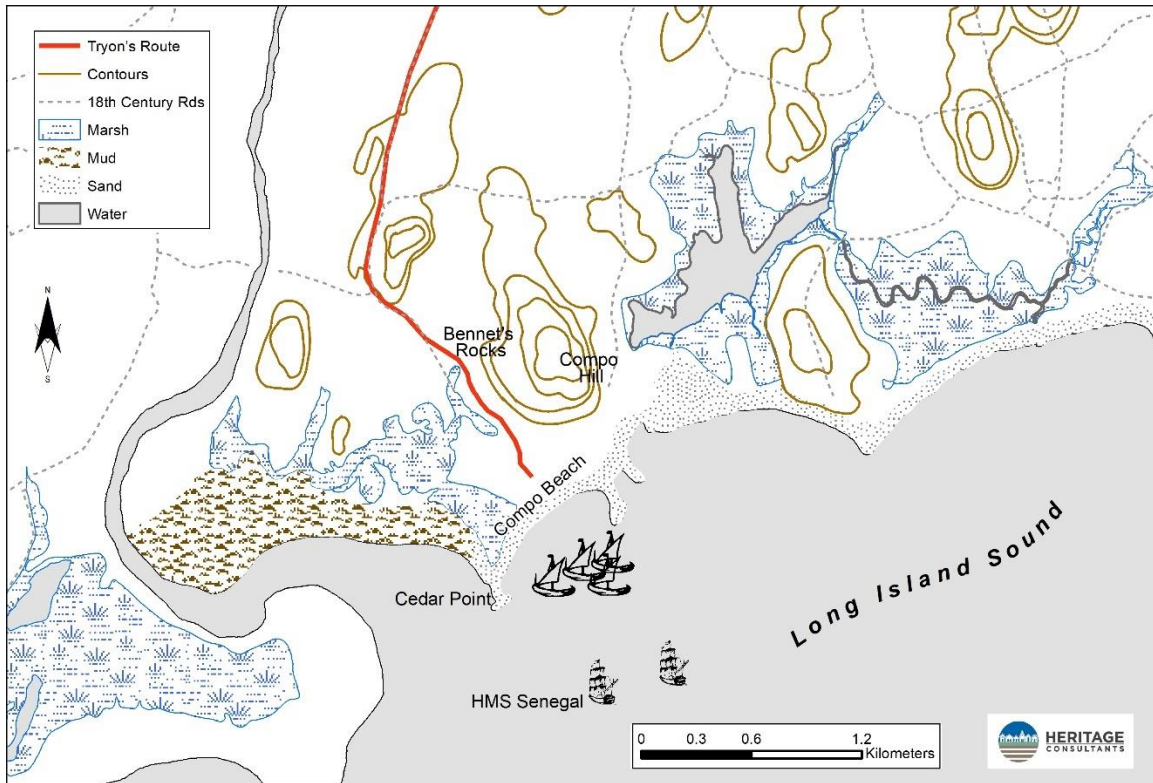


Figure 2: British Landing at Cedar Point

disembarked from the transports. They employed flat bottom boats and moved ashore under cover of the armed ships anchored nearby. According to Captain Roger Curtis of the Sloop *Senegal*, 1,800 troops disembarked in two divisions, in about an hour's time with no American resistance. Captain Curtis reported that "At 6 pm landed the 1st Division, At ½ past landed the 2nd Division. At 7 pm completed the Landing"²⁵ Brigadier-General Silliman was atop Compo Hill where he counted some "40 or 50 boats manned in order to land a Number unknown" and sent an express dispatch to General David Wooster in New Haven assessing him of the situation as British troops

²⁴ Kew. Captain's Log H.M.'s Sloop *Senegal*, ADM 51/885.

²⁵ Kew. Captain's Log H.M.'s Sloop *Senegal*, ADM 51/885.

advanced on the heights.²⁶ Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers was among the first to land and recalled that “We immediately march’d and took Possession of two hills call’d Compo hill and Bennet’s Rocks about 1 ½ miles from the Beach.”²⁷ The British quickly landed their infantry and secured the heights north of Compo Beach to protect the beach as the more cumbersome artillery pieces, wagons, and baggage landed. Lieutenant Robertson noted that “Here we halted untill the Artillery etc. was landed, which was about 11 a night. We began our march in a half an hour in one Column on the Danbury Road by Reading”²⁸

As the British disembarked at Compo Beach General Silliman sent a flurry of dispatches to 4th Brigade, Connecticut Militia commanders to mobilize their men. The brigade consisted of units from Fairfield County that included the 4th Regiment Connecticut Militia, 9th Regiment Connecticut Militia, 13th Regiment Connecticut Militia, and 16th Regiment Connecticut Militia.²⁹ The 4th Brigade was ordered to rendezvous at the Town of Fairfield which was thought to be the intended target. The first United States Continental forces on the scene were 20 soldiers of the 6th Connecticut Continental Line under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel David Dimon, a Fairfield native who was in the area overseeing recruitment and administering smallpox vaccinations of his men.³⁰ The Continentals were joined by a company of around 50 Connecticut Militia, perhaps members of the 4th Brigade, to monitor the movement of the British troops massing around Compo Hill and the beach.³¹ Dimon’s troops took position along the Country Road between the Green’s Farm Meeting House and Saugatuck River where they were joined by local armed citizens in anticipation of a British advance along Compo Road.³²

²⁶ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Douglas, *Bridge Not Taken*. 8.

²⁷ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 126.

²⁸ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

²⁹ Henry P. Johnston, Ed. *The Record of Connecticut Men in the Military and Naval Service During the War of the Revolution 1775-1783* (Hartford, CT: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1889). 428-487; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 58.

³⁰ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Johnston, *Record of Connecticut Men*. 205.

³¹ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; McDevitt, *Connecticut Attacked*. 32.

³² Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Douglas, *Bridge Not Taken*. 8.

As described by Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers, the British army advanced in a single column during their 20-mile march from Cedar Point to Danbury. The 300 troops of Browne's Corps, which included Connecticut loyalists, marched at the head of the column.³³ Major General Tryon expected significant loyalist support in western Connecticut which influenced his decision to place Browne's unit, the "Prince of Wales' American Regiment," in this position of honor. These men would be the first Royal troops encountered by the people of Connecticut, loyalists and rebels alike, during the march to Danbury. The British infantry followed in two brigades, General Agnew's and General Erskine's Brigades, each containing 750 British Regulars. The six artillery pieces with full complement of 16-man gun crews were divided evenly between the brigades. Each brigade was trailed by ammunition wagons and other baggage driven by civilian teamsters. The 17th Dragoons may have guarded the flanks and/or served as an advanced guard.

Marching north at 11:30 PM in the dark along Compo Road, the British column came within range of Lieutenant-Colonel Dimon's company of American troops who were posted along the Country Road. General Silliman reported to Governor Trumbull that "A small skirmish happened this night between a few of this party and the enemy."³⁴ Lieutenant Robertson noted how the column had only marched a mile and a half when "we received a few Stragglings shots from the sides of the Road which caused a little confusion amongst the Provincials etc. in the Front."³⁵ When the Americans fired from their positions along the side of the road into the British column Browne's Corps took the brunt of the gunfire, which wounded Captain Daniel Lyman of New Haven along with five or six enlisted men, all of whom were likely from western Connecticut.³⁶ The Americans retreated and the wounded men from Browne's Corps were carried back to Compo Beach and taken aboard the *Senegal* the next morning.³⁷

The British column continued their nighttime march towards the town of Weston and as they approached the center of town in the early hours of April 26 they were again fired on by

³³ This assertion is based on the notes of Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers. See: Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

³⁴ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Douglas, *Bridge Not Taken*. 9.

³⁵ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

³⁶ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Douglas, *Bridge Not Taken*. 8-9.

³⁷ Kew. Captain's Log H.M.'s Sloop *Senegal*, ADM 51/885.

Americans who were concealed by the cover of darkness. According to one British officer “About 7 Miles from the Sea We were attacked by a small ambuscade from a morass, but we soon dislodged them, killed 5-& took a few Prisoners & proceeded with very little opposition”³⁸ It is unclear how many Connecticut men were involved in the ambush outside of Weston or whether they belonged to any organized militia unit. Perhaps it was Lieutenant-Colonel Dimon’s company, others of the 4th Brigade, or armed citizens, but nonetheless they stood their ground long enough to exchange gunfire with British troops who were forced to “dislodge” them. There was no other reported fighting during that evening’s march through Redding, Bethel, and on towards the US depot at Danbury (Figure 3: Danbury Expedition Map, April 25 – 28, 1777).

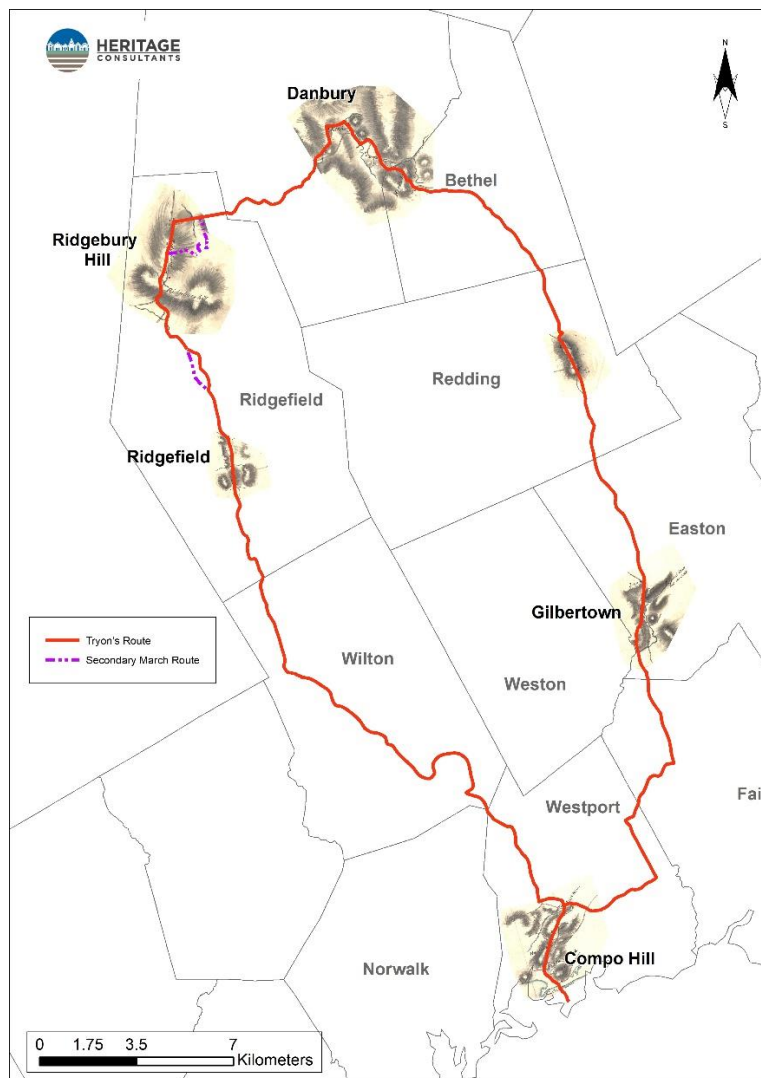


Figure 3: Danbury Expedition Map, April 25 – 28, 1777

³⁸ “Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk” in Benjamin Franklin Stevens, Ed. *B.F. Steven's facsimiles of manuscripts in European archives relating to America, 1773-1783: with descriptions, editorial notes, collations, references and translations* (London, UK: Malby & Sons, 1889-95). 2.

April 26, 1777: British Arrival at Danbury

Colonel Jediah Huntington, commander of the 1st Connecticut Regiment Continental Line, 2nd Connecticut Brigade was detailed with the defense of the Continental stores warehoused at Danbury. The British ruse to attack Peekskill succeeded in drawing out Continental troops stationed in the vicinity of Peekskill including nearly three quarters of the 1st Connecticut Regiment. On April 25 the majority of the 1st Connecticut marched west from Danbury towards Peekskill to support General McDougall's forces on the Hudson unaware that the true target was the Danbury depot. This left Colonel Huntington with around 50 Continental soldiers under his command and a contingent of militiamen under Ensign Thomas Starr detailed to guard the military stores.³⁹ On the morning of Saturday, April 26, 1777 at 3:00 AM, Colonel Huntington received the first of several dispatches from General Silliman informing him of the British landing at Compo Beach.⁴⁰ Enclosed were orders to 4th Brigade commanders, Colonel Joseph Plat Cooke of the 16th Connecticut Militia and Colonel Increase Mosely of the 13th Connecticut Militia, that "as soon as you get 20 men of a Company together send them on immediately under a proper officer, and send on the rest as fast as possible. Bring all the ammunition you can get."⁴¹ Huntington quickly sent Brigadier-General McDougall at Peekskill an express dispatch informing him of the British landing at Fairfield and that he faced "a great want of ammunition" at Danbury as well as musket gunflints. He noted that he only had around 100 men at his command after "double the number marched...on their way to Peekskill" days earlier when the British decoy fleet appeared around Dobbs Ferry, New York.⁴² Around 150 troops from the 4th Brigade, 16th Connecticut Militia under the command of Major Nehemiah Beardsley likely arrived in Danbury early on April 26 in response to General Wooster and Silliman's marching orders.⁴³ It appears that the 16th Connecticut Militia remained in Danbury instead of continuing further south. It is possible that Colonel Huntington retained these troops to help move the Continental stores in the event the British marched north. As militiamen from other regiments arrived in Danbury it is possible they too assisted in the hasty evacuation.

³⁹ Darley. *Call to Arms*. 17, 219.

⁴⁰ "Hartford, May 5" *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, CT), May 5, 1777. 3.

⁴¹ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group 360, Microfilm 247, Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, Volume 3. 179-180.

⁴² NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 179-180

⁴³ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Johnston, Ed. *The Record of Connecticut Men*. 437.

Around sunrise on Saturday, April 26, 1777, Brigadier-General Silliman anxiously awaited the arrival of the 20-man companies from the 4th Brigade regiments to help defend Fairfield, the presumed target. Recently enlisted Continental Line recruits were ordered to fall in with the closest militia company, presumably within the town where they resided at the time.⁴⁴ This was the case of Private Joseph Plumb Martin of Milford, Connecticut, who was discharged from the Connecticut State Troops in December 1776 and reenlisted in the 8th Connecticut Line on April 22, 1777, along with dozens of other men. He was at home on April 25 as Tryon's army landed and Martin described how "the militia were generally turned out and sent to settle the account with them; the newly enlisted soldiers went with the militia."⁴⁵ In Martin's case, he was home in Milford and likely joined the 2nd Connecticut Militia Regiment, 2nd Brigade, which included Milford militia, while other Continental recruits fell in with local militia companies adding a modest amount of men to growing American forces.⁴⁶ General Silliman had no sooner paraded his small force of around 120 troops, when intelligence arrived that the British marched north and were seven miles ahead on the road to Danbury.⁴⁷ The 4th Brigade marched in pursuit and dispatched another express rider to Colonel Huntington to give as much advance warning as possible. The message arrived a few hours later advising Colonel Huntington of the large enemy force enroute from Fairfield and with little time to spare, American forces at Danbury worked to move whatever stores they could out of town.⁴⁸ Colonel Huntington and Major Beardsley decided it was impossible to make a stand against the incoming superior British force which they estimated to be around 2,000 troops. Even with the prospects of reinforcements the 200 American troops at

⁴⁴ A review of the rosters of Connecticut Continental Line Regiments from 1777 indicates dozens of men enlisted in April of 1777 and were likely on leave at their homes prior to having to report to their regiments, as was the case of Joseph Plumb Martin. Some of these men may have been awaiting smallpox inoculation which was overseen by Colonel Philip Burr Bradley of the 5th Connecticut Line. Although nearly every Connecticut Line regiment had recruits with enlistment dates between April 1 and April 25, 1777 only several regiments have specific details recorded in the rosters that identify soldiers as having participated in the Danbury Expedition and/or Battle of Ridgebury while others indicate some of the men fought on April 28 only. These regiments include the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th Connecticut Line Regiments. Those men listed were typically casualties either killed, wounded, missing or deserted while those who were not casualties have no indication that they fought such as Joseph Plumb Martin of the 8th CT Line. For examples see: Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. (3rd CT) Bartlet, Noah; Bath John; Taylor, William, 171, 178; (4th CT) Bingham, Bartholom; Coledrake, James; Townsend, Hendrick; Whiting, John; Wampee, John, 185-186, 190; (5th CT) Lloyd, Clement; Coggen, David; Dean, Bradley; Noble, Francis; Noble, Benjamin, 194, 197, 200; (7th CT) Hall, Simeon, 223; (8th CT) Caesar, William; Martin, Joseph; 233, 236.

⁴⁵ Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of A Revolutionary Soldier: Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of Joseph Plumb Martin* (New York, NY: First Signet Classic Printing, 2001). 54.

⁴⁶ Johnston, Ed. *The Record of Connecticut Men*. 432.

⁴⁷ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

⁴⁸ "Hartford, April 28," *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, CT), May 5, 1777. 3. "Hartford, May 5" *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, CT), May 5, 1777. 3.

Danbury lacked ammunition had perhaps only a cartridge or two per soldier, and little hope of defending the town.⁴⁹ Huntington and Cooke chose to save what stores they could and redeploy their troops to the heights outside of town once the British arrived.

The British column came to a halt at Redding at around 12:00 PM and rested after the long march over rough roads in the rain. Here, General Tryon encountered the loyalist support he had expected. The officers were said to have dined with loyalists in town while British troops took those townspeople prisoner who were accused of being rebels.⁵⁰ After resting in town for an hour and a half, British forces marched through Bethel and on towards Danbury. Colonel Huntington's command evacuated as many Continental stores as possible although they had no real means of transportation other than a few wagons. Some materials were hidden around the town or in the immediate outskirts. At 4:00 PM Colonel Huntington penned his final report to General McDougall in Peekskill noting that "The Enemy just entered the Town, and I am reduced to the hard necessity of leaving the plain, and the greatest part of the Stores, and repairing to the Heights with about 50 Continental troops and as many again Militia....the Enemy are said to be 2000." Huntington noted that no reinforcements arrived and therefore "I did not think it prudent to stay in the Town to make any opposition, as the place is incompassed with heights and the number of the Enemy so superior."⁵¹ That afternoon word of the British march on Danbury reached the New York border, and Westchester County militia companies mobilized several miles west of the Ridgefield line. Further to the northwest, local tradition recounts the efforts of 16-year-old Sybil Ludington of Dutchess County who alerted members of her father's 7th Regiment Dutchess County Militia throughout the evening of April 26 to the British at Danbury.⁵² Early the next day elements of the 7th Dutchess County Militia marched from Pawling, New York towards Connecticut where they likely linked up with American troops massing north of Danbury.

Some of the advanced British guard, likely the 17th Dragoons and mounted elements of Browne's Corps, could have been the troops who entered the town around 4:00 PM as noted by

⁴⁹ "Hartford, May 5" *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, CT), May 5, 1777. 3.

⁵⁰ Douglas, *Bridge Not Taken*. 10.

⁵¹ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 182-183

⁵² Stephen Darley, *Call to Arms: The Patriot Militia in the 1777 British Raid on Danbury, Connecticut* (Las Vegas, NV: Stephen Darley, 2015). 71-81; Paula D. Hunt, "Sybil Ludington, the Female Paul Revere: The Making of a Revolutionary War Heroine" in *New England Quarterly*, Volume 88, Number 2 (June 2015). 187-222.

Colonel Huntington. According to Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers, the main British column arrived in Danbury around “5 o’clock in the Evening, having pass’d through a very mountainous difficult Country.” He noted that British forces “took Several Prisoners in Arms along the Road mounted on horseback” on their march; these may have been American scouts or unlucky Connecticut militiamen trying to report to their companies.⁵³ The British encountered little resistance from American forces as they entered the town; the 50 Continental Soldiers of the 1st Connecticut Line and about 150 men of the 16th Connecticut Militia withdrew to the surrounding hills. Their presence was confirmed by Robertson who wrote that “The Rebels Appeared about Danbury in a body of 200 Scattered, they fired a few Shots at a Distance” which “Wounded 3 of the 23rd while we were taking possession of the Rising Grounds about the Village.”⁵⁴ In another action, Ensign Starr’s 18-man militia company, part of the depot guard, engaged British troops in town. When the fighting was over only two men from the unit escaped; two others were killed, one was wounded, and 13 taken prisoner.⁵⁵ It is unclear if the British suffered any casualties in the skirmish.

When British troops entered Danbury Village and marched along Main Street, they took musket fire from five Americans barricaded in Captain Ezra Starr’s House on the west side of the street.⁵⁶ Robertson described how “7 Daring Rascals fired at us from a house that flank’d the street we were drawn up in” and soon after “Two Companys of the 15th Attack’d them and put them to Death Burning the house.”⁵⁷ Months later, Ebenezer White of Danbury testified that his house was taken over by British officers after the burning of Starr’s house and that one officer, “the Earl of Falklands Son” told him that a number of men, including “two Negros” that were found in the house were killed and the house set on fire.⁵⁸ Of the two African American defenders, one man was named Ned, who was enslaved by Samuel Smith of Redding and said to be “a very Zealous friend to the American cause.”⁵⁹ The identity of the other man remains unknown. White also testified that the officer went on to explain how this was the standard policy of the British Army

⁵³ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

⁵⁴ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

⁵⁵ Darley. *Call to Arms*. 17.

⁵⁶ James Benedict Hill, *History of Danbury, Conn. 1864-1896* (New York, NY: Burr Printing House, 1896). 67.

⁵⁷ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

⁵⁸ Connecticut State Library (CSL), Connecticut (CT) Archives: Revolutionary War, First Series, XXXVII:231.

⁵⁹ Nearly nine months after the battle, Samuel Smith of Redding, CT petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly for compensation for his loss as CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, XXXVII:229-230.

“that it was their Constant Practice there they found People Shut up in a House & firing upon them...to kill them & burn the house & c.”⁶⁰ This policy was first employed at Captain Starr’s house on Main Street in Danbury and it would be repeated over the next two days as they returned to their ships. After neutralizing any American threats and securing the town, the British searched for and collecting military stores. It appears that General Tryon intended to take his time in Danbury that afternoon, but British officers received intelligence that American militia forces had gathered nearby and were growing in numbers. This convinced the general to march at daybreak.

General Silliman’s small contingent of 120 men from the 4th Brigade marched hard in pursuit of the British column but never overtook them. Approximately four miles to the south of Redding, Benedict Arnold, Brigadier-General of Continental troops, caught up with General Silliman on the Danbury Road; he may have assumed command at this time. At Redding General Silliman reported that other men had gathered there and that “we found our force was increased to about 600 men.”⁶¹ Other units who had been marching toward Fairfield redeployed to Danbury also began to arrive at Redding which accounted for the dramatic increase in Silliman’s forces. The assembled units under Silliman and Arnold rested for a while in increasingly wet and stormy conditions as evening approached. Major-General David Wooster, Commander of Connecticut Militia forces arrived on the scene shortly after and assumed command of the growing body of American troops, the majority of which were likely men of 4th Brigade Connecticut Militia. Unbeknownst to the American commanders, Tryon’s force had reached Danbury. General Wooster sent a dispatch from Redding to Brigadier General James Wadsworth of the Second Brigade in Durham, Connecticut and reported that he had 600 American forces under his command compared to an estimated 2,000 British troops. He advised General Wadsworth that “we have every Reason to apprehend they will destroy our Magazine at Danbury as there is very few Men there. It is thought they will return this way or, take the Road Lead^g to Norwalk, as there is a quantity of Stores at Wilton which lies on the road.” Wooster ordered Wadsworth to “muster half your Brigade in Detachments, as fast as they come in to Saugatauck Bridge between Fairfield & Norwalk, & take Posts on each side of the River.” By positioning half of the 2nd Brigade Connecticut Militia around Saugatuck Bridge, Wooster could quickly deploy those troops anywhere to the south of the

⁶⁰ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, XXXVII:231.

⁶¹ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

British should they march towards the shoreline as he predicted. Before closing the dispatch General Wooster noted that “A smoke arises this moment over Danbury, which we suppose is from the stores on fire.”⁶² Even in the rain it was clear that the British were in Danbury.

During the evening of April 26, the British set fire to the American supplies they collected and loaded selected military goods and provisions in their wagons.⁶³ A heavy rain persisted throughout the evening, which may have hampered British efforts, but the fires continued to spread nevertheless. Later that night Connecticut troops under the command of Major-General Wooster arrived at the town of Bethel at around midnight. According to General Silliman the troops halted “2 ½ miles south of Danbury exceedingly fatigued as the roads were full of mud and water and the night extremely dark.”⁶⁴ The rainstorm soaked American troops and ammunition during their march, rendering their flintlock arms useless.⁶⁵ Individuals and elements of western Connecticut militia companies rendezvous at Bethel throughout the evening, swelling American troop strength to over 600 infantry total.⁶⁶ The American troops gathered at Bethel noticed flames from the burning structures and military stores to the north at Danbury. Silliman wrote that “we found that we had come too late, and that the town [Danbury] was then in flames.”⁶⁷

April 27, 1777: British March to Ridgefield

During the early hours of April 27, 1777, Brigadier-General Silliman received word from Colonel Huntington of the 1st Connecticut Line informing him that his company of 50 soldiers was “obliged at the approach of the enemy to abandon the town and the greatest part of the stores” warehoused there.⁶⁸ Huntington redeployed his men to a hill situated two miles outside of Danbury, likely to the west of the town center near Lake Kanosia. From there, he coordinated efforts with Wooster, Silliman, and Arnold to the south. Soon after, General Silliman received word from Major Beardsley of the 16th Connecticut Militia, 4th Brigade that his regiment was

⁶² David Wooster to James Wadsworth, Saturday, April 26, 1777. Heritage Auctions, Private Collection.

⁶³ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

⁶⁴ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

⁶⁵ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 191-192.

⁶⁶ There were 600 Connecticut Militia forces at Redding according to Silliman and it appears that additional troops continued to join Wooster and the troops massing at Bethel, therefore it is likely there were more than 600 American troops at Bethel but the exact number is unclear. Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

⁶⁷ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

⁶⁸ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

positioned “on the hills to the northeast with 150 men more” which likely referred to the commanding hill known as Shelter Rock overlooking Danbury.⁶⁹ The 16th Connecticut was well positioned to monitor British troop movements while awaiting commands from Major-General Wooster a few miles south at Bethel.

Western Connecticut militia companies continued to muster in the early hours of April 27, some joining General Wooster to the south at Bethel or Colonel Huntington and Major Beardsley to the north near Danbury. Private John Wood of the 13th Connecticut Militia rushed with his company from Kent, Connecticut to the aid of Danbury and to link up with the rest of their regiment. He noted that on the morning of April 27 the men of Captain Joseph Carter’s Company were required “to march with the rest of S^d Company in the utmost haste on horseback for the relieve of the Town of Danbury when invaded by the British Troops...with Sundry others Leaving our Horses with a guard pursued the Enemy.”⁷⁰ Wood and his companions fell in with the 13th Regiment stationed with the other American forces assembling at Bethel. To the northeast in Litchfield, men from the 17th Connecticut Militia, 6th Brigade mustered for the relief of Danbury “at the usual place of parade by 6 OClock” according to testimony of Solomon Buell; however, the company commander, Captain Solomon Marsh, did not appear until two hours later with no plans to march.⁷¹ Most of the company became impatient waiting for Marsh and fell in with Captain McNeil’s company on the move to Danbury where they likely joined the 16th Connecticut. Militias from most surrounding towns mobilized throughout the day.

In nearby Westchester County, New York, various companies of the 2nd and 3rd Regiment’s Westchester Militia mobilized in the early hours of April 27 alerted to the presence of the British in Danbury. Several companies of the 2nd Westchester Militia, who were under the command of Colonel Thomas Thomas marched from the vicinity of present-day South Salem, east towards Ridgefield Village, which was a little over three miles away.⁷² Companies from the 3rd Westchester

⁶⁹ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

⁷⁰ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, X:306.

⁷¹ In May 1777, Captain Solomon Marsh was tried on charges being negligent of his duty as a Military officer primarily for his long delay in marching his company to Danbury. See: CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, VIII:334.

⁷² The Federal pension records of Benjamin Boughton and David Smith indicate that Captain William Fancher’s Company and Captain Abijah Gilbert’s Company were among the 2nd Westchester Militia companies that mobilized and were at the Battle of Ridgefield. The route the 2nd Regiment Westchester Militia followed included the Old Post

Militia under the command of Colonel Samuel Drake, mustered in North Salem and marched towards Danbury most likely along the North Salem Road (present-day Route 116), north along the Ridgebury Road, and east along the Danbury Road (present-day George Washington Highway). They appear to have reached the outskirts of town before daybreak.⁷³

As dawn approached on the morning of April 27, 1777, Generals Wooster, Arnold, and Silliman were resigned to the loss of the Continental stores at Danbury but devised a plan to attack both the front and rear of Tryon's troops should they march south from town. General Benedict Arnold wrote that at "6 this morning we divided the troops into two divisions" in anticipation of moving at a moment's notice against the British once their route of march was known. Dividing the 600 troops into two divisions at Bethel provided some measure of flexibility to intercept the British column whether they moved back south towards Fairfield or west towards Peekskill, New York.⁷⁴ Major-General Wooster commanded one division of 200 soldiers from the 4th Brigade Connecticut State Militia and likely assumed command of the 200 or more soldiers north of Danbury including elements of the 1st Connecticut Line, 16th Connecticut Militia, 7th Dutchess County Militia among others. It is unclear if Generals' Wooster, Arnold, or Silliman were aware of the 3rd Westchester Militia on the western end of town. The other division under General Arnold and General Silliman included the remaining 400 soldiers of the 4th, 9th, and 13th Connecticut Militia along with other militia troops and volunteers.

In describing the arrangement of American forces at Bethel, General Arnold reported that "One division was stationed on each road, on a cross road where they could support each other" while the officers waited for intelligence regarding British movements.⁷⁵ General Silliman also described posting the troops "on the Road from Danbury down through Wilton in Order to harass

Road through South Salem, NY to West Lane, Ridgefield, CT to Main Street, Ridgefield Village, most of which is included in present-day Route 35 today.

⁷³ The Federal pension records of Thaddeus Crane, Benjamin June, and Jabish Truesdell indicate that Captain Thaddeus Crane's Company, Captain Nathaniel Delvan's Company and Captain Truesdell's Company were among the 3rd Westchester Militia companies that mobilized and were at the Battle of Ridgefield. Private Benjamin June's pension notes that he "was in the service was Danbury in Connecticut was burned..." and that "he retreated before the enemy from Danbury to Salem..." which suggests that the 3rd Westchester was on the western end of the town. NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, Roll 1455, S.23285, June, Benjamin.6-7.

⁷⁴ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 191-192.

⁷⁵ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 191-192.

the Enemy on their Return as we had Reason to believe they would return that Way & General Wooster with the Remainder of our Troops was to harrass their Rear.”⁷⁶ Arnold-Silliman’s Division was likely positioned along present-day Reservoir Street off of Redding Road (Route 53) in Bethel. Wooster’s Division was likely posted to the east of the crossroads on present-day Route 302 (Figure 4: Possible Arrangement of American Forces around Danbury; Appendix II: Routes of March: Wooster’s Division, Arnold and Silliman’s Division). The American strategy assumed the British would march to the south towards Long Island Sound. Wooster’s Division was tasked to attack the rear of the British column while Arnold-Silliman’s Division planned to slow the larger enemy force by engaging the front of the British column in a blocking action. In the event that the British continued west towards the Hudson River both divisions could quickly redeploy and march in pursuit.⁷⁷ In that scenario, the combined American force would likely have attacked the British rear while Continental troops and New York Militia under the command of General MacDougal on the march east from Peekskill would engage the head of the column. American forces on the southern and northern outskirts of Danbury waited for signs of British movements.

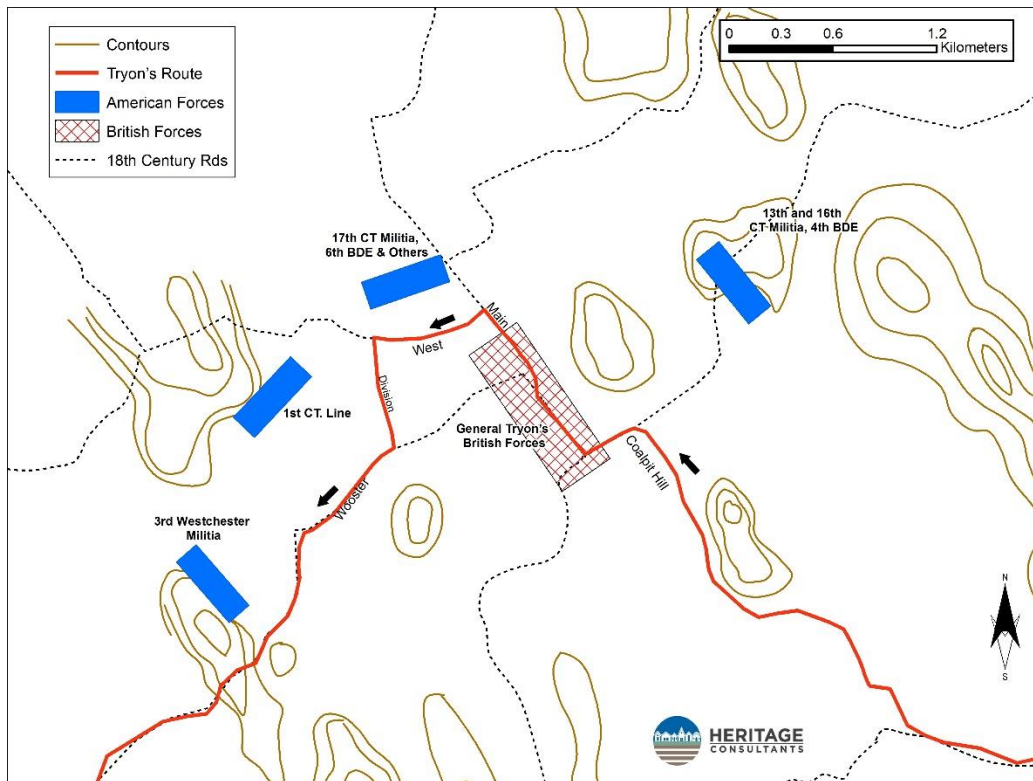


Figure 4: Possible Arrangement of American Forces around Danbury

⁷⁶ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

⁷⁷ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

Tryon's army was effectively surrounded by American forces but was in no way trapped as the British maintained advantages in terms of numbers, experience, and firepower. General Tryon initially intended to remain in Danbury through the Sunday Sabbath but considering the current situation he altered his plan. British troops continued to burn military stores, which, in most cases, included the buildings in which they were stored. On the morning of April 27, 1777 Lieutenant Robertson wrote "by Day break set fire to all the stores and March'd about 8 o'clock on our Return to the Ships by the way of Ridgefield."⁷⁸ He also noted that they "Had information that the Rebels were Collecting in Numbers to oppose us and Mollest our Rear" during their march.⁷⁹ Robertson's intelligence may have been based on the several hundred Connecticut and Continental troops growing in strength on the heights outside of town within plain sight of British troops. As rain continued to fall, General Tryon's forces marched west out of town at 9:00 AM leaving much of Main Street, Danbury ruined. In describing the scene one British officer remarked that they had "left the Town in Flames."⁸⁰

Several companies of the 3rd Westchester Militia posted along Mirey Swamp Road quickly fell back west in the face of the advancing British Army. According to Private Benjamin June of the 3rd Westchester, his regiment "retreated before the enemy from Danbury to Salem" which indicates that the New York troops believed Tryon was destined for Peekskill by way of North Salem.⁸¹ American scouts on horseback monitored British movements while avoiding British dragoons and other mounted troops of Browne's Corps. The Continental soldiers and various Connecticut militia companies that had assembled on the heights around Danbury had a clear view of the British column and wagons as they advanced to the southwest along Miry Brook Road and on towards Ridgebury. According to Danbury historian James Bailey, some Americans destroyed a bridge over Wolf Pond Run in the Miry Brook District of town which slowed the British column as they were forced to construct a temporary bridge of fence rails.⁸² The 3rd Westchester Militia,

⁷⁸ British time differed by American time by being an hour slower. American time keeping notes that the British left Danbury at 9:00 AM.

⁷⁹ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

⁸⁰ "Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk," Stevens, Ed. *America, 1773-1783*. 3.

⁸¹ NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, S.23285, June, Benjamin.6-7.

⁸² James Montgomery Bailey and Susan Benedict Hill, *History of Danbury, Conn. 1684-1896* (New York, NY: Burr Printing House, 1896). 76.

who were in the vicinity and retreated “before the enemy,” could have been the Americans responsible for this delaying action.

On April 27, the British continued to arrange their Regular forces into two brigades on the march as they had the day before. Browne’s Corps likely led the column as the advance force, but once the threat of American attack increased, they served as flanking companies and protected the main column of troops. The 17th Light Dragoons and other mounted troops also acted as advance scouts and flankers. Agnew’s Brigade consisted of the 4th, 15th, and 44th Regiments followed on the march by Erskine’s Brigade which included the 23rd, 27th, and 64th Regiments. The six, 3-Pound guns of the Royal Artillery were split evenly between the two brigades. This arrangement also was noted in local Ridgebury tradition, which described how “First came a body of light horsemen, then three pieces of cannon, followed by the main body...with three pieces of cannon in their rear.”⁸³ As the British advanced west along Miry Brook Road out of Danbury they soon entered the Ridgebury section of Ridgefield. The mounted troops took a more southerly path along Bogus Road and Ned’s Mountain Road likely to scout their eastern flank and to perhaps get ahead of the main column on the Ridgebury Road (Figure 5: Routes of March, Battle of Ridgefield).⁸⁴

The main column may have experienced increasing harassing fire from swamps, thickets, and structures along Miry Brook Road as they marched the four miles towards Ridgebury. One British account of Tryon’s Expedition “from a Gentleman who attended it” described significant skirmishing and sharpshooting at the British troops on the march. The source, likely an officer, described how “the Militia began to Harrass us early on the 27. & increased every Mile, galling us from their Houses & Fences.”⁸⁵ According to one local resident, Enos K. Reed, “There was much skirmishing when they passed through Ridgebury.”⁸⁶ It is unclear where the attacks began, or occurred, but the author makes it clear the shots were fired “early on the 27,” which may have been the moment they moved out from Danbury. In addition to the 3rd Westchester Militia, armed citizen volunteers and militiamen looking to avenge the burning of Danbury had plenty of time during the night to plan where they would position themselves to fire on the British troops as they

⁸³ As quoted from Reverend Edward Teller in Hamilton D. Hurd, *History of Fairfield County, Connecticut* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Company, 1881). P. 646; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 43.

⁸⁴ George Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield* (Ridgefield, CT: Private Printing by Author, 1927). 108-109.

⁸⁵ “Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk,” Stevens, Ed. *America, 1773-1783*. 3.

⁸⁶ Westchester County Historical Society (WCHS). Hufeland Collection. The McDonald Papers, 1844-1850. 475.

marched west. As a matter of policy, anyone who fired on British troops from a home or outbuilding was condemned to death and the structures were burned. As described by the British themselves “it was their Constant Practice there they found People Shut up in a House & firing upon them...to kill them & burn the house & c.”⁸⁷

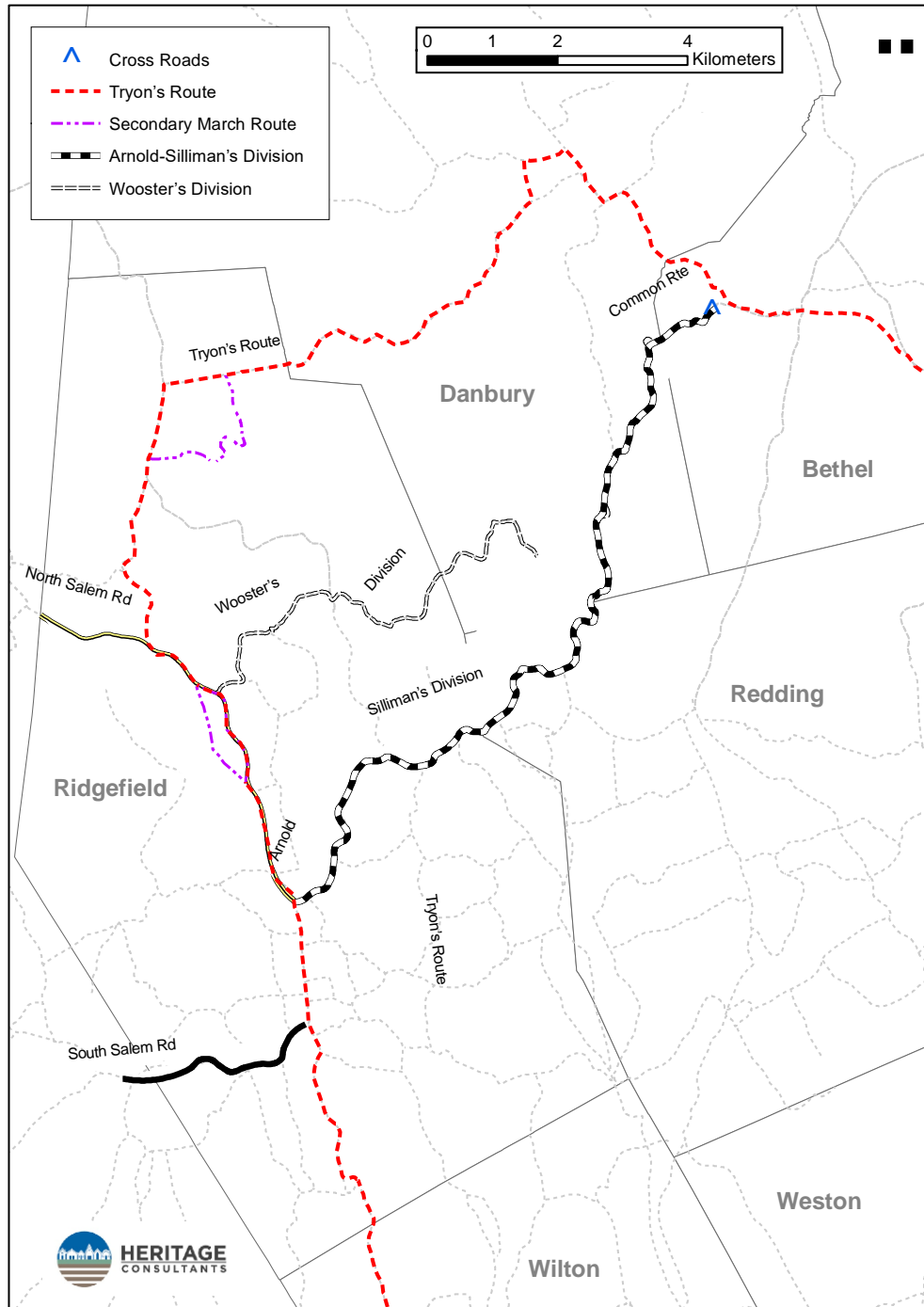


Figure 5: Routes of March, Battle of Ridgefield

⁸⁷ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, XXXVII:231.

