The Pre-Precursor to the Revolution

By President Damien Cregeau

Six weeks before the Boston Massacre occurred 250 years ago this month, violence broke out in a long-forgotten confrontation in New York City. Indeed, while there are significant remembrances for the Boston Massacre, including the Freedom Trail and an annual reenactment at the historic site, the one marker for the riot in New York has been missing and forgotten for decades - until now. Boston and New York: one thinks of the Red Sox and the Yankees or the Patriots and the Giants. Yet if we turn the clock back 250 years to 1770, most of us would suddenly realize the importance of the so-called “Battle” of Golden Hill that took place over several days in January. No one was killed in what was in fact a mob-sized riot of patriots confronting the injustices of British parliament and the British being quartered in their city - illegally, as they felt. There was no Paul Revere to spread what some might later assert was the “fake news” of the violent encounter, and it was indeed violent: several rioters were severely wounded with gashes and puncture wounds inflicted by British regular bayonets and swords. The Sons of Liberty were just as active and robust in New York as they were in their more famous manifestation in Boston. While Boston had Samuel Adams (who, it could be argued, was the architect of the American Revolution), Dr. Joseph Warren, John Hancock and others, New York had equally important but sadly less famous names of their Sons of Liberty: John Lamb, Isaac Sears, and Alexander McDougall, who would go on to become a Continental Army major general.

What was the reason behind the Battle of Golden Hill? Pride. The New York Sons of Liberty had erected a Liberty Pole memorializing the repeal of the despised Stamp Act of 1765 on Broadway, and repeated attempts by British soldiers to dismantle or even blow up the pole had angered them. So violent acts by the Sons of Liberty had already occurred in New York. Up in Boston, where the city was also occupied by British regular troops since 1768, the Boston Sons of Liberty used some youngsters they came to call the Liberty Boys as spies and messengers. One of those young messengers was Christopher Seider. When he joined Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty in a street protest in Boston that included a march on a Loyalist merchant, the Royal agent inside decided to fire his flintlock musket into the mob of protesters in the street. He supposedly meant for the firing to be a warning shot—but tragically, his bullet struck and killed young Christopher. When Dr. Joseph Warren was called to the scene, there was nothing he could do to save the boy’s life.

So it was the Battle of Golden Hill, the British Army occupation since in 1768, and the untimely death of Christopher Seider that all incensed the patriots of the city of Boston when they gathered in another protest on the night of March 5th, 1770. Crispus Attucks, who was part Native American and part African American, was one of the five who would die that night and be immortalized by the artistic and political talents of the famous Boston Sons of Liberty, Paul Revere. We should remember him and learn more about not just him but the other patriots whose lives were taken too soon that fateful, famous night 250 years ago.

For more information on the Battle of Golden Hill, check out the American Revolution Podcast, which is updated weekly; “The Battle of Golden Hill - Six Weeks Before the Boston Massacre,” by Bob Ruppert; and the chapter on the Sons of Liberty, by Ken Daigler, in Spies, Patriots and Traitors: American Intelligence in the Revolutionary War (2014).
CTSSAR BOM and Luncheon at Luce Restaurant in Middletown, February 22nd.

The Washington’s Birthday BOM Luncheon was held on February 22nd in Middletown, CT in honor of the 218th Anniversary of the birth of General George Washington.

The CTSSAR budget for 2020 was reviewed and approved for voting on at the Annual State Meeting in April. Donations from the 2020 dues collection process has exceeded $2,800 with $300 raised for the Roger Sherman Fund, $685 for the General Fund, $750 for Color Guard Activity, and over $1,000 for the three Museums. Well done to all those who donated!

The BOM approved donations of $200 to the Connecticut Society of the Children of the Revolution, and $250 to the NSSAR Service Academy Endowment Fund. Each year the CTSSAR presents the NSSAR Alexander Hamilton award at the United States Coast Guard Academy that is funded by this endowment fund.

The Property Steward, Dave Packard, gave his report on the status of the three properties and his proposed budget for 2020 as well as his need for Docents in 2020. Discussion was also had on the possibility of adding an outside toilet to the War Office property to make it easier for docents and guests to visit the War Office in Lebanon. Some discussion was held about self-composting toilets, and the Town currently having a moratorium on their use. Dates for the 2020/2021 BOM meeting were approved. All reports of the BOM are available on-line. Go to www.connecticutSAR.org and you will find the reports under the 'BOM Managers Only' section under the 'About' menu option.

Our Properties Need Docents.