Ridgebury

At Ridgebury Center, local tradition from the late 1800's relays that as the British column "passed the house of Capt. Timothy Benedict, standing on the corner of the road leading to Danbury, they [British] fired two pistol shots at some person looking out a window, but without doing any harm."⁸⁸ The two pistol shots were likely fired by an officer or a trooper from the 17th Light Dragoons, who were on alert for American attackers.⁸⁹ The source also stated that "As the light horsemen passed through the outskirts of the village, they fired at several persons near the New York state line."⁹⁰ It is unclear who the "several persons" were that were fired on by the Dragoons, whether they were curious onlookers or soldiers from the 3rd Regiment Westchester Militia falling back to North Salem only a mile west. The British column turned to the south at the Congregational Church, which they undoubtedly searched for contraband, and continued south on the Ridgebury Road. From this point on British mounted forces kept a close watch on Army's western flank looking for any signs of American reinforcements expected to arrive from Peekskill. American scouts shadowing the British confirmed their route of march was south towards Long Island Sound and sent riders to inform General Wooster near Bethel.

At 9:00 AM General Arnold reported that American commanders on the outskirts of Danbury received intelligence that "the Enemy set fire to the meeting house & most of the Buildings in Town & had taken the route to Newbury leading either to Peekskill or Tarry town."⁹¹ The British fleet sent up the Hudson River as a decoy a few days earlier continued to deceive some into believing that General Tryon might march west in that direction. Around 10:00 AM much needed reinforcements arrived in Danbury in the form of 140 soldiers of the 6th Massachusetts Continental Line under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Calvin Smith. Unfortunately, the regiment also lacked ammunition. According to the *Connecticut Courant*, the situation improved

⁸⁸ As quoted from Reverend Edward Teller in Hamilton D. Hurd, *History of Fairfield County, Connecticut* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Company, 1881). 646; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 43.

⁸⁹ The story was based on quotes from Reverend Edward Teller published in 1881. The assertion that a British officer or dragoon fired the shots is based on the fact that either would have been the few British forces who carried pistols unlike rank and file Regulars. As the British had taken fire from Americans in Danbury and on the march to Ridgebury it is likely the shots were fired at what they thought was a potential attacker. See: Hurd, *History of Fairfield County*. 646; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 43.

⁹⁰ As quoted from Reverend Edward Teller in Hamilton D. Hurd, *History of Fairfield County, Connecticut* (Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Company, 1881). P. 646; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 43.

⁹¹ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 191-192.

when “there soon arrived 2000 cartridges from Peeks Hill.”⁹² The ammunition was presumably distributed to the 50 soldiers of the 1st Connecticut and the 140 men of the 6th Massachusetts which worked out about 10 rounds each, barely half a cartridge box per man. It is unclear if the Continental troops at Danbury marched to join General Wooster at Bethel but the *Connecticut Courant* reported that “Gen. Wooster, who had followed them [British] to Danbury with a small body of militia” then “pursued them [British] with the Continental Troops and Militia” specifically placing Continental soldiers with Wooster’s Division.⁹³ If all of the 1st Connecticut and/or 6th Massachusetts marched with Wooster’s Division they would have increased the size of the division to around 400 men. It seems logical that the 150 men of the 16th Connecticut Militia under Major Beardsley likely fell in with their fellow 4th Brigade units in Wooster’s Division. This regiment alone would have increased the formation to around 350 troops excluding Continental forces. Generals Wooster, Arnold and Silliman likely considered the presence of at least 200 Continentals and Militia around Danbury when planning their strategy which may explain why only 200 troops were detailed to Wooster’s Division compared to the 400 soldiers with Arnold and Silliman.

General Arnold and General Silliman noted in separate correspondences that they received word that the British marched south at Ridgebury presumably towards Long Island Sound at 11:00 AM “upon which a disposition was made to harass the enemy until a sufficient reinforcement should come in to make a vigorous attack.”⁹⁴ With this crucial piece of information General Wooster ordered a pursuit and the two divisions marched to intercept the British column in Ridgefield. According to Silliman “About 11 o’clock we received Advise that the Enemy were Returning by the Road Thro Ridgefield, on this We directly paraded our Men & marched thro the Northwesterly part of Redding over to Ridgefield.”⁹⁵ In a letter to General McDougal in the afternoon of April 28, General Arnold similarly reported that ““I found the Enemy were on their march to Ridgefield At 11 o’clock.”⁹⁶ By 11:30 AM, Arnold and Silliman’s Division of 400 troops marched southwest to Ridgefield through West Redding while Wooster’s Division of 350-450

⁹² *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), May 15, 1777; “Hartford, May 5,” *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, May 5, 1777. 3.

⁹³ “Hartford, May 5,” *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, May 5, 1777. 3.

⁹⁴ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 197-198; Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; *Boston Gazette* (Boston, MA), May 15, 1777; “Hartford, May 5,” *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, May 5, 1777. 3.

⁹⁵ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

⁹⁶ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 197.

troops advanced westerly toward Barlow Mountain and North Salem Road (Figure 5: Routes of March, Battle of Ridgefield).

Word that Arnold and Silliman's Division was on the march towards Ridgefield to position themselves in front of the British southern advance quickly spread. Ridgefield town center soon became a rendezvous point for American troops. Colonel Philip Burr Bradley and around 20 soldiers of the 5th Connecticut Regiment Continental Line joined Arnold and Silliman's Division at Ridgefield.⁹⁷ Colonel Bradley, who was a resident of Ridgefield and who had a home on the northern end of Main Street, was in Connecticut overseeing smallpox inoculations for new continental recruits. This included the 5th Connecticut soldiers under his command.⁹⁸ In addition to the 5th Connecticut, Arnold and Silliman were joined by elements of various local militia companies, civilian volunteers, and men from the 2nd Westchester New York Militia. This swelled the combined American force "which was now increased to about 500" troops or more according to Silliman.⁹⁹ The selectmen of Ridgefield noted that a "great number of Militia from the State of New York and from the Neighbouring Towns came" but many of which "brought Little or no ammunition with them."¹⁰⁰ Officers soon requested Ridgefield officials to open their town magazine to the troops and "where upon application was made to the Select men of s^d Ridgefield for all the ammunition they had on hand which they distributed among the Troops."¹⁰¹ The American forces mobilizing to defend the town were fully munitioned thanks to the actions of the Ridgefield selectmen. The Americans constructed a strong barricade across the North Salem Road at a high ridge entering the north end of town; the barricade was described by General Silliman as "a Small Breast Work" made of timber, carts, and other obstacles.¹⁰² General Arnold and General Silliman decided how to deploy their mixed force of Connecticut Militia, New York Militia, and Continental Line troops.

⁹⁷ Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 69-70.

⁹⁸ Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 69-70.

⁹⁹ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 72.

¹⁰⁰ CSL, CT Archives, Series I, XXIII: 393a.

¹⁰¹ CSL, CT Archives, Series I, XXIII: 393a.

¹⁰² Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

Keeler's Mill

According to Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers, the first substantial American resistance of April 27 occurred to the south of Ridgebury as the British column passed through Ridgebury Hills. Robertson wrote that “they first that made their Appearance was on Ridgebury hill about 5 miles from Danbury. They fired on the Rear at great Distance with little harm.”¹⁰³ The identity of the attackers is unknown. They could have been the 3rd Westchester Militia, Connecticut militia, or an armed group of civilians, but they were a large enough force for Robertson to note in his journal as the “first that made their appearance” in contrast to the scattered skirmishing that had characterized the march thus far. This company of Americans was likely not associated with Wooster’s Division which was still on the march from Danbury at the time of the Ridgebury Hill skirmish. The American militia fired at the rear of the British column “at great Distance” which may have been in excess of 200 yards but nonetheless may have inflicted a casualty or two since Robertson noted that the gunfire caused “little harm” in contrast to no harm at all. Robertson or others did not detail any specific skirmishes for the next several miles following this incident.

Around this time, an American scout, John Campbell, reported on the movements of the British Army and the disposition of their forces to General McDougall who was on the march with reinforcements from Peekskill. Campbell observed British movements for almost two hours beginning around noon before sending an express letter to McDougal. Campbell stated that “Their whole body is marching for Richfield [*sic*] I suppose what is already in Richfield road amounts to between seven and eight hundred men they have with them five ox teams fifty or sixty cattle, and the same number of sheep. They have a number of horse men with them and march in great haste. I have no accounts of any force of ours but hear a number of scattering shots in the rear.”¹⁰⁴ It appears from Campbell’s notes that he observed Erskine’s Division only, as his estimate is approximately half of Tryon’s entire force and the scout counted wagons and cattle located in the rear of the column. Campbell did not mention any American forces (e.g., Wooster’s Division or the New York Militia) yet he reported, “scattered shot in the rear” of the column indicating the British were skirmishing or taking occasional fire at the least.

¹⁰³ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127-128.

¹⁰⁴ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 188-189.

Other than the skirmishing incidents described by Campbell and Robertson, British troops advanced with no significant resistance and marched further along Ridgebury Road, which continued along present-day Sherwood Road, until it met with the North Salem Road. At this junction a contingent of British troops detached from the main body and marched to the west on North Salem Road for about a quarter of a mile until they reached the grist mill of Isaac Keeler on a sharp turn near present-day Craigmoor Road (Figure 6: Keeler's Mill and British Rest). It is unclear how the British became aware of the mill, perhaps it was visible during their march over Ridgebury Hill and along the Ridgebury Road or advanced troops such as the 17th Dragoons found the structure while scouting. Historian Keith Marshall Jones asserts that the burning of Isaac Keeler's gristmill may have been a result of loyalist neighbors or loyalist troops of Browne's Corp familiar with the family.¹⁰⁵ Upon inspection British forces found at least "100 Barrels of Flour, and a Quantity of Indian Corn" assumed to be rebel property and the mill was set ablaze.¹⁰⁶ According to a local family oral tradition, captured in manuscript note form, 12-year-old Lizzie Hunt and other children watched the entire event unfold from the roadside as they gathered to see the British on the march. The children watched as a company of British soldiers rolled out barrels of flour to set them on fire before torching the building and then continuing on Ridgebury Road to join the main column. Hunt related that as the flour barrels heated the bungs blew out, sounding like gunfire, and local residents, or the children at least, referred to as "Bungtown," a place name which was in use through the late twentieth century.¹⁰⁷

As the contingent of troops razed Keeler's mill, the main British force marched to the intersection of Ridgebury and North Salem Roads, and from there continued to the south for another half mile before coming to a halt at the southern end of Mamasasco Lake for a much-needed rest (Figure 6: Keeler's Mill and British Rest). There, British officers likely posted skirmishers and flankers to protect the main body while the men tended to the wounded and lit cooking fires. British troops slaughtered perhaps a half dozen cattle to provide a portion of the standard 1-pound daily ration of beef issued to infantrymen. As noted in Campbell's account of the British march, he estimated that they had "with them...fifty or sixty cattle and the same number

¹⁰⁵ Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 45.

¹⁰⁶ "Return of the Stores, Ordnance, Provision as nearly as could be ascertained, found at the Rebels Stores, and destroyed by the Kings Troops at Danbury, &c. in Connecticut, April 27, 1777" in *The London Gazette* (London, UK), July 24, 1777. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Silvio A. Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review* (Ridgefield, CT: Ridgefield 250th Anniversary Committee, Inc., 1958). 64.

of sheep” which indicates that mutton may have been on the menu as well.¹⁰⁸ The Selectmen of Ridgefield later attested to the General Assembly that the British “Killed & Carried off many of their Cattle & plundered the Inhabitants of their provisions & much of their Clothing.”¹⁰⁹ Local tradition also speaks to the slaughtering of beef at the location, so much so that the Scott family and their neighbors collected enough fat and bones to make two barrels of soft soap in the days that followed.¹¹⁰ One animal escaped but was driven into Mamasco Lake and drowned.¹¹¹ It was also said that British officers visited the nearby house of Nathan Scott and asked to borrow knives and forks from the homeowner which they returned after their meal.

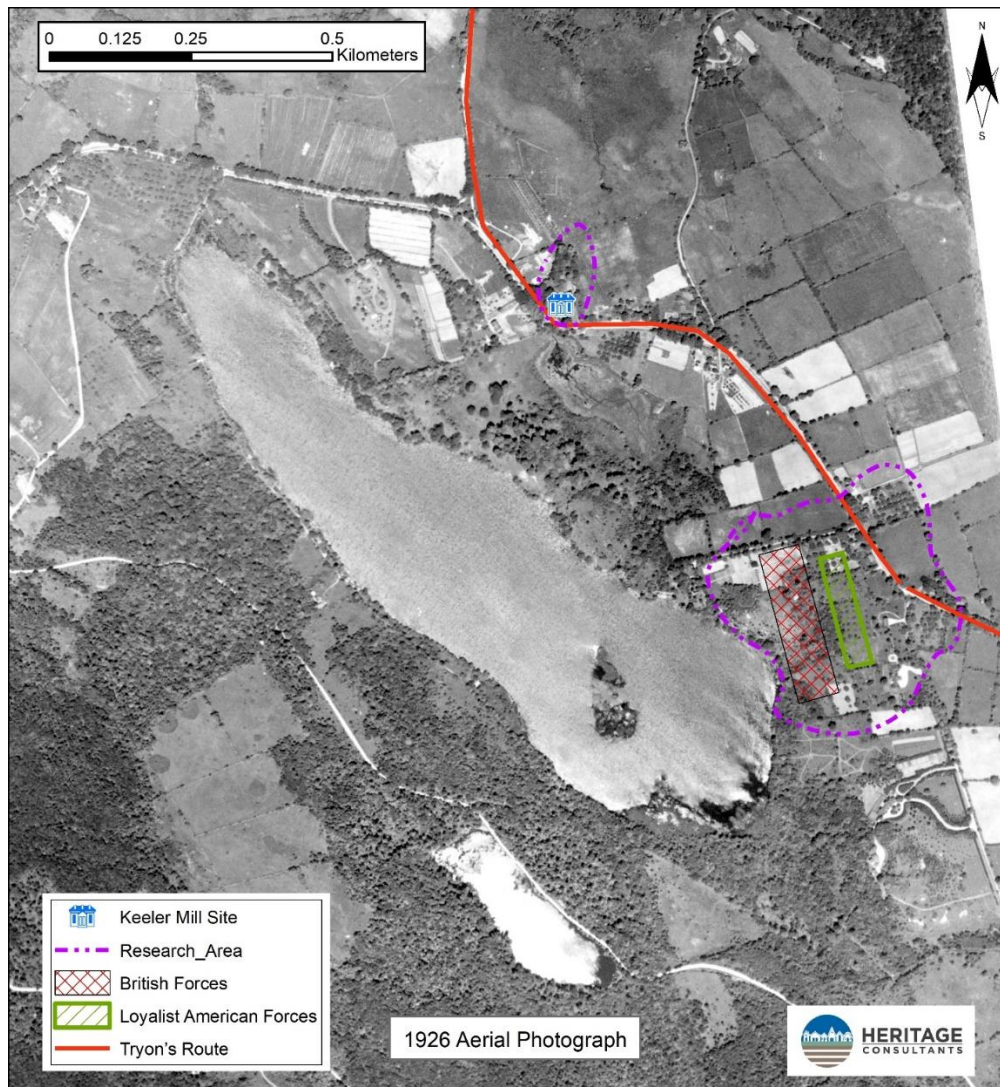


Figure 6: Keeler’s Mill and British Rest

¹⁰⁸ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 188-189.

¹⁰⁹ CSL, CT Archives, Series I, VIII: 393.

¹¹⁰ Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review*. 64-65.

¹¹¹ Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review*. 64.

As British forces ate their breakfast on the morning of April 27, 1777, American troops closed in on their position from the north and east. The British were aware of American militia to their north after the Ridgebury Hill skirmish and believed Continental troops from Peekskill were on the march from the west. What they were not aware of was Wooster's Division closing in from the east along Barlow Mountain Road with as many as 400 troops from the 4th Brigade Connecticut Militia and some Continental soldiers. General Tryon was also unaware that American forces were massing at the northern end of Ridgefield Village waiting for the arrival of Arnold and Silliman's Division of 400 soldiers of the 4th Brigade Connecticut Militia who were on the march from Redding. Soldiers from the 3rd Westchester Militia were likely to the north, close enough to strike if the opportunity presented itself, while the 2nd Westchester Militia marched from South Salem towards Ridgefield. Further to the west, General Alexander McDougall prepared a column of 1,200 Continental Infantry and a cannon with the intent of reaching the British before they reached their ships, but his men were unready to march until nightfall. Connecticut militia from other parts of the state were on the march towards Fairfield from as far east as Saybrook.¹¹² The lack of any serious opposition the day before and the light skirmishing throughout the morning march from Danbury may have given the British a false sense of security as they ate their meal.

The British likely remained at Mamasasco Lake for up to an hour and a half, similar to the length of time they rested on their approach at Redding. In the early afternoon, perhaps around 1:30 PM, the British army renewed their march. Mounted troops likely continued their role scouting the western flank and acting as the advance guard. General Tryon and the other officers undoubtedly expected skirmishing to increase as they neared Ridgefield Village and may have tasked Browne's Corps to act as flanking companies instead of leading the column as they did the day before since they expected a fight. General Agnew's Brigade led the column, followed by General Erskine's Brigade with the six Royal Artillery gun crews split between the two brigades. The column was trailed by an unknown number of horse or oxen-pulled wagons and carts, but according to John Campbell, he observed that "they have with them five ox teams" which suggests at least five large wagons.¹¹³ These were filled with supplies for the army and any wounded soldiers unable to march. The remaining cattle and sheep were driven along as well. The entire

¹¹² CSL, CT Archives, Series I, X: 3.

¹¹³ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 188-189.

British column with wagons may have exceeded a half mile in length on the southern march along North Salem Road.¹¹⁴

First Engagement – Wooster’s Division Rear Flank Attack

As the British army filed onto the North Salem Road from their rest at the southern end of Mamasco Lake, General Wooster’s Division was advancing on their position about a mile away along Barlow Mountain Road. Browne’s Loyalist Corps and Agnew’s Brigade passed Barlow Mountain Road as they advanced toward Ridgefield with no Americans in sight. The most experienced of the officers in command, General Erskine, marched with his brigade at the rear of the column perhaps expecting any attack from the Americans to occur there. Erskine’s Brigade also marched past Barlow Mountain Road without any sign of American forces. Closely following Erskine’s Brigade were the wagons and cattle. Wooster’s Division approached North Salem Road just as the British wagons were being driven from Mamasco Lake past Barlow Mountain Road.

It is unclear exactly how many American troops or precisely what units constituted Wooster’s Division. According to a report by the *Connecticut Courant* written a week after the battle, "Gen. Wooster, who had followed them [British] to Danbury with a small body of militia pursued them with the Continental troops and militia, and overtook their rear in Ridgebury"¹¹⁵ This suggests that General Wooster did indeed combine his small force of 200 men of the 4th Brigade Connecticut Militia with the 150 men of the 16th Connecticut Militia and up to 190 Continental soldiers of the 1st Connecticut and 6th Massachusetts. If this interpretation is correct, a significant contingent of Wooster’s Division may have consisted of United States Continental soldiers. In addition, it is clear that men from the 7th Regiment Dutchess County Militia, other nearby Connecticut militia companies, and armed civilians joined Wooster’s Division on the march towards Ridgefield. Private Jabish Truesdell of the 3rd Regiment Westchester Militia declared on his pension record in later years that his regiment “formed with Gen. Wooster at Ridgefield” but he does not elaborate as to where this occurred.¹¹⁶ Until that point, the 3rd

¹¹⁴ This estimate is based on General Silliman’s comment prior to the Third Engagement that the British column was a half mile in length. Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹¹⁵ "Hartford, May 5," *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, May 5, 1777. 3.

¹¹⁶ NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, S.19468, Truesdell, Jabesh. 3.

Westchester trailed Tryon's army along North Salem Road continuing to harass the British rear guard as they had since Ridgebury. It is reasonable to assume that Wooster's Division consisted of between 250 to 300 American troops representing at least a half-dozen different US, New York and Connecticut regiments. Not only is this figure higher than previously recognized, but the effectiveness of Wooster's forces also was significantly bolstered by the inclusion of Continental rank and file soldiers alongside Connecticut and New York militia.

As General Wooster's Division passed Lake Naraneka on Barlow Mountain Road the British column may have been only 500 yards away. With their target in sight, Wooster's Division likely deployed from a column into a battle line as they crossed the Titicus River in the hopes of overtaking the British rear guard. Around 2:00 PM the division advanced from the wood line around the Titicus River, ascended the sloping hill towards North Salem Road and attacked. The first British troops they encountered were the soldiers guarding the wagons and animals at the rear of Erskine's Brigade. Wooster's Division quickly overran the lightly guarded wagon train killing at least two British soldiers.¹¹⁷ Wooster's assault may have caused some British troops to retreat west across open fields towards Tackora Trail with American troops in pursuit. It is unclear how many casualties were suffered on either side during the initial engagement, but some of the British troops and teamsters assigned to the wagons were taken prisoner. Presumably any Continental supplies looted from Danbury were recovered with the wagons and it is probable that extra small arms and cannon ammunition for Erskine's Brigade also were taken along with the wagons. Some of the wagons may have carried wounded British soldiers unable to walk and were among the captured (Figure 7: First Engagement).

There are no detailed accounts of this engagement by any of the participants but Wooster's appearance on the battlefield, the taking of prisoners, and the beginning of combat between British and American forces at this time was reported widely. Colonel Huntington of the 1st Connecticut reported on April 28 that "in all yesterday's skirmishes...Thirteen prisoners" were taken "including some wounded."¹¹⁸ The *Connecticut Journal* later reported that "15 prisoners taken at Danbury were brought to this town [Hartford]" who may have been in the initial engagement as

¹¹⁷ Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 55.

¹¹⁸ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 196.

well.¹¹⁹ The *Connecticut Courant* noted that the British “had 40 taken prisoner, 18 or 20 of whom are now in gaol [sic]” in Hartford. A British newspaper, the *Gazette and New Daily Advertiser* repeated the claim that “The Americans...took 40 prisoners (belonging to Mr. Tryon's army) and a great number of waggons and horses.”¹²⁰

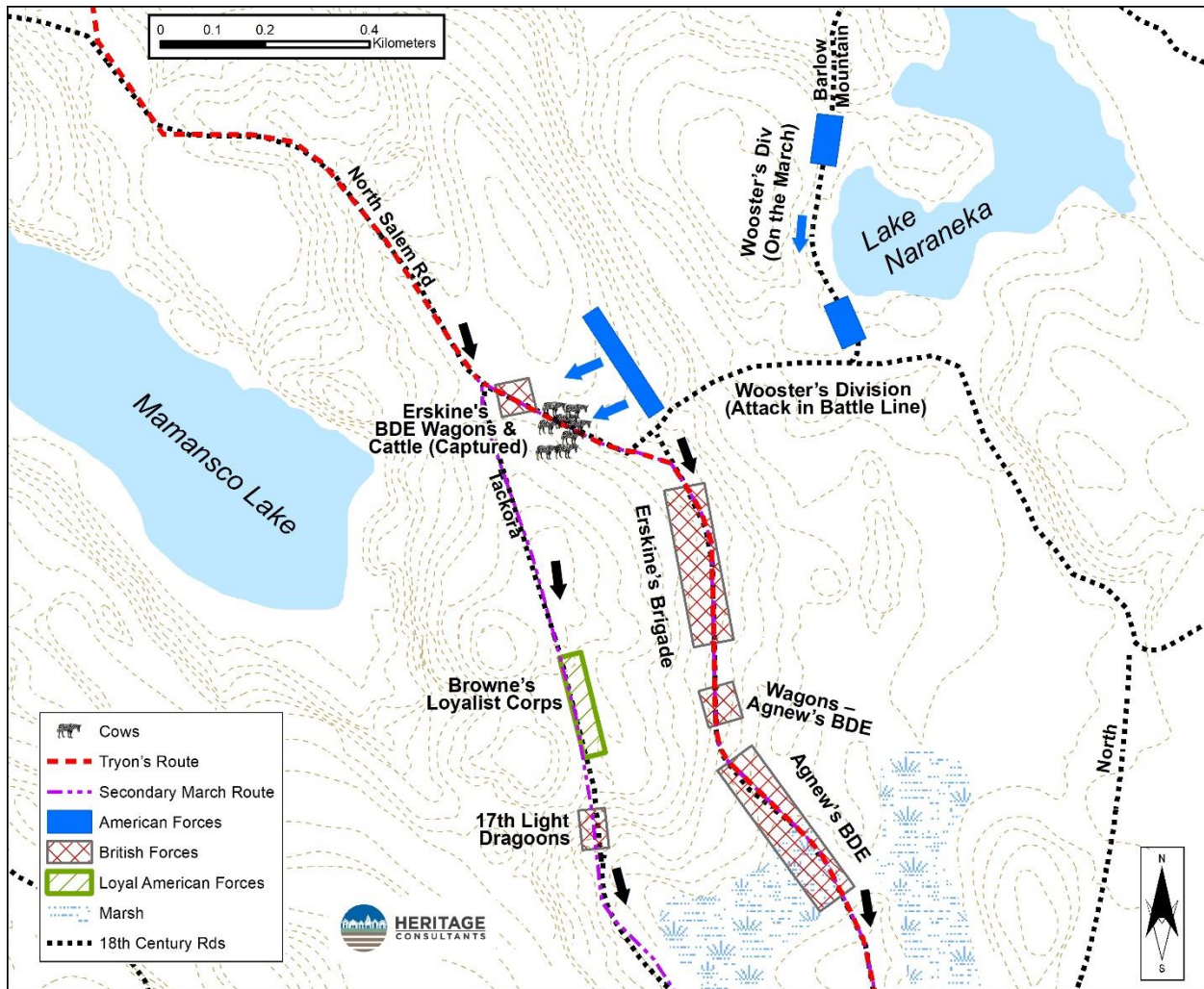


Figure 7: First Engagement Core Area

It is interesting to consider the number of British prisoners reportedly taken during the Danbury Expedition and those captured in the First Engagement with Wooster’s Division. There are several references to British prisoners, but few with clues regarding when or where on the battlefield they were captured. Colonel Huntington’s report of “Thirteen prisoners” taken

¹¹⁹ *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), May 7, 1777; McDevitt, *Connecticut Attacked*. 52.

¹²⁰ "News," *Gazette and New Daily Advertiser* (London, UK), July 16, 1777.

“including some wounded” during the fighting on April 27 likely refers to prisoners taken by Wooster’s Division and therefore were captured during the First Engagement.¹²¹ On April 29, General Silliman noted that “We have taken at Different Posts sundry Prisoners” indicating that British soldiers were captured by Arnold and Silliman’s Division as well as those taken near Barlow Mountain Road.¹²² Even though the numbers of prisoners vary, from as many as 40 to as few as 13; it is notable that Lord William Howe himself accounted for a total of 30 “missing” soldiers throughout the entire army.¹²³ British casualty figures do not account for prisoners and therefore it is reasonable to assume that a fraction of the 30 “missing” soldiers noted by Howe were prisoners. During the First Engagement, where the greatest number of British prisoners were taken during the Danbury Expedition, only a small portion of Tryon’s force was involved; one wagon train, not the entire army.

Any prisoners captured by Wooster’s Division were teamsters driving the wagons and the few soldiers from Erskine’s Brigade assigned to guard them. The “40 prisoners” figure referred to in the *London Chronicle* may be an accurate figure, but if so, the number could have included the civilian teamsters driving the wagons. They were not military personnel and therefore if captured by Wooster’s Division along with their wagons, their losses would not have been noted in official British casualty lists. As they were not British soldiers, and perhaps viewed as loyalists by their American captors at the least, these prisoners may have been released soon after the battle as they do not appear in any military reports or State of Connecticut records. In contrast, the “18 or 20” British prisoners listed as jailed in Hartford were likely British soldiers taken during the battle, possibly during the first engagement. The British wagons must have had some sort of armed guard accompanying them and that task may have fallen to soldiers from Erskine’s Brigade marching in the rear of the column. Two regiments in Erskine’s Brigade, the 23rd Regiment (Royal Welch Fusiliers) and 27th Regiment (Inniskilling), suffered the highest number of missing of any other British units during the Danbury Expedition; “6 rank and file missing” each.¹²⁴ It is worth speculating whether these twelve British soldiers went missing in the defense of the wagons during this First Engagement.

¹²¹ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 196.

¹²² Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹²³ "America," *The Scots Magazine* (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 286.

¹²⁴ "America," *The Scots Magazine* (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 286.

With respect to the captured wagons, a week after the battle the *Connecticut Courant* described British troops as “leaving bag and baggage” in their retreat, which appears to have been a reference to the wagons lost to Wooster’s Division.¹²⁵ The *London Evening Post* published a critical report of Tryon’s Danbury Expedition in which it was noted that the British lost “all the waggons which they took with them, not one of which they brought back; they were intended for forage.”¹²⁶ The loss of the wagons had real consequences for Tryon’s army. Any useful military stores taken at Danbury were lost, and any food supplies, including cattle and sheep looted earlier during the march, also were lost and there was still at least a full day’s march ahead for the British. Additional musket and cannon ammunition also were stored in some of the wagons taken by Wooster’s Division. The only ammunition British troops had in reserve was carried by the wagons assigned to Agnew’s Brigade as well as the 60 cartridges each soldier was issued when they landed at Compo Beach.¹²⁷ Although the number of prisoners varies and is debatable, the fact that the British lost at least half of their wagons and supplies early in the Battle of Ridgefield is certain.

Second Engagement – Wooster’s Division Rear Guard Attack

Despite the appearance of a significant body of American troops to their rear in the early afternoon of April 27, 1777, British forces continued to advance towards Ridgefield as quickly as possible. General Erskine prepared his brigade for an assault should the Americans press the rear of the column. Detached infantry from the brigade and the Royal Artillery guns all deployed as the rear guard along with some of Browne’s Loyalist Corps as flanking companies. An account published in the *London Evening Post* described the combat following Wooster’s arrival on the battlefield following the First Engagement. The report described how “the American militia...by a quick march, got on both sides of the road the King’s troops were to march in their retreat to their ships. A sort of running fight began; in which both sides suffered considerably”¹²⁸ This description of continued skirmishing may be an accurate depiction of the type of fighting that followed the loss of the British wagons. Erskine’s Brigade and Browne’s Corps may have been constantly engaged with American infantry after the first engagement with Wooster’s Division.

¹²⁵ “Hartford, May 5” *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, CT), May 5, 1777. 3.

¹²⁶ “News,” *London Evening Post*, June 12, 1777. 1.

¹²⁷ According to the *London Evening Post* “...we are told, the King’s troops landed with sixty rounds each man, had not any occasion to fire their pieces once until this attack began.” See: “London,” *London Evening Post* (London, UK), June 12-14, 1777. 1.

¹²⁸ “News,” *London Evening Post* (London, UK), June 12, 1777. 1.

It is unclear at exactly what point along the North Salem Road Wooster's Division and the rear guard of Erskine's Brigade engaged in the phase of combat referred to as the Second Engagement. It is possible that the two sides were in a constant state of skirmishing once the Americans overran Tryon's wagons. As noted earlier, the *London Evening Post* described "A sort of running fight began; in which both sides suffered considerably" prior to the fighting that occurred within town.¹²⁹ There is little documentary evidence to support any conclusion and is a question that can be addressed with evidence obtained from future battlefield archeology. The little information that can be gleaned regarding the nature of the fighting appears to describe a fluid engagement. Private Joseph Plumb Martin of the 8th Connecticut Line having fallen in with a Connecticut State Militia regiment, seems to have fought with Wooster's Division. In recalling the battle over 50 years later, Martin simply stated "We had some pretty severe scratches with them [British forces]; killed some, wounded some, and took some prisoners." During the course of the fighting his company suffered "the loss of three men belonging to the town [Milford]," one of which was an enlisted Continental soldier like himself.¹³⁰ The 1896 *History of Danbury, Conn.* published an account from an elderly Aaron Hull who retold the his father's story of when he was a 17 year old soldier with Wooster's Division:

He joined in the pursuit of Tryon through Ridgefield, and was in all the fighting. In escaping one of the dashes of the enemy, he found himself back of a rock in company with two boys a trifle younger than himself, who were having their first experience in battle. While waiting there, he discovered that a Tory was in a brake near by, watching with ready gun for them to reappear. Putting his hat on the end of his gun he pushed it out beyond the rock. Immediately the Tory fired, the bullet piercing the hat. The next instant he plunged toward the rock, when the three boys fired simultaneously at him. At the discharge he sprang several feet in the air and came down full length upon his face, but turned in a flash upon his back, and lay there, motionless in death.¹³¹

This story seems to describe a British counter-charge, "one of the dashes of the enemy," against a part of Wooster's Division that resulted in Private Hull and his companions taking cover behind a large rock off the North Salem Road. The "Tory...in a brake" may refer to a soldier from Browne's

¹²⁹ "News," *London Evening Post* (London, UK), June 12, 1777. 1.

¹³⁰ Martin, *A Narrative of A Revolutionary Soldier*. 54.

¹³¹ The name of Aaron Hull's father is not revealed in the 1896 account making it difficult to determine if father was enlisted in any particular unit or who he may have deployed with. Being a native of Danbury and in town at the time of the British occupation he likely fought with the troops assembled with Colonel Cooke's 16th Connecticut Militia who ultimately joined Wooster's Division. See: Bailey and Hill, *History of Danbury*. 100; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 62.

Loyalist Corps taking cover in brush who may have been deployed in a flanking company along the march to Ridgefield. Fighting as skirmishers, Private Hull and his companions dispatched the enemy soldier and presumably rejoined their respective companies in Wooster's Division.

Wooster's Division initiated the second assault on the British rear and General Wooster personally led the attack on horseback. According to Colonel Huntington of the 1st Connecticut Line, "Gen. Wooster...conducted & commanded the unconnected and undisciplined Troops with great spirit, zeal & bravery."¹³² Through personal example Wooster urged his command forward against soldiers from Erskine's Brigade and Browne's Loyalist Corps. According to Silvio A. Bedini, Wooster's Division continually skirmished with the rear of the British column for up to an hour. This occurred over the course of about a mile from the vicinity of Barlow Mountain Road towards the intersection of North Salem Road and Tackora Trail.¹³³ Wooster's Division of around 500 troops pushed back British skirmishers and pressed the rear of the column so closely that the rear guard of Erskine's Brigade halted to make a stand against the Americans. British troops took position about 150 yards (137 meters) south of Tackora Trail along a ridge that cut across North Salem Road where the road went up a steep incline. Bedini states that according to local tradition "a makeshift barricade was erected along this ridge" by the inhabitants of the Titicus River section of Ridgefield; the barricade was abandoned and subsequently pushed aside by the advancing British column.¹³⁴ Remnants of that obstacle could have been repurposed by British troops preparing to defend the ridge. The three Royal Artillery guns assigned to Erskine's brigade were deployed along the ridge and were loaded with canister cartridges. The 3-pound cartridges were standard anti-personnel rounds consisting of tin cans or linen sacks packed with dozens of lead musket balls. They were designed to spread projectiles over an increasingly wide area as they traveled from the muzzle of the cannon and were most effective up to 300 yards (275 meters) and spread too far beyond that point to make much of an impact.¹³⁵ A company from Browne's Loyalist Corps held a hill slightly to the west of the ridge. British infantry and artillery awaited Wooster's Division as it drove in British skirmishers back towards the ridge (Figure 8: British and US Troop Positions, Second Engagement Core Area).

¹³² NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 196.

¹³³ Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review*. 66.

¹³⁴ Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review*. 66.

¹³⁵ Daniel M. Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification Guide* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016). 93-94, 96-97. See Chapter IV: Weaponry, Tactics, Order of Battle.

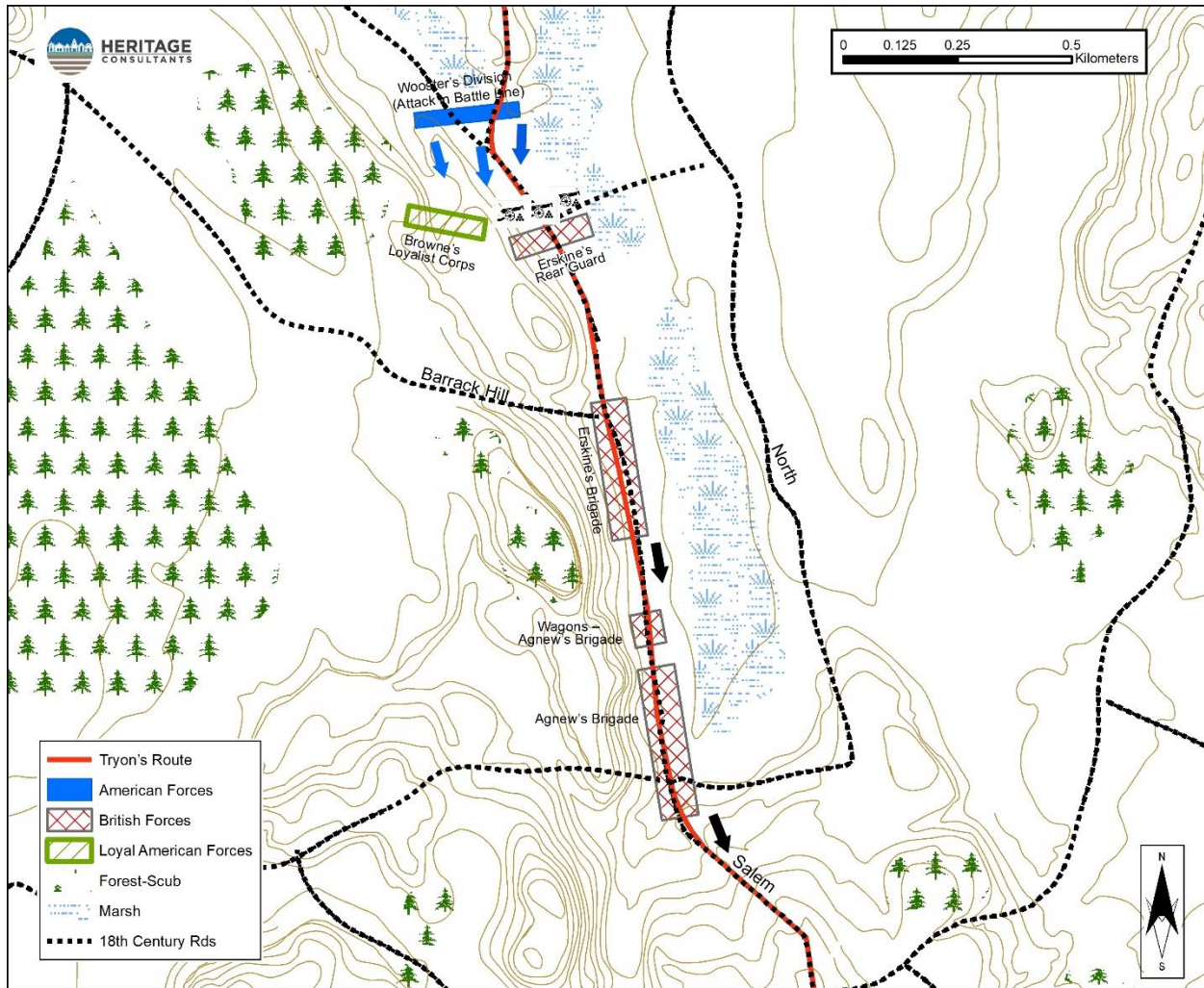


Figure 8: British and US Troop Positions, Second Engagement, Core Area

As American troops fought their way towards the junction of Tackora Trail, they were within range of the three guns supported by British infantry on the ridge, with Browne's Corps holding the flanks. Once the 3-pound guns were in position on the ridge they opened fire on Wooster's Division before the British infantry since the cannons had greater range. Each gun crew was able to fire as much as two rounds a minute under good conditions; now they raked the Americans with canister-shot beginning around 300 yards.¹³⁶ There is no indication how Wooster's Division deployed to attack during the Second Engagement. It is possible the 200 to 300 man division maintained a column formation to quickly advance down North Salem Road with some units advancing along Tackora Trail less than a hundred yards west of the main road. General Wooster may have advanced his division rapidly in a column before ordering his men into an

¹³⁶ Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 157; See Chapter IV: Weaponry, Tactics, Order of Battle.

infantry battle line that stretched east to west between North Salem Road and Tackora Trail to attack the British rear guard. The latter deployment may have made more sense given an open terrain of roads, fields, and rolling hills as they neared the intersection of North Salem Road and Tackora Trail. A battle line would present less of a densely packed formation for British infantry and artillery on which to concentrate fire. Little can be inferred from existing documentary evidence to support any conclusion regarding the formation of Wooster's Division prior to their assault on the British rear guard; this may be another question that can be answered with evidence obtained from a future archeological survey of the battlefield.

British infantry likely held their fire until the Americans closed within 100 yards, making men such as General Wooster and any other officers on horseback conspicuous targets. In turn, Wooster's Division likely opened fire on British troops and artillery on the ridge when they too were within 100 yards, if not earlier. British small arms and cannons took their toll on the advancing American troops. According to Private Richard Truesdell of the 7th Dutchess Militia, Captain Thaddeus Crane of the 3rd Westchester Militia was shot in his chest and fell from his horse; he was removed from the battlefield and survived.¹³⁷ Historian Keith Jones identified several soldiers wounded who fought with Wooster's Division during the Second Engagement including men from the 16th Connecticut Militia.¹³⁸ Research into pension records by historian Stephen Darley also resulted in the identification of a number of soldiers from various militia companies who were wounded during this engagement as well.¹³⁹ American fire may have had some impact on the British battleline, as official British figures list six casualties among the Royal Artillery, including two killed, four wounded and one missing.¹⁴⁰ Although there is no indication where the casualties occurred, the Second Engagement is the first time during the Danbury Expedition where the Royal Artillery was involved in direct, close combat action with a body of American troops.

¹³⁷ NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, S.14728, Truesdell, Richard; William Fulcher, "Colonel Thaddeus Crane" in *The Quarterly Bulletin of the Westchester County Historical Society*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (January 1941). 2.

¹³⁸ The 16th Connecticut Militia was posted to the northwest of Danbury during the British occupation of the town. Jones' research confirms that a portion of the 150 soldiers of the 16th Connecticut Militia, if not the entire regiment, joined Wooster's Division once the British had left Danbury. See: Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 61.

¹³⁹ Darley, *Call to Arms*. 197-226

¹⁴⁰ "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 286.

During the fighting, Wooster's horse was hit by British musketry or canister fire and the general fell but recovered. According to one eyewitness account, Wooster was soon "in the road, on foot, leading on his men" because "his horse had just been shot."¹⁴¹ Revolutionary War historian Benson Lossing wrote that local tradition stated that when General Wooster noticed the British unlimbering an artillery piece, he rallied the men closest to him and charged the gun shouting "Come on my boys! Never mind such random shots!" possibly referring to the discharges of canister hitting the ground around them or British musketry fired over 100 yards away.¹⁴² General Huntington described a similar act of leadership when in a later report he noted that "Gen. Wooster...conducted & commanded the unconnected and undisciplined Troops with great spirit, zeal & bravery."¹⁴³ Soldiers from Browne's Loyalist Corp poured fire into the American lines from their vantage point on high ground on the western flank of the British position on the ridge. It was at this time that General David Wooster was struck by musket fire attributed to Browne's Corps. According to an account "a musket-ball took him obliquely in the side and broke his back-bone."¹⁴⁴ Details from the McDonald Papers provide additional insights into Wooster's fall noting that "While preparing to mount another [horse] which they were rigging out for him [Wooster] he was shot from an eminence about 30 or 40 rods by a tory who was with the British, as was said. He was at the time in the road on the west side encouraging his men."¹⁴⁵ According to Ridgefield historian George Rockwell, after General Wooster fell, his aides carried him a half mile to the rear and laid him on a large flat rock that once sat on the western side of the road. There Dr. Turner of the Connecticut Militia dressed Wooster's wounds and he was taken in a carriage back to Danbury for care; he passed away on May 2, 1777.¹⁴⁶

The severe wounding of General Wooster in full sight of the division, combined with heavy musket and cannon fire, brought the American troops to a halt. The American attack had already lost momentum in the face of withering fire from British troops, who held a strong, elevated position, supported by artillery. With such a variety of US, Connecticut, and New York troops in Wooster's Division, it may have also been unclear who was in command, leading to conflicting

¹⁴¹ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 475.

¹⁴² Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of The Revolution*, Vol. I (New York, NY: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1851). 408; Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review*. 66.

¹⁴³ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 196.

¹⁴⁴ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 475.

¹⁴⁵ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 475.

¹⁴⁶ Rockwell, *History of Ridgefield*. 110-111.

orders. There is a claim by Private John Ells of the 9th Connecticut Militia, whose company was assigned to Wooster's Division, that "he saw General Wooster when he put his foot in the stirrup and mounted his horse and gave orders to the Militia to retreat."¹⁴⁷ There is no other account of Wooster giving such a command, but if this was this case, this could account for the rapid American withdrawal. Soon after Wooster was wounded, and his division withdrew and disengaged from the fight. There is no evidence that the withdrawal was a disorganized retreat or rout. There is some evidence that Captain Stephen Bradley, one of General Wooster's staff officers, rallied the American companies and reformed the division. If so, it is unclear how many men, or which units, constituted this new formation. Captain Bradley turned over command to Colonel Joseph Platt Cooke of the 16th Connecticut Militia who was the senior State commander on scene once General Wooster was incapacitated.¹⁴⁸ British troops did not pursue the remnants of Wooster's Division and the rear-guard of Erskine's Brigade likely held their position along the ridge as General Tryon's army came to a halt a half-mile north of Ridgefield center to assess the level of American resistance that awaited them in town.

Historian Silvio A. Bedini asserts that the reformed division marched around Tryon's army to attempt to link up with Arnold-Silliman's Division to the south in Ridgefield Village; however this is dismissed by Jones who believes the arrival of several hundred American reinforcements would not go unrecorded by commanders there.¹⁴⁹ If Colonel Cooke marched the remaining division down North Street, which ran parallel to and east of North Salem Road, and crossed Copps Hill further east, the men could have reached Danbury Road northeast of Ridgefield Village, avoiding contact with the main British column. One piece of circumstantial evidence that may point to American troop movements to the east of Tryon's army is a 3-Pound British cannonball that was recovered at the site of present-day 158 Danbury Road in 1954 "near a stone wall, spading in preparation for a new lawn" and now in possession of the Ridgefield Historical Society (Figure 16: Artifact Map).¹⁵⁰ The cannonball was recovered over a half mile from the closest known combat that occurred during either the Second or Third Engagements and it is a mystery how the

¹⁴⁷ NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, R.3268, Ells, John; Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 485.

¹⁴⁸ Rockwell, *History of Ridgefield*. P. 112; Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review*. Pp. 66-67; Henry Marvin Benedict, *The Genealogy of the Benedicts in America* (Albany, NY: 1870). 367 as found in Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 63

¹⁴⁹ Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review*. Pp. 66-67; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 63.

¹⁵⁰ "50 Years Ago," *The News-Times* (Danbury, CT), March 28, 2004.

ball ended up so far from the battle. It is possible that this shot, among others, were fired by Royal Artillery gunners a half mile away near North Salem Road and Main Street at American troops marching to join Arnold-Silliman's division further to the south.

It is difficult to determine how many British and American casualties were suffered during the action referred to as the Second Engagement. Often-cited British figures represent total casualties, but they cannot be attributed to any specific engagement. Several Ridgefield histories describe two British soldiers who were "hastily buried in a sand-knoll north of Mr. Zalmon Main's" near present day Farrar Lane.¹⁵¹ It is unclear if it was the British who buried their dead or if the task was left to a local farmer, but the burials were forgotten until they were discovered in 1874. Based on the description of the surviving uniforms on the bodies they appear to have been British Grenadiers who were the elite of any British regiment. The Grenadiers in Erskine's brigade may have been tasked as the rear-guard keeping Wooster's Division from overtaking the rear of the column. The only real estimate of British casualties is related by Colonel Huntington, 1st Connecticut Line, who informed General McDougall on August 28 "I find we have killed of the Enemy in all yesterdays skirmishes Twelve – Thirteen prisoners including some wounded. The prisoners say many wounded were carried on with the British Army."¹⁵² Colonel Huntington may have been directly involved in combat leading troops in Wooster's Division, but his figure could be based on information given to him and not on personal observation. The description of the British carrying their wounded with them suggests there may have been additional wagons or carts in use after the loss of those at the rear of the column. With the loss of their wagons early on in the battle they may have procured others to carry severely wounded men and officers from Ridgefield dwellings they encountered along the route. Another possibility is that the wagons taken by Wooster's Division belonged to Erskine's Brigade and others were assigned to Agnew's Brigade towards the front of the column just as the Royal Artillery was divided between brigades. There is no account of the number of casualties incurred by Wooster's Division although it is clear a number of Americans were killed and wounded in the fighting as indicated by surviving pensions.

¹⁵¹ Teller, Daniel W., *The History of Ridgefield, Conn.: From the First Settlement to the Present Time* (Danbury, CT: T. Donovan, 1878). 68; Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review*. Pp. 77-78; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 56.

¹⁵² NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 196.

The actions referred to as the First Engagement and Second Engagement constituted extended periods of continuous fighting. As noted above, those engagements marked the beginning of the Battle of Ridgefield and occurred from Barlow Mountain Road until General Wooster fell near the junction of Tackora Trail and North Salem Road. The fighting may have only lasted 15 minutes to a half hour before the Americans were repulsed.¹⁵³ The actions of General Wooster's Division deprived the British of much of their wagons and supplies while forcing the rear column, elements of Erskine's Brigade, Browne's Loyalist Corps, and the Royal Artillery to deploy and fight a rear-guard action to slow the American advance. Casualties may have been light on both sides, but the fighting bought Arnold-Silliman's Division precious time to further reinforce their positions and prepare to contest the British advance.

Third Engagement – Arnold and Silliman's Division Defense of Ridgefield

General Arnold's and General Silliman's Division of 400 men marched into Ridgefield center around 2:00 PM where 100 or more American troops awaited them. American commanders chose to make their stand on the northern end of the town on a steep rise about 200 yards (183 meters) to the south of where North Salem Road meets Danbury Road at the Stebbins property. Continuing south at the intersection of these roads is the Ridgefield Road, present-day Main Street, which runs south into a low valley and brook before rising steeply past the Stebbins house and barn to the east. The Ridgefield Road then followed a level path through the center of town. A steep bedrock ledge was situated to the west of the Stebbins house which overlooked orchards and wetlands. To the east of the Stebbins house was a meadow, a small brook, additional orchards, and a rising hill forming the beginning of East Ridge. The Stebbins property included stonewalls that formed enclosures and an east to west running lane in front of the house as well as a barn to the north of the house. Immediately to the north of the Stebbins house the terrain gently sloped downhill towards a brook before rising towards Danbury Road. General Benedict Arnold, who was in overall command of American forces in Ridgefield chose this position to make a stand against Tryon's approaching army. It afforded American forces a naturally fortified area due to the ledges and rocky terrain leading to the Stebbins house while the portion of the road between the house and ledges was a natural choke point the British would be forced to pass. Beyond was the

¹⁵³ See Chapter VI, Battlefield Timeline.

village itself which did offer the same favorable defensive position and the town could have suffered considerable damage in the resulting battle (Figure 9: Ridgefield Village Terrain Map).

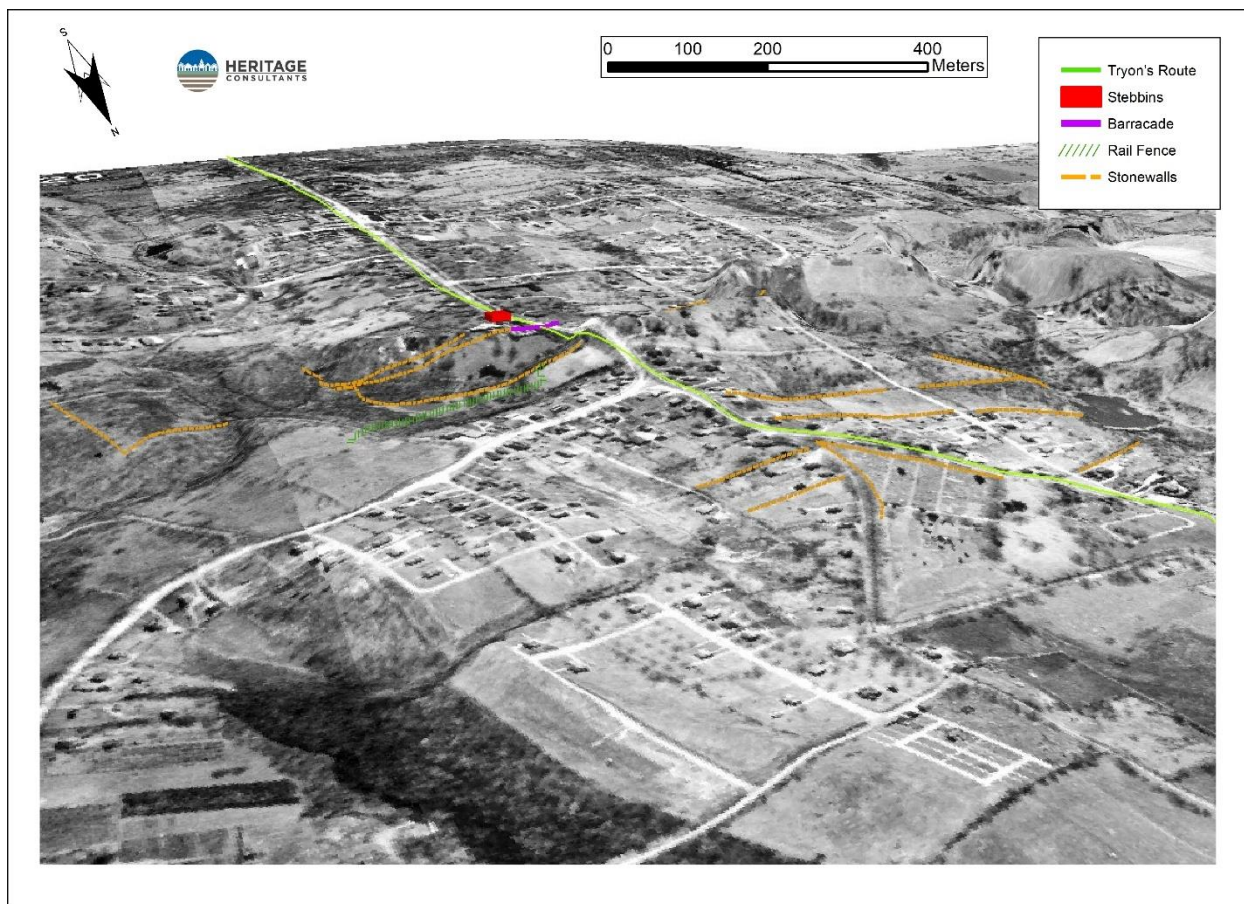


Figure 9: Northern Ridgefield Village Terrain Model Map

General Arnold and General Silliman ordered their men to build a barricade, which they oriented from east to west across a strategic section of present-day Main Street between the Stebbins house on the east and bedrock ledges to the west. Abraham Gilbert who in later years built his home on the site of the ledges, described the defensive structure as a “barricade (carts, waggons, earth, &c)” which “extended from Stebbins house to a high ledge of rocks where my house now stands.... Beyond and north of the rocks was an old orchard.”¹⁵⁴ Once the breastworks were complete, American troops had nearly a 150-yard (137-meter) fortified fighting position to oppose British forces beginning with stone walls on the east end of the line running in front of the Stebbins house towards Main Street. The center of the barricade extended across Main Street, and

¹⁵⁴ WCHS, McDonald Papers, 472-473.

further to the west it met with the bedrock ledges. The ledges themselves were steep enough to be considered a natural obstacle which American commanders may have believed too difficult to scale by British infantry. North of the Stebbins house and stone walls the land sloped downhill quickly with a stream running along the base. A rail fence was situated north of the streams and at the base of a field that rose towards the Danbury Road. A barn stood just north of the stone house and walls. The natural landscape afforded the American troops a formidable position to defend against a British assault.

There is no formally described arrangement of American forces at Ridgefield and much of the order of battle must be reconstructed through compiling various references embedded in pension records, field reports, post-war interviews, and through the process of elimination (Figure 10: Third Engagement Phase I). It appears that those troops posted at the center of the battle line included Lieutenant Colonel Abraham Gould's 4th Connecticut Militia 4th Brigade which likely formed along the ledges and behind the barricade. It is probable that the few Continental forces with Arnold and Silliman's Division were posted here as well which would have included a contingent of Colonel Philip Burr Bradley's the 5th Connecticut Line and the men of the 6th Connecticut Line under Lieutenant-Colonel Dimon's command. These Continental soldiers may have held a section of line east of the Stebbins house protected by stone walls running east and downhill towards the a stream and marshy area below. There were additional American defenders who had gathered at Ridgefield who fell in with Arnold and Silliman's Division but prove difficult to identify. These troops included Connecticut militia companies from other brigades, soldiers of the 16th Connecticut Militia not attached to Wooster's Division, along with members of the 1st Ridgefield Town Militia and any other armed citizens who responded to the alarm.¹⁵⁵ According to a report in the *Connecticut Journal*, the combined American troop strength along this 150-yard front was only around 200 soldiers from the estimated 500-man force.¹⁵⁶

The remaining American troops were equally divided into 150-man groups and ordered to hold the east and west flanks of the main defensive line to check any British attempts to surround

¹⁵⁵ Jones details the multitude of units and notable individuals present at the Third Engagement. See: Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 68-72.

¹⁵⁶ *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), April 30, 1777; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 66.

the division.¹⁵⁷ There were orchards present and stone walls on both the east and west flanks of the main line, which American likely used for cover and concealment. Wetlands in both areas also would have slowed any British assaults, but these flank positions were less defensible areas than the main battle line at the barricade. Colonel John Mead commanded the 9th Connecticut Militia on the eastern flank which was about 300 yards (900 feet / 267 meters) east of the center of the American line and the stronger of the two positions.¹⁵⁸ The Stebbins property sloped eastward to a small stream and marshy area before rising eastward up a rocky area and small orchard with Grove Street just beyond. The 9th Connecticut Militia likely positioned themselves in an orchard northeast of Grove Street atop the hill which was enclosed with a stone wall and overlooked a stream at the base of its northern slope. This location provided a naturally fortified area from which the 9th Connecticut could defend Grove Street and the eastern flank (Figure 10: Third Engagement Phase I).¹⁵⁹ Colonel Thomas Thomas' 2nd Regiment Westchester County Militia likely defended the western flank about 300 yards (900 feet / 267 meters) west of the American center, behind a stone wall than ran south of a stream than ran along the base of ledges (Figure 10: Third Engagement Phase I).¹⁶⁰ According to Abraham Gilbert, "Beyond and north of the rocks was an old orchard" which likely extended north of the 2nd Westchester.¹⁶¹

According to an 1846 interview with Jeremiah Keeler of the 9th Connecticut Militia, the general arrangement of American forces in Ridgefield was as follows: "There are two roads about eighty yards east and west from Ridgefield Street parallel with it, and the American flank was extended as far as these roads. The American flank about parallel with the main body"¹⁶² Writing nearly 70 years after the event, Keeler's estimate of 80 yards (240 feet / 73 meters) falls short of any roads in existence at the time of the battle that ran parallel to present-day Main Street. The closest road that could represent the eastern flank in Keeler's account is Grove Street although it is located about 300 yards (900 feet / 267 meters) east of the Stebbins property; this is where Colonel John Mead's 9th Connecticut Militia, 4th Brigade were positioned. To the west, there may have been a cart path where present-day New Street is situated today which is about 200 yards

¹⁵⁷ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁵⁸ Colonel Mead was present at the battle as evident of a pay roll document. See: Johnston, *Record of Connecticut Men*. 492.

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¹⁶⁰ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 73-74.

¹⁶¹ WCHS, McDonald Papers, 472-473.

¹⁶² WCHS, McDonald Papers, 473; Jones, *Farmers Against the Crown*. 66.

(600 feet / 183 meters) to the west of Main Street. This was likely where the 2nd Westchester Militia was posted. Additional men from other militia companies may have been sent to augment the flanks as it is unclear if either regiment could field 150 soldiers on their own.

General Silliman described how “at several other Posts along our Flanks that were important We posted our Men & waited for the coming of the Enemy.” This may be a reference to companies of American skirmishers detached from the main lines.¹⁶³ At least one party of skirmishers, a detachment of 25 men from Captain Jesse Bell’s Coast Guard Company of the 9th Connecticut Militia, were deployed in advance of the American positions to engage the British main column during their approach.¹⁶⁴ Coast Guard companies, composed of veteran soldiers, were tasked with protecting their town’s coastline from British and Loyalist raiding parties from Long Island. Private Thaddeus Bell and Private John Dibble, both of Darien, Connecticut, were among those skirmishers sent forward around 150 yards north of the main American line directly in front of the barn posted behind the rail fencing at the base of the hill. Thaddeus Bell remembered that “on the 27th of April we were posted north of Stebbins house where the road turned to go to Danbury... We were posted to take the British in the flank as they came down the Ridgebury Road. We were behind the fence and eight to ten rods north of Stebbins barn.”¹⁶⁵ Although Private Bell mentioned the Ridgebury Road, the road was more accurately known as the North Salem Road which did lead towards Ridgebury. The rail fence Bell described was on the Stebbins property, around 100 yards north of the barricade and only about 50 yards north of the barn, down a slope and across a stream. The 9th CT skirmishers were about 100 yards south of the junction of North Salem Road and Danbury Road. It is possible that another company of skirmishers was similarly posted in advance of the main line on the western side of Main Street. The 2nd Westchester Militia on the western flank likely positioned skirmishers in the old orchard to their front. Deploying skirmishers ahead of the main force was a standard military tactic, in this case American commanders hoped to inflict casualties and sow confusion among the British as they approached the American lines while also providing a signal to the main force of where the lead elements of the British were located and that fighting will soon begin.

¹⁶³ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁶⁴ WCHS, McDonald Papers, 584; Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 487.

¹⁶⁵ WCHS, McDonald Papers, 111; Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 487.

The division was alerted to the approach of the British by the sound of small arms and cannon fire between Wooster's Division and the British rear guard a mile to the north. In his report to Governor Trumbull, General Silliman said "Of their Approach we had Notice by the Fireing in the Enemies rear occasioned by Gen Woosters Harrassing them in the rear" only a mile north of the town. It is unclear what time the sounds of fighting between Erskin's Brigade and Wooster's Division occurred but he reported that before long "the Enemy appeared in One grand column that filled the Road full for more than half a Mile in Length."¹⁶⁶ Silliman stated that the British brought their main column to a halt near Titicus River about a half mile from the American position at the Stebbins's House to "to make their Dispositions for the attack."¹⁶⁷ By this time Wooster's Division had been repulsed by the British rear-guard and the British commanders focused on the next obstacle, the entrenched Americans to their front. General Erskine, who was effectively in command of British forces, called up three guns from his brigade to join the guns at the front of the column with Agnew's Brigade. As Agnew's Brigade of some 750 troops advanced along present-day Main Street to prepare for the main assault, their advance guard first encountered Captain Bell's Company of 25 skirmishers positioned behind some rail fencing on the Danbury Road in front of the Stebbins barn and the center of the American line. Bell stated that the "British advanced with music which we heard along time before they reached us. When they saw us they fired, but fired too high. This was musketry."¹⁶⁸ Bell's account suggests that his company held their fire and allowed the British advance guard to approach as close to their position as possible. It is unclear how many volleys were exchanged but Private Dibble recalled years later that "I was then on the flank guards, and five out of twenty five of us got killed" which indicates a sharp action, at relatively close range, before the skirmishers fell back to the main American line.¹⁶⁹ It is unknown how many casualties were inflicted on the British advance guard but the main column came to a halt as Generals Tryon and Erskine surveyed the situation (Figure 10: Third Engagement Phase I). The Third Engagement of the Battle of Ridgefield had begun.

¹⁶⁶ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁶⁷ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁶⁸ McDonald Papers, 599.

¹⁶⁹ WCHS, McDonald Papers, 584.

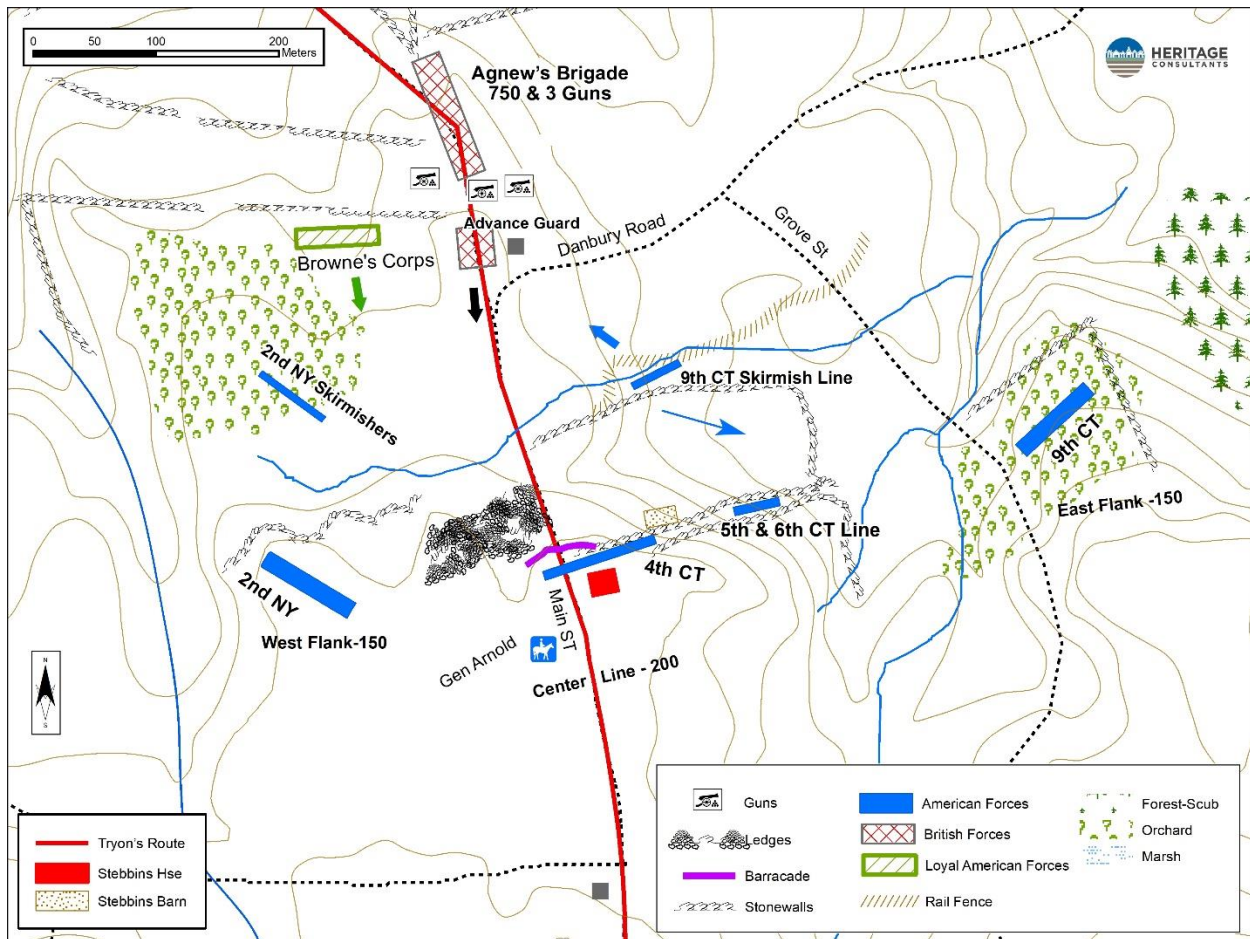


Figure 10: Third Engagement, Phase I

The action referred to as the Third Engagement is the most well documented engagement of the Battle of Ridgefield yet there are several conflicting accounts as to when the action began. As noted earlier, Arnold and Silliman’s Division arrived in Ridgefield around 2:00 PM on April 27, 1777 “one hour before them [British]... We had little time to make a disposition of our Troops, when a smart action began which lasted about one hour.” Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers, who likely accompanied General Tryon at the head of the column with Agnew’s Brigade, recorded that upon reaching Ridgefield “we found General Arnold posted on the hills and in the Village with about 700 men... We immediately (2 o’clock) Attack’d the Village and drove them off and took Possession.” Taking into account the hour difference between British and American timekeeping, the assault may have begun around 3:00 PM.¹⁷⁰ Writing on April 29, General Silliman confirmed the American time estimate that “About 3 o’clock the Enemy appeared

¹⁷⁰ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

in One grand column.” He also provided details about several phases of combat that lasted at least an hour or more before his men gave way.¹⁷¹ Thus, it appears that the fighting that constituted the Third Engagement began around 3:00 PM and perhaps ended as late as 4:00 PM.¹⁷²

Third Engagement Part I – Royal Artillery Bombardment

General Silliman recorded several phases of combat during the British assault on the American position at Ridgefield Village. He wrote that “they began first by a Cannonade from 6 Field Pieces” as the Royal Artillery attempted to dislodge the Americans (Figure 11. Third Engagement, Phase II).¹⁷³ The cannon fire directed at the barricade and Stebbins house had little impact and only served to deplete British ammunition. The makeshift American breastworks was not penetrated by the 3-pound solid shot. The Stebbins house was struck several times by cannon fire and the gunners may have also targeted the barn and stonewalls running east of the home that American forces used as breastworks. The cannonade may have lasted up to one half hour during which time the British commanders arranged their forces for an infantry assault.

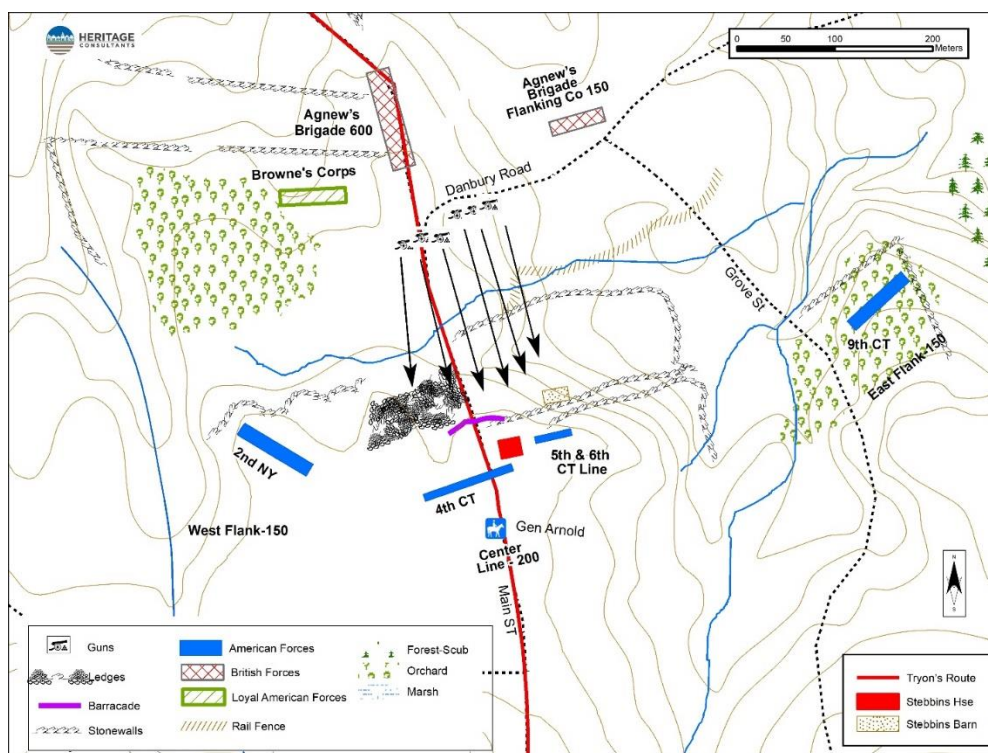


Figure 11: Third Engagement, Phase II

¹⁷¹ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁷² See Chapter VI: Results and Battlefield Event Synthesis, Timeline.

¹⁷³ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

Third Engagement Part II – British Flanking Actions

The initial cannonade alone was ineffective. “This not answering their purpose” wrote Silliman, “they sent large flanking Parties to flank us, they were received warmly by our out Posts, for a while.”¹⁷⁴ Browne’s Loyalist Corps pressed the American western flank beyond the bedrock ledges, and another detachment of troops, most likely from Agnew’s Brigade, assaulted the eastern American flank in the vicinity of Grove Street. The combined British flanking parties may have included 300 or more soldiers. Elements of Browne’s Corps advanced through an orchard and over a stream until they encountered American troops, most likely the 2nd Westchester Militia. New York and Connecticut soldiers posted at this location exchanged fire with New York and Connecticut loyalists over control of the western flank. To the east, the flanking company detached from Agnew’s Brigade advanced along Grove Street until they met the 9th Connecticut Militia on a hill with a stonewall enclosure and orchard, east of the Stebbins house. General Arnold described the fighting as “a smart action” which marked the beginning of the battle.¹⁷⁵ The Royal Artillery likely continued their bombardment of the American center during the flank attacks. In the face of determined American opposition Browne’s Corps and Agnew’s flanking detachment disengaged and fell back towards the main British line (Figure 12: Third Engagement, Phase III).

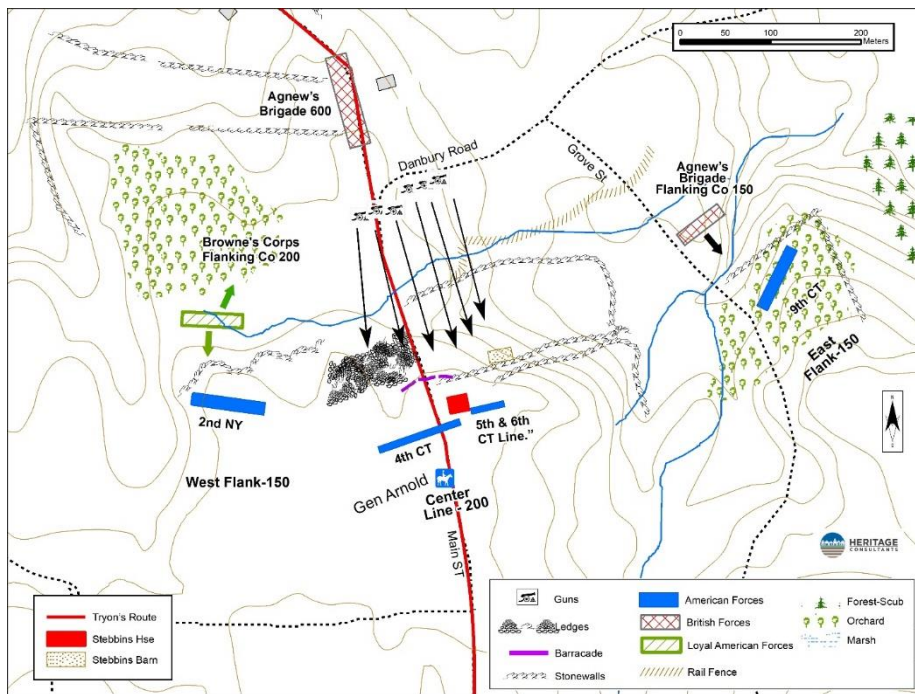


Figure 12: Third Engagement, Phase III

¹⁷⁴ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁷⁵ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 197.

Third Engagement Part III – Main British Assault

The western and eastern flanks held against the British flanking attacks as the center of the American line prepared for the main assault. Generals Erskine and Tryon arranged their forces for a concentrated assault on the American center. More than half of the British forces were chosen for the task and General Agnew may have led the attack himself. General Agnew's Brigade consisted of 750 infantry, 600 of which advanced in a single column and then deployed into a battleline with close support from the three guns assigned to that brigade. The remaining 150 men were detached and ordered to renew the attack on the eastern flank. All of Browne's Loyalist Corps, almost 300 men, were ordered to attack the American western flank. Erskine's Brigade was likely brought up towards Main Street as the attack began to serve as the rear guard; it also acted as a reserve in the event the attack was repulsed. From his vantage point near the center of the American line, General Silliman described the final assault as follows:

“...the Enemy soon marched up a large Collum containing about 600 men right in our Front; and very large flanking Parties on each of their Flanks consisting either of them of more Men than our whole force consisted of, with 3 Field Pieces in Front of their Collum; Upon this a hot Fire ensued from both Sides, which continued with great Fury for about half an hour more...”¹⁷⁶

The account of Private John Dibble of Captain Bell's Company, who survived the initial skirmish with British troops near Danbury Road provided a description of the main British assault from the vantage point of the eastern flank of the American line. The 20 survivors of Bell's Company rejoined the 9th Connecticut Militia who “were posted on the road leading to Reading on the east flank” placing this unit near present-day Grove Street which led to East Ridge Street and the main route towards Redding as opposed to the Danbury Road further north.¹⁷⁷ Private Dibble recalled how the British infantry, composed of up to 600 soldiers of Agnew's Brigade along with the 150 man flanking company, “advanced with a broad front” toward the American line.¹⁷⁸ This “broad front” most likely denotes a long line of battle of two or three ranks of men, stretched long enough to match, if not exceed, the American's 150 – 200 yard battle front. Private Dibble and the 9th Connecticut would not have been able to see Browne's Corps from their vantage point (Figure 13: Third Engagement, Phase IV).

¹⁷⁶ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁷⁷ WCHS, McDonald Papers, 603.

¹⁷⁸ WCHS, McDonald Papers, 603.

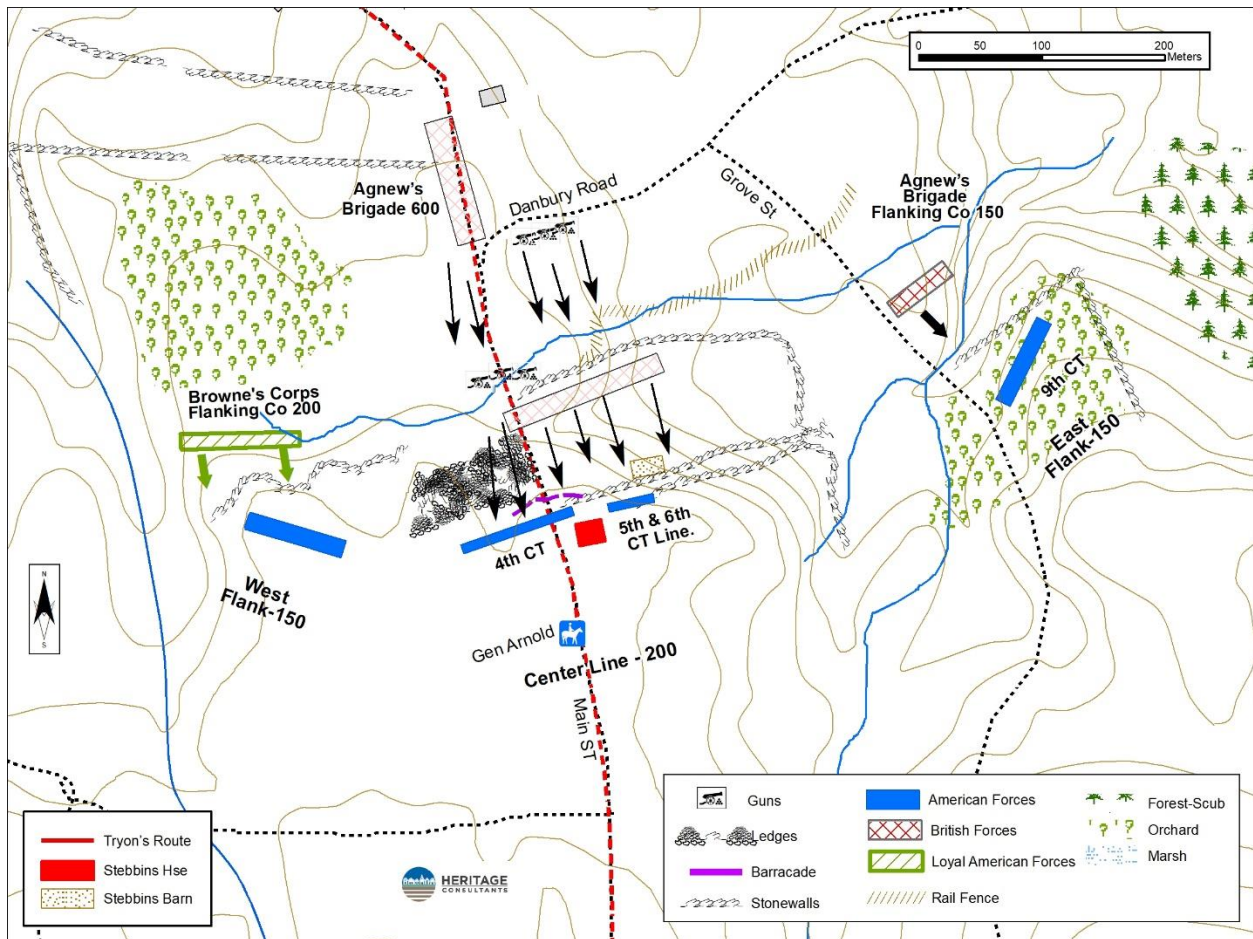


Figure 13: Third Engagement, Phase IV

General's Erskine, Tryon, and Agnew most likely believed that untrained provincial militia held the town and bolstered by the success of Erskine's rear guard against Wooster's Brigade they may have expected a short fight. Dibble's description suggests that although Agnew's Brigade advanced as an assaulting column as described by General Silliman, British forces deployed into a battleline, perhaps arranging their troops west to east along Danbury Road before commencing the assault. If Agnew's Brigade attempted to charge through the center of the American line in a column formation with 600 men at the barricade it is unlikely that the fighting would have raged for a half hour as reported by Silliman. If attacking in column only the front rank of the formation (4, 6, or even 10 soldiers) would fire at a given time minimizing their impact. Attacking in a line of battle could bring hundreds of muskets to bear on the American line during each volley maximizing their firepower. If they had attacked in column formation, the British would have either quickly broken through the barricade due to the sheer mass of men thrown against the breastworks or the Americans would have halted the British charge by firing into the flanks of the

attacking column inflicting significant casualties. The fight would not have lasted “continued with great Fury for about half an hour more” as described by Silliman. British commanders likely arranged their forces in a battle line with strong flanking companies in order to stretch American troops thin and minimize casualties; thus the “broad front” noted by Dibble.

The three guns of the Royal Artillery acted as close infantry support at the vanguard of the main attack “in Front of their Collum” according to General Silliman. These guns likely advanced along Main Street until within 150 – 200 yards of the barricade where they could act as close support by firing canister, grape, and/or solid iron shot into the American line to both cover the infantry advance and inflict damage while effectively remaining out of range of American musket fire. From his perspective on the American eastern flank, Private Dibble of the 9th Connecticut Militia not only described how the British then “advanced with a broad front” but he also noted that “they fired first” which may indicate that British troops marched within 50 to 75 yards to maximize the effect of their musketry while the American’s held their fire.¹⁷⁹ On their approach to the Stebbins house British troops would have had to knock over fencing, cross and stream, and marched up a steep, rock incline. Shooting volleys uphill would also result in a number of soldiers firing high over the heads of the Americans. As British troops reloaded, the entire American line of battle stretching from the 2nd Westchester New York Militia to the west of the ledges to the 9th Connecticut Militia in the orchard on Grove Street, responded with their own volleys of musket fire. As described by General Silliman “a hot Fire ensued from both Sides, which continued with great Fury for about half an hour more.”¹⁸⁰ Private Amon Marshall of the 2nd Regiment Westchester Militia recalled in a post-war pension application that he “was in the engagement at Ridgefield in Connecticut...saw Arnold ride back and forth giving orders to the American Troops” holding the line.¹⁸¹ A general fight erupted along the entire American front as the approximately 500 American troops held their ground against a veteran British force of at least twice that number.

The makeshift breastworks and fortifications from the ledges through the Stebbins property proved a good defense for the American troops fighting behind it and a substantial obstacle for the

¹⁷⁹ WCHS, McDonald Papers, 561-562.

¹⁸⁰ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁸¹ NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, Marshall, S.13862, Amon Marshall.

attacking British forces. As early as 1775 General Israel Putnam advocated for the use of fortification during the siege of Boston and was said to have stated that “The Americans are not at all afraid of their heads, though very much afraid of their legs; if you cover those, they will fight forever.”¹⁸² Putnam’s experience accurately describes the effect of the breastworks employed by Arnold and Silliman’s Division at Ridgefield in 1777. British officers may have been surprised by the amount of resistance from the Americans who benefited from the cover of the ledges, barricade, and stone walls along the Stebbins property. One British officer described how “Arnold had taken Post very advantageously” and the intensity of the American fire may have led the officer to overestimate the size of the American force which he believed to be “a Body of 5000 men.” He thought they had “Marched from Peeks Hill [Peekskill] 32 Miles distance.”¹⁸³ Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers did not describe the fighting at the barricade in any great detail but noted “General Arnold posted on the hills and in the Village with about 700 men” and although he only overestimated Arnold-Silliman’s Division by about two hundred soldiers this too may also speak to the level of opposition Robertson witnessed that afternoon.¹⁸⁴ Agnew’s Brigade of around 600 infantry faced approximately 200 moderately entrenched American troops at the center of the line around the barricade, Stebbins property, and the ledges were able to withstand a frontal assault from a larger, but fully exposed, force. The opposition the British encountered at Ridgefield Village differed greatly from their experience an hour earlier fighting Wooster’s Brigade where a similarly sized American force was defeated in an open field of battle by British infantry and artillery. Even slight fortifications resulted in a boost in both confidence and morale among the outnumbered American forces. Casualties began to mount among Agnew’s Brigade as Connecticut and New York Militia, as well as a company of Continental soldiers, poured continuous fire into the exposed line of British infantry to their front. Browne’s Loyalist Corps again advanced through the older orchard on the western flank of the American line where they undoubtedly used the trees for cover as they engaged the 2nd Westchester Militia near the ledges.

The Americans successfully held back the main thrust of the British assault for the time being. Benjamin Stebbins, the owner of the home at the center of combat, did not evacuate his

¹⁸² Office of the Chief of Military History, *Selected Quotations: U.S. Military Leaders* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1964). 7.

¹⁸³ “Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk,” Stevens, Ed. *America, 1773-1783*. 4.

¹⁸⁴ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

house prior to the battle and witnessed the entire affair. Writing years after the event to a relative, Stebbins described the day as “when the British were repulsed by Benedict Arnold and his men at the location of my house,” which is an interesting description considering it was common knowledge that the British won the battle.¹⁸⁵ Stebbins’ perspective was of a successful American defense at the barricade which held back Agnew’s Brigade for nearly a half hour. As the battle wore on British musket and cannon fire started to take effect on the American line and a number of men were wounded and killed.¹⁸⁶ According to Stebbins eyewitness account:

The fight was a bloody one; between forty and fifty Americans lost their lives...During the battle, the house was used as a hospital for the wounded. Several times it caught fire. I was crippled at the time, but when I heard the news that the British were coming from Danbury, I decided not to leave my house, and, indeed, stuck it out in my bedroom that looks out to the East, over the meadow. A musket ball broke through the door once, but missed me. But it splintered my chair.¹⁸⁷

There was not enough room in Benjamin Stebbins’ house to care for the mounting American casualties, nor was it a particularly safe location as it was directly behind the American line. Colonel Philip Bradley’s private home was located around 300 yards (275 meters) directly to the south of the barricade on Main Street and he opened his home to wounded men later testifying to the General Assembly that “those y^t were wounded many of which were lodged in his s^d House.”¹⁸⁸ Further to the south along Main Street the Congregational Church, a public building already being used to store military goods, also was used as a field hospital and a point far enough away from the fighting where wounded men could be moved out of town by horse if necessary. The experience of Stephen Wells of the 4th Connecticut, is a good example of what the American wounded endured.¹⁸⁹ Private Wells testified that:

...on the 27th of said month in the Memorable Action at Ridgefield, your Memorialists was one of the few in Number that was Stationed at the Breast Works, and in the Attack there made on the Enemy – He Received a dangerous Wound in his Left Leg – and was with Great Difficulty and Risque of Life, by the Assistance

¹⁸⁵ Benjamin Stebbins Account, Undated Manuscript, Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center.

¹⁸⁶ For additional details on individual casualties see Keith Marshall Jones’ description of the Third Engagement in his history of the Battle of Ridgefield, *Farmers Against the Crown*. See: Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 80-89.

¹⁸⁷ Benjamin Stebbins Account, Undated Manuscript, Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center.

¹⁸⁸ CSL, CT Archives, Series I, VII: 227.

¹⁸⁹ A newspaper advertisement in search of a lost musket posted in the Connecticut Journal by Stephen Wells noted that he “was carried away wounded from Ridgefield, on the 27th of April last, my gun was given to a person unknown, as some people were helping me on to a horse nearly opposite to Ridgefield meeting house.” The church would have been the most visible structure in town and appears to have been a rendezvous point for American troops before and during the battle. See: *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), July 9, 1777. 2.

of Friends Brought of[sic] the Field of Action and Convayed home in a Horse litter,
Where your Memorialist Lay Confined by said Wound under the Care of a Doctor,
Ten Weeks...¹⁹⁰

The half-hour of sustained firing from the American line began to take its toll on Agnew's Brigade and the main attack began to falter as British troops suffered from what Tryon's Aid de Camp described as "a want of ammunition."¹⁹¹ At the beginning of the British assault on Arnold-Silliman's Division most of the soldiers of Agnew's Brigade carried as many as 60 rounds of ammunition. From their post at the front of the British column they had seen little or no combat on the march from Danbury but Browne's Loyalist Corps was involved in more fighting than the main column during the march assigned to protect the army's flanks and likely expended a significant amount of ammunition in the process. If, as reported by General Silliman, "a hot Fire ensued from both Sides, which continued with great Fury for about half an hour," and assuming a conservative estimate that British soldiers may have maintained a rate of fire of approximately two rounds per minute, the average British soldier in Agnew's Brigade or Browne's Loyalist Corps would have expended most of their ammunition within 30 – 45 minutes.¹⁹²

By this point it was likely 4:00 PM and for the previous hour the American line held against artillery bombardment, flanking maneuvers, and a frontal assault. Generals Arnold and Silliman and the 200 troops holding the center of the American battle line then faced a bayonet charge by British regulars. In the face of a full-frontal charge by a force twice their size the American position became tenuous. The 4th Connecticut at the center of the American line behind the barricade bore the brunt of the renewed British assault. Captain Ebenezer Coe of the 4th Connecticut later testified that "when the Enemy [sic] was Coming down on us the orders was to Send all the horses forard [sic]" although the purpose of the order was not explained.¹⁹³ It is unclear if this was an effort to evacuate the wounded, to prepare for a withdrawal, or both. Prior to the battle large portions of the Connecticut and New York militia companies arrived at Ridgefield on horseback and these horses were put to pasture under guard, far enough away so they would be safe but close enough to be recalled when required. As described by Private John Lockwood of the 9th Connecticut Militia,

¹⁹⁰ CSL, CT Archives, Series I, XXIII: 217.

¹⁹¹ "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 284.

¹⁹² Anthony D. Darling, *Red Coat and Brown Bess* (Alexandria Bay, NY: Museum Restoration Service, 1971). 11; Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

¹⁹³ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, Series I, X:165.

“when he got to Ridgefield...put his Horse out to pasture so that he might be far from the care of trouble of s^d Horse and be there better prepared to Engage the Enemy.”¹⁹⁴ This also was the case for Private John Wedge of the 13th Connecticut attached to Wooster’s Division, who stated that the men of his regiment marched “with the rest of S^d Company in the utmost haste on horseback for the relieve of the Town of Danbury when invaded by the British Troops your memorialist with Sundery others Leaving our Horses with a guard pursued the Enemy.”¹⁹⁵ In the case of the 4th Connecticut, horses belonging to the regiment were brought up, which likely occurred along the entire American line as fighting intensified.

As the main British assault on the American position was checked one incident on the western flank broke the stalemate. Browne’s Loyalist Corps advanced on the American west flank through an orchard towards the rock ledges and 2nd Westchester Militia.¹⁹⁶ The Americans may have had a stonewall to use as cover. As described by Abraham Gilbert, who later built his house upon the site of the ledges across the road from the Stebbins house, local tradition stated that “Beyond and north of the rocks was an old orchard, under cover of which the British advanced and out flanked Arnold.”¹⁹⁷ Using the orchard trees and rocks for cover, as well as their superior numbers, Browne’s Corps pushed back the 2nd Westchester Militia and any other American troops on the western flank which then was exposed to British attack. This successful flanking action by Browne’s Corps appears to have occurred in unison with a renewed assault on the American center by Agnew’s Brigade. With fighting along the entire line, and no reserve troops available to reinforce the exposed western flank, US commanders were not aware of the dire situation until it was too late.

At least one platoon of Browne’s men scaled the ledges as the rest of the regiment fought their way through the orchard. Coming over the top of the ledges the Loyalist soldiers had a line of sight to the east along the entire American battleline who were heavily engaged with Agnew’s Brigade. Through the smoke and roar of the battle the Loyalists observed an American officer on horseback wearing “a blanket great coat” only 40 or 50 yards to their southeast, shouting orders

¹⁹⁴ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, Series I, VIII:80; Johnston, Ed. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 485.

¹⁹⁵ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, Series I, X:306; Johnston, Ed. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 467.

¹⁹⁶ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 472-473.

¹⁹⁷ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 472-473.

and rallying the soldiers at the barricade.¹⁹⁸ General Benedict Arnold was the officer on horseback encouraging the 200 or so American troops holding the center of the line and he may not have been aware of the Loyalists on his left until it was too late. An officer among the Loyalists may have commanded them to take aim at the conspicuous target to their front, or they all instinctively shot at the officer on horseback, but in either case at least nine British soldiers fired at General Arnold and all the gunfire struck the horse but missed the rider.¹⁹⁹

The horse fell and Arnold was pinned to the ground. A few of the Loyalists charged forward to kill or capture Arnold. Dozens of accounts of this incident appear in both primary and secondary sources which only seem to become more exaggerated over time.²⁰⁰ Days after the battle, the *Connecticut Journal* reported that “The General had his horse shot under him, when the enemy were within ten yards of him, but luckily received no hurt, recovering himself he drew his pistols and shot the soldier who was advancing with his fixed bayonet.”²⁰¹ Also writing a few days after the battle, General Tryon’s Aide de Camp, George Hutchinson reported that “Arnold escaped very narrowly with the loss of his horse, which was killed. Every body said, he behaved that day with uncommon resolution, as to personal bravery, but did not give him much credit for his judgement as a general.”²⁰² Local tradition, as recalled by Revolutionary War historian Benson Lossing, and later by Ridgefield historian George Rockwell, described how a Loyalist rushed forward to take the General who “While trying to extricate himself, a Tory rushed up with his bayonet” before Arnold “shot him dead.”²⁰³ During an interview in 1845, Abraham Gilbert was able to point to where Arnold fell and stated that British troops “out flanked Arnold whose horse was shot about eight or ten rods from my house - that is, where the rocks were. He walked calmly off afterwards... The British completely outflanked and encircled Arnold’s left wing... Arnold was the

¹⁹⁸ According to Private John Dibble of the 9th Connecticut Militia recalled in his 1847 interview with John MacDonald “I saw Arnold twice that day. He wore a blanket great coat” which is the only surviving period description of General Arnold’s clothing, or uniform, worn during the battle. Dibble was posted on the eastern flank of the American Line, which he notes when he described how “I was east of Gen Arnold when his horse was killed,” but does not describe actually witnessing the event. See: WCHS, McDonald Papers. 561.

¹⁹⁹ According to the account of the historian Benson Lossing, during his visit to Ridgefield an old resident of town mentioned that “on the day after the battle himself and some other boys skinned Arnold’s horse and discovered nine bullet holes in his hide.” See: Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book of The Revolution*, Vol. I. 409; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 87.

²⁰⁰ For a complete account of the most well-known versions of General Arnold’s narrow escape see: Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 86-88.

²⁰¹ *The Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT). April 30, 1777.

²⁰² “America,” *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 284.

²⁰³ Lossing. *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution*. I: 409; Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 115.

last man to go.”²⁰⁴ Gilbert’s account does not detail Arnold shooting his attacker but suggests that the incident occurred before the American line collapsed. Private John Dibble of the 9th Connecticut recalled being told by another soldier that after having his horse shot “Arnold mounted another horse and rode off at speed laying down upon the animal.”²⁰⁵ All accounts agree on the following synopsis of the event as reported by the *Connecticut Journal*:

...The General had his horse shot out under him, when the enemy were within about ten yards of him, but luckily received no hurt, recovering himself he drew his pistols and shot the soldier who was advancing with his fixed bayonet.²⁰⁶

Third Engagement Part IV – American Line Flanked

Although the American line wavered against the full weight of the assault from Agnew’s Brigade, the 4th Connecticut held strong at the barricade as did the men of the 5th and 6th Connecticut Line, and the 9th Connecticut on the eastern flank. It was not until Browne’s Loyalist Corps appeared on their western flank on the ledges that the American line fractured as confusion and panic spread among some of the men. Browne’s Loyalist Corps took advantage of the situation and began firing enfilade along the 4th Connecticut at the barricade and the Stebbins house. Major John Benjamin of the 4th Connecticut was said to have been wounded in the neck by three buck shot which was likely part of a Loyalist “buck and ball” cartridge, a uniquely “American” ammunition developed by colonists by the eighteenth century.²⁰⁷ These cartridges included one lead roundball and three smaller lead shot loaded atop one another and when fired would send multiple projectiles downrange while the single musket ball would retain some degree of accuracy. Buck and Ball cartridges were adopted by United States armed forces as well as state militias, and although they were not issued to regular British troops it is likely that some, or all, or Browne’s Loyalist Corps carried such ammunition. As described by Abraham Gilbert, “The British completely outflanked and encircled Arnold’s left wing, crowded them closely together and compelled them to retreat in confusion” (Figure 14: Third Engagement, Phase V).²⁰⁸ The

²⁰⁴ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 472-473.

²⁰⁵ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 561-562.

²⁰⁶ *The Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), April 30, 1777.

²⁰⁷ Buck and Ball cartridges included one lead roundball and three smaller lead shot loaded atop one another and when fired would send multiple projectiles downrange while the single musket ball would retain some degree of accuracy. It is entirely possible that Major Benjamin was wounded by the “buckshot” component of such a cartridge. See: Bedini. *Ridgefield in Review*; 83; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 91; Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 30-35.

²⁰⁸ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 472-473.

Connecticut Journal reported that after Arnold's narrow escape "He then ordered his troops to retreat through a shower of small and grape shot...it was found impossible to rally our troops."²⁰⁹

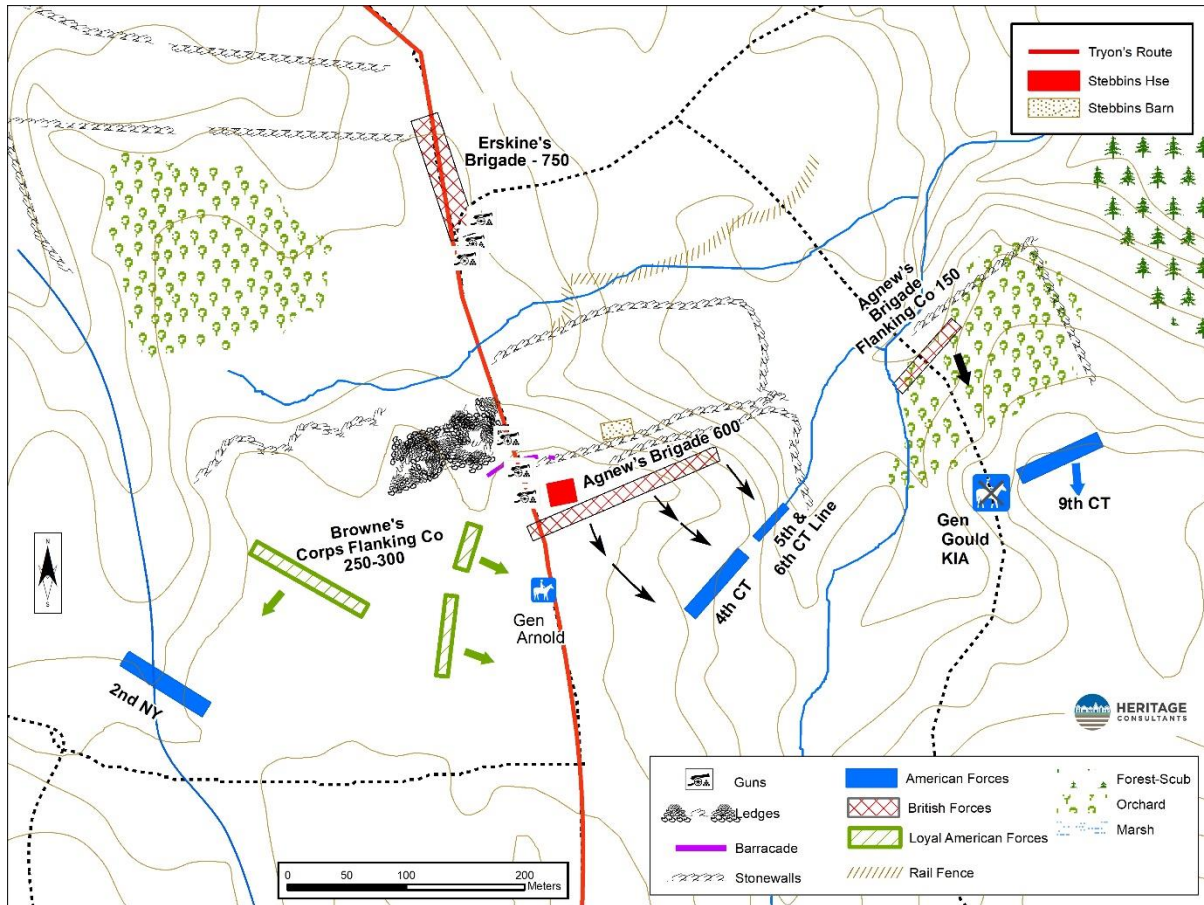


Figure 14: Third Engagement, Phase V

The attempt to hold back the renewed British frontal assault while being flanked on the west by Browne's Corps was too much for the approximately 200 American troops at the center of the line. According to the *Connecticut Journal* the "men behaved with great spirit; but being overpowered by numbers, were obliged to give way, though not until the enemy were raising [*sic*: razing] a small breast-work, thrown across the way."²¹⁰ The report of the Americans not retreating until British troops were razing, or destroying, the barricade is an important detail in terms of a description of the effectiveness of the barricade itself as an obstacle to the British assault and as a reference to American troops holding out against the final charge until the very moment of

²⁰⁹ *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), April 30, 1777.

²¹⁰ *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), April 30, 1777.

Browne's flanking maneuver. The final push by Agnew's Brigade to break through the American line, and the close fighting that ensued, was too much for the outnumbered Americans and according to Captain Coe of the 4th Connecticut stationed near the barricade, some of "the privates run off just before they were flanked by the British" further weakening their battle line.²¹¹ The appearance of Browne's Loyalist Corps on the western flank was the breaking point for the 4th Connecticut Militia, the 5th and 6th Connecticut Line, and others who were pushed back towards the southeast, away from the Stebbins house and towards the center of Ridgefield.

The Americans were not completely routed; some of the officers and the rank and file fell back in an orderly manner as they continued to fire on the advancing British troops. David Patchen of the 4th Connecticut was one of these stubborn soldiers and according to family tradition he related the following account:

...he [Patchen] had seven shots, when he took as he said as good a sight as ever he did at pigeons – the last time at one [British soldier] that came around the corner of the house about three rods distant. He saw him drop, and then under the cover of smoke the whole volley the British poured in upon them, [he] retreated, and when that left him Skulked behind a rock where the balls struck spat! Spat! Spat! In the manner of hail...²¹²

The Patchen family account is noteworthy for several reasons as it demonstrates that some American troops continued to fight on the Stebbins property after Browne's Corps had taken the ledge and the barricade was breached. By Patchen's own account he was able to take seven aimed shots with "as good a sight as ever he did at pigeons," which would have taken up to five minutes and may have felled an enemy soldier with each shot.²¹³ His description of shooting "the last time at one that came around the corner of the house about three rods distant" undoubtedly refers to the Stebbins house which the 4th Connecticut had been posted. As British forces overran the American positions around the Stebbins house they gave no quarter to the wounded. Captain Coe, also of the 4th Connecticut, was shot in the head during the withdrawal and fell wounded into the hands of the

²¹¹ Jones. *Farmers Against The Crown*. 85.

²¹² Cornelius Penfield Lathrop, *Black Rock, Seaport of Old Fairfield, CT 1644-1870* (New Haven, CT: The Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor Company, 1930). 28; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 64.

²¹³ Under perfect conditions a well-trained soldiers could fire up to three shots per minute with a good flintlock musket. Considering the stress, physical activity, and fatigue David Patchen endured, as well as the time he may have taken to aim at his target, relying on a reasonable estimate of 2 shots per minute it may have taken Patchen four to five minutes to fire his seven shots. Lathrop, *Black Rock*. 28.

British who “stabbed with Bayonets & Robbed” him but somehow, he survived the ordeal.²¹⁴ Writing two days after the battle General Silliman noted that the British acted with “Barbarity & Cruelty...Murdering the wounded that fell into their hands” as confirmed by Coe’s experience.²¹⁵

The American line appears to have folded “in confusion” from west to east. It does not seem that General Arnold, General Silliman, or any officers were able to rally their retreating men at the time during which Colonel Abraham Gould of the 4th Connecticut Militia was shot and killed in the orchard. Abraham Gilbert noted that “Colonel Gould was killed about sixty rods east of Stebbins house on a gentle height beyond and close to a ledge of rocks” as he oversaw the withdrawal of the eastern flank.²¹⁶ Patchen family tradition states that after their relative David Patchen of the 4th Connecticut fell back from the Stebbins property “The place where they retreated was a cleared spot in a orchard – no cover – and there Col. Gould of Fairfield was shot.”²¹⁷ The distance noted by Gilbert, 60 rods or nearly 1,000 feet east of the Stebbins property places Colonel Gould close to Grove Street and indicates that the Americans were pushed east as their line was flanked while the Patchen family account suggests that he was in the process of rallying retreating troops when he was wounded. The only regiment that may have withdrawn from the line in good order was the 9th Connecticut Militia which was heavily engaged with Agnew’s flanking company on the eastern flank, fighting from the cover of the stonewall and orchard when the American line collapsed. Private Jeremiah Keeler of the 9th Connecticut recalled that “The American flank about parallel with the main body, and we retreated about the same time that Arnold's force fled. This was about 1 or 2 PM.”²¹⁸ With the western end of the line flanked, the American troops at the center were pushed back from the barricade and Stebbins house retreating easterly towards Grove Street while others may have retreated southerly into town, most likely towards the Congregational Church which had been a rendezvous point for evacuating the wounded.

According to one British officer on the scene “the Rebels presently Retreated on all sides, having us a Compleat [*sic*] Victory...And with less loss than we Could have expected; for the Enemy opposed us with great bravery – many opening their Breasts to the Bayonets with great

²¹⁴ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, Series I, VII: 453.

²¹⁵ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

²¹⁶ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 472-473.

²¹⁷ Lathrop, *Black Rock*. 28.

²¹⁸ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 473.

fury & our Ammunition began to be very scarce.”²¹⁹ Browne’s Corps, Agnew’s Brigade, and the Royal Artillery controlled the high ground at the Stebbins property on Main Street to the orchards by Grove Street but did not immediately pursue the retreating Americans. British forces suffered relatively low casualties during the assault on General Arnold’s position; however, they expended a great deal of their ammunition during the effort. General Tryon likely needed time to reform his troops and bring up Erskine’s Brigade as well as care for the wounded.

Third Engagement Casualty Estimates

The exact number of British and American casualties incurred during the Third Engagement is unclear and figures vary.²²⁰ A number of British officers were listed as wounded during the Danbury Expedition although it is unclear exactly where most received their wounds. It is reasonable to assume most were wounded during the “Third Engagement,” which was the only pitched battle of the expedition and one during which at least 500 American troops held their ground against at least 1,000 British Regulars, Loyalists, and artillery at close range for a half hour. American soldiers may have been targeting British officers, particularly those on horseback. According to Hutchinson “Gen. Agnew had got a slight wound on the shoulder, and I was told that Maj. Hope, Capt. Thorne, and Lieut-Hastings, were slightly wounded, and a Captain in Browne’s corps, who was said to be the only one in danger.”²²¹ Colonel Browne and two captains from the Loyalist Corps also were reported as wounded.²²² All of the wounded officers mentioned took part in the Third Engagement at Ridgefield. On June 30, 1777, the *London Daily Advertiser* reported that they received letters that “mention that Sir William Erskine had a very narrow Escape at the Danbury Expedition, two Persons being shot at his Side, and that the small Loss of British Troops sustained was in a great Measure owing to the Bravery and good Conduct of that gallant officer.”²²³ It is unclear where this incident occurred but it is possible that Erskine was directly involved in the Third Engagement or was close enough to the front during the fighting for some of his staff officers to be hit by musket fire.

²¹⁹ “Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk,” Stevens, Ed. *America, 1773-1783*. 5.

²²⁰ For the most detailed discussion of the casualty estimates and individuals killed during the Third Engagement see: Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 101-104.

²²¹ “America,” *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 284.

²²² “America,” *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 286.

²²³ “News,” *Daily Advertiser* (London, UK), 30 June 1777. 1.

Most British accounts report the total casualties from all three engagements, not just those of the third engagement. *Scot's Magazine*, for example, published a "Return of the killed, wounded, and missing, of the following corps on the 27th and 28th of April upon the expedition under the command of Maj-Gen. Tryon" which reported the following total casualties:

Total. 1 drummer and fifer, 23 rank and file, killed; 3 field officers, 6 captains, 2 sub-alterns, 9 serjeants, 92 rank and file, wounded; 1 drummer and fifer, 27 rank and file, missing.

Royal Artillery, 2 additional killed; 2 matrosses, 1 wheeler, wounded; 1 matross missing.

W. Howe.²²⁴

The official British figures, as reported by Sir William Howe, accounted for 27 killed, 155 wounded, and 30 missing soldiers and artillerists for a total of 212 casualties during the Danbury Expedition. The exact number of British troops killed and wounded during the Third Engagement is unclear.²²⁵ Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers recorded in his journal that "In three severe Skirmishes we had about 50 or 60 men Killed and Wounded and 4 or 5 Officers, Major Hope, Captain Rutherford, etc." on April 27.²²⁶ Although Robertson specifies three instances of "severe" combat described as "Skirmishes" he does not attribute casualties to any particular engagement although reason dictates the majority occurred during the Third Engagement. Lieutenant Robertson's estimate was likely recorded at the end of the day on April 27, 1777 and may represent one of the more accurate casualty figures. An account published in the *London Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* in July of 1777 reported figures similar to Robertson's estimate, stating that "Governor Tryon's excursion to Danbury, appears to have been exactly similar to the celebrated Lexington expedition. The Americans buried 62 of the King's troops, and took 40 prisoners (belonging to Mr. Tryon's army) and a great number of waggons and horses."²²⁷ It is unclear where the newspaper received its information but the very specific figure of 62 killed along with the report of wagons, horses, and 40 prisoners taken by the enemy arguably represents casualties incurred on April 27, 1777. Two days after the battle, General Silliman of the 4th Brigade Connecticut Militia reported to Governor Jonathan Trumbull that "the Enemy had about 40 Killed that we know of, & how many more that they Carried we know not nor do we know anything about

²²⁴ "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 286.

²²⁵ For a detailed discussion of the casualty estimates and individuals killed during the Third Engagement see: Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 101-104.

²²⁶ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

²²⁷ "News," *Gazetter and New Daily Advertiser* (London, UK), 16 July 1777.

their wounded.”²²⁸ Silliman later noted that “18 of the Enemy were buried there” at Ridgefield and that the British carted away the wounded and officers killed in action.²²⁹ As admitted by Silliman himself, any estimates of British casualties were little more than educated guesses as American commanders had no real means of calculating such figures other than the dead or wounded left on the battlefield, as well as prisoners taken.

British estimates of American casualties were similarly skewed and wrongly believed that they killed over 100 American soldiers along with a half dozen officers during the expedition and wounded 150 others.²³⁰ American accounts vary as well. General Benedict Arnold only reported that American losses, on both April 27th and 28th was “not great, about twenty killed & wounded” which is an unrealistically low estimate although Arnold may be referring to officers only.²³¹ General Silliman reported to Governor Trumbull on April 29 that “we lost Lt. Col. Gold killed & 8 or 9 others,” which was likely a reference to officers killed and in the same correspondence he also noted that “By the best Accounts I can get we lost in both Actions about 20 Men & ...70 or 80 wounded.”²³² On his return through Ridgefield on April 29, Colonel Hugh Hughes of the Continental Army was informed that 32 Americans were killed in town although it is unclear if that figure represented the Third Engagement or the others as well.²³³ On May 2, 1777 the *Connecticut Journal* reported that between 40 and 50 Americans had died.²³⁴ Benjamin Stebbins, who remained in his house during the battle, when it was occupied by Americans and afterwards by the British who used it as a field hospital, may have provided one of the more accurate American casualty estimates that occurred at the Third Engagement. Stebbins recalled that “The fight was bloody one; between forty and fifty Americans lost their lives. Several are buried beneath the apple tree behind my house.”²³⁵

²²⁸ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center. 2.

²²⁹ Yale University Library, Silliman Papers, Series I, Manuscript Group Number 450, Box 2, Folder 13. Silliman to Fish, May 13, 1777.

²³⁰ "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 286.

²³¹ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 197-198.

²³² Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center. 2.

²³³ “Hugh Hughes to Horatio Gates, Fishkill, NY,” May 3, 1777. New York Historical Society.

²³⁴ *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), May 2, 1777; For a detailed comparison of varying American casualty figures see: Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 103.

²³⁵ Benjamin Stebbins Account, Undated Manuscript, Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center.

Additional Engagements – American Withdrawal through Ridgefield

With the American position at the barricade and Stebbins house flanked and broken, American troops fell back towards the village of Ridgefield as well as the steep ridges on either side of town. The 2nd Westchester and any other troops that retreated to the west likely withdrew to a steep ridge a few hundred yards to the west known as High Ridge. The troops pushed back from the Stebbins property, including the 4th Connecticut Militia, 5th and 6th Connecticut Line, among others, likely retreated in several directions, including south along Main Street and southeast through the orchard and along Grove Street, while others may have made their way to East Ridge beyond. As the 9th Connecticut Militia held the orchard and Grove Street and were the last to withdraw, they likely conducted a rear-guard action, falling back, to the south along Grove Street. It appears that the British did not closely pursue the American troops in retreat. Agnew's Brigade led the assault on the American line and had depleted much of their ammunition in the process while Browne's Loyalist Corps had suffered a number of casualties taking the American western flank including Colonel Browne himself. British troops commandeered the Stebbins house and probably the barn as well in order to care for the dozens of wounded troops scattered across the battlefield and taking time to bury the dead onsite. Erskine's Brigade which had formerly served as the rear-guard marched up Main Street, through the destroyed barricade and likely deployed to the south of the Stebbins property as Agnew's Brigade and Browne's Loyalist Corps reorganized their men. Erskine's Brigade was supported by at least three guns of the Royal Artillery as had been the case all day.

General Silliman wrote that "After our Defeat Gen. Arnold & myself together concluded to endeavor to rally our scattered Forces" but he did not elaborate where this occurred or whether they were successful.²³⁶ Neither General Arnold, General Silliman, or any other American source provide specific details regarding the opposition against the British after the fight at the barricade. Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers recorded a few sentences in his journal which provides some insight into events following the Third Engagement. Robertson noted that "After being in the Village a little while the Rebels again drew together and came up to gain a Rising Ground above the Village, upon which Sir William Erskine made a Disposition to surround them. However by the different Companys not advancing in the same time, we only Dispersed them and

²³⁶ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

drove them off.”²³⁷ His description suggests that Arnold, Silliman, and other field officers may have had some success rallying retreating American forces in town. As Robertson described, the Americans were “in the Village a little while” before they “again drew together” which suggests the retreating troops reformed in town to prepare for the next British attack. It may have been a confusing scene of intermingled individuals and companies from Arnold and Silliman’s broken division, including the 4th Connecticut, 2nd Westchester Militia, soldiers of the 5th and 6th Connecticut Line, and perhaps the 9th Connecticut Militia forming the core of this ad hoc group.

Lieutenant Robertson described how once “the Rebels again drew together” they marched “up to gain a Rising Ground above the Village,” which may refer to the southern end of High Ridge on the western side of Ridgefield. Robertson stated that “Sir William Erskine made a Disposition to surround them. However the different Companys not advancing in the same time, we only Dispersed them and drove them off” confirms that Erskine’s Brigade, after being held in reserve during the Third Engagement, was tasked to press forward into town and clear it of remaining American troops. There is little additional information in the historical record that elaborates on the fighting that occurred during this phase of the battle which involved as many as 750 men of Erskine’s Brigade, three guns of the Royal Artillery, and an unknown number of American troops scattered through Ridgefield center along with those Americans marching “to gain a Rising Ground above the Village.” British troops from Erskine’s Brigade advanced along High Ridge Road to the west, Main Street through Ridgefield village, and East Ridge Road beyond. Erskine’s Brigade included the three cannons from the Royal Artillery in support of the 23rd, 27th, and 64th Regiments, each consisting of up to 250 soldiers. It is possible that one of each regiment, supported by an artillery piece, was assigned to High Ridge, Main Street, and East Ridge in pursuit of remaining American forces.

In 1927 Ridgefield historian George Rockwell wrote that following the retreat from the barricade the “battle did not end in Ridgefield at this time. Firing was kept up all day through the street, along East Ridge, across the hill...continuing south on the Whipstick Ridge...the British placed a cannon in front of the Episcopal Church...and several shots were fired down the street.”²³⁸

²³⁷ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

²³⁸ Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 115.

Rockwell's detailed references to geography and roads was based on both oral tradition and physical evidence in the form of iron 3-pound cannonballs, lead shot, buttons, and other artifacts uncovered by townspeople throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rockwell also noted that "several cannon balls have been found on Main Street" and "on High Ridge" and detailed where they were found, the most notable example being the Keeler Tavern which was struck by cannon fire with the cannonball still visible today (Figure 15: 3-Pound Shot Keeler Tavern).²³⁹ Since Rockwell's 1927 publication additional artifacts have been located throughout town and as recently as 2020 local metal detectorists uncovered lead musket balls and both American and British uniform buttons on private property on the southern end of Main Street.²⁴⁰ The Ridgefield Historical Society recorded historical and contemporary references to battle-related artifacts and mapped the locations using GPS equipment. The resulting distribution of iron cannonballs, iron canister shot, lead musket balls, and regimental buttons confirms that fighting occurred south along Main Street and that the British fired on the Americans on High Ridge (Figure 16: ArcGIS Battle of Ridgefield Artifact Distribution Map).



Figure 15: 3-Pound Shot embedded in the Keeler Tavern, Ridgefield, CT.

²³⁹ Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 79, 115-116; See Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center for more information regarding the 3-pound solid iron shot embedded in a wooden beam on the northern face of the structure. <https://keelertavernmuseum.org/>

²⁴⁰ For a good survey of some of the British cannonballs recovered in years past in Ridgefield see: Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 115-116; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 92-96.

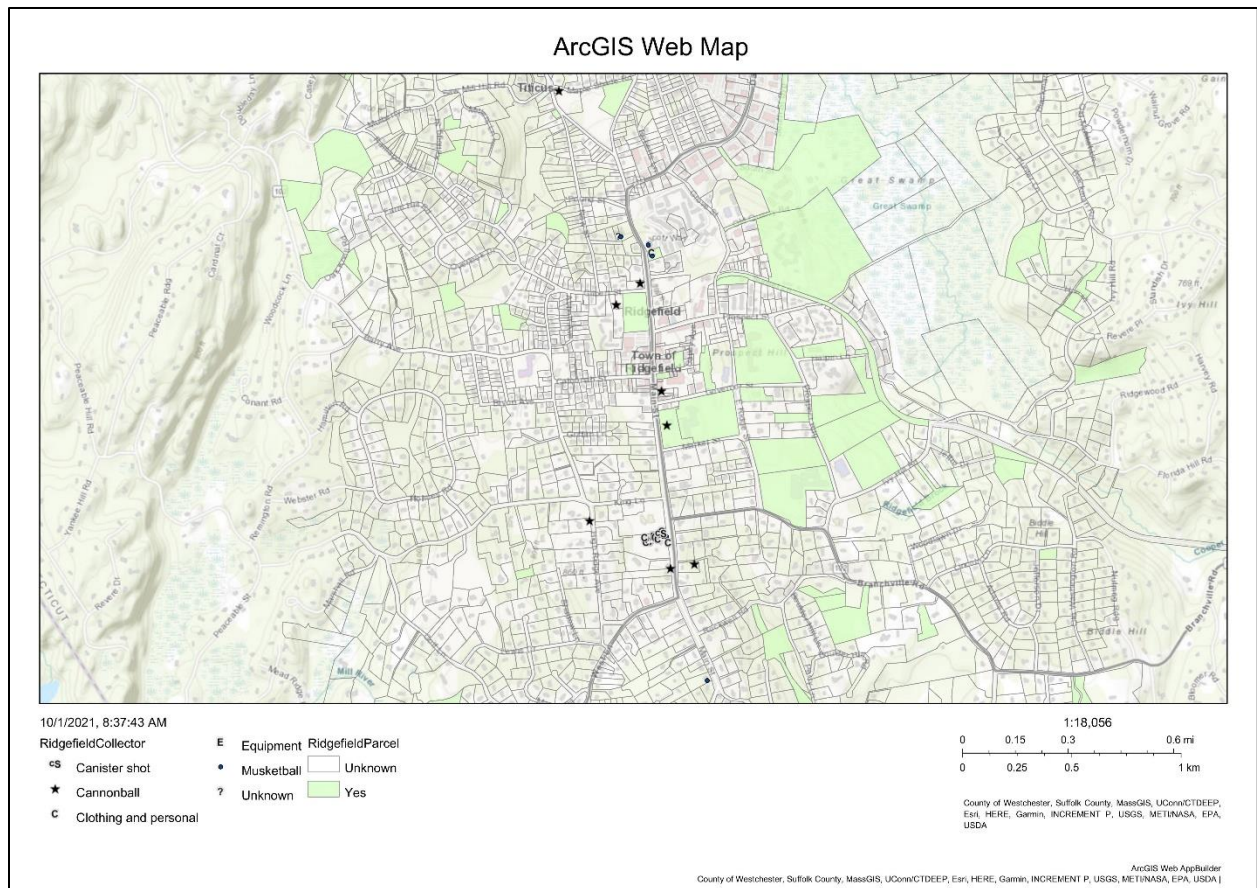


Figure 16: ArcGIS Battle of Ridgefield Artifact Distribution Map

The density of 3-pound iron cannonballs recovered from the ground or discovered embedded in structures indicates that the guns of the Royal Artillery were heavily employed in support of Erskine’s Brigade as they advanced south through town. It is likely that some American forces contested the British advance in a fighting retreat and the Royal Artillery was called upon to repeatedly fire upon them. Perhaps scattered pockets of American soldiers were dispersed with well-placed rounds from the British guns. One particularly descriptive local account may speak to these additional actions fought through Ridgefield Village. The account of Levi Bradley, a Fairfield soldier, as told by his grandson years later may be indicative of the hectic nature of the fighting:

“Arnold’s men getting scattered, my grandfather and some others ran to an old barn for shelter. The British seeing them turned their field pieces that way and making the clapboards fly my grandfather got out and ran to an apple tree. He found a man standing behind it; and whether the man made room for him or he pushed him a little to one side a cannon ball killed him.”²⁴¹

²⁴¹ Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 629; Glenna M. Welsh. *The Proprietors of Ridgefield* (Ridgefield: Caudatowa Press, 1976). 133; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 92-93, 194; Darley. *Call to Arms*. 157-158.

Although it is not clear exactly where Bradley and his comrades sought shelter it was certainly to the south of the Stebbins property. British troops apparently took notice of the American soldiers taking cover in a nearby barn and directed their cannons on the structure which resulted in the death of at least one American. Similar scenes were undoubtedly repeated throughout Ridgefield.

Most Ridgefield histories state that skirmishing occurred on the eastern end of town along East Ridge Road. Grove Street meets East Ridge Road and would have been a natural route of retreat for those American forces that withdrew to the southeast through the orchard. Erskine's Brigade likely detached one of its three regiments along with a gun from the Royal Artillery to clear East Ridge. According to Ridgefield historian Daniel Teller, writing a century after the battle, local tradition stated that a "company of half-grown boys" who trailed the British on East Ridge came "up to a large rock standing on an eminence in a field...found a British soldier who had been mortally wounded" who was later cared for in the home of Captain Jones of Ridgefield until the soldier died.²⁴² This incident occurred in the vicinity of East Ridge Road near Market Street and appears to reinforce the assertion that skirmishing occurred along East Ridge. Early Ridgefield historians also point to a skirmish occurring on the southern end of East Ridge in the vicinity of Rockwell Road but with no details as to why.²⁴³ To the west of the purported skirmish site were two homes the British commandeered to care for their wounded.²⁴⁴

It is unclear how much resistance the British encountered as they advanced south on Main Street through the village of Ridgefield although several iron cannonballs have been recovered in years past during road improvements, in the trunks of trees, or embedded in house timbers during renovations.²⁴⁵ On the southern end of town, the Keeler Tavern was reportedly the location of one American rally point. Local tradition states that musket cartridges were being rolled for American troops positioned around the tavern, including two companies of the 4th Connecticut Militia.²⁴⁶ The Royal Artillery was brought up to the site of the Congregational Church, trained their guns on Americans at Keeler Tavern and opened fire. Solid shot struck the house several times, one of which embedded in the northeast corner of the structure. Another "came crashing through the

²⁴² Teller. *History of Ridgefield*. 71; Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 125-126; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 96.

²⁴³ Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 71; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 93, 96-97.

²⁴⁴ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 93, 97.

²⁴⁵ Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 115-117; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 92-95.

²⁴⁶ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 94-95, 194.

building, and crossed a staircase just as a man was ascending the steps...and he tumbled to the bottom, exclaiming ‘I’m killed, I’m a dead man.’ After a time, however, he discovered that he was unhurt and thereupon he scampered away.”²⁴⁷ The American troops gathered there began suffering some casualties, including Private Silas Haines of Fairfield who was killed by a ball.²⁴⁸ The cannon fire alone may have been enough to drive the Americans away and if not at least one regiment of British regulars were on hand to clear the way. When the British infantry passed they set fire to the tavern as was their practice. Local tradition states a neighboring Loyalist extinguished the flames to save his nearby home.²⁴⁹

A trail of incinerated homes marked the path of the British advance north to south on High Ridge, along present-day High Ridge Avenue, and suggests that this prominent landform was the “Rising Ground above the Village” Lieutenant Robertson noted in his journal. British troops burned any structures in which they found significant amounts of military stores or because American forces used the buildings for armed resistance as had been the case since their occupation of Danbury. The majority of homes that were burned in the village were located on High Ridge which included at least two homes atop the ridge and two more at the southern base of the ridge.²⁵⁰ Two iron cannonballs were recovered from High Ridge over the years as well which suggest that British infantry were again supported by at least one gun from the Royal Artillery as was the case along Main Street (Figure 16: ArcGIS Battle of Ridgefield Artifact Distribution Map).²⁵¹ As Erskine’s Brigade and the Royal Artillery cleared Ridgefield of American troops, other groups of British searched homes and outbuildings for any materials perceived as contraband of war such as firearms, ammunition, military equipage, clothing, and food stores.²⁵² A British officer noted that in “Ridgefield, where, as at Danbury, we found the Meeting House full of Stores, which we also set Fire to, & to Several Houses.”²⁵³ As was the case in Danbury, the British found that the Americans used a church in town, the Episcopal Church, to store military supplies and set the

²⁴⁷ Samuel Griswold Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime; or Men and Things I Have Seen* (New York, NY: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1857). 21; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 94, 194.

²⁴⁸ Bedini. *Ridgefield in Review*. 90.

²⁴⁹ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 94-95.

²⁵⁰ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 94-95

²⁵¹ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 93.

²⁵² For instance, George Rockwell relates a story in which a British scouting party found a firearm in the home of Wakemann Burritt in Farmingville and proceeded to set the house ablaze. As soon as British troops moved on his neighbors extinguished the flames. See: Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 71.

²⁵³ “Paul Wentworth to the Earl of Suffolk,” Stevens, Ed. *America, 1773-1783*. 3.

building ablaze. British troops still around the Stebbins property likely buried their men that fell in the vicinity, gathered their wounded, and continued their march south with Agnew's Brigade, which by then was situated in the rear. It is unclear if Browne's Loyalist Corps were active in the skirmishing through Ridgefield village or remained with Agnew's Brigade at this time (Figure 17: Additional Engagements in Ridgefield Village).

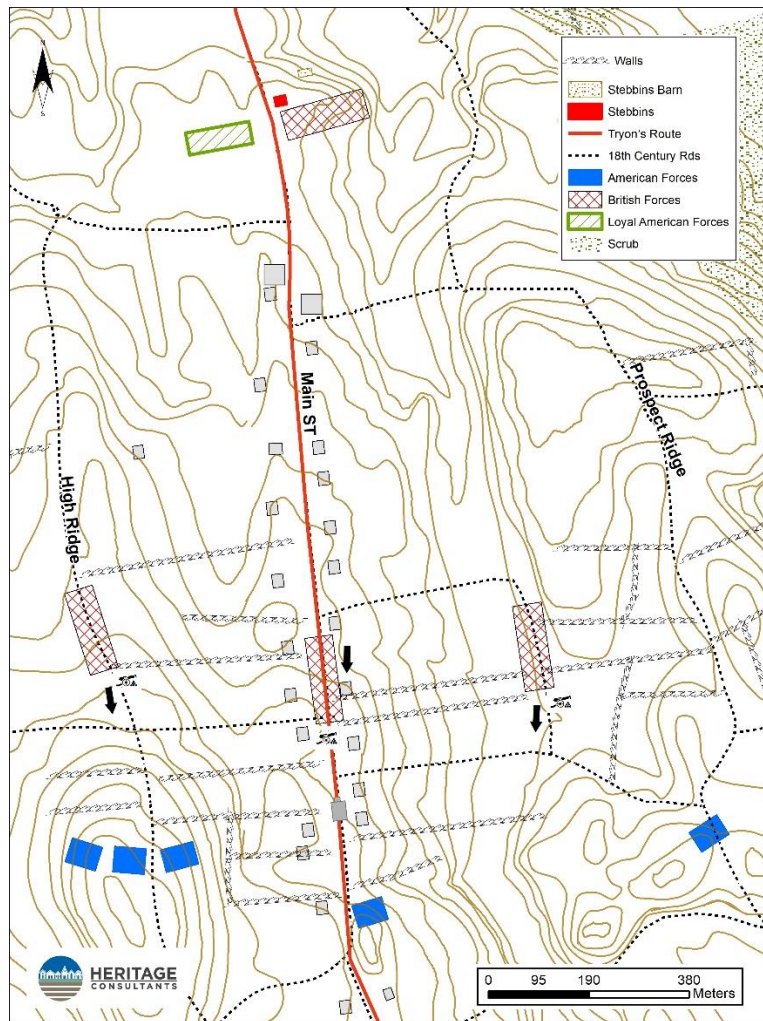


Figure 17: Additional Engagements in Ridgefield Village

British Encampment

By the time all the British troops had made their way through Ridgefield village it was evening with night soon approaching. General Tryon gathered his force on the southern end of Ridgefield on a large, level plain to the east of the Wilton Road and immediately to the south of Creamery Road. In an 1846 interview of Ridgefield resident Joshua King, he recalled that the

"British encampment at Ridgefield was half or three quarters of a mile from the village on an elevated plain or ridge of land on the east of and adjacent to the Norwalk Road."²⁵⁴ Two American veterans of the battle described how "The British encamped near a half or three quarters of a mile south of the Congregational Church at Ridgefield on the east side of the road to Norwalk."²⁵⁵ According to Rockwell, various British units approached the site from Main Street and Olmstead Lane and described the location as a smooth upland field by the roadside half a mile south of the village.²⁵⁶ As one might expect of a Royal Engineer, Lieutenant Archibald Robertson recorded the layout of the British encampment and described how "We lay near the Village all night, 4 Battalions in line and two on the Wings, i.e. one on each wing" (Figure 18: British Encampment Site).²⁵⁷ At the time of the American Revolution the term regiment and battalion were often used interchangeably and in this case Robertson is likely detailing the arrangement of the six regiments of Agnew and Erskine's Brigades. The six guns of the Royal Artillery may have been divided among the infantry regiments. There is no mention of Browne's Loyalist Corps camp which suggests that Robertson either ignored the provincial regiment in his description of the camp layout or they were elsewhere on the battlefield.

It is possible that the remaining effective men from Browne's Corps were ordered to serve as picket guards throughout the evening to guard the camp from American attack. Ridgefield resident Joshua King specifically mentioned that the British established at least two outlying sentry posts at strategic positions to alert the main body of any approach of American troops. According to King "They had several out posts or picket guards. One, on the high hill a quarter of a mile west of the village; one east of that, and near where Colonel Gould and others fell." He went on to state that "Their encampment was by the roadside on the east, with guards on the hill west of the village of Ridgefield, and on a hill to the east near where Colonel Gould fell."²⁵⁸ It may have been troops from Browne's Corps manning those outposts. Based on King's descriptions, one outpost was located at the orchard on Grove Street likely where the 9th Connecticut had been positioned which would have afforded a clear view of both the Danbury Road and Ridgebury Road. Another appears to have been located on the hill on the southern end of High Ridge where American troops

²⁵⁴ McDonald Papers. 468-469.

²⁵⁵ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 475.

²⁵⁶ Rockwell. *History of Ridgefield*. 70.

²⁵⁷ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

²⁵⁸ McDonald Papers. 468-469.

regrouped at the end of the battle which had a commanding view of West Lane, the main road from New York to Ridgefield.

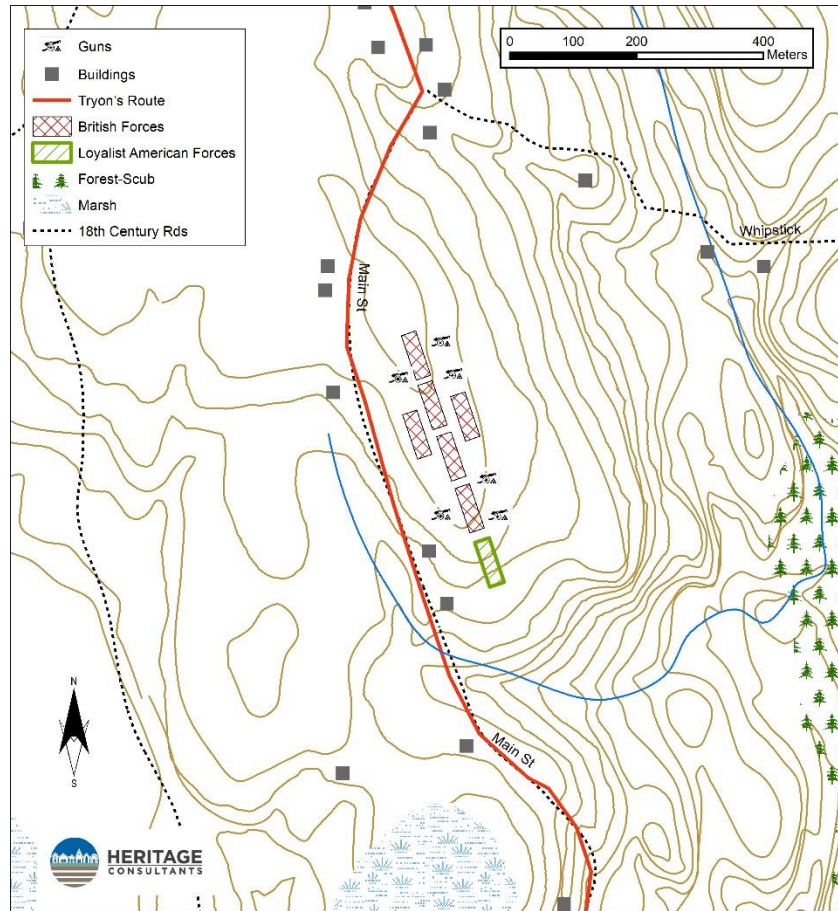


Figure 18: British Encampment Site

By all accounts, British forces were exhausted from the day's march from Danbury through Ridgefield and had expended much of their ammunition during the combat they endured along the way. With much of their wagons and remaining cattle in the hands of American forces it is unclear if General Tryon had any supplies left to properly feed his army, let alone resupply them with ammunition. Any lack of food stores may have been replenished as British troops plundered their way through Ridgefield homes. The British deployed sentries at various outposts around the camp to give advance warning of any American assault overnight. Although no attack materialized, the *Connecticut Courant* reported that the fighting in Ridgefield "continued in a loose scattering fire

until night.”²⁵⁹ According to Jonathan Keeler, a Ridgefield resident and veteran of the battle, the British “soldiers were so exhausted by the long march and by two successive nights of watchfulness that the sentries divided sleep soon after being posted.”²⁶⁰ At this time the British may have held up to 50 prisoners taken from the time they landed through the fight at Ridgefield. During the night several American prisoners were able to escape their exhausted captors. According to one witness, James Holley, described “sentinels so sound asleep that one prisoner walked out of camp unmolested,” while one historian noted how Jesse Olmstead of Wilton and David Coggin of the 5th Connecticut Line were among those who escaped that evening.²⁶¹ It is unclear how many prisoners remained by the morning, but when the British returned to New York they took 43 American prisoners with them, several of which were Ridgebury residents.²⁶² Despite occasional gunfire between American militia and camp sentries the British Army rested throughout the evening. The Battle of Ridgefield was over.

April 28, 1777: British Return to their Ships

General Tryon’s forces rose early the morning of April 28, 1777, and broke camp at 5:00 AM. They buried any soldiers that died of their wounds overnight and torched the home of Thomas Saymor as a signal to British ships anchored offshore that the British Army was on the march.²⁶³ Joshua King remembered that on the “morning the British left they fired a house on the top of a high hill to give their friends notice of who they were.... They retreated in haste without plundering.”²⁶⁴ Lieutenant Robertson described how the army advanced at daybreak and for the first “5 or 6 miles had only a few Popping Shots from behind houses Rocks etc.” but did not experience any significant resistance.²⁶⁵ According to Robertson, the British were informed that the Americans were going to oppose their crossing of the Norwalk River in Wilton. Tryon’s forces, likely guided by men from Browne’s Loyalist Corps familiar with the town, crossed the Norwalk

²⁵⁹ "Hartford, May 5," *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer* (Hartford, CT), May 5, 1777. P. 3.

²⁶⁰ WCHS, McDonald Papers. 173-174.

²⁶¹ David Coggin of the 5th Connecticut Line was listed as “Prisoner Apr. 27, ‘77” in the rolls of his regiment with no other details. See Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 197; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 98.

²⁶² Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 493.

²⁶³ John Warner Barber, *Connecticut Historical Collections: Containing A General Collection Of Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, Etc. Relating To The History And Antiquities of Every Town In Connecticut* (New Haven, CT: Durrie & Peck and J.W. Barber, 1836). 400; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 98.

²⁶⁴ McDonald Papers. 468-469.

²⁶⁵ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

River at a different bridge. There they discovered some “Rum and other Stores in the Woods” which they presumably destroyed as the British column proceeded south towards Norwalk and Fairfield beyond where their ships lay anchored.²⁶⁶

Throughout the evening of April 27 and into the morning of April 28, General Arnold and General Silliman gathered what forces they could to continue to oppose the British during the march to their ships. According to Silliman, “Very early General Arnold and myself used our best endeavors to collect our troops that were scattered everywhere almost by the defeat of the day before.” It took the American commanders many hours to find, and organize, any troops left in the vicinity. General Silliman reported that by “nine o’clock we got a few of them and some other troops that had come in together and found they consisted of 252 Rank and File only. Soon after we received intelligence that the enemy were marching down upon us from Wilton.”²⁶⁷ By General Silliman’s account there were barely enough effective American troops left to constitute a regiment and Tryon’s army was only miles to the north. An hour later Arnold and Silliman’s command had increased to around 500 men and by 10:30 AM the force counted around 700 soldiers with additional militia on their way.²⁶⁸ Around this time their number was further reinforced by a detachment of two 6-pound cannons from Colonel Lamb’s Artillery.²⁶⁹ General Benedict Arnold, who was the ranking commander, decided to position his troops near the Saugatuck Bridge on a commanding hill overlooking the bridge where he expected the British would cross. British Loyalist troops familiar with the landscape likely provided information regarding a nearby ford which Tryon’s Army utilized to avoid the Americans massed at Saugatuck Bridge. According to Robertson, “by another Rapid and well conducted move we again Wheel’d to our left, pass’d the River at a Ford, and push’d two Battalions to the Bridge by which means the Rebels were shut in until all our Detachment pass’d by them in sight.”²⁷⁰

Lieutenant Robertson’s journal described increased fighting once British forces crossed the Saugatuck. They marched as quickly as they could towards Compo Hill and their ships waiting offshore. Robertson wrote that “we marc’d from hill to hill towards to water side, the Rebels

²⁶⁶ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

²⁶⁷ Silliman to Trumbull

²⁶⁸ Douglas. *The Bridge Not Taken*. 14.

²⁶⁹ Douglas. *The Bridge Not Taken*. 15.

²⁷⁰ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*.128; Dougals. *The Bridge Not Taken*. 16-17.

pressing on our Rear and Appearing in Considerable Numbers, Skirmishing all the way.”²⁷¹ A division of American troops under Colonel Huntington, formerly General Wooster’s command, had increasingly harassed the British rear guard and now had combined with General Arnold’s troops. General Silliman estimated the entire American force to be around 4,000 troops as they marched in pursuit of Tryon’s retreating army. Around 2:00 PM the advanced British guard arrived on Compo Beach at Cedar Point and by 3:00 PM British forces took command of Compo Hill to defend against an expected American assault.²⁷² Robertson described the fighting that occurred as “the Rebels advanced from Wall to Wall keeping up a very heavy fire of Musquetry and two pieces of Cannon.”²⁷³ Both American cannons were soon out of the fight; one was disabled and the other expended its ammunition but Arnold’s troops continued to push the attack. With ammunition almost fully depleted and in the face of advancing American troops the remaining British troops on Compo Hill fixed bayonets and counter-charged.²⁷⁴ According to Lieutenant Robertson “At length they came so near that it was thought advisable to charge them with fix’d Bayonets, which was done with 4 Regiments...and we drove them back a great way Killing considerable Numbers.”²⁷⁵ The American attack was crushed and thrown back in disarray.

Robertson reported that following the bayonet charge on Compo Hill, American troops “never more advanced and we embarked on board our ships without a Shot being fired. Our men very much fatigued by so Rapid and long a march.”²⁷⁶ The British Navy resupplied the infantry on shore with ammunition in case of renewed American attack as boats ferried the wounded, prisoners, and troops back to the transports anchored offshore. The last regiment was aboard around 7:30 PM.²⁷⁷ American observers feared additional incursions along the coast but they were unaware how exhausted Tryon’s Army was following two days of marching and fighting after leaving Danbury. The British fleet weighed anchor and set sail towards Long Island and ultimately to New York City while Connecticut and Continental officials assessed their losses.

²⁷¹ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 129.

²⁷² Douglas. *The Bridge Not Taken*. 26.

²⁷³ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 129.

²⁷⁴ Douglas. *The Bridge Not Taken*. 28-29; Darley. *Call to Arms*. 32.

²⁷⁵ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 129.

²⁷⁶ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 129.

²⁷⁷ Douglas. *The Bridge Not Taken*. 29.

The Aftermath of the Danbury Expedition

The immediate impact of the Danbury Expedition, and the Battle of Ridgefield in particular, was clearly most significant to those townspeople and American soldiers who suffered from the British incursion. By August of 1777, the General Assembly resolved to pay the medical expenses for “every Person who was wounded in any Action with the British Troops in their said Incursion.”²⁷⁸ This came to the relief to those Connecticut men wounded in action during the three days of fighting. It would take longer for the legislature to address the issue of compensating citizens impacted during the British occupation. Days after the British returned to New York, Private Joseph Plumb Martin, a veteran of Wooster’s Division, and other recently enlisted men of Colonel John Chandler’s 8th Regiment Connecticut Line marched from Newtown through Danbury on their way to Peekskill and Martin commented on the desolate scene he witnessed.

I had an ample opportunity to see the devastation caused there by the British. The town had been laid in ashes, a number of inhabitants murdered and cast into their burning houses, because they presumed to defend their person and property, or to be avenged on a cruel, vindictive enemy. I saw the inhabitants, after the fire was out, endeavoring to find the burnt bones of their relatives amongst the rubbish of their demolished houses. The streets, in many places, were literally flooded by the fat which ran from the piles of barrels of pork burnt by the enemy. – They fully executed their design.²⁷⁹

Private Martin’s dramatic account of marching through town may have overstated the destruction inflicted on the inhabitants and overestimated the loss of life in Danbury. According to Robert McDevitt there were 37 reported American casualties and no reported civilian deaths. In his assessment of the burning of Danbury, he asserted that the only structures that were burned were those that housed military stores and that the “damage to private property, from whatever the cause, was relatively slight in proportion to the size of the town.”²⁸⁰ An estimate recorded in a May 26, 1777 memorial from the Danbury Selectmen to the General Assembly detailing the damage “about twenty dwelling houses, with a number of barns, stores, and other buildings were destroyed” with was valued at “£16,181.4”²⁸¹ A total of nineteen claims were submitted to the General Assembly by Danbury residents.²⁸²

²⁷⁸ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, VII:419.

²⁷⁹ Martin, *A Narrative of A Revolutionary Soldier*. 54.

²⁸⁰ McDevitt. *Connecticut Attacked*. 45.

²⁸¹ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, VIII:388.

²⁸² McDevitt. *Connecticut Attacked*. 57.

As in Danbury, the inhabitants of Ridgefield experienced significant loss of private property in the form of damage or complete destruction of homes, barns, outbuildings, and one mill. Other townspeople suffered the loss of private possessions and livestock such as the cattle consumed by British troops near Mamasco Lake on the morning of April 27. The Selectmen of Ridgefield also submitted a memorial to the Connecticut General Assembly on May 26, 1777 which detailed the following damages:

“...the Enemy, in their late incursion to Danbury on their return through Ridgefield and, burnt the Gristmill & Saw Mill of M^r Isaac Keeler of s^d Ridgefield, six dwelling houses two barnes and killed and carried and carried off a number of horses, & Cattle, and on then Army took up their quarters in that Town for a Night, they plundered the inhabitants of almost all their Provisions and of a great part of their clothing, etc.”²⁸³

Ultimately a total of 65 Ridgefield residents submitted claims to the General Assembly for a total of “£2625-1-8” in damages.²⁸⁴ Unlike Danbury, most of the buildings burnt by British soldiers were due to American troops fighting from them as very few housed military stores with the noteworthy exception of the Episcopal Church. The Selectmen of Ridgefield stated that as a result of the British deprivations “y^e inhabitants of S^d Ridgefield are reduced to indigence poverty & Inability to provide for their Necessities as S^d Town cannot afford them adequate relief.”²⁸⁵ The State of Connecticut appears to have reimbursed both Danbury and Ridgefield memorialists about 1/3 of their claims in May 1778.²⁸⁶

According to historian Robert McDevitt, “the British raid on Danbury was not a major battle, but it did have a surprisingly large impact on subsequent events of the war.”²⁸⁷ McDevitt concluded that the British were “eminently successful in achieving their immediate objective” although the operation did not serve any real strategic value in terms of the 1777 Campaign or the Revolutionary War.²⁸⁸ The immediate objective of the destruction of Continental stores warehoused at Danbury was certainly achieved but it did not setback American efforts to continue the war to any real degree. Everything that was destroyed could be replaced and the loss inflicted no long-term damage on the American war effort. McDevitt argued that the only items or real

²⁸³ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, VII:28

²⁸⁴ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, VIII:391.

²⁸⁵ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, VIII:393.

²⁸⁶ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, VIII:388-389.

²⁸⁷ McDevitt. *Connecticut Attacked*. 64.

²⁸⁸ McDevitt. *Connecticut Attacked*. 64; Darley. *Call to Arms*. 35.

value that were difficult to procure were the military tents burned at Danbury as Replacements for them had to be obtained abroad from the French. When General George Washington was fully assessed of the results of the British expedition he commented that “the damage we sustained at Danbury....was not so great...than was apprehended at first” but noted that the tents were “the chief loss we sustained,” everything else being replaceable.²⁸⁹

Several British newspapers celebrated General Tryon’s success in destroying what was portrayed as a significant rebel magazine at Danbury which the *Morning Chronicle* described as “chiefly furnished with military stores from France” and that “the loss therefore must be severely felt.”²⁹⁰ Other British reports were critical of the Danbury Expedition and questioned the impact of the operation and the general’s overall strategy. The *London Evening-Post* published a scathing report of Tryon’s march to “Ridgefield and Danbury, at which places, as General Howe had been informed, the Americans had formed two considerable Magazines” but “This information proved *false*: for when General Tryon advanced to Ridgefield and Danbury, he could not find any magazine, unless a quantity of rum concealed in a wood can be called a magazine.”²⁹¹ The newspaper described the destroyed supplies as “a store of country goods” with little military value and concluded that “the whole was a silly expedition; has answered no purpose whatever.”²⁹²

General Tryon’s other objective, to swell his ranks with loyalist supporters and liberate Western Connecticut from the remainder of the rebellious state proved a fantasy. If General Tryon’s strategy relied on the belief that Loyalist supporters in Western Connecticut would rise up and deliver him that part of the state, he was sorely mistaken. Although some Loyalists did welcome British officers into their homes and supplied British forces with food and mounts, few actually took the opportunity to take up arms on behalf of the crown. The *London Evening-Post* remarked that “General Tryon was selected for this business, in hopes, his appearance in the country, should draw numbers to join him. But it had not that effect. He has no influence beyond New-York.”²⁹³ As more reports of the Danbury Expedition became available some British

²⁸⁹ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 205; McDevitt. *Connecticut Attacked*. 64.

²⁹⁰ “News.” *Morning Chronicle* (London, UK), June 13, 1777.

²⁹¹ “London,” *London Evening Post* (London, UK), June 12-14, 1777. 1.

²⁹² “London,” *London Evening Post* (London, UK), June 12-14, 1777. 1.

²⁹³ “London,” *London Evening Post* (London, UK), June 12-14, 1777. 1.

newspapers were increasingly critical of the raid. The *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* noted that “had it not been for the uncommon bravery of our troops, the whole detachment would have been taken or destroyed” and described how “the undisciplined mob of Americans are able to harass the best troops under General Howe, and even oblige him to find refuge in his shipping.”²⁹⁴ Weeks later they painted an even more dismal picture of Tryon’s expedition with allusions to the first battle of the war noting “Governor Tryon's excursion to Danbury, appears to have been exactly similar to the celebrated Lexington expedition. The Americans buried 62 of the King's troops, and took 40 prisoners (belonging to Mr. Tryon's army) and a great number of waggons and horses.”²⁹⁵ These surprising criticisms of the British expedition to Danbury were likely a result of a growing perception of inaction on the part of General Howe and others as the year dragged on.

The April 1777 Danbury Expedition did not materially impact the course of the 1777 British offensive in any meaningful way. It also was the only significant action that occurred between the British and American armies since the American victory and the Battle of Princeton (January 3, 1777) and for the next two months the British Army remained around New York City. The slow pace of the war prompted the *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* to publish a comical advertisement in early August in search of Howe’s forces which stated:

LOST this summer, in the enclosures about
New York in North America,
The BRITISH ARMY.
Whoever can give an account of it to his Majesty's Secretary at War, shall not only receive a Large premium, but have the high honour of kissing his Majesty's hand.
A part of it is said to have been seen in the spring near Danbury; but its stay was so short, that it's tracks were not deep enough to be traced.²⁹⁶

That same month the promised British offensive began with operations along the Hudson River in New York. General John Burgoyne commanded an army that moved south from Quebec towards Albany, New York where he rendezvoused with General William Howe after the latter’s troops marched north from New York City. Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger was ordered to attack Fort Stanwix in support of the campaign, which resulted in a British victory at the Battle of

²⁹⁴ “News,” *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, UK), July 1, 1777. 1.

²⁹⁵ “News,” *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, UK), July 16, 1777. 2.

²⁹⁶ “News,” *General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* (London, UK), August 4, 1777.

Oriskany, New York (August 6, 1777), but this did not support Burgoyne or Howe any further. Ten days later, General Burgoyne's army clashed with American troops at the Battle of Bennington, Vermont (August 16, 1777) where they were defeated. This set the stage for the complete defeat of Burgoyne's remaining forces at the Battles of Saratoga months later, on September 19 and October 17, 1777. The personal actions of General Benedict Arnold on October 7 during the American attack on the Breymann Redoubt helped breach Burgoyne's forward lines and lead to the British surrender 10 days later. Historians note that news of Burgoyne's surrender helped convince King Louis XVI of France to formally recognize the United States of America early the next year. McDevitt contends that the "most far-reaching result" of the Danbury Expedition was "the influence it had upon the career of Benedict Arnold" as his actions at Ridgefield, Saugatuck, and Compo Hill earned him significant public recognition and a belated promotion to Major General after Congress failed to grant him the commission earlier that year.²⁹⁷ It was his actions during the Danbury Raid and subsequent promotion, McDevitt argues, that placed him in a position to win the day at Saratoga on October 7 which led to ultimate British defeat and French diplomatic recognition of the United States.²⁹⁸

In terms of the overall impact of the Danbury Expedition and the Battle of Ridgefield, British generals learned once again that it was of great risk to march even the most veteran of forces deep into American territory without proper support. Once out of range of naval gun support and immediate reinforcement or resupply the British Army risked being cut off, exhausted, and overwhelmed by numerous American armed forces. This lesson was increasingly understood by the British public as well who read mounting criticism in the pages of their newspapers. In late July of 1777 the *Gazetteer* published a letter "from an officer in General Howe's army" dated June 7, 1777 that described how the "expedition to Danbury, which consisted of near 2000 of the flower of the army, had cost them dear, they being obliged to retreat as expeditiously as possible, fighting their way through the country people (who had risen in great numbers) with fixed bayonets, with the loss of 200 men, and that the whole had very nearly been cut off, but for the precipitateness of their retreat."²⁹⁹ Later in the war, one of British General Sir Henry Clinton's criticisms of Lord Cornwallis' operations in the southern campaigns in 1780 was that "he was certainly too apt to

²⁹⁷ McDevitt. *Connecticut Attacked*. 65; Darley. *Call to Arms*. 33-34.

²⁹⁸ McDevitt. *Connecticut Attacked*. 65.

²⁹⁹ "News," *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London, UK), July 29, 1777 – July 31, 1777. 2.

risk detachments without proper support, which is more to be wondered at as Lexington, Bennington, Danbury, and Trenton were recent instances which His Lordship could not have forgot.”³⁰⁰ The Danbury Expedition was the last British invasion of southern New England and the defeat of British forces at Bennington later that year reinforced the risk of unsupported inland expeditions. For the remainder of the war the British relegated their operations against New England to quick, coastal invasions as is evident in the 1779 British Burning of Fairfield.³⁰¹

IV Weaponry, Tactics, Order of Battle

Revolutionary War Era Armaments & Tactics (1777)

Throughout the Eighteenth-Century European armies developed and employed tactics to maximize the effect of the smoothbore musket on the battlefield. During that era, the flintlock smoothbore firearm (pistol, carbine, musket) was the standard weapon of European armies as well as the most common firearm used by British colonists throughout their empire.³⁰² As with earlier smoothbore firearms, the flintlock musket consisted of a smoothbore iron barrel produced on a mandrel as opposed to a rifled barrel, which had lanes of rifling cut into the inside of the barrel. The barrel was fitted to a wooden stock that was held in place with either barrel bands or pins driven through the stock. A flintlock musket lock was inlaid into the stock, held in place with side screws and positioned flush with the barrel and to the rear of the barrel near the breech. A trigger protected by a trigger guard was installed in the stock beneath the barrel and positioned to trigger the lock when squeezed (Figure 19: British Pattern Flintlock Musket). A flintlock mechanism operated by charging the pan with blackpowder, covering the pan with the frizzen held closed by the tension of an exterior frizzen spring, and cocking back the hammer of the lock that contained a gunflint pressed between the vice built into the hammer. The internal lock mechanism held the hammer at half-cock (tumbler, bridle, mainspring, sear, searspring) and it could then be pulled back to full-cock, after which depressing the trigger would release the hammer. The flint held by the hammer’s vice would strike the frizzen, snapping it open and showering the exposed blackpowder with sparks of red hot iron sherds that would ignite the powder held in the pan. The explosion from the powder in the pan would be forced into a hole in the barrel level with the pan, igniting the blackpowder charge in the barrel itself (Figure 20: British Flintlock Musket Lock).

³⁰⁰ William B. Wilcox, Ed., *Sir Henry Clinton’s Narrative of His Campaigns 1775-1782* (New York, 1964). 227-228.

³⁰¹ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 109.

³⁰² Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 8-9; George C. Neumann and Frank J. Kravic, *Collector’s Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (Texarkana, TX: Scurlock Publishing Company, 1997). 201-213

Finally, the end of the musket stock beyond the breech, pressed against the shoulder when firing was known as the butt and was fitted with a brass or iron buttplate.³⁰³ The smoothbore had no rear sight or formal front sight except for a bayonet lug in the case of British “Brown Bess” muskets or a slight front blade built into the front barrel band of the French pattern muskets.

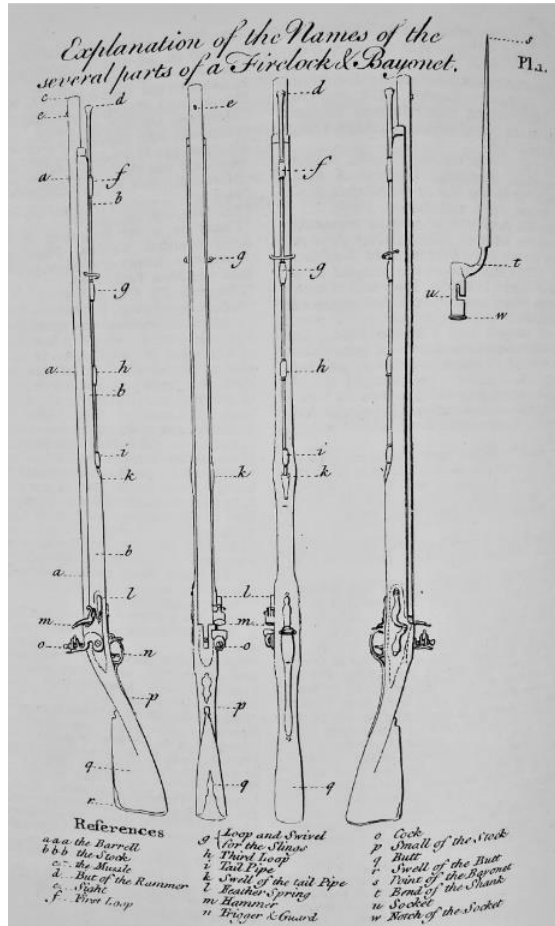


Figure 19: British Pattern Flintlock Musket
(Darling, *Red Coat and Brown Bess*. 14.)



Figure 20: British Flintlock Musket Lock
(Darling, *Red Coat and Brown Bess*. 41)

³⁰³ Neumann and Kravic, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 200-201.

The flintlock smoothbore musket was loaded by priming the flintlock pan with blackpower, then pouring a premeasured charge of blackpowder down the musket barrel, often followed by placing some sort of wadding in the barrel (paper, tow fibers, cloth, wasps nest) and a lead musketball (or multiple lead balls) on top of the wadding, all of which was rammed down the barrel with the ramrod and seated in the breech of the barrel. Wadding was not always used but its inclusion acted as a sabot trapping the gas from the igniting blackpower behind it and not blasting by the space between the lead projectile(s) and the wall of the smoothbore barrel. This increased accuracy. Wadding could also hold the loose powder and ball in place in the barrel tighter than would be the case without it. Eighteenth century blackpowder varied greatly in consistency and also had a tendency to absorb moisture. As a result, misfires could occur resulting in a delayed discharge or no discharge at all. Around half of the blackpowder charge turned to gas and the rest clung to the lockpan and barrel in the form of carbon fouling. Fouling prevents the loading of tightly fitting ammunition and resulted in the utilization of undersized roundball. Lead roundball ammunition for smoothbore firearms must be smaller than the diameter of the interior wall of the musket barrel to not only ram the ball down the muzzle but it must also be undersized enough to ease loading as carbon fouling accumulated. Most military smoothbore musket ammunition was approximately 0.05” to 0.10” inches undersized.³⁰⁴ For example, the British Long Land Pattern musket had a bore diameter of 0.75” and was often loaded with a 0.69” diameter roundball.³⁰⁵ At the time of the American Revolution ammunition was typically prerolled in a paper cartridge consisting of powder and lead ball. They were carried in a leather cartridge box fitted with a wooden block that was drilled to securely hold the cartridges (Figure 21: American .69 Caliber Musket Cartridges).³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Geroge Neumann, *The History of Weapons of the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Bonanza Books, 1967). 52.

³⁰⁵ Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 8.

³⁰⁶ Stephenson, *Patriot Battles*. 137-138.

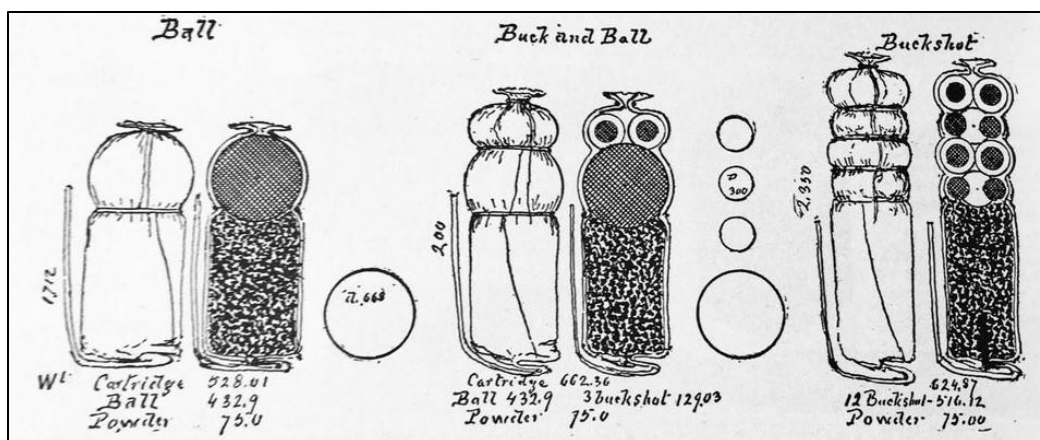


Figure 21: American .69 Caliber Musket Cartridges
(*Bannerman Catalogue of Military Goods*, 1927. 124)

Well trained soldiers were able to load and fire around three or four shots per minute under good conditions (Figure 22: Revolutionary War Recruitment Poster).³⁰⁷ Infantry tactics evolved with the use of the smoothbore musket and bayonet to the point that regiments would fight on open ground in long lines of soldiers two or more ranks deep. Flintlock muskets would be fired in volleys, all at once, often by one rank at a time. Due to the relative inaccuracy of the smoothbore musket officers often had their men fire several volleys of musket fire at the enemy before fixing bayonets and charging in hopes of breaking the opposing line and putting them to flight. By the first quarter of the eighteenth century, most European armies had developed the socket bayonet which was fit over the muzzle of the flintlock musket and held in place by both the tightness of the fit of the bayonet to the barrel and a bayonet lug that was used to guide and secure the long blade on the barrel of the arm. Bayonets varied in size, from 15" to 17" in length, were carried in a leather bayonet scabbard held in a leather frog and worn on a waistbelt or shoulderbelt (Figure 23: Long Land Musket and Shoulderbelt attributed to the 15th Regiment of Foot).³⁰⁸ The addition of a bayonet fixed on the muzzle of a musket allowed the weapon to be used as pike when fighting in close quarters. It was often the bayonet that decided the outcome of infantry engagements.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ Neumann and Kravic, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 201; Stephenson, *Patriot Battles*. 127.

³⁰⁸ Neumann and Kravic, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 29-32.

³⁰⁹ Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 140-143.

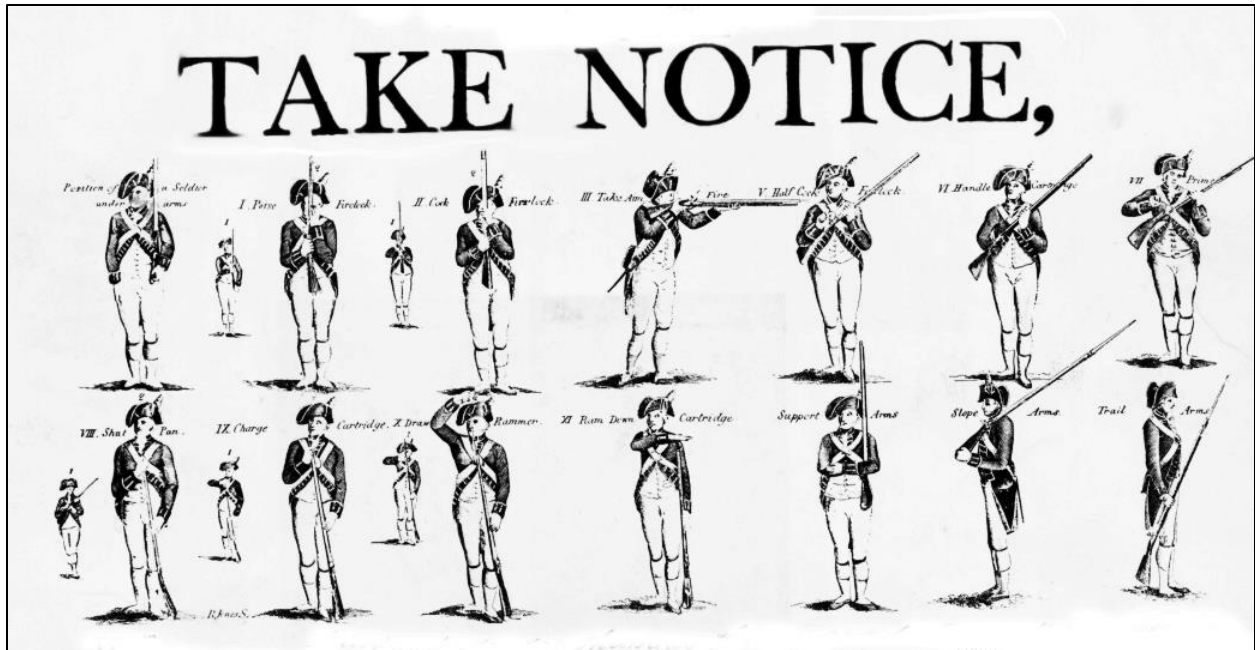


Figure 22: Revolutionary War recruitment poster demonstrating the steps required to load and fire a smoothbore musket.

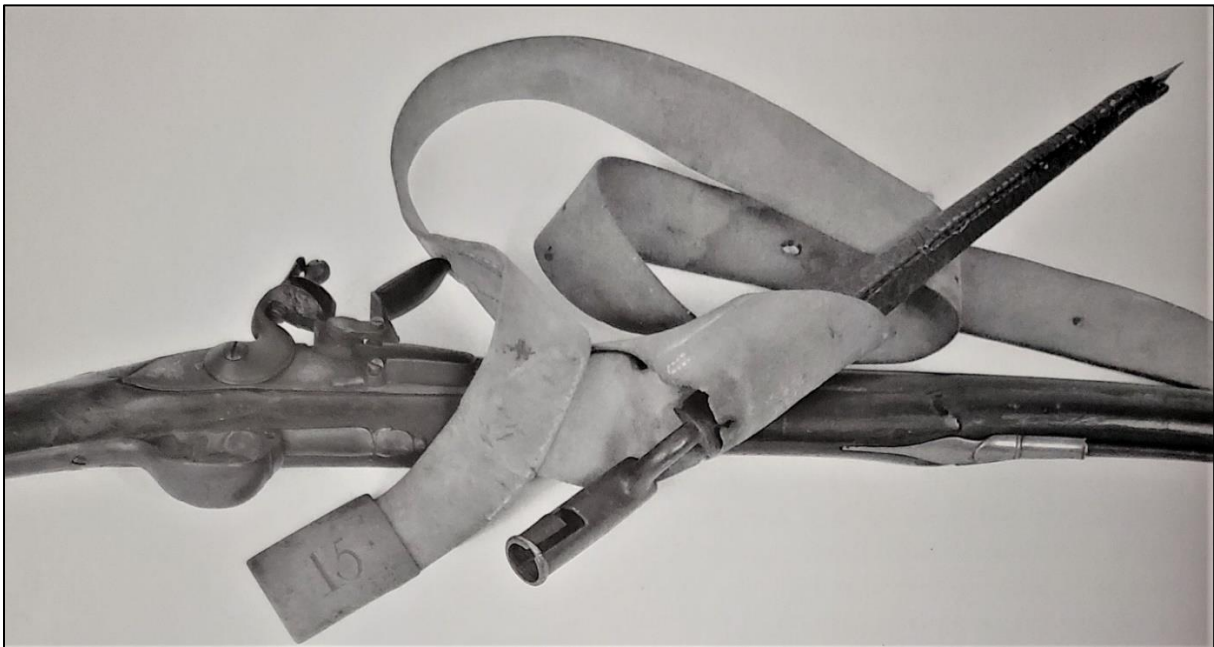


Figure 23: Long Land Musket and Shoulderbelt attributed to the 15th Regiment of Foot (Troiani, *Soldiers in America*. 30)

The typical European smoothbore musket had a point-blank range of 50 yards, which is the point of aim where there is no appreciable drop of the musket ball below the initial horizontal line of flight; in other words, the point of aim where the bullet will travel in a straight line to the target. Beyond 50 yards the musket ball would typically begin to drop by as much as five feet

between 100 to 125 yards. If attempting to hit individual targets beyond 100 yards the soldier would have to elevate their point of aim to drop the shot onto target. Volley fire at massed formations of troops beyond 100 yards would have a greater effect but the ratio of hits to shots fired dropped exponentially as demonstrated by European smoothbore trials. For example, in 1782 the Prussian army conducted smoothbore musket trials firing at a target 10 feet in width by six feet in height approximately representing a double-ranked platoon of troops. At around 80 yards soldiers hit 60 percent of the time, at 160 yards they achieved 40 percent, and at 240 yards the target was struck 25 percent of the time.³¹⁰ The experiences of European officers of the battlefield reflect the level of accuracy documented in the Prussian trials. Writing in 1814, Colonel George Hanger, a British officer who fought in the American Revolution, described the capabilities of the smoothbore musket as follows:

A soldier's musket, if not exceedingly ill bored and very crooked, as many are, will strike the figure of a man at 80 yards; it may even at a hundred; but a soldier *must be very unfortunate indeed* who shall be wounded by a *common musket* at 150 yards, PROVIDED HIS ANTAGONIST AIMS AT HIM; and, as for firing at a man at 200 yards with a common musket, you may just as well fire at the moon and have the same hope of hitting your object. I do maintain, and I will prove, whenever called on, that NO MAN WAS EVER KILLED AT TWO HUNDRED YARDS, by a common soldier's musket, BY THE PERSON WHO AIMED AT HIM.³¹¹

British Armaments

The primary firearm of British infantry troops during the American Revolution was the Land Pattern Musket, often referred to as the King's Arm or the Tower Musket. The slang term "Brown Bess" was popularly used to describe the arm by the time of the Revolutionary War. There were three versions of the "King's Pattern Musket." They were known as the Long Land, the Short Land, and the Sea Service; however, only the Long and Short Land Patterns were carried by British infantry. The Long Land Pattern Musket had a 46" barrel with a .75" bore diameter, an overall length of 62.5" without bayonet, and weighted around 10.5 pounds. The Short Land Pattern Musket had a 42" barrel with an overall length of 58.5" without bayonet and both pattern arms weighted around 10 pounds.³¹² As noted earlier, these arms were loaded with .069" diameter roundball.³¹³ General Tryon's troops who participated in the Danbury Expedition and the Battle of

³¹⁰ Stephenson, *Patriot Battles*. 127.

³¹¹ George Hanger, *Colonel George Hanger, to all Sportsmen, and Particularly to Farmers, and Gamekeepers* (London, UK: J.J. Stockdale, 1814). 205

³¹² Neumann and Kravic, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 202.

³¹³ Don Troiani, *Don Troiani's Soldiers in America 1754-1865* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1998). 13, 44.

Ridgefield carried both Long and Short Pattern Muskets as evident by two surviving examples from the 15th Regiment of Foot and the 27th Regiment of Foot that fell into American hands during the three-day campaign (Figure 23: Long Land Musket and Shoulderbelt attributed to the 15th Regiment of Foot; Figure 24: British Short Land Pattern Musket and matching bayonet attributed to the 27th Regiment of Foot).



Figure 24: British Short Land Pattern Musket and matching bayonet attributed to the 27th Regiment of Foot. *Courtesy Sam Young*

Flintlock smoothbore pistols also were commonly carried by British officers and British Dragoons. Military pistols carried by mounted troops were usually carried as pairs in holsters on the cantle of the horse saddle, and at the time of the Revolutionary War were often 19.5” long overall with a barrel about 12” long. They had a bore diameter of 0.65” and were loaded with a 0.58” roundball. A slightly shorter Light Dragoon pistol also was widely used. It differed only in

length, having a 9” barrel and an overall length of 15.25”.³¹⁴ Both types of pistols were likely carried during the Danbury Expedition by officers and the troopers of the 17th Light Dragoons.

Included in General Tryon’s Army were six pieces of artillery known as 3-Pound Guns which referred to the weight and size of the cannonball they fired. The 3-Pounder was a crew serviced weapon that required a group of six artillerists to efficiently operate along with 10 artillerists in reserve to drag the gun on the battlefield and to replace casualties, but as few as three men could work the gun (Figure 25: Revolutionary War Cannon Crew).³¹⁵ These smoothbore bronze guns were mobile enough to serve as close infantry support, were manageable on difficult terrain such as western Connecticut roads, and light enough that the six-man cannon crew and/or ten-man reserve could drag the gun with ropes or even carry it using handspikes to trundle the gun carriage (Figure 26: 1783 Sketch of “The Irish method of carrying Light 3 Pounders by Men”). These guns were fielded by British forces as early as the 1740’s and by 1764 the Board of Ordnance listed the 3-Pounder among its established models. This light bronze gun was demonstrated before King George III in 1773 and was used routinely during the American Revolution.³¹⁶ It was referred to as a “grasshopper,” “butterfly,” or “galloper” which is attributed to a variety of factors including its mobility, its alleged resemblance to a grasshopper or butterfly when the handspikes were inserted into the carriage, as well as its tendency to jump from the recoil of a discharge.³¹⁷

The British gun carriage incorporated removable ammunition chests that were brought to the rear of the cannon when fired. One style situated the chests on either side of the cannon tube with compartments for five or six fixed cartridges in each for rapid fire and another design incorporated a single box on the tail of the gun that held around 12 cartridges. If the cannon was in tow it was attached to a limber, which was a set of wheels and an axle fixed under the tail of the gun carriage for ease of transportation (Figure 27: Plan of a Light 3-Pound Gun carriage; Figure 28; 3-Pound Gun and Limber). The limber often incorporated an ammunition chest that held

³¹⁴ Neumann and Kravic, *Collector’s Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 220; Troiani, *Soldiers in America*. 38.

³¹⁵ Caruana, *Grasshoppers and Butterflies*. 9.

³¹⁶ Caruana, *Grasshoppers and Butterflies*. 3, 9.

³¹⁷ David McConnel, *British Smooth-Bore Artillery: A Technological Study to Support Identification, Acquisition, Restoration, Reproduction, and Interpretation of Artillery at National Historic Parks in Canada* (Ottawa, Canada: Minister of the Environment, 1988). 48; Neumann and Kravic, *Collector’s Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 220; Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 157; Caruana. *Grasshoppers and Butterflies*. 3.

another 30 to 40 cartridges. In addition, ammunition wagons, or caissons, were often assigned to each gun; they carried extra cannon cartridges, spare parts, implements, and other baggage. The cannon and limber could be dragged by the artillery crew or a single horse, and the ammunition wagons were driven by a separate team of draft animals and a hired teamster.



Figure 25: Revolutionary War Cannon Crew (NPS, Don Troiani, 1975)

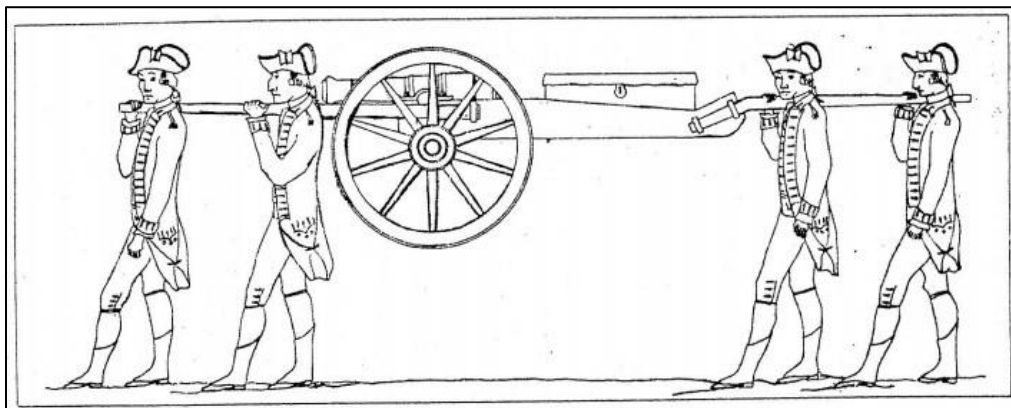


Figure 26: Sketch of “The Irish method of carrying Light 3 Pounders by Men,” William Congreve (Caruna, *Grasshoppers and Butterflies*.10).

All members of a 3-Pound artillery crew were extremely well-drilled. After discharging their gun, it would only take approximately 15 seconds to reposition the gun, clear the barrel of debris, swab the barrel, reload, and fire another aimed shot. A well drilled team could fire about four shots a minute. The smoothbore gun barrel bore measured approximately 2.9” in diameter and typically fired three types of ammunition; solid iron shot, iron grape shot, or lead canister shot

(Figure 29: Types of 3-Pound Cannon Ammunition).³¹⁸ All three rounds were supplied as fixed ammunition consisting of a powder charge packed in a linen bag and affixed to the projectile so the entire cartridge could be rammed down the barrel to the breech of the gun. The different ammunition was employed based on the range of the target and the particular situation.

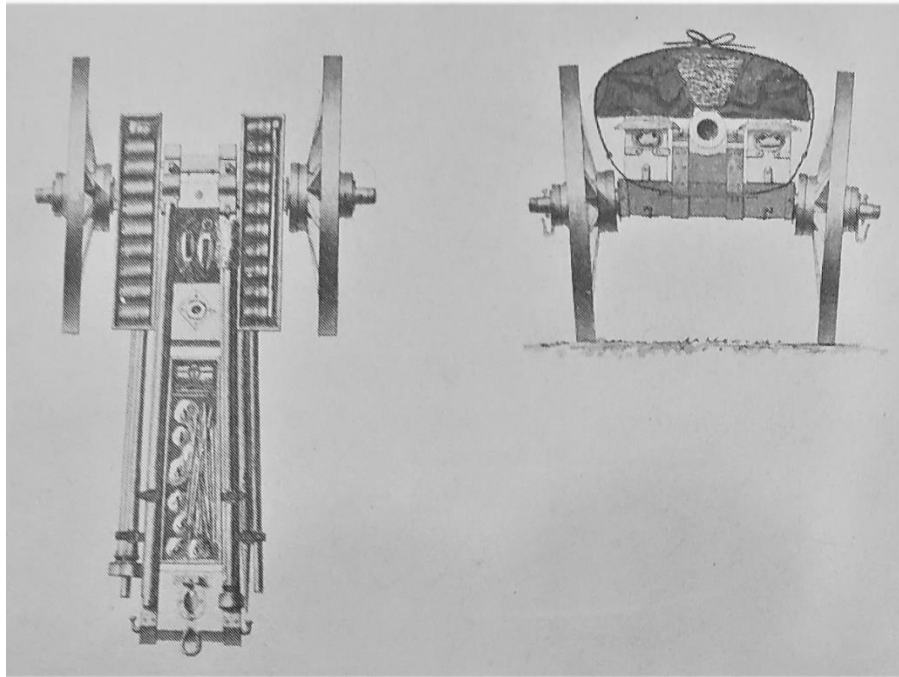


Figure 27: Plan of a Light 3-Pound Gun carriage (Caruna, *Grasshoppers and Butterflies*.13).

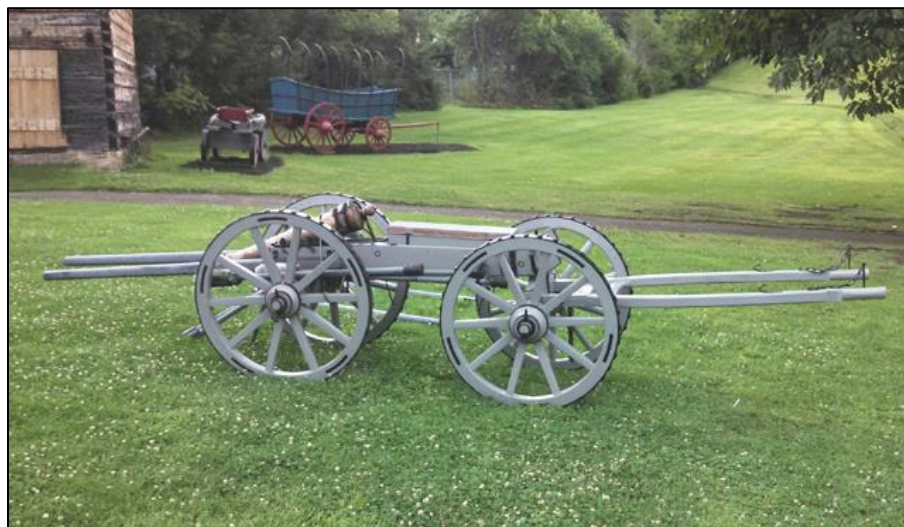


Figure 28: Reproduction 3-Pound Gun and Limber (Hoffsman Forge, LLC, Barnesville, Ohio)

³¹⁸ McConnel, *British Smooth-Bore Artillery*. 287-288, 315-316; Neumann and Kravic, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 220; Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 154-160;

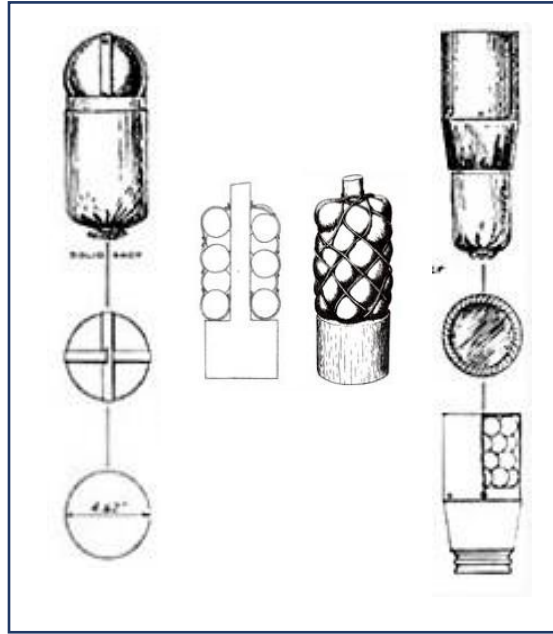


Figure 29: Types of 3-Pound Cannon Ammunition: (Left) Fixed Solid Shot Cartridge; (Middle) Grapeshot Stand; (Right) Fixed Canister Shot Cartridge

Solid iron shot, simply referred to as a cannonball, constituted most 3-Pound cannon ammunition. The iron ball generally measured 2.75” in diameter, weighed slightly more than three pounds and could be fired out to distances of 1,000 yards or more. This type of shot was typically fired at targets located between 300 to 500 yards from the cannon.³¹⁹ When firing solid shot at infantry formations gunners would aim the shot before the front rank hoping to blast earth and rocks into the ranks and skip the shot through as many ranks as possible. Solid shot also was the most effective type of ammunition to batter fortified targets.

Canister Shot generally consisted of a tin can that fit within the bore of the gun and was filled with as many lead musket balls as possible. This type of shot was fired at targets located at 200 to 300 yards from the cannon.³²⁰ When discharged, the tin canister generally remained intact instead of breaking apart and spreading the projectiles contained within. Therefore, gunners aimed their shot just in front of their target as they would with solid shot cannonball, so the canister would strike the ground throwing up dozens of musket balls as well as earth, rocks, and other debris into

³¹⁹ Caruana, *Grasshoppers and Butterflies*. 25.

³²⁰ McConnel, *British Smooth-Bore Artillery*. 319-; Neumann and Kravic, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 10; Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 154-160; Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 92-94.

the intended target multiplying the effect of the blast. At the closest range, zero to 200 yards, Grapeshot would be fired directly into the enemy lines.

Grapeshot consisted of 16 or more, 1.5 to 2 ounce iron balls that were stacked in a fabric bag and wrapped in twine to hold the ammunition tightly together affixed to a wooden base or sabot that fit the bore of the gun. Grapeshot was a close-range anti-personnel ammunition. Once fired, the balls broke apart forming a rapidly expanding cone downrange resulting in a shotgun-like blast. Grapeshot was rarely employed beyond 200 yards as the multiple projectiles rapidly lost velocity upon discharge.³²¹ Although the terms grape and canister are used interchangeably in both historical accounts and contemporary writings, the ammunition differed in contents, construction, and purpose. Tryon's Army was equally divided into two brigades and three cannon were assigned to each while the ammunition wagons trailed each brigade with the baggage train. The six, 3-Pound Guns of the Royal Artillery were heavily used on the second day of the Danbury Expedition, during the April 27, 1777 Battle of Ridgefield.

American Armaments

American forces who fought at the April 27, 1777 Battle of Ridgefield, whether Connecticut militia, New York militia, or Continental Troops, undoubtedly carried a variety of makes and models of firearms. Earlier that year, on January 3, 1777 British Regulars fought United States Continental Troops and American militia at the Battle of Princeton, New Jersey.³²² British commanders understood that American troops did not have standardized arms, most lacked bayonets, and that a number of American units carried slow-loading rifled arms. This impacted British strategy as they charged the ill-equipped American forces early in the engagement, breaking the enemy lines and pushing them back.³²³ A British account of the battle published in the *Annual Register* attributed large American casualties to a variety of factors including "defect in military skill, experience, judgment, conduct and mechanical habit" but most importantly "the imperfect loading of their pieces in the hurry of action, than to any other cause...to which even veterans are not fully attentive." In regard to American armaments the observer reported:

³²¹ McConnel, *British Smooth-Bore Artillery*. 319; Neumann and Kravic, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 10; Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 154-160; Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 92-94.

³²² Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 262-263.

³²³ Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 265; Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 8.

To this may also be added the various make of their small arms, which being procured, as chance or opportunity favoured them, from remote and different quarters, were equally different in size and bore, which rendered their being filled with ball upon any general scale impracticable.³²⁴

This eyewitness account speaks to the variety of firearms, and bore sizes, utilized by American forces during the early years of the war before receiving significant material support from France and other European powers. Such a range of small arms resulted in a logistical nightmare on the part of American quartermasters and officers attempting to supply ammunition to their men. A year later, in February 1778 at Valley Forge, General Von Steuben complained of the lack of firearm uniformity noting that “The arms at Valley Forge were in a horrible condition, covered with rust, half of them without bayonets....muskets, carbines, fowling-pieces, and rifles were to be seen in the same company.”³²⁵

Although Continental forces may have achieved a small degree of uniformity issuing British and French pattern arms to their men, State militia troops carried a wide assortment of flintlock firearms that were often privately owned and many of which were not able to be fitted with a bayonet. In 1776 American diplomats arranged the clandestine purchase of French Pattern Muskets, but most of these arms did not arrive until late in 1777. Once they became available, they were issued to Continental soldiers who were trained by General Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania in their use, as well as that of the bayonet.³²⁶ The French Pattern Musket was the second most common firearm of the American Revolution following the British Pattern Musket. Aside from those already in private hands as a result of Inter-Colonial warfare with the French, a variety of different models of French arms were imported to the United States during the Revolution. The most common was the Model 1766. This firearm was produced at several Royal Arsenals and differed from the British Pattern in terms of a strengthened hammer design and the usage of iron barrel bands instead of pinned barrel; it weighed less (8.5 pounds compared to the 10-pound British pattern), had a 0.44” long barrel with a bore diameter of 0.69” and fired a 0.63” lead ball.³²⁷ The majority of French Pattern arms exported to the United States

³²⁴ Dodsley. *Annual Register*. 19; Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 9.

³²⁵ Friedrich Kapp, *Life of Frederick William Von Steuben: Major General in the Revolutionary Army* (New York, NY: Mason Brothers, 1859). 117.

³²⁶ Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 10.

³²⁷ Troiani, *Soldiers in America*. 82; Sivilich, *Musket Ball and Small Shot Identification*. 10, 24.

originated from the Charleville armory which resulted in the term “Charleville” being applied to all French Pattern arms (Figure 30: French Pattern Model 1766 “Charleville” Musket).



Figure 30: A “U.States” marked French Pattern Model 1766 “Charleville” Musket with Bayonet, Sling, Frog and Scabbard (Skinners Auctions)

As a result of military service during the Inter-Colonial Wars of the Eighteenth Century and international trade, American militiamen utilized firearms of British, French, German, Dutch, and even Spanish make. Bore sizes from surviving European military firearms attributed to the Revolutionary War include 0.79”, 0.75”, 0.72”, 0.69,” while civilian flintlock longarms and fowling arms could vary further from 0.50” to 0.80” diameter.³²⁸ Early on, American armed forces attempted to rely on domestic arms sources and in November 1775 Congress issued specifications to each colony for a “Committee of Safety” model arm that closely resembled the British Pattern and were produced in limited numbers.³²⁹ Most American militiamen were not equipped with a bayonet as the belt axe or short sword was often the preferred sidearm. Such armaments were commonly used during earlier Inter-Colonial Wars and were well suited for northeastern woodland combat. Writing from Valley Forge in early 1778 General Von Steuben complained that “The American soldier, never having used this arm [bayonet], had no faith in it, and never used it but to roast his beefsteak, and indeed often left it at home.”³³⁰ The situation had not improved in the three months prior to the April 27, 1777 Battle of Ridgefield. American forces engaged in battle included Connecticut Militia, New York Militia, and a small contingent of Continental soldiers, suggesting a wide assortment of firearms were employed against the British. Several sources note that many American militiamen arrived at Ridgefield destitute of lead ball which may suggest a variety of firearms and bore sizes along with the inability of their officers to supply them with ammunition

³²⁸ Neumann and Kravic, *Collector’s Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 125,202-203, 232-233.

³²⁹ Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 121-122.

³³⁰ Kapp, *Life of Frederick William Von Steuben*. 117.

to fit their arms. Ultimately the Ridgefield Town Selectmen opened the town's private ammunition magazine, specifically their lead supply, to the American troops massing near the Stebbins property to be cast into musket balls.³³¹ It is likely that individual soldiers carried bullet molds specific to their personal firearm or that gang molds were employed to cast shot of graduated sizes to fit a variety of barrel bores. Unlike the standardization of the British Army, American troops at Ridgefield carried a variety of firearms in the battle and most of the men likely lacked bayonets.

It is difficult to determine what types of arms were carried by American units at Ridgefield as few historical sources contain such specific references to firearms. Additional targeted research into archival collections related to the American units and commanders present at the battle may uncover firearm references. Future battlefield archeological surveys in Ridgefield will undoubtedly recover examples of dropped and impacted lead shot associated with American positions on the battlefield. Such examples may provide insight into the bore sizes of the muskets from which they were fired. Days after the Battle of Ridgefield, Stephen Wells of the 4th Connecticut Militia, 4th Brigade, published a notice in the *Connecticut Journal* for a reward for his lost musket. Wells wrote that "on the 27th of April last, my gun was given to a person unknown...She was formerly a king's arm, had a wooden rammer" which indicates he carried not only a British firearm (formerly a king's arm), but most likely a Long Land Pattern Musket as the Short Land Pattern was issued with an iron rammer. His "Brown Bess" Musket may have been an early model acquired during the inter-colonial warfare of the eighteenth century or from a British regular in 1775 or 1776. Interestingly, Wells described the ramrod as "wooden" which suggests that the firearm may have dated from prior to the early 1760's when iron ramrods replaced the wooden type.³³² Stephen Wells' personal musket lost in the confusion of the Third Engagement does not confirm that the rest of the soldiers of the 4th Connecticut Militia were similarly armed but it demonstrates that such European military long arms were privately owned by American citizens who constituted State Militias at the time of the Battle of Ridgefield. American forces also lacked artillery support during the April 27, 1777 Battle of Ridgefield. American artillery did not arrive on the battlefield until the next day where they were used against the British at Saugatuck Bridge and during the fighting on Compo Hill.

³³¹ CSL, CT Archives, Series I, XXIII: 393.

³³² *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, CT), July 9, 1777. 2; Neumann and Kravic, *Collector's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*. 202; Troiani, *Soldiers in America*. 30, 40.

Order of Battle, April 27, 1777 - American Forces

There is no definitive roster of American forces engaged in the April 27, 1777 Battle of Ridgefield. The following Order of Battle was reconstructed from various primary source materials and includes only those units that could be definitively identified as being involved in the day's events. Although a particular American unit can be attributed to the battle it is unknown how many soldiers responded to the alarm as only a fraction of any particular regiment, or any given company, turned out to oppose the British. Further complicating American troop estimates is that recently enlisted Continental Army recruits in Connecticut who were at home on leave were ordered to fall in with the closest militia regiment during Tryon's invasion as demonstrated by the case of Private Joseph Plumb Martin.³³³ A review of published Connecticut Line regimental rosters uncovered instances of soldiers from several continental regiments who were wounded, killed, or even deserted during the Danbury Expedition although those regiments were not involved in the fighting, many of which had been deployed to Peekskill, New York earlier that year. This demonstrates that men recruited in late March or early April, especially from Western Connecticut, could have potentially fought at Ridgefield with the local militia.

Another challenge in reconstructing the American Order of Battle is the whereabouts of Colonel Jedediah Huntington's 1st Connecticut Regiment Continental Line on the morning of April 27, 1777 once American forces marched from Bethel to intercept the British Army. The 1st Connecticut was tasked to guard the Continental stores at Danbury and consisted of 50 soldiers with little ammunition. There is no indication if they joined Wooster's Division or remained in Danbury extinguishing fires and trying to salvage military stores. At approximately 10:00 AM on April 27, 1777, around 140 soldiers of Lieutenant Colonel Calvin Smith's 6th Massachusetts Regiment Continental Line arrived in Danbury also lacking ammunition. The *Connecticut Courant* reported that "2,000 cartridges" of musket ammunition arrived from Peekskill soon after and that "upon which a disposition was made to harass the enemy until a sufficient reinforcement should come in."³³⁴ The *Courant* noted that "Gen. Wooster, who had followed them [British] to Danbury with a small body of militia pursued them with the Continental Troops and Militia, and overtook

³³³ Joseph Plumb Martin was a veteran of the 1776 New York Campaign and was discharged at the end of the year. He reenlisted in the 8th Connecticut Regiment Continental Line in early April 1777 and was still at his home in Milford, Connecticut when the British invaded. New enlistees like Martin were ordered to fall in with their local militia to fight the British. See: Martin. *A Narrative of A Revolutionary Soldier*. 54.

³³⁴ "Hartford, May 5," *The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, May 5, 1777. 3.

their rear in Ridgebury” again placing Continental soldiers with Wooster’s Division.³³⁵ It is unclear if only some elements of the 1st Connecticut and/or 6th Massachusetts marched with Wooster’s Division or if all of the men went to Ridgebury. For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that the elements of the Continental regiments at Danbury were involved in the fighting on April 27 as part of Wooster’s Division.³³⁶

Forces around Danbury, Morning, April 27, 1777

Approximately 200 Continental Soldiers; 150 – 200 Connecticut Militia

1st Connecticut Regiment Continental Line – Colonel Jedediah Huntington (~50)³³⁷
6th Massachusetts Regiment Continental Line – Lieutenant Colonel Calvin Smith (~140)³³⁸
16th Connecticut Regiment Militia, 4th Brigade – Colonel Joseph Platt Cooke (~150)³³⁹

Wooster’s Division, Afternoon, April 27, 1777

Approximately 200 at Bethel; ~400-500 at Ridgefield First and Second Engagements

Ranking Commander: Major-General David Wooster
Second-in-Command: Aide-de-camp Stephen Rowe Bradley

4th Brigade Militia Companies Detached at Bethel – Major-General Wooster (200)³⁴⁰
13th Connecticut Militia, 4th Brigade – Colonel Increase Mosley (~125)³⁴¹
16th Connecticut Regiment Militia, 4th Brigade – Colonel Joseph Platt Cooke (~150)³⁴²
17th Connecticut Regiment Militia, 6th Brigade – Colonel Epaphras Sheldon (~40)³⁴³
3rd Regiment Westchester County Militia – Colonel Pierre Van Cortlandt (~50)³⁴⁴

³³⁵ "Hartford, May 5," The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer, May 5, 1777. 3.

³³⁶ Colonel Huntington of the 1st Connecticut Line reported some details of the events of April 27 to General McDougall at Peekskill but does not include any information regarding the days fighting. He does note General Wooster’s brave conduct at Ridgefield and also reported on British prisoners but there is no indication that he witnessed the First or Second Engagements. The 50 soldiers of the 1st Connecticut may have fought in the battle but there are no notes listed in the published regimental rolls that indicate they suffered any casualties during the Danbury Expedition. There is no other details regarding the 6th Massachusetts Line during the Battle of Ridgefield. See: "Hartford, May 5," The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer, May 5, 1777. 3; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 55.

³³⁷ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

³³⁸ "Hartford, May 5," The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer, May 5, 1777. 3.

³³⁹ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

³⁴⁰ NARA, RG360, M247. Papers of the Continental Congress, Roll 186, I 169, V3. 191-192.

³⁴¹ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, Series I, X:306; Johnston, *Record of Connecticut Men*. 492.

³⁴² Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

³⁴³ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, VIII:334; Johnston, *Record of Connecticut Men*. 492.

³⁴⁴ NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, Roll 1455, S.23285, June, Benjamin.6-7.

7th Regiment Dutchess County Militia – Colonel Henry Ludington (~40)³⁴⁵
Detached Continental Soldiers from the 1st Connecticut and 6th Massachusetts Line (~100)³⁴⁶
Armed Civilian Volunteers (Unknown)³⁴⁷

General Arnold / General Silliman's Division, Afternoon April 27, 1777

Approximately 400 at Bethel; ~500 at Ridgefield Village
Ranking Commander: U.S. Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold
Second-in-Command: CT Brig.Gen. Gold Selleck Silliman

5th Connecticut Regiment Continental Line – Colonel Philip Burr Bradley (~20)³⁴⁸
6th Connecticut Regiment Continental Line – Lieutenant-Colonel David Dimon (~20)³⁴⁹
4th Connecticut Militia, 4th Brigade – Lieutenant-Colonel Abraham Gould (~125)³⁵⁰
9th Connecticut Militia, 4th Brigade – Colonel John Mead (~125)³⁵¹
2nd Reg't Westchester County Militia – Colonel Thomas Thomas (~60)³⁵²
Ridgefield Town Militia (~15)³⁵³
Armed Civilian Volunteers (Unknown)³⁵⁴

³⁴⁵ NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, S.19468, Truesdell, Jabesh Truesdell. 3.

³⁴⁶ "Hartford, May 5," The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer, May 5, 1777. 3.

³⁴⁷ It is unclear how many civilians, who were not part of any formal militia company, turned out to oppose the British during the Danbury Expedition. One account survives from a Mr. William Edmond in the Connecticut Archives as a petition for medical expenses. He stated that he "turned out Voluntarily to oppose the common enemy...In pursuit of whom under the command of General Wooster on Sunday the 27th of April AD 1777 at Ridgefield...received a Musket ball through the Bone of his thigh." CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, First Series, XVIII:361.

³⁴⁸ According to Connecticut's published Revolutionary War records, the 5th Connecticut Line suffered casualties on April 27 and April 28, 1777 during the Danbury Expedition. One Sergeant was "Killed in Battle Apr. 28, '77" and one soldier was listed as "Killed in Action, Apr. '77 – Danbury Raid" while one soldier was listed as "Prisoner Apr. 27, '77." Two more soldiers were listed as "Missing Action Apr. 28, '77 Danbury Raid." With slight exception, these casualties were all listed as having enlisted in April 1777 which suggests that other soldiers recruited in April 1777 may have also participated in the Battle of Ridgefield and the fighting at Saugatuck and Compo Hill. A number of newly recruited troops were at home on leave or being inoculated for Smallpox and responded to the British raid. A review of the 5th Connecticut rosters indicates that over 60 soldiers were enlisted in April 1777 and could have participated in the Third Engagement with Arnold-Silliman's Division. It is unclear if Colonel Philip Burr Bradley was with his regiment during any of the fighting or if Lieutenant-Colonel Matthew Mead led the small company of 5th Connecticut soldiers. See: Johnston, *Record of Connecticut Men*. 193-204; Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 69-72; A small contingent of continental soldiers under Lt.-Col. John Dimon of the 6th Connecticut Line turned out to oppose the British on April 25, 1777, fired the first shots of the Danbury Expedition, and fell in with American forces at Redding. See: Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Johnston, *Record of Connecticut Men*. 205.

³⁴⁹ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center; Johnston, *Record of Connecticut Men*. 205.

³⁵⁰ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, Series I, X:165.

³⁵¹ CSL, CT Archives, Revolutionary War, Series I, VIII:80; WCHS, McDonald Papers. 111; Johnston, *Record of Connecticut Men*. 492.

³⁵² NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, Roll 1455, S.23285, June, Benjamin.6-7.

³⁵³ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 69.

³⁵⁴ There were likely armed civilians from Ridgefield Village and neighboring towns, who were not part of any formal militia company, turned out to oppose the British during the Danbury Expedition and fell in with Arnold-Silliman's Division. As was the case with Wooster's Division, there is no way to determine how many civilians fell in to assist.

Order of Battle, April 27, 1777 – British Forces

The exact number of British troops and the regiments to which they belonged is well known thanks to detailed published British accounts.³⁵⁵ Tryon's total forces during the Danbury Expedition, including civilian teamsters hired to drive ammunition and baggage wagons, was around 2,000 troops. This figure is cited by both British and American observers. On the second day of the expedition, during the April 27, 1777 Battle of Ridgefield these numbers varied slightly but it is unclear to what extent as British forces incurred a few casualties on their march to Danbury and during the occupation of the town. During their march through Ridgefield in one long column of troops the British Army divided into two Brigades of equal numbers of infantry and artillery; Agnew's Brigade and Erskine's Brigade. Browne's Loyalist Corps served as flanking companies defending the sides of the advancing column from surprise attack and at times were likely tasked to serve as the advance guard; they also were involved in rear guard actions. Agnew's Brigade led the march while Erskine's Brigade brought up the rear and each brigade was likely followed by their respective wagon trains which included ammunition wagons. The 17th Dragoons may have served as scouts ranging roads parallel to the main route of march and on the western flank in anticipation of American reinforcements from New York.

1,800 Infantry³⁵⁶

17 Light Dragoons³⁵⁷

96 Artillerists, 6 3-pound Light Artillery³⁵⁸

Civilian Wagoners / Teamsters (Unknown)³⁵⁹

<u>Ranking Commander:</u>	Major-General of Provincials William Tryon
<u>Effective Commander:</u>	Brigadier-General Sir William Erskine
<u>Second-in-Command:</u>	Brigadier-General James Agnew

³⁵⁵ "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 283-284.

³⁵⁶ "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 283-284.

³⁵⁷ A small contingent of Dragoons were attached to Tryon's Army and their numbers vary in period sources including 10 from Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers, 12 from General Tryon's aid-de-camp, Captain Hutchinson, and "a subalterns command" from the *London Chronicle* which was around 17 troopers. See: Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 126; "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 284; "News," *London Chronicle*, June 5, 1777 - June 7, 1777. 514.

³⁵⁸ There is no sources that describe the exact number of artillerists that were attached to Tryon's Army but the typical British 3-Pound cannon crew consisted of 6 crew members and up to 10 reservists for a total of 16 artillerists per gun. See: "America," *The Scots Magazine*, (Edinburgh, Scotland), Vol. XXXIX. June 1777. 283-284.

³⁵⁹ The British typically hired civilians to drive the army wagons and perhaps the artillery as well but they were not considered military personnel and therefore not listed on any rosters nor were casualties recorded. It is impossible to determine how many wagons accompanied British forces which is required to estimate the number of civilian wagoners or teamsters were part of the Danbury Expedition.

4th Regiment “King’s Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster)” (250)
 15th Regiment “East Yorkshire Regiment” (250)
 23rd Regiment “Royal Welch Fusiliers” (250)
 27th Regiment “Inniskilling” (250)
 44th Regiment “East Essex” (250)
 64th Regiment “2nd Staffordshire” (250)
 71st Regiment “Fraser’s Highlanders” (1 Volunteer)
 Browne’s Corps “Prince of Wales’ American Regiment (300)
 17th Light Dragoons “17th Lancers (Duke of Cambridge’s Own)” (10 - 17 Troopers)
 Royal Artillery 6 “Light” Field Pieces “3-Pounders” (96: 6 artillerists and 10 reserve per gun)

Marching Order:

<i>Front Brigade:</i>	Agnew’s Brigade	750 Infantry; ~48 Artillerists 3 Guns; Baggage
	Royal Artillery, 3 Cannon	
	4 th Regiment	
	15 th Regiment	
	44 th Regiment	
<i>Rear Brigade:</i>	Erskine’s Brigade	750 Infantry; ~48 Artillerists 3 Guns; Baggage
	23 rd Regiment	
	27 th Regiment	
	64 th Regiment	
	Royal Artillery, 3 Cannon	
<i>Flanking Companies:</i>		
	Browne’s Corps	300 Infantry & Mounted Troops
	Light Dragoons	10-17 Troopers

V Methods, Site Identification & Documentation

Historical research for the Battle of Ridgefield (April 27, 1777) Site Identification and Documentation Plan studied the broader historical context of the battle beginning with the early years of the American Revolutionary War (1775- 1777) and the Danbury Expedition (April 25-28, 1777) in its entirety but focused specifically on the Battle of Ridgefield in as much detail as possible. The purpose of this approach was to identify relevant battle events that occurred on April 27, 1777 and reconstruct where combat actions occurred during the Battle of Ridgefield.

Battlefield Survey

The discipline of Battlefield Archeology is concerned primarily with the identification and study of sites where conflict took place, and the archeological signature of the event. This requires information gathered from historical records associated with a battlefield including troop dispositions, numbers, and the order of battle (command structure, strength, and disposition of personnel, equipment, and units of an armed force during field operations), as well as

undocumented evidence of an action or battle gathered from archeological investigations. The archeology of a battlefield allows battlefield archeologists to reconstruct the progress of a battle, assess the veracity of historical accounts of the battle, as well as fill in any gaps in the historical record. This is particularly important with respect to the Battle of Ridgefield as the historical record is often incomplete, inconsistent, and biased. Battlefield archeology seeks to move beyond simple reconstruction of the event and move toward a more dynamic interpretation of the battlefield.³⁶⁰

The overall goal of battlefield surveys is to identify and document the historical and geographical extent of the battlefield through the recovery of battle-related objects, assess site integrity (as defined in *National Register Bulletin 40: Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Registering America's Historic Battlefields*), provide an overview of surviving resources, and assess short- and long-term threats to the integrity of the battlefield. Specific steps involved in this process include:

- Research the battlefield event(s);
- Develop a list of battlefield defining natural and cultural features;
- Conduct a visual reconnaissance of the battlefield;
- Locate, document, and photograph features;
- Map troop positions and features on a USGS topographic quadrangle;
- Define study and core engagement areas for each battlefield;
- Assess overall site integrity and threats

Analysis of Primary Sources

The first step to reconstruct a comprehensive military history of the Battle of Ridgefield was to identify the various primary accounts that provided information on battlefield events and ancillary sites. Once these accounts were identified they were analyzed to assess the quality, veracity, relevancy, and significance of the material they contained. Very few primary sources survive which discuss the fighting in Ridgefield in great detail but even the shortest of accounts add additional details to the collective knowledge of the battle. Dozens of primary source materials were incorporated into as complete a battle narrative as possible to reconstruct the events of April 27, 1777. Important considerations in assessing the veracity of individual accounts included: determining who the author was (battle participant or chronicler), why the account was written

³⁶⁰ Richard Fox and Douglas Scott. "The Post-Civil War Battlefield Pattern: An Example from the Custer Battlefield." *Historical Archeology*, Vol. 25, No. 2: 1991. 92-103.

(e.g., field report, local history, British versus American perspectives), how long after the event was the account written, and can the information in the account be corroborated by other records.

Among the primary sources consulted during the course of this research were early historical narratives, often in the form of town histories, that discussed the “Danbury Raid” and the Battle of Ridgefield, as well as field reports written by both American and English commanders. The study was also advanced through the examination of correspondences and letters, as well as Connecticut State records and Federal records in the form of veteran pension records. These sources offered important insights into the many aspects of the battle including possible battlefield locations, movements of combatants on the battlefield, weaponry, tactics, and casualties. The primary sources researched during the course of this study were “deconstructed” to identify defining terrain features, battle events and movements, avenues of approach and retreat, and homes standing at the time of the Battle of Ridgefield.

Dozens of sources directly referenced various aspects of the Battle of Ridgefield. These accounts, along with other period documentation, were analyzed individually and collectively to gather information regarding battlefield features, locations, routes of approach and retreat, the ebb and flow of engagements, the movements of combatants across the battlefield landscape, tactics, weaponry, and specific individuals associated with a battle or action. Very few of the relevant accounts were contradictory and usually correspond well with one another. A combined analysis of all relevant accounts provided a much richer and more complex narrative of the battle and assisted in refining the scope and scale of the battlefield study areas.

The historical record associated with the battlefield is used to construct a timeline of discrete battle events and potential material correlates or archeological signatures associated with each event. The expected archeological signatures may be used to inform and test hypotheses of unit actions and movements drawn from the historical record. It is often the case that the actual (recovered) archeological signature differs from the expected archeological signature necessitating a reevaluation or reinterpretation of the historical record. Using both Gross-Pattern (spatial) and Dynamic-Pattern (temporal) Battlefield Analyses, the spatial and temporal dimensions of a battle can be defined and reconstructed through the integration and continual assessment of the congruence of the historical and archeological record, a process based on the archeological

correlates or signatures of individual and unit actions. In this ongoing process the historical record informs the archeological record as much as the archeological record informs the historical record and both contribute equally to the reconstruction of the battlefield.

The key to this analysis is the ability of battlefield archeologists to integrate the spatial dimensions of unit actions into a temporal framework. This does not necessarily require identification of aggregates of individual behaviors based on modern firearm analysis, as was the basis for the reconstruction of the Battle of Little Bighorn. The Dynamic Pattern Analysis approach can be applied to Pre- Civil War battlefields in which the vast majority of firearms were smoothbore weapons that generally do not leave distinguishing marks on discharged lead shot that are unique to the barrel. By focusing on hypothesized unit actions and movements drawn from the historical record and identifying potentially unique material cultural signatures can be associated with actions and movements of the American and British large and small units. Actions and movements of the various units can be clarified based on the battlefield timeline (sequential unit actions and movements) and KOCOA analysis, and integrated into a comprehensive sequence of battlefield actions and events.

The Potential Battlefield Boundary and Core Area(s) locations were identified by integrating information from the following sources: primary accounts, local oral history, local artifact collections, land records, historical maps, aerial photographs, site visits and KOCOA analysis (see below). The precise location and delineation of battlefields and associated sites will require fieldwork to better assess battlefield features, terrain, and integrity. Archeological surveys (walkover reconnaissance surveys, metal detector survey, sub-surface testing) are particularly important to locate and delineate the battlefield sites as the documents associated with the battle often lack detail, are incomplete, and sometimes contradictory.

Field Methodology

Landholder Permission

Written permission must be obtained from landholders in order to conduct any future battlefield surveys on their property. The first step to gain landholder permissions was to develop a landholder packet consisting of a Permission Form, a brief Historical Overview of the project, along with “Frequently Asked Questions.” The Ridgefield Historical Society regularly updates the

local community regarding overall progress of the project while sharing interesting discoveries to engage all town stakeholders, to raise the public visibility of the project, and to discuss any ongoing concerns individuals may have had. Public outreach, individual contacts, and direct appeals to landholders achieved great success in acquiring permissions for properties located within or adjacent to the battlefield site. Permissions were cultivated primarily through personal contact and relationship building, as conversation and communication became frequent and tangible between project staff and local residents.

Visual Inspection

Once landholder permission was granted, a visual inspection followed. Windshield surveys were conducted on properties where permission had not yet been granted as well as initial visual surveys from areas where viewing was possible (i.e., adjoining property, higher elevation, etc.). Visual Inspections of individual lots consisted of a walkover of the property with the landholder to gain information on the locations of possible below-ground disturbance (i.e., septic systems, utility lines), and noting landscape features that had either physical or cultural attributes that denoted possible inferences to the battlefield. These discussions with landowners were helpful in reconstructing recent land use history as a means of contextualizing the nature and distribution of the artifacts recovered during the project.

Land Use Research

Battlefields dating to the eighteenth century in New England, like the Battle of Ridgefield, present their own unique set of challenges. Most areas in the region have been continually occupied, farmed, and built upon by Americans, Europeans before them, and Native Americans prior to their arrival. This history of long-term land use will result in large numbers of artifacts dating to periods before and after the Battle of Ridgefield potentially complicating the identification and interpretation aspect of a future battlefield survey. Therefore, a land use study was employed as a frame of reference for interpreting the varied artifacts anticipated during fieldwork associated with human occupation and activities over the past 245 years since the battle. Peeling back the layers of habitation and varied land use is important to understand and predict the relevance and significance of artifacts signatures and contexts, and to assess site integrity. Information for study was gathered from local histories, town records, historical newspapers,

maps, photographs, books and other various periodicals, along with recorded local knowledge or “hearsay,” as well as previous artifact collections from the local area. Results uncovered a consistent pattern of landscape occupation in the centuries following the battle which primarily took the form of agricultural activity until the second half of the twentieth century. In recent years, a substantial amount of the most-well known battle sites where fighting occurred in Ridgefield had been impacted by commercial and residential development.

KOCCOA Evaluation and Analysis

The United States military has developed a process for evaluating the military significance of the battlefield denoted by the acronym KOCCOA; Key and Decisive Terrain, Observation and Fields of Fire, Cover and Concealment, Obstacles, Avenues of Approach and Retreat. The NPS ABPP requires the KOCCOA approach for all documentation and implementation grants. An important aspect of KOCCOA analysis is to identify defining features of the battlefield landscape – aspects of the landscape that are mentioned in battlefield accounts and influenced the nature and progress of the battle. Defining features may be natural (e.g., Titicus River, swamps, boulders, ridges) or cultural (e.g. Ridgebury Village, roads, fortifications) and are assessed and evaluated to determine their effect on the process and outcome of the battle. Critical defining features are mapped using GPS and GIS, surveyed using remote sensing (metal detection and electrical resistivity), along with some archeological testing at times.

Prospective battlefield and ancillary site locations were identified by analyzing and integrating information from the following sources; primary accounts, oral history, local and institutional artifact collections, land records, historical maps, aerial photographs, site visits, archeological sampling and KOCCOA analysis. Battlefield landscapes consist of natural features (hills, streams, valleys, etc.) and cultural features (trails, fortifications, villages, etc.) that define the original battlefield landscape and also reflect the evolution of these features over time and their impacts to the original landscape. In order to identify, document, survey and map a battlefield, historians and archeologists must research all available and relevant historical accounts and identify the historical landscape that defined the battlefield in the field through terrain analysis and identification of natural and cultural features associated with the battlefield.

Terrain Analysis

Terrain analysis is a critical aspect of battlefield surveys, so much so that the NPS ABPP require all grant recipients to use KOCO A (Key terrain, Observation, Cover and concealment, Obstacles, Avenues of approach), a military terrain model the U.S. Army developed to evaluate the military significance of terrain associated with a battlefield. By studying the military applications of the terrain using KOCO A, a battlefield historian or archeologist can identify the landscape of the battlefield and develop a basis for judging the merits and flaws of battle accounts. KOCO A components include:

Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain - Key Terrain is any ground that, when controlled, affords a marked advantage to either combatant. Two factors can make terrain key: how a commander wants to use it, and whether his enemy can use it to defeat the commander's forces. Decisive Terrain is ground that must be controlled in order to successfully accomplish the mission.

Observation and Fields of Fire - Observation is the condition of weather and terrain that allows a force to see friendly and enemy forces, and key aspects of the terrain. Fields of Fire are areas in which a weapon or group of weapons may cover and fire into from a given position.

Cover and Concealment - Cover is protection from enemy's fire (e.g., barricade, stone wall, brow of a hill, wooded swamp), and Concealment is protection from observation and surveillance (e.g., ravines, swamps, intervening hill or wood).

Obstacles - Obstacles are any features that prevent, restrict, or delay troop movements. Obstacles can be natural, manmade, or a combination of both and fall into two categories: existing (such as rock ledges, swamps, rivers, dense wood, town or village) and reinforcing (placed on a battlefield through military effort such as a barricade).

Avenues of Approach and Withdrawal - An avenue of approach is the route taken by a force that leads to its objective or to key terrain in its path. An Avenue of Withdrawal is the route taken by a force to withdraw from an objective or key terrain.

Table 1 - Key Terrain Features & KOCO Analysis

Name	Location	Relevance to Battle	Field Comment	KOCO Analysis	Integrity Assessment	Remarks
Terrain and Topographical Features						
Miry Brook	Northeast corner of Ridgefield near the Danbury border.	British forces entered Ridgefield from the east, marching west on the Ridgebury Road (present-day George Washington Highway) and crossed Miry Brook 1,000 ft west of the border and a second time 635 ft further west. American forces may have used the thickets around Miry Brook to fire on the British column.	British forces took scattered gunfire from the vicinity of Miry Brook.	Cover & Concealment (US); Obstacle (B); Avenue of Approach (B);	Low Development; Wetlands; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area
Ridgebury Hill	Approx. 1 mile south of Ridgebury Center	British forces marched up and over Ridgebury Hill on their approach to Mamasasco Lake. According to Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers some American forces fired on the rear of the British column on Ridgebury Hill signaling the first appearance of organized American resistance on April 27, 1777.	Light skirmishing occurred as British forces marched over the hill.	Key Terrain (B); Observation & Field of Fire (B; US); Avenue of Approach (B & US)	Low Residential Development; Moderate Agricultural Development; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area
Mamasasco Lake	West of North Salem Road and Tackora Trail	British forces came to a halt and rested near the southeastern shore of Mamasasco Lake for up to two hours before continuing their march south towards Ridgefield Village.	No combat occurred during the British rest.	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (B); Avenue of Approach (B)	Moderate Residential Development; Moderate Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area and Ancillary Site
Titicus River	Intersections of North Salem Road, Sawmill Road and Maple Shade Road	The Titicus River flows through Ridgefield beginning on the New York – Connecticut border and generally runs along the north side of North Salem Road until it turns south where it is then located on the east side of North Salem Road. Titicus River continues south through Barlow Mountain Road before intersecting North Salem Road and Maple Shade Road until it ends in the northern part of Ridgefield Village. British forces crossed the river once as they continued on Ridgebury Road before it became Ledges Road and again as they approached Ridgefield Village at the intersections of North Salem Road, Saw Mill Hill Road, and Maple Shade Road. The river, which was wooded in areas, may have offered some concealment for Wooster’s Division as they approached the British column from Barlow Mountain Road.	No combat occurred along the Titicus River.	Cover and Concealment (US); Obstacle (B; US)	Moderate Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area and Core Area

Bedrock Ledges	West of Main Street and Stebbins House, Present-day 559 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT	A large bedrock outcrop described as “ledges” were located at the site of present-day 559 Main Street which created a formidable obstacle for British forces to negotiate as they approached the north end of Ridgefield Village on Main Street. This bedrock formation was directly west of the Stebbins House and was utilized by Arnold-Silliman’s Division as the western end of a series of improvised breastworks which included the “barricade” built across Main Street between the ledges and the house. A platoon of British troops scaled the ledges during the last phase of the Third Engagement. The ledges were quarried and removed post-war.	Heavy fighting occurred around the ledges.	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (US); Observation and Fields of Fire (US); Cover & Concealment (US); Obstacle (B); Avenue of Approach (B) and Withdrawal (US)	High Residential Development; Destroyed; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity, Low Degree Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
Old Orchard	North of the Bedrock Ledge, West of Main Street	An “old orchard” stood on the ground just north of the bedrock ledges and near a small stream that ran west to east across Main Street and the Stebbins House. A British flanking party fought their way through the orchard while a platoon of British troop scaled the ledges, turning the American western flank during the last phase of the Third Engagement.	Heavy fighting occurred in the orchard.	Observation and Fields of Fire (US); Cover & Concealment (B); Obstacle (B); Avenue of Approach and Withdrawal (B)	High Residential Development; Destroyed; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity, Low Degree Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
Orchard	Most likely located West of Grove Street and East of the Stebbins House	An orchard stood on the ground east of the Stebbins House towards Grove Street. During the Third Engagement a British flanking party unsuccessfully attempted to fight their way through the orchard to turn the American eastern flank.	Heavy fighting occurred in and around the orchard, American forces withdrew from the Stebbins House towards the orchard culminating in a full withdrawal from that position towards East Ridge.	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (B; US); Observation and Fields of Fire (US); Cover & Concealment (US); Obstacle (B); Avenue of Approach (B) and Withdrawal (B; US)	High Residential Development; Destroyed; Low Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
High Ridge	Located on the Western end of Ridgefield Village between present-day	Following the successful British assault on American positions during the Third Engagement some American forces retreated south along High Ridge. According to Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers the final action of the Battle of Ridgefield	Some skirmishing likely occurred along High Ridge leading to	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (US); Observation & Field of Fire (US); Obstacle (B);	High Residential Development; Moderate Degree of Visual and	Within Core Area

	Gilbert Street south to West Lane and is approx. 1 mile in length.	occurred on a “Rising Ground above the Village” which likely refers to a hill on the southern end of High Ridge which is the highest elevation in the village.	the final stand of American forces on the southern end of the ridge prior to withdrawal.	Avenue of Approach (B & US) and Withdrawal (US);	Physical Integrity.	
East Ridge	Located on the Eastern end of Ridgefield Village between present-day Prospect Street and Branchville Road and is approx. .5 miles in length.	Following the successful British assault on American positions during the Third Engagement some American forces retreated south along East Ridge.	Some skirmishing and brief actions likely occurred along East Ridge during the American withdrawal.	Observation and Fields of Fire (B; US); Avenues of Approach (B) and Withdrawal (US)	High Residential Development; Moderately Forested; Moderate Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
Name	Location	Relevance to Battle	Field Comment	KOCOA Analysis	Integrity Assessment	Remarks
Cultural Features						
Miry Brook Road	Danbury-Ridgefield Border, George Washington Highway, Old Mill Road	While British troops were in Danbury soldiers from the 3 rd Westchester Country Militia approached the town on Miry Brook Road. After setting any remaining military stores ablaze and the buildings in which they were stored the British column marched west out of Danbury on Miry Brook Road while the 3 rd Westchester retreated before them and possibly set up small ambushes along the way. Just prior to the Ridgefield Town Line Miry Brook Road split between Briar Ridge Road and the Danbury Road (George Washington Highway) which the British continued along towards Ridgebury.	British forces took scattered gunfire from the vicinity of Miry Brook.	Avenue of Approach (B; US) and Withdrawal (US)	Moderate Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area
Danbury Road	Danbury-Ridgefield Border to Ridgebury Road; Present-day George	While British troops were in Danbury soldiers from the 3 rd Westchester Country Militia approached the town on Danbury Road. The British Army marched in a column along Miry Brook Road from their departure from Danbury until it became Danbury Road at the Ridgefield town line. The	British forces took scattered gunfire from the vicinity of Miry Brook.	Avenue of Approach (B; US) and Withdrawal (US)	Moderate Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area

	Washington Highway	3 rd Westchester retreated before them on the Danbury Road and possibly set up small ambushes along the way. In 1933 the Danbury Road was renamed the “George Washington Highway.”				
Bogus Road	The entrance to the road from the Danbury Road is discontinued today but began approx. 750 feet west of Oil Mill Road.	A detachment of mounted British troops detached from the main column marching west on Danbury Road (George Washington Highway) to head south on Bogus Road to cover the right flank of the army. Bogus Road ends as it meets Ned’s Mountain Road approximately .70 miles south of Danbury Road (George Washington Highway).	No known actions occurred.	Avenue of Approach (B)	Low Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area
Ned’s Mountain Road	From the end of Bogus Road it runs west to Ridgebury Road	Mounted British troops rode south along Bogus Road to Ned’s Mountain Road where they went west until they reached Ridgebury Road and the rest of the British Army marching south along Ridgebury Road.	No known actions occurred.	Avenue of Approach (B)	Low Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area
Ridgebury Road	Beginning at the intersection of Canterbury Lane and Danbury Road (George Washington Highway) it runs south to Sherwood Road to North Salem Road.	The British Army turned south at the Ridgebury Congregational Church onto Ridgebury Road which ran to the junction of North Salem Road for approximately 3 miles. The final half mile of the original road is known as Sherwood Road today.	The only known action that occurred was a brief skirmish on Ridgebury Hill.	Avenue of Approach (B)	Moderate Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area
Ledges Road	Ridgebury Road becomes Ledges Road which runs southeast to the junction of Sherwood Road.	At the time of the battle Ledges Road was part of the North Salem Road.	No known actions occurred along the section of road.	Avenue of Approach (B)	Low Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area
Sherwood Road	It runs from Ledges Road south towards North Salem Road.	At the time of the battle Sherwood Road was part of the North Salem Road.	No known actions occurred along the section of road.	Avenue of Approach (B)	Low Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area

North Salem Road	Beginning at Sherwood Road it continues south towards Ridgefield Village ending at the junction of Danbury Road and Main Street. A contingent of British forces marched northwest from Sherwood Road to the Keeler Mill site near the junction of North Salem Road and Craigmoor Road.	The British column continued south along North Salem Road for approximately 1/3 of a mile before coming to a halt near the junction of North Salem Road and Tackora Trail. Here the entire British force rested to eat near the southeastern end of Mamanasco Lake. When the British continued their march south on North Salem Road, American forces with Wooster's Division stacked the rear of their column approximately 300 yards to the southeast from the junction of Tackora Trail. Wooster's Division pursued the British column for another mile south along North Salem Road until they were repulsed near the southern junction of North Salem Road and Tackora Trail. The British column advanced as far as the Titicus River another mile south where they came to a halt in preparation for an attack on Ridgefield village. Some New York militia companies likely marched to Ridgefield using the North Salem Road.	Moderate fighting and skirmishing occurred on the road during the First Engagement and Second Engagement .	Avenue of Approach (B & US)	Moderate Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual and Physical Integrity.	Within Study Area and Core Area
Barlow Mountain Road	Barlow Mountain Road runs west towards Ledges Road, continuing south along the western shore of Lake Naraneka to North Street, turning west to North Salem Road.	Wooster's Division was tasked to attack the rear of the British column to slow their advance to allow additional American reinforcements to arrive on the battlefield. After marching over Barlow Mountain, Wooster's Division marched along Barlow Mountain Road south along the western shore of Lake Naraneka. Wooster's Division crossed Titicus River on Barlow Mountain Road where they attacked and captured wagons and personnel at the end of the British column during the First Engagement.	Some of the fighting that constituted the First Engagement may have occurred at the junction of Barlow Mountain Road and North Salem Road.	Avenue of Approach (US)	Moderate Residential Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual Integrity and Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
Keeler Grist and Sawmill	Located on a brook just north of the junction of North Salem Road and Craigmoor Road.	A detachment of British troops marched to Keeler's Mill while the main body marched towards Lake Mamanasco to rest. Grain and flour were found at the mill and the mill was set ablaze to destroy the stores.	No known actions occurred.	Avenue of Approach and Withdrawal (B)	Low Development; Forested Land; High Degree of Visual Integrity and Low Physical Integrity.	Ancillary Site
Barricade Across Main Street between the "ledges" and Stebbins House	Improvised breastworks were constructed across Main Street between a	A barricade of wooded rails, logs, carts, earth, rocks and other debris were constructed across Main Street on the northern approach to Ridgefield Village. This barricade was designed as an obstacle to the British advance and used by American forces for cover	The heaviest fighting of the Battle of Ridgefield occurred in the vicinity of the	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (US); Observation and Fields of Fire (US); Cover &	Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity and Low Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area

	bedrock formation to the west and the Stebbins House on the eastern side of the road on the north edge of Ridgefield Village	and concealment during the Third Engagement. It was destroyed and removed by British troops once American forces withdrew from their positions.	barricade, the bedrock ledges, and the Stebbins House.	Concealment (US); Obstacle (B); Avenue of Approach (B; US) and Withdrawal (US)		
Ridgefield Village	Located at the center of the Town of Ridgefield. Main Street runs through the center of the village flanked by East Ridge and High Ridge.	Following the Third Engagement American forces withdrew through the streets of Ridgefield Village. High Ridge, Main Street, and East Ridge were used as avenues of withdrawal. A portion of the British troops eventually pursued and cleared the town of American forces. Skirmishing occurred in several areas in the village. Remnant American forces may have made a stand towards the southern end of Main Street and on the highest hill in the village on the southern end of High Ridge before fully withdrawing from the field.	Sporadic fighting occurred throughout Ridgefield Village.	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (B; US); Observation and Fields of Fire (B; US); Cover & Concealment (US); Obstacle (B); Avenue of Approach (B; US) and Withdrawal (US)	High Residential and Commercial Development; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity and Low Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
Main Street	Beginning at the junction of North Salem Road and Danbury Road, Main Street runs south through Ridgefield Village for 1.45 miles ending at the junction of Wilton Road and Wilton Road East.	Following the Third Engagement American forces withdrew through the streets of Ridgefield Village. High Ridge, Main Street, and East Ridge were used as avenues of withdrawal. A portion of the British troops eventually pursued and cleared the town of American forces. Skirmishing occurred in several areas in the village along Main Street. Remnant American forces may have made a stand towards the southern end of Main Street before withdrawing from the field.	Sporadic fighting occurred throughout Ridgefield Village.	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (B; US); Observation and Fields of Fire (B; US); Cover & Concealment (US); Avenue of Approach (B; US) and Withdrawal (US)	High Residential and Commercial Development; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity and Low Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
High Ridge Avenue	Beginning at the junction of Gilbert Street and Ramapoo Road, High Ridge Avenue runs south for 1 mile to West Lane.	Following the Third Engagement American forces withdrew through the streets of Ridgefield Village. High Ridge, Main Street, and East Ridge were used as avenues of withdrawal. A portion of the British troops eventually pursued and cleared the town of American forces. Skirmishing occurred along High Ridge Avenue and American forces made a final stand on the highest hill in the village on the southern end of High Ridge before withdrawing from the field.	Sporadic fighting occurred throughout Ridgefield Village. A body of American troops made a final stand on a hill on the southern end of High	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (B; US); Observation and Fields of Fire (B; US); Cover & Concealment (US); Avenue of Approach (B; US) and	High Residential and Commercial Development; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity and Low Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area

			Ridge Avenue.	Withdrawal (US)		
East Ridge Road	Beginning at Prospect Street, East Ridge Road runs south for .5 mile to Branchville Road	Following the Third Engagement American forces withdrew through the streets of Ridgefield Village. High Ridge, Main Street, and East Ridge were used as avenues of withdrawal. A portion of the British troops eventually pursued and cleared the town of American forces. Skirmishing occurred along East Ridge Road as American forces withdrew south.	Sporadic fighting occurred throughout Ridgefield Village.	Key Terrain and Decisive Terrain (B; US); Observation and Fields of Fire (B; US); Cover & Concealment (US); Avenue of Approach (B; US) and Withdrawal (US)	High Residential and Commercial Development; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity and Low Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
Wilton Road West	Beginning at Main Street, Wilton Road West runs south for 1.75 miles to the Wilton border.	Approximately .25 miles south of the southern end of Main Street is the location of the British encampment on the evening of April 27, 1777. From there, Wilton Road West continues south another 1.5 miles to the Wilton border. The British followed this route on the morning of April 28, 1777.	No known actions occurred.	Avenue of Approach (B; US) and Withdrawal (US)	High Residential Development; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity and Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
West Lane	Beginning at the southern end of Main Street, West Lane runs west to South Salem Road for .75 miles.	Avenue of approach for New York Militia companies who responded to the alarm.	No known actions occurred.	Avenue of Approach and Withdrawal (US)	High Residential Development; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity and Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area
South Salem Road	Beginning at West Lane Road, South Salem Road runs west 1 mile to the New York Border.	Avenue of approach for New York Militia companies who responded to the alarm.	No known actions occurred.	Avenue of Approach and Withdrawal (US)	High Residential Development; Moderate Degree of Visual Integrity and Physical Integrity.	Within Core Area

Viewshed Analysis

Several Viewshed Models were developed using elements of KOCO A and GIS (Figure 31: Viewshed Model). Identified cultural and terrain features were geo-referenced and integrated into cumulative Viewshed Models. A Viewshed is a raster-based map in which from each cell, a straight line is interpolated between a source point and all other cells within an elevation model to find whether the cell exceeds the height of the three-dimensional line at that point. Therefore, the result of each calculation is either positive or negative. If the result is positive (1) then there is a

direct line of sight, if it is negative (0), there is no line of sight.³⁶¹ The resultant Viewshed Models illustrate locations that could be seen from elevations at different locations along the Battle of Ridgefield route modeling what locations the combatants could see from these positions and how this might influence their actions. These models were very useful for conceptualizing the battlefield landscape and identifying key terrain, avenues of approach and retreat, obstacles and areas of concealment and observation.

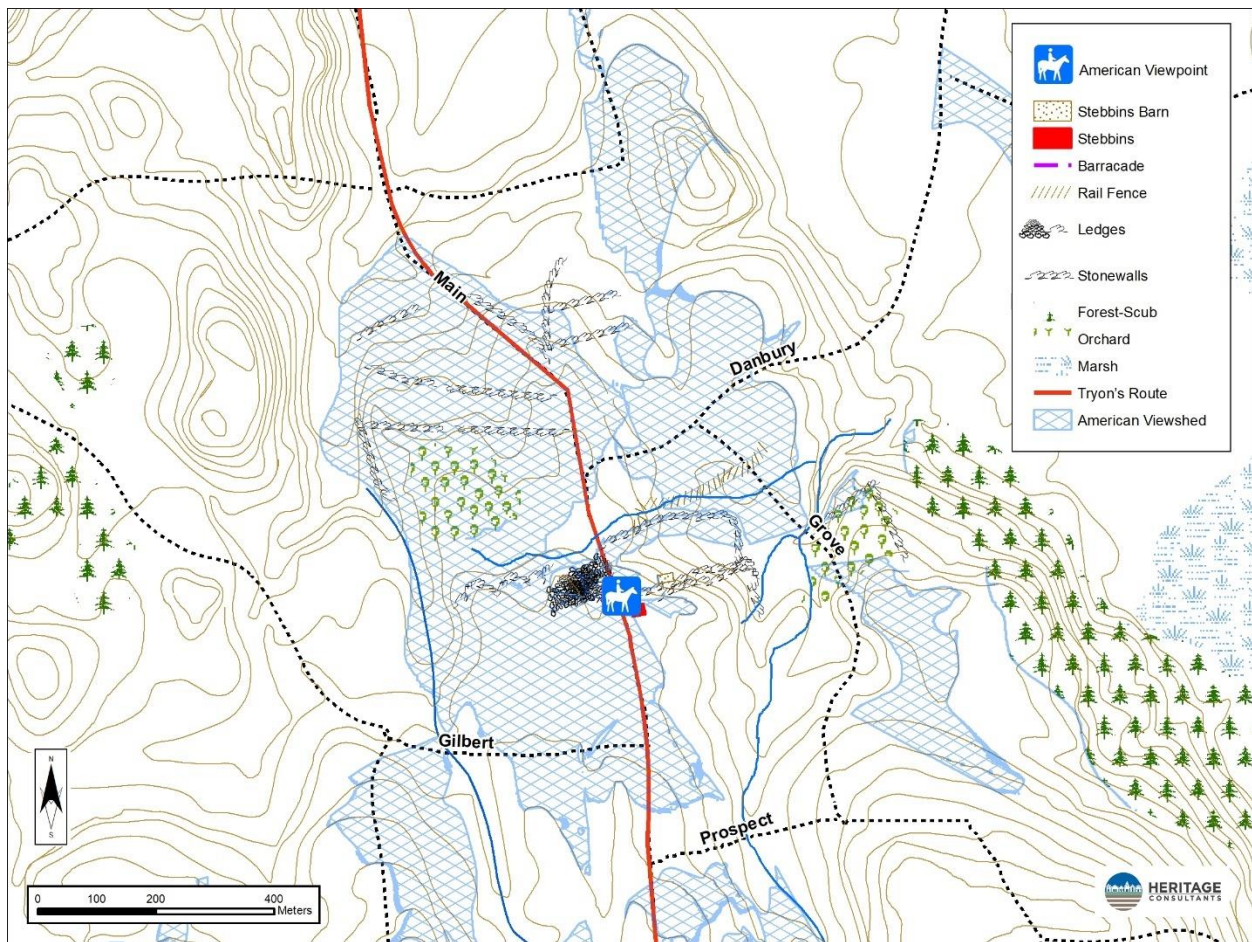


Figure 31: Viewshed Model, Stebbins House Location from American Positions

³⁶¹ David Wheatley and Mark Gillings. *Spatial Technology and Archaeology: The Archaeological Applications of GIS* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2002).

VI Results and Battlefield Event Synthesis

Battlefield Sequence

The battlefield sequence presented here details only those actions and movements of American and British forces during the Battle of Ridgefield between 12:00 AM on April 27, 1777 and 12:00 AM on April 28, 1777. The Battle of Ridgefield occurred during the third day of the British military campaign referred to as the “Danbury Expedition” April 25 – April 28, 1777.³⁶² The times noted within the following Battlefield Sequence and Battlefield Timeline are referenced in “New England Time” which differs from “British Time” by one hour, New England time being faster than the recorded British time by one hour. Whenever the two times do not correspond due to this discrepancy, British Time will follow and be noted in brackets.³⁶³

The British strategy on April 27, 1777 was to return to their shipping off of Cedar Point as quickly as possible as American forces were massing around them and growing in strength by the hour. The British did not return along the same route they used to get to Danbury. Instead, they marched west towards Ridgebury in the town of Ridgefield to confuse American commanders who suspected that Tryon might march towards Peekskill, New York. At Ridgebury the British Army marched directly south towards Ridgefield Village, Wilton, and Fairfield (present-day Westport). The British Army came to a halt at the southern end of Mamasasco Lake where the troops rested, ate, and cared for the wounded for at least an hour and a half. Tryon’s Army continued their march to the south towards Cedar Point as quickly as possible to avoid substantial American resistance and reach the safety of the Royal Navy anchored offshore.

General David Wooster anticipated that the British Army would follow a southerly route of march from Danbury instead of the longer march west towards Peekskill. He believed Tryon was aware of additional military stores warehoused in Ridgefield and Wilton but there was also a chance the British would continue west towards the Hudson. General Wooster gave orders to Connecticut Militia Brigades mobilizing to the south to mass around the Saugatuck Bridge believing that the British would most likely march south. The plan to divide American forces assembled at Bethel into two divisions may have been proposed by other ranking commanders,

³⁶² Damon Greenleaf Douglas’s book, *The Bridge Not Taken: Benedict Arnold Outwitted* includes battlefield sequencing and timelines for other aspects of the Danbury Expedition. See: Douglas. *The Bridge Not Taken*. 56-65.

³⁶³ See Battlefield Timeline.

including Major-General Benedict Arnold and Brigadier-General Gold Selleck Silliman, Connecticut Militia, to attack the British Army in both the front and rear to slow their southern march to their vessels. Although Arnold and Silliman's Division contained around 400 soldiers and Wooster's Division consisted of the remaining 200 troops, General Wooster likely took command of the 150 troops of Major Beardsley's 16th Connecticut Militia, 4th Brigade posted to the northeast of Danbury Village and other troops that may have gathered bringing his division to around 400 troops. It is unclear if any Continental soldiers from the 1st Connecticut Line or 6th Massachusetts Line joined Wooster's Division or remained at Danbury. Although both Continental units lacked ammunition, they were resupplied around 10:00 AM and would have been able to rendezvous with American forces between Danbury and Bethel before they marched in pursuit of Tryon's Army an hour later. Elements of the 1st Connecticut and/or 6th Massachusetts could have been among the "Continental Troops" who were reported as having been under Wooster's command. If so, Wooster's Division could have exceeded 400 troops especially once they were joined by the 3rd Westchester Militia already in pursuit of Tryon.

The American strategy was not to defeat the British in open battle but rather to slow their advance to buy time for Connecticut Militia forces to organize and deploy to the south around Saugatuck. The longer Wooster, Arnold, and Silliman could delay the British Army, the better chance American forces had to defeat and capture Tryon's men before they could reach the safety of the Royal Navy anchored off Cedar Point. It does not appear that the American officers planned in advance to make a stand outside of Ridgefield Village, but rather it was a result of where the two armies met during the march south. Troop movements related to the Battle of Ridgefield began at 6:00 AM with American commanders forming two divisions out of their 600 troops at Bethel followed by the British marching west out of Danbury at 9:00 AM. The Americans were aware of British movements but did not march in pursuit until they were aware of Tryon's next destination. By 11:00 AM American commanders received word that the British marched south at Ridgebury along the road through Ridgefield towards Wilton as Wooster predicted. Wooster's Division marched to the west to intercept the rear of the advancing British column and Arnold and Silliman's Division marched hard to the southwest through northwest Redding to reach Ridgefield Village before Tryon's Army.

As American forces mobilized at Bethel, the first combat actions of the Battle of Ridgefield occurred around 11:00 AM on the southern end of Ridgebury Hill. There, an unknown number of American militia fired on the rear of the British column, likely from atop Ridgebury Hill. The skirmish was the first noteworthy combat action of the day recorded by Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers who noted that some American troops “first that made their Appearance was on Ridgebury hill about 5 miles from Danbury. They fired on the Rear at great Distance with little harm.”³⁶⁴ This was more evidence to British commanders that American forces were mobilizing even though they had experienced no substantial opposition since their landing at Compo Beach on April 25. Even so, the Army rested for at least an hour and a half near the southern end of Mamasco Lake from around 12:00 PM to around 1:30 PM and then prepared for their march back to Compo (Figure 6: Keeler’s Mill and British Rest). During this time a detachment of British troops destroyed a Grist Mill and its contents of grain. Tryon’s Army resumed their march sometime after 1:30 PM.

Although American resistance was expected, General Tryon may have been surprised when Wooster’s Division overran Erskine’s Brigade’s wagon train around 2:00 PM, thus losing half of the army’s extra ammunition and baggage to the Americans. This combat action known as the First Engagement occurred in the vicinity of Barlow Mountain Road, North Salem Road, and Tackora Trail (Figure 7: First Engagement). It was a short affair that may have only lasted about 15 minutes. At about the same time, Arnold and Silliman’s Division arrived at Ridgefield Village after their forced march where they were met with at least 100 more troops including the 2nd Westchester New York Militia. American commanders ordered the construction of a barricade, or breastworks, across the main road entering town from nearby fencing, carts, rocks, earth and other debris. This barricade was anchored by bedrock ledges to the west and the Stebbins house to the east which also sat atop a steep slope of rock and ledge. Arnold noted that they had little time to prepare their forces, only having arrived about an hour before the British assault. General Silliman recalled that he knew the British were approaching by the sound of battle as Wooster’s Division attacked the column.

³⁶⁴ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127.

After capturing the wagon train at the end of the British column, General Wooster ordered his men to pursue the British rear guard. Wooster's Division reformed, advanced south along North Salem Road skirmishing with the enemy as they went. This action is known as the Second Engagement. It began at approximately 2:00 PM as Wooster's Division pressed Erskine's Brigade to the south along the North Salem Road. Erskine's rear guard formed about 100 yards south of the junction of Tackora Trail and North Salem Road on a hilly section of the road along with three cannon. Elements of Browne's Loyalist Corps held higher ground on the western flank. Wooster's Division was within range of the Royal Artillery's 3-Pound guns, and they were exposed to solid shot as they approached, then canister shot around 300 yards, and finally with grapeshot at around 200 yards followed by British musket fire. As the American troops reached the intersection of Tackora Trail and North Salem Road, about 100 yards north of British positions, General Wooster was mortally wounded while pressing his men forward. (Figure 8: Second Engagement) The American attack soon faltered, and Wooster's Division retreated north but Erskine's Brigade did not pursue. This action ended around 3:00 PM. General Silliman noted that as soon as he heard the sounds of battle in the distance, the British main column appeared. The British column halted at Titicus River on the outskirts of Ridgefield Village to prepare to assault American troops entrenched there. This British formation took up a half mile of road from Titicus River north.

Both British and American accounts confirm that the British arrived north of Ridgefield Village around 3:00 PM which also illustrates the difference in timekeeping by British and American observers. Lieutenant Robertson of the Royal Engineers stated that "We immediately (2 o'clock) Attack'd the Village" while General Silliman of the 4th Brigade Connecticut recorded that "About 3 o'clock the Enemy appeared in One grand column...when their Front came within about a half a Mile they halted to make their Dispositions for the attack."³⁶⁵ This combat action is known as the Third Engagement (Figure 10: Third Engagement Phase I). General Silliman specifically described the different phases of the British assault that occurred over the next hour and a half. As Agnew's Brigade and Browne's Corps prepared for battle, Silliman reported that "the attack they began first by a Cannonade from 6 Field Pieces" which may have been directed at the barricade to batter it down, but the fire proved ineffective (Figure 11: Third Engagement Phase II). It is unclear

³⁶⁵ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 127; Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

how long the initial cannon fire lasted but it likely ranged in time from 15 minutes to a half hour. The British next “sent large flanking Parties to flank us, they were received warmly by our out Posts, for a while.” This occurred to the west of the Ridgefield Road beyond the bedrock ledges and to the east in the vicinity of Grove Street and the orchards there.³⁶⁶ The flanking actions, which occurred towards the end of the 6-gun bombardment, may have lasted as late as 4:00 PM (Figure 12: Third Engagement Phase III).

After testing the American flanks, Agnew’s Brigade launched a general assault on the entire American position which probably began around 4:00 PM. According to Silliman “the Enemy soon marched up a large Collum containing about 600 Men right in our Front; and very large flanking Parties on each of their Flanks consisting either of them of more Men than our whole forces consisted of, with 3 Field Pieces in Front of their Collum.”³⁶⁷ As described by Silliman, Agnew’s Brigade advanced with their 3-Pound Guns at the head of the column and likely came to a halt around 200 or 300 yards from the American line to provide close infantry support. The column included 600 infantrymen from three regiments that deployed into a line of battle to assault the center of the American line, while the 300 soldiers of Browne’s Corps pressed the western American flank and another 150-man flanking company from Agnew’s Brigade pressed the eastern flank. American commanders allowed the British to advance within musket range. The British fired first, and Arnold-Silliman’s Division responded with heavy musket fire and fought the British to a standstill. Silliman described the action as “a hot fire ensued from both Sides, which continued with great Fury for about half an hour more” (Figure 13: Third Engagement Phase IV).³⁶⁸ Just as British infantry were running dangerously low on ammunition and not making any discernible progress against the fortified American position, Browne’s Loyalist Corps pushed back American forces on the western flank. At least one platoon from Browne’s Corps scaled the bedrock ledges and fired enfilade east along the American line. It was at this time that General Arnold’s horse was shot out from under him. General Silliman described how his troops “were obliged to give way to a Superior Force” and the American line collapsed from the west at the barricade and moved east towards the orchards near Grove Street where Colonel Gould of the 8th Connecticut Militia was killed in action trying to rally the men (Figure 14: Third Engagement

³⁶⁶ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

³⁶⁷ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

³⁶⁸ Gold S. Silliman to Gov. Trumbull, Fairfield, Tuesday, April 29, 1777. Fairfield Museum and History Center.

Phase V). American forces withdrew further into Ridgefield Village as Agnew's Brigade and Browne's Corps occupied the former American position around the Stebbins House. The fighting likely ended around 4:30 PM.

There was a break in the fighting for perhaps as long as a half hour or more as Erskine's Brigade was brought to the front and advanced through Ridgefield in pursuit of American troops along East Ridge, Ridgefield Road (Main Street), and High Ridge Avenue. It is unclear how much fighting occurred in the town itself after the Americans withdrew from the Stebbins property, but based on the cannonballs, lead shot, buttons, and other artifacts recovered through the town in the years since the battle, it appears that the Americans contested the British advance. Lieutenant Robertson recorded one of the only accounts of these actions, which are referred to in this report as "Additional Engagements" in Ridgefield Village (Figure 17: Additional Engagements). Robertson described how "After being in the Village a little while the Rebels again drew together and come up a Rising Ground above the Village, upon which Sir William Erskine made a Disposition to surround them. However by different Companys not advancing at the same time, we only Dispersed them and drove them off."³⁶⁹ It is estimated the troop movements, skirmishing and small actions that constituted the Additional Engagements in Ridgefield Village likely occurred between 5:00 PM and 7:00 PM, as remaining American forces were driven off and as sunset approached.

The final component of the Battlefield Sequence of the April 27, 1777 Battle of Ridgefield was Tryon's Army pitching camp to the south of Ridgefield Village, at the end of the Ridgefield Road where it split between Wilton Road West and Wilton Road East. There was an open field off the east side of the road where the British encamped for the evening. According to Lieutenant Robertson "We lay near the Village all night, 4 Battalions in line and two on the wings, i.e. one on each wing" (Figure 18: British Encampment Site).³⁷⁰ The British posted sentries around the camp but only encountered some occasional gunfire and American forces made no organized effort to attack the enemy camp overnight. The April 27, 1777 Battle of Ridgefield ended.

³⁶⁹ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

³⁷⁰ Robertson, *Diaries and Sketches in America*. 128.

Battlefield Timeline

A detailed analysis and reconstruction of the sequence of events, movements and actions associated with the Battle of Ridgefield suggests the battlefield timeline as presented in Table 2. These events, movements and actions may be assumed to have a unique archeological signature across time and space. The sequencing of historical events will assist in a future battlefield survey in modeling and anticipating archeological signatures and potential material culture that may be encountered.

To calculate the Battlefield Event Timeline several assumptions regarding British forces were relied upon to estimate both routes of march, the rate of march, and specific times. First, it was assumed that British forces marched along the widest, most well-established roads in order to accommodate their artillery and wagons. Second, it was assumed that the British Army would move only as quickly as their slowest elements which were their artillery and wagons. They generally moved at the average rate of 2.5 miles per hour followed by the infantry at 3 miles per hour.³⁷¹ Although the British marched with great haste on April 27 the more conservative figure of 2.5 miles per hour was selected as the basis for this calculation. Finally, Lieutenant Archbald Robertson of the Royal Engineers included important references to time in his journal of the expedition. In several instances, American observers also reference the time of events recorded by Robertson but there is consistently an hour difference between the two figures. It appears to be because British timepieces were synchronized to a standard British Naval time or time set in New York City which seem to be one hour faster than what Americans recorded. This is an important clue when trying to reconcile British and American time references.

In terms of assumptions regarding American forces, as noted above, American references to time likely differ from British accounts by being one hour faster which helped reconcile some of the seemingly different timing of events. Second, it was assumed that a significant portion of American forces were mounted (at least half if not more) as they rendezvoused on the battlefield, whether to the north of Danbury, to the south at Bethel, or to the west on the Ridgefield-Danbury line in the case of the 3rd Westchester Militia. Finally, American forces had few or no wagons or

³⁷¹ Chris Baker, *The Long, Long Trail: Researching soldiers of the British Army in the Great War of 1914-1919*. Accessed 2021. <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/other-aspects-of-order-of-battle/road-space-and-speed-of-british-army-units/>

carts in tow and certainly no artillery; therefore, both Wooster's Division and Arnold-Silliman's Division were capable of moving faster than the British column. The mixture of mounted infantry able to travel around 7 miles per hour at a trot, and infantry marching on foot at 3 miles per hour, the mounted portions of each division arrived at their destinations in advance of those advancing on foot. Regardless, as with the British example, it is assumed that either American division was only able to move as fast as their slowest elements, in this case infantry on the march, so it was estimated that American forces could march at 3 miles per hour.

Table 2: Battlefield Event Timeline of Battle of Ridgefield (April 27, 1777)

Sequence	Battle Event / Action	Approximate Combatants	Location	Approximate Time & Mileage	Documentation	Anticipated Archeological Signature
1	Generals Wooster, Arnold, and Silliman divide their force into two divisions.	U.S. Forces at Bethel ~600, U.S. Forces outside Danbury ~200-300. Wooster's Division ~300-400 Arnold-Silliman's Division ~400	Grassy Plain Street and Reservoir Street (Bethel, CT); Hills to the northwest and northeast of Danbury, CT.	Approx. 6:00 AM [5:00 AM British Time]; 0 Miles.	"At 6 this morning we divided the troops into two divisions, being uncertain if they would return via Fairfield or Norwalk" <i>Arnold to McDougall</i> "...Advice from Col. Huntington.... about ½ miles with most of the Division with about 50 Continental Troops....Advice from Major Beardsly...with about 150 men More;...we immediately advised him of our numbers which about 600; Next morning at Day Light 400 Men under Command of Gen Arnold & myself marched & took post on the Road from Danbury down through Wilton in Order to harass the Enemy on their Return...& Gen Wooster with the Remainder of our Troops was to harass their Rear." <i>Silliman to Trumbull</i>	Low. Dropped American personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.
2	British Army marches west from Danbury to Ridgefield line along Miry Brook Road	British Army ~2000	Miry Brook Road; Ridgebury - Danbury Road (George Washington Highway)	Approx. 9:00-10:00 AM [8:00-9:00 AM British Time]; Approx. 3 Miles from Danbury Village to the Ridgefield Line.	"by Day break set fire to all the stores and March'd about 8 o'clock on our Return to the Ships by the way of Ridgefield." <i>Robertson, 127</i>	Low. Dropped British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.
3	American commanders to the south at Bethel receive intelligence that the British left Danbury	U.S. Forces at Bethel ~600	Grassy Plain Street and Reservoir Street (Bethel, CT)	Approx. 9:00 AM [8:00 AM British Time]; Approx. 2 Miles south of Danbury Village.	"We have this minute information that at 9 this morning the enemy set fire to the meetinghouse and most of the buildings in town and had taken the route to Newbury [Ridgebury] leading either to Peekskill or Tarrytown." <i>Arnold to McDougall</i>	Low. Dropped American personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.
4	British Army marches south at	British Army ~2000	Ridgebury Road	Approx. 10:30 AM [9:30 AM British Time];		Low. Dropped British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.

	Ridgebury Village towards Ridgefield Village.		(Ridgefield, CT)	Approx. 1 Mile from Danbury line.		
5	American commanders to the south at Bethel receive intelligence that the British marched south at Ridgebury	U.S. Forces at Bethel ~600	Bethel, CT	Approx. 11:00 AM [10:00 AM British Time]; Approx. 2 Miles south of Danbury Village.	<p>“About 11 o’clock we received advice that the enemy were returning by the road through Ridgefield. On this, we directly paraded our men and marched through the northwesterly part of Redding” <i>Silliman to Trumbull</i></p> <p>“I found the Enemy were on their march to Ridgefield At 11 o’clock” <i>Arnold to McDougall, V3:197.</i></p>	<p>Route of March: Dropped American personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.</p> <p>Barricade Location: High. Dropped and Impacted Musket Balls; Solid Shot, Canister Shot, and Grapeshot Cannon Ammunition, Dropped American and/or British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.</p>
6	Skirmishing on Ridgebury Hill	British Rear Guard, Erskine’s Brigade ~150; American Forces, 3 rd Westchester New York Militia ~40-50	Ridgebury Hill, Ridgebury Road (Ridgefield, CT)	Approx. 11:00 AM [10:00 AM British Time]; Approx. 2 Mile from Ridgebury Center.	<p>“they first that made their Appearance was on Ridgebury hill about 5 miles from Danbury. They fired on the Rear at great Distance with little harm” <i>Robertson, 127</i></p>	<p>Low. Dropped and Impacted Musket Balls; Dropped American and/or British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.</p>
7	Arnold and Silliman’s Division march to Ridgefield Village and deploy their troops.	American Forces, Arnold-Silliman’s Division ~400	Bethel to the northern end of Ridgefield Village near the Stebbins House where Gen. Arnold ordered the construction	<p>Approx. 11:00 AM-2:00 PM [10:00 AM-1:00 PM British Time];</p> <p>See Appendix II</p> <p>9.25 Miles,</p>	<p>“...we arrived there about one hour before them with 500 men. We had little time to make a disposition of our Troops” <i>Arnold to McDougall, V3:197.</i></p> <p>“...we directly paraded our men and marched through the northwesterly part of Redding over to Ridgefield & took our post across Ridgefield Town Street near the Church & formed a Small Breast Work of Rails Timber & across the Road & posted our small Body which was</p>	<p>Route of March: Low. Dropped American British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.</p> <p>Barricade Location: High. Dropped and Impacted Musket Balls;</p>

			of a barricade across the road.	Redding-Ridgefield Line on the Danbury Road (Route 35) south to Ridgefield Road (Main Street Route 35) south 900 feet to northern end of Ridgefield Village.	now increased to about 500; at this work & at several other Posts along our Flanks that were important We posted our Men & waited the coming of the Enemy.” <i>Silliman to Trumbull</i>	Solid Shot, Canister Shot, and Grapeshot Cannon Ammunition, Dropped American and/or British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.
8	Wooster’s Division marches towards Ridgebury to harass the rear of the British column	American Forces, Wooster’s Division ~300-400	Bethel to Mamasco Lake in Ridgefield, CT	Approx. 11:00 AM–2:00 PM [10:00 AM-1:00 PM British Time] 8.75 Miles See Appendix II	“Gen. Wooster, who had followed them [British] to Danbury with a small body of militia pursued them with the Continental troops and militia, and overtook their rear in Ridgebury.” <i>The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer</i> , May 5, 1777	Low. Dropped American British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.
9	Burning of Keeler’s Mill	British Forces ~150	North Salem Road (Route 116) and Craigmoor Road (Ridgefield, CT)	Approx. 12:00-1:00 PM. [11:00 AM-12:00 PM British Time]; Approx. 3.25 Mile from Ridgebury Center.	British forces found at least “100 Barrels of Flour, and a Quantity of Indian Corn” assumed to be rebel property and the mill was set ablaze. <i>The London Gazette</i> , July 24, 1777.	Moderate. Mill Foundation, Mill Dam, Iron Nails, Dropped British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.
10	British Rest	British Army ~2000	Southeast end of Mamasco Lake, Junction of North Salem Road (Route 116) and Tackora Road	Approx. 12:00 AM–1:30 PM. [11:00 AM–12:30 PM British Time]; Approx. 3.25 Mile from Ridgebury Center.	Local tradition states the British rested near Mamasco Lake and slaughtered cows there for the troops. British officers visited the nearby house of Nathan Scott and asked to borrow knives and forks from the homeowner which they returned after their meal Bedini, <i>Ridgefield in Review</i> .	Moderate. Dropped British personal items, clothing items, equipment, horse and/or oxen shoes, etc.
11	First Engagement	British Army, Erskine’s Brigade Wagons, Teamsters	Junction of Barlow Mountain Road and North	Approx. 2:00-2:45 PM [1:00-1:45 PM British Time] 1,000 feet easterly of the	“Gen. Wooster, who had followed them [British] to Danbury with a small body of militia pursued them with the Continental troops and militia, and overtook their rear in Ridgebury.” <i>The Connecticut Courant and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer</i> , May 5, 1777	High. Dropped and Impacted Musket Balls; Dropped American and/or British personal items, clothing items,

		and Guards ~16-20; American Forces, Wooster's Division ~300-400	Salem Road (Route 116)	junction of Tackora Trail and North Salem Road (Route 116)		equipment, horse and/or oxen shoes, etc.
12	Second Engagement	British Forces, Erskine's Brigade Rear Guard ~250, Browne's Loyalist Corps ~150 and 3 Guns Royal Artillery ~48; American Forces, Wooster's Division ~300-400	Junction of North Salem Road (Route 116) and Tackora Trail.	Approx. 2:45-3:00 PM [1:45-2:00 PM British Time] 1 Mile south of Barlow Mountain Road.	<p>"General Wooster at the same time attack'd our Rear but was repulsed." <i>Robertson</i>. 128.</p> <p>"Gen. Wooster... conducted & commanded the unconnected and undisciplined Troops with great spirit, zeal & bravery." <i>Huntington</i>. V3:196.</p>	High. Dropped and Impacted Musket Balls; Solid Shot, Canister Shot, and Grapeshot Cannon Ammunition, Dropped American and/or British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.
13	Third Engagement	British Forces, Agnew's Brigade ~750, Browne's Loyalist Corps ~300, 6 Guns Royal Artillery ~96; American Forces, Arnold-Silliman's Division ~500.	Ridgefield Road (Main Street, Route 33) beginning at the junction of Ridgefield Road and Danbury Road south	Approx. 3:00-4:30 PM [2:00-3:30 PM British Time], .25 Mile	<p>"When we got near Ridgefield we found General Arnold posted on the hills and in the Village... We immediately (2 o'clock) Attack'd the Village." <i>Robertson</i>. 128.</p> <p>"About 3 o'clock the Enemy appeared in One grand column that filled the Road full for more than a half a Mile in Length when their Front came within about half a Mile they halted to make their Dispositions for the attack they began first by a Cannonade from 6 Field Pieces; This not answering their purpose they sent large flanking Parties to flank us, they were received warmly by our out Posts, for a while, but the Enemy soon marched up a large Collum containing about 600 Men right in our Front; and very large flanking Parties on each of their Flanks consisting either of them of more Men than our whole forces consisted of, with 3 Field Pieces in Front of their Collum; Upon this a hot Fire</p>	High. Dropped and Impacted Musket Balls; Solid Shot, Canister Shot, and Grapeshot Cannon Ammunition, Dropped American and/or British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.

					ensured from both Sides, which continued with great Fury for about half an hour more when we were obliged to give way to a Superior Force..." <i>Silliman to Trumbull</i>	
14	Additional Engagements in Ridgefield Village	British Forces, Erskine's Brigade ~750 and 3 Guns Royal Artillery ~48; American Forces, Arnold-Silliman's Division ~300.	Ridgefield Road (Main Street, Route 33) from Prospect Street south 1 Mile, High Ridge Avenue south 1 Mile, East Ridge Street South 1 Mile.	Approx. 5:00-7:00 PM [4:00-6:00 PM British Time], 1 Mile.	"After being in the Village a little while the Rebels again drew together and came up to gain a Rising Ground above the Village, upon which Sir William Erskine made a Disposition to surround them. However by different Companys not advancing at the same time, we only Dispersed them and drove them off." <i>Robertson. 128.</i>	Moderate. Dropped and Impacted Solid Shot, Canister Shot, and Grapeshot Cannon Ammunition, Dropped American and/or British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.
15	British Encampment	British Army ~1900	Wilton Road West (Route 33) Approx. 1.5 Miles north of the Ridgefield-Wilton line.	Approx. 7:00 PM [6:00 PM British Time]	"We lay near the Village all night, 4 Battalions in line and two on the wings, i.e. one on each wing." <i>Robertson. 128.</i>	High. Dropped and Impacted Musket Balls; Ammunition, Dropped American and/or British personal items, clothing items, equipment, etc.

VII Conclusions and Recommendations

As noted in the introduction of this report, the goal of the NPS ABPP “Battle of Ridgefield (April 27, 1777) Planning and Consensus Building Grant was to conduct a research and documentation project to; Identify the battlefield boundary, avenues of advance and withdrawal by British and American units, Core Areas of direct combat, identify the locations of ancillary sites (e.g. British Rest) related to the Battle of Ridgefield, as well as create an inventory of previously collected artifacts attributed to the battle. These goals have been achieved and in addition, Heritage has identified additional avenues of research, and conducted preliminary metal detector surveys on threatened parcels of land within the proposed battlefield boundary.

Based on background research, discussions with landholders, visual inspections of selected portions of the battlefield, and initial metal detector surveys it has been determined that the battlefield retains moderate to high visual and archeological integrity and a high potential to yield material culture associated with the battle. Therefore, it is recommended that a Site Identification and Documentation Grant phase of research should be completed due to the likelihood that a survey of such properties has the potential to yield important artifacts and features that will help delineate actions and boundaries along the battle route.

In contemplating the next phase of research conducted during an NPS ABPP Site Identification and Documentation Grant several questions or avenues of inquiry may be considered that include:

- Identifying areas of low and high archeological sensitivity within the battlefield boundaries.
- Within high sensitivity areas can specific actions or sites, such as the avenues of approach, avenues of retreat, military engagements, British rest areas and the site of the British overnight encampment be identified in the archeological record?
- Isolate the nature and distribution of artifacts indicative of the “archeological signature” of specific sites and actions.
- Using available data, can American versus British archeological associations (buttons, equipage, musket ball diameters) be predicted and can specific regiments be identified during the battlefield survey?

- Is it possible to determine areas on the battlefield where Connecticut Militia, New York Militia or United States Continental soldiers were positioned?
- Can the battlefield boundaries be confidently identified archeologically given the degree to which these sites have been impacted through development (agricultural, residential, industrial, commercial) both historically and in the modern era?
- Determine the depositional integrity of various areas of the battlefield using traditional archeological survey techniques such as a 50x50cm shovel test pit (STP) or a 1x1 meter excavated unit, as appropriate.
- Traditionally, the most efficient and productive method of identifying Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Battlefield sites in New England utilizes remote sensing technology such as Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and handheld Metal Detectors. In addition to these proven resources, an important question for the Site Identification and Documentation phase of the Battle of Ridgefield Project is how to effectively apply STP's and excavation units within the battlefield boundary to recover non-metallic artifacts. If, for example, as high-density artifact areas are identified when and how would such an approach be employed?
- What non-metallic archeological objects of features may be expected?
- Finally, a plan should be developed in the event of unanticipated discoveries in the event that battle-related human remains are uncovered during a survey.

There are also historical research questions that need to be pursued or require further elaboration.

They include:

- The location of General David Wooster's Division following the Second Engagement on April 27, 1777, as there is no indication of their location on the battlefield after Wooster was mortally wounded and the division withdrew.
- To what extent did the fighting that occurred in Ridgefield Village following the Third Engagement, where did these actions take place, and what American forces were involved.
- Additional research regarding soldiers of color who participated in the battle can proceed now that there is a clearer indication of what units were involved. This could

include searching for individuals in regimental muster rolls, orderly books, and through additional military pension research.

- As military pension records have proved to be an important source of details regarding the Battle of Ridgefield this avenue of research should also be expanded by continuing to utilize lists of veterans from recent publications to search for surviving pension materials and any reference to the Danbury Expedition or Ridgefield.
- Historical research for materials related to the Danbury Expedition or Ridgefield should be conducted in the English National Archives at Kew, Richmond, United Kingdom. The most cost-efficient and effective means of doing so would be to hire a researcher recommended by The National Archives at Kew already familiar with the records and archival system. See: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/paying-for-research/independent-researchers/>

The goal of a future NPS ABPP Site Identification and Documentation project will be to define battlefield boundaries through archeological means, identify and record areas of integrity, and assess the eligibility of the battlefield for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as an archeological resource. This information will be used to develop a long-term preservation plan through collaboration with the NPS, Connecticut State Historical Preservation Office, Office of the State Archeologist, and the Town of Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission. Research in subsequent years should continue to focus on the identification and documentation of sites, battles, and actions that occurred during the Battle of Ridgefield as well as educational and preservation initiatives to raise the visibility and our collective understanding of this important battle of the American Revolution.

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Appendix I: Report on Soldiers of Color at the Battle of Ridgefield

Soldiers of Color at the Battle of Ridgefield

The participation of American Revolutionary War soldiers of color has been historically underestimated. In 1887 Joseph T. Wilson estimated that 5,000 “negro” soldiers served in the Revolution and although the figure is little more than an educated guess, it has been repeated by historians for over a century.³⁷² The Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University maintains a “Patriots of Color” database with several thousand entries, and research regarding Connecticut’s Revolutionary War veterans of color has resulted in the identification of over 800 men, both of which demonstrate that Wilson’s often cited 5,000 figure is a conservative estimate.³⁷³ Assuming this experience is representative of the challenges researching veterans from all 13 states, the true extent of the participation of people of color in the American Revolution will continue to be revised.

There are inherent difficulties researching Revolutionary War veterans of color. Aside from the incomplete nature of these early State and Federal records, most Revolutionary War documentation is devoid of descriptions of race. Although racial descriptions such as “negro,” “Indian,” and “mulatto” appear in wartime regimental records, deserter advertisements, and in post-war military pensions, there are many more veterans of color who remain unidentified because of the lack of obvious descriptions of race.³⁷⁴ With few exceptions, American armed forces were integrated throughout the war; soldiers of Native American, European, African and mixed-racial ancestry fought side by side in Continental and State regiments.

The names of men of color appear on rosters of Connecticut troops throughout the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) among infantry regiments, aboard naval vessels as sailors or

³⁷² For a discussion of Revolutionary War veterans of color see: David J. Naumec, “Connecticut Indians in the War for Independence” in *Connecticut History*, Volume 47, Number 2, Fall 2008. 183. For examples of the 5,000 “negro” Revolutionary War enlistments see: Joseph T. Wilson, *The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro soldiers of the United States in the wars of 1775-1812, 1861-65* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1887). 64; Stephenson. *Patriot Battles*. 183.

³⁷³ Naumec. *Connecticut Indians*. 183-184; Patriots of Color Database, <https://www.archives.com/patriots>.

³⁷⁴ In terms of the research regarding Connecticut’s Revolutionary War armed forces, as many as half of the identified veteran of color were confirmed through genealogical research; Naumec. *Connecticut Indians*. 181-218.

Marines, and in the dragoons.³⁷⁵ When estimating the number of American soldiers of color involved in the Danbury Expedition and/or the Battle of Ridgefield the first challenge is the lack of a comprehensive accounting of regiments, let alone veterans who were there. It is generally agreed upon which American units responded to the British invasion of Connecticut between April 25-28, 1777; however, it is unknown how many men from those regiments actually mobilized.³⁷⁶ In the cases where regimental rosters exist, it is difficult to determine which soldiers actually turned out to fight the British. By most accounts, only a fraction of Connecticut and New York militiamen marched with their regiment and in many cases only a few dozen men from a particular unit mobilized. Federal pension research has resulted in the identification of individuals who indicated that they were at Danbury, Ridgefield and/or Compo, but those numbers are inherently low estimates, as Revolutionary War pensions were not awarded until 1818, 35 years after the war had ended, and only a fraction of surviving veterans applied for them.³⁷⁷ Very few men of color have been directly identified to date as having participated in the “Danbury Alarm,” and fewer still can be tied to the fighting at Ridgefield on April 27, 1777.

Further complicating efforts to identify soldiers of color at the Battle of Ridgefield are the dozens of Continental Army recruits who were in western Connecticut at the time of the Danbury Expedition and participated in the battle. The 1st Connecticut Line Regiment was stationed at Danbury in defense of the military stores warehoused there, but only 50 soldiers were on hand on April 26 and 27, 1777. Continental soldiers were in Connecticut being vaccinated for smallpox, including men from the 5th Connecticut Line, or were home on leave preparing to join their regiments. Elements of the 3rd Connecticut Line are credited with opposing the British at Danbury and several of the men are noted as wounded or killed at Danbury on April 26, 1777, but there is no indication how many men were present that day.³⁷⁸ As noted by Joseph Plumb Martin, who had reenlisted in the army and joined the 8th Connecticut Line in April, new recruits were allowed time at home before rendezvousing with their regiment. When the British invaded on April 25, 1777, Martin and other new enlistments were ordered to fall in with the nearest militia unit to oppose the enemy.³⁷⁹ Although Martin stated that he was mobilized during Tryon’s raid and fought the British

³⁷⁵ Naumec. *Connecticut Indians*. 181-218.

³⁷⁶ Jones. *Farmers Against the Crown*. 161-164; Darley. *A Call to Arms*. 197-231.

³⁷⁷ Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 632.

³⁷⁸ Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 168-181.

³⁷⁹ Martin, *A Narrative of A Revolutionary Soldier*. 54.

as part of another Connecticut militia regiment there is no indication in the 8th Connecticut Line regimental roster that he served at Ridgefield.³⁸⁰ In researching the “remarks” column of the 8th Connecticut’s regimental roster another soldiers, William Caesar, was noted as “des. to the enemy Apr. 27 ‘77” directly placing another man from the unit at the Battle of Ridgefield.³⁸¹ Private William Caesar was likely a man of African descent based on his surname and his desertion “to the enemy Apr. 27 ‘77” is a very specific comment suggesting the man fled to the British, but no other specifics are recorded.

Based upon the examples of Joseph Plumb Martin and William Caesar in the 8th Connecticut Line every published regimental roster for the Connecticut Line Regiments were researched to both identify soldiers who enlisted in April of 1777 and “remarks” that could link an individual to the Danbury Expedition and/or the Battle of Ridgefield. This study of April enlistments and “remarks” identified 15 soldiers with “remarks” that linked them to the events of April 26-28, 1777, of which 50% enlisted in April 1777 [Table 1]. Of those 14 soldiers identified, 4 men in addition to William Caesar were reported as deserted on between April 26 and 17, 1777 although Caesar is the only one noted as having deserted to the British. Hundreds of soldiers enlisted in Connecticut Line regiments in April of 1777 but without any “remarks” that could link them to the Danbury Expedition or the Battle of Ridgefield; the 8th Connecticut alone had 87 enlistments that month including Martin, and only Caesar could be linked to April 27.³⁸²

In researching April 1777 enlistments, a total of 20 soldiers of color were identified, who, based on the logic outlined above, could have possibly been involved in the Danbury Expedition and/or the Battle of Ridgefield [Table 2]. Ultimately, a total of five soldiers of color can definitively linked to the Danbury Expedition and/or the Battle of Ridgefield. This includes the above-mentioned William Caesar (8th Connecticut Line), Robin Starr (7th Connecticut Line), and Jack Congo (5th Connecticut Line), along with Ned Smith and an unidentified African-American man who were both killed at Danbury along with several other men on April 26, 1777 after they fired on British troops from the Captain Ezra Starr house [Table 3]. Robin Starr is a unique example who notes in his Federal Pension application that he “is a man of Colour” who enlisted in the 7th

³⁸⁰ Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 236.

³⁸¹ Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 233

³⁸² Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 229-240.

Connecticut Line under Colonel Herman Swift. He testified in 1818 that he participated in several significant battles including “Danbury, Conn.”³⁸³ Starr’s 7th Connecticut service record states his enlistment date as May 2, 1777, and therefore was missed in the aforementioned study.³⁸⁴ Starr wrote that he “served for four months in said Regiment before he enlisted for the war” which explains the discrepancy and he does not provide any other details regarding his service.

Table 1: Study of April Enlistments and Remarks

Continental Regiment	Name	Company	Date of Enlistment	Term	Remarks
1st Connecticut	None Identified				No info in remarks but 50 soldiers were at Danbury.
2nd Connecticut	None Identified				
3rd Connecticut	Bartlet, Noah	Barnard, John	1777/02/17	War	Killed at Danbury in Action Apr. 27, '77
3rd Connecticut	Bath, John	Barnard, John	1777/04/23	War	Des. Apr. 26, '77
3rd Connecticut	Taylor, William	Clift, Will	1777/02/26	3 Yrs	Killed at Danbury in Action Apr. 26, '77
4th Connecticut	Coldrake, James	Hyde, Jedidiah	1777/01/19	War	Des. Apr. 27, '77
4th Connecticut	Townsend, Hendrick	Fitch, Andrew	1777/02/22	3 Yrs	Killed or taken at Danbury Apr. 26, '77
4th Connecticut	Whiting, John	Lee, Elisha	1777/04/14	War	Des. Apr. 26, '77
4th Connecticut	Wampee, John	Brown, Stephen	1777/04/23	3 Yrs	Des. Apr. 26, '77
5th Connecticut	Loyd, Clement	Lacy, Josiah	1777/01/01	3 Yrs	Killed in Battle Apr. 28, '77
5th Connecticut	Coggen, David	Lacy, Josiah	1777/01/01	War	Prisoner Apr. 27, '77; disc. Mar. 1, '80
5th Connecticut	Bradley, Dean	Strong, Solomon	1777/04/23	War	Killed in action Apr., '77 - [Danbury Raid]
5th Connecticut	Noble, Francis	Lacy, Josiah	1777/04/09	War	Missing in action Apr. 28, '77 [Danbury Raid]
5th Connecticut	Noble, Benjamin	Lacy, Josiah	1777/04/09	War	Missing in action Apr. 28, '77 [Danbury Raid]; joined and disc. Mar. 15, '79

³⁸³ NARA, RG15, M804 Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Application Files, Roll 1455, S.23285, Robbin Starr. 9.

³⁸⁴ Johnston. *Record of Connecticut Men*. 225.

6th Connecticut	None Identified				
7th Connecticut	Hall, Simeon	Chapman, Albert	1777/04/04	War	Died Apr. 28, '77
7 th Connecticut Line	Starr, Robin	Woodbridge, Theodore	1777/05/02	War	None; U.S. Federal Pension S36810
8th Connecticut	Caesar, William	Comstock, Samuel			Des. To the enemy Apr. 27, '77

Table 2: Possible Veterans of Color of the Danbury Expedition and/or Battle of Ridgefield

Unit	Name	Notes	Citation
2 nd Connecticut Line	Upomb, Doppo (See Apomb, Deppo 4 th CT)	Enlisted 1777/4/22 Died 1777/9	Johnston. 164.
3 rd Connecticut Line	Augustus, Bristo	Enlisted 1777/4/26 Discharged 1777/9/19	Johnston. 170.
3 rd Connecticut Line	Augustus, Caesar	Enlisted 1777/4/24 Discharged 1780/4/24	Johnston. 171.
3 rd Connecticut Line	Mullatto, Dick	Enlisted 1777/4/24 Died 1778/5/31	Johnston. 176.
3 rd Connecticut Line	Wyampy, Charles	Enlisted 1777/4/8 Died 1777/8/14	Johnston. 179.
4 th Connecticut Line	Apomb, Deppo (See Upomb, Doppo 2 nd CT)	Enlisted 1777/4/22 "Reported on August '77 roll, "Dead."	Johnston. 184.
4 th Connecticut Line	Meson, John	Enlisted 1777/4/19; Died 1778/4/7	Johnston. 188.
4 th Connecticut Line	Wampee, John	Enlisted 1777/4/23; Deserted 1777/4/26 "Des. Apr. 26 '77"	Johnston. 190.
5 th Connecticut Line	Brister, John	Enlisted 1777/4/1	Johnston. 196.
5 th Connecticut Line	Boston, John P.	Enlisted 1777/4/1	Johnston. 196.
5 th Connecticut Line	Brown, Solomon	Enlisted 1777/4/23; "Died, time unknown, Nov. '78"	Johnston. 196.
5 th Connecticut Line	Congo, Jack	Enlisted 1777/4/15; Died 1778/10/30	Johnston. 197.
5 th Connecticut Line	Cossump, James	Enlisted 1777/4/14; "Missing in Action, Oct.4,'77 [Germantown]"	Johnston. 197.
5 th Connecticut Line	Sinemon, Thomas	Enlisted 1777/4/21; Died 1778/1/27	Johnston. 201.

7 th Connecticut Line	Blackman, Zachariah	Enlisted 1777/4/25; Discharged 1778/1/2	Johnston 222
7 th Connecticut Line	Freeman, Guy	Enlisted 1777/4/6; Died 1777/12/18	Johnston 222
8 th Connecticut Line	Blackman, Jeremiah	Enlisted 1777/4/20	Johnston 232
8 th Connecticut Line	Caesar, Brister	Enlisted 1777/4/17; Deserted 1779/11/9; Rejoined	Johnston 233
8 th Connecticut Line	Jowler, Caesar	Enlisted 1777/4/21; Died 1778/4/8	Johnston 235
8 th Connecticut Line	Sunsemun, John	Enlisted 1777/4/16; Discharged 1778/1/1	Johnston 237
8 th Connecticut Line	Sampson, Ephraim	Enlisted 1777/4/16; Died 1777/8/17	Johnston 237

Table 3: Identified Soldiers of Color of the Danbury Expedition and/or Battle of Ridgefield

Unit	Name	Notes	Citation
Danbury Volunteer	Smith, Ned	Killed in action, 1777/4/26	CT Archives: Rev War 1 st Series, XXXVII:229-230
Danbury Volunteer	Unidentified	Killed in action, 1777/4/26	CT Archives: Rev War 1 st Series, XXXVII:229-230
5 th Connecticut Line	Congo, Jack	Enlisted 1777/4/15; Died 1778/10/30	Johnston. 197; Jones. 70.
7 th Connecticut Line	Starr, Robin	“Danbury, Conn.” Enlisted May 2, 1777	U.S. Federal Pension S36810; Johnston 225.
8 th Connecticut Line	Caesar, William	“Des. to the enemy Apr. 27, ’77”	Johnston 233

This study suggests that dozens, if not hundreds, of Continental soldiers could have participated in the fighting between April 26-28, 1777, but they did so with other Connecticut militia regiments. This is noteworthy as it provides additional insight into the scale and composition of American forces that responded to the British invasion. These soldiers may have somewhat better drilled, equipped, and more experienced than the average militia soldier. This new revelation regarding April 1777 Continental enlistments also provides newly identified veterans whose names can be cross referenced with Federal Pension records in the future in search of additional primary accounts of the Battle of Ridgefield.

Appendix II: Routes of March: Wooster's Division, Arnold and Silliman's Division

Dr. Kristen Noble Keegan and William F. Keegan

Arnold-Silliman Division

The division began its march in the town of Bethel, at the intersection of Route 53 (Grassy Plain Street) and Reservoir Street. The route followed Reservoir Street in a southwesterly direction for an estimated 0.67 miles to the Danbury town line. This road continues to be called Reservoir Street in Danbury. In the modern era, reaching Long Ridge Road requires turning northward at Reservoir Street's intersection with Reservoir Road, approximately 0.06 miles into Danbury. In 1777, however, the division continued straight to the southwest for an estimated 0.09 miles and then turned left to go directly south on Long Ridge Road.

The division then followed Long Ridge Road southward, and somewhat westward, passing its intersection with Bushy Hill Road at 1.3 miles, and then leaving the modern road to travel south and west after a further 1.2 miles (a total of approximately 2.5 miles on Long Ridge Road). After approximately 0.27 miles, the route rejoins modern roads at the intersection of West Redding Road and George Hull Hill Road. The division traveled straight across the intersection to follow George Hull Hill Road southward. The road enters the town of Redding, keeping the same name, after an estimated 0.08 miles, and the division stayed with its many curves for a further 0.9 miles, to its ending point at Picketts Ridge Road. The division continued straight along Picketts Ridge Road, first westerly and then southwesterly, for approximately 1.18 miles to the Ridgefield town line.

At the town line, this road's name changes to Great Pond Road. The division followed it westerly for approximately 0.32 miles to its end point at Route 7 (Ethan Allen Highway). The route crosses Route 7 onto Haviland Road and follows it in a westerly and southerly direction for an estimated 1 mile to its endpoint at Danbury Road (Route 35). The division then turned left onto Danbury Road and followed it southward for approximately 0.58 miles to what is now its intersection with Fox Hill Drive, which used to be part of the Danbury Road. Thus, the route turns left to follow the curve of Fox Hill Drive for 0.39 miles and then rejoins Danbury Road (Route 35). The division turned left to continue south and then west on Danbury Road (Route 35) for 0.76 miles to its end point at Ridgefield's Main Street.

Wooster's Division

The division began its march in the town of Bethel, at the intersection of Route 53 (Grassy Plain Street) and Reservoir Street. The route followed Reservoir Street in a southwesterly direction for an estimated 0.67 miles to the Danbury town line. This road continues to be called Reservoir Street in Danbury. In the modern era, reaching Long Ridge Road requires turning northward at Reservoir Street's intersection with Reservoir Road, approximately 0.06 miles into Danbury. In 1777, however, the division continued straight to the southwest for an estimated 0.09 miles and then turned left to go directly south on Long Ridge Road.

The division then followed Long Ridge Road southward, and somewhat westward, passing its intersection with Bushy Hill Road at 1.3 miles, and continued along Long Ridge Road for approximately 0.71 miles. Then the division turned right, off the road, and traveled either cross-country or on a now-vanished road for an estimated 0.55 miles to meet West Redding Road a short

distance to the east of its intersection with East Starrs Plain Road. The division turned right onto West Redding Road, following it to where it turns sharply north at the intersection just mentioned, and continuing along it for approximately 0.9 miles to its end point at Starrs Plain Road. At that intersection, the division turned left to go south along Starrs Plain Road for 0.36 miles to its intersection with West Starrs Plain Road. The division then turned right and followed West Starrs Plain Road westward to its end point at Route 7 (Sugar Hollow Road). Turning left onto Route 7, the division followed it south for approximately 0.19 miles and then turned right onto Bennetts Farm Road. After 0.09 miles this road continues in the town of Ridgefield under the same name.

The division followed Bennetts Farm Road southward, westward, and then northwestward through Ridgefield for an estimated 1.07 miles to its intersection with Great Hill Road. They then went on straight to continue northward and westward along Bennetts Farm Road, across part of what is now Fox Hill Lake, for approximately another 0.31 miles, to its intersection with Bates Farm Road. The division went on straight to follow Bates Farm Road for an estimated 0.14 miles to its end point at Limestone Road. Turning right, the division followed Limestone Road northward for approximately 0.1 miles to a point near its intersection with Midrock Road.

At this point, the division turned to the left and crossed what is now Seth Low Pierrepont State Park, mostly along a road that the park system designates Old Barlow Mountain Road but is not shown on modern street maps. After an estimated 0.5 miles, the route joins a still-used portion of Old Barlow Mountain Road, proceeding southwestward for approximately 0.19 miles to the end of the current road. The route continues cross-country more or less straight or westward for approximately 0.07 miles to join Barlow Mountain Road, at the north end of Lake Naraneka. The route continues an estimated 0.28 miles westward to Barlow Mountain Road's intersection with Ledges Road. The division turned left to continue following Barlow Mountain Road southward for an estimated 0.43 miles, to its intersection with North Street. At this point, Barlow Mountain Road and the march route turn right to follow the road westward to its end point at North Salem Road (Route 116).