We are the only state in the SAR that owns historical properties: The Governor Trumbull War office in Lebanon, and two Nathan Hale Schoolhouses in East Haddam and New London, CT. The properties are open to the public in the warm weather, and serve as an historical teaching tool to over 600 students a year. If you have some time, please consider a truly enriching experience as a museum docent for the CTSSAR! Please see https://www.connecticutSAR.org/volunteer/
On Saturday March 6, the Line had its annual business meeting to set the color guard events calendar for 2020, present awards to members for participation, and to elect officers for the upcoming year. Russ Cumbee of the NHSSAR was awarded the Silver Color Guard medal, Jim Rothgeb was awarded the Bronze Color Guard medal, and Dave Perkins was awarded the Von Steuben medal for Sustained Service to the SAR as a member of the color guard. Patriot Grave marking medal was presented Jim Rothgeb for having participated in 15 patriot grave markings since 2011. Oak-leaf clusters were awarded to Tyler Smith, Dave Packard and Dave Perkins for having participated in 30 or more patriot grave markings. New recruit certificates were presented to compatriots Peter Stothart of the Wolcott Branch, Todd Unkefer of the Wadsworth Branch and Chris Bandecchia of the Humphreys Branch for having participated as the newest members of the state color guard this past year. The Connecticut line is open to any member of the Connecticut SAR. Please contact Dave Perkins should you have any questions about joining. The Color Guardsman of the Year for 2019 is Tyler D. Smith of the Capt. Nathan Hale Chapter. For more pictures see https://photos.app.goo.gl/pqE2ViCjR3RmKozU7

An Exciting Archeological Find in Ridgefield, CT
In December of 2019, archaeologists discovered what may be the remains of soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary War. But it’s a mystery whose side they were on; they could have been Yankees, British or even Loyalists. The three men were buried in a rush, so experts’ leading theory is that they were either British or colonists fighting for the British. Archaeologists found the skeletons piled on top of each other in a single grave only three or four feet deep. Based on the lack of organic matter and the way the bones flaked, the police and medical examiner determined that the remains were at least a century old, if not two. Subsequently, “We did uncover a fourth skeleton under the foundation,” Connecticut State Archaeologist Nicholas Bellantoni told Fox News, via email on Feb. 8. “The individual had 28 brass buttons associated with him.” Archaeologists are now planning to spend months, if not years, studying the skeletal remains to learn more about these three individuals, including, if possible, where their loyalties lay. “I can’t be 100% [certain] yet. I don’t have that smoking gun” about whether these individuals were revolutionary soldiers, said Bellantoni, the interim emeritus Connecticut State Archaeologist. The skeletons were found when the owners of a 1790 home in Ridgefield, Connecticut, decided to put in a concrete floor over their dirt basement in December 2019. The basement was an addition to the house, which means that these individuals were buried there and later the house was expanded, covering the graves. The house itself is located near the site of the 1777 Battle of Ridgefield, in which British troops on their way to fight George Washington’s army farther south in the Hudson Valley came across 700 patriot fighters in Ridgefield. The principal skirmish took place near the northern end of Main Street. The battle was fought April 27, 1777. The British forces were led by Major General William Tryon. They marched north unimpeded to Danbury, where the Continental Army supply depot was located. By 8 a.m. that morning, the British forces, with an additional 100 Loyalist volunteers, had set fire to the supplies and torched numerous dwellings and barns and were marching back to rendezvous with their ships off Westport. General David Wooster led several hundred men in an attack on the British rear guard while Generals Arnold and Silliman organized a position ahead of the British in Ridgefield. Wooster had one horse was shot out from under him and he remounted and continued to attack but was himself shot and carried from the battle, gravely wounded; he later died in Danbury. Meanwhile, General Arnold was organizing defenses in the village; he had arrived there about 11 a.m. A barricade was established on Main Street, and within an hour, the British fought around it and the Patriots withdrew. The British troops eventually returned to New York. Historians recorded 16 British soldiers and eight Americans were buried in a small field to the right of the American position on the battlefield. We look forward to some answers from the ongoing study in the coming months! Sources: Ridgefield Press, Live Science, Smithsonian, Milford Mirror, and Associated Press.
President’s Report—Spring 2020

Dear Compatriots of Connecticut,

As your state president, I was proud to represent our state society when I attended the 250th anniversary commemoration events of the Battle of Golden Hill hosted by the Sons of the Revolution in New York at Fraunces Tavern Museum in lower Manhattan on January 19th. It featured a wonderful slideshow presentation by my historian/author friend, Barnet Schecter, who is known for his excellent book, The Battle of New York. He provided a fascinating look at the various events leading up to, during and following the Battle of Golden Hill, a mob riot in 1770.

I offered follow-up commentary after Schecter’s presentation, including the historical events would occur next up here in New England, whether that be the untimely death of young Christopher Seider (see my feature in this newsletter) or the Boston Massacre. The massacre occurred on March 5th, and while the President General of the DAR, Denise Van Buren, was part of a patriotic wreath-laying ceremony at the Boston Granary Burying Ground on Thursday, March 5th, the anniversary fell on a weekday, necessitating the Boston planners to have the reenactment of the Boston Massacre two days after the 250th anniversary, on Saturday, March 7th. This allowed more public to attend and witness the incredibly impressive and professional-level reenactment. It was the closest thing to time travel.

We in the CTSSAR Board of Managers invite all Compatriots and their wives to our annual luncheon and meeting in April at the historic J. Timothy’s Tavern in Plainville, where we will present awards as we do each year to a very deserving Eagle Scout, JROTC cadet and the high school student winner of our Knight Essay contest. It is at that meeting that we will elect and induct our revised slate of state officers.

I encourage Compatriots to get involved at the state level, including serving on our various committees. I look forward to seeing many of you there to continue celebrating our patriot ancestors’ sacrifice and our continuing promotion of patriotism.

Sincerely,

Damien Cregeau
President, CTSSAR

2020 CTSSAR Calendar of Events:

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<td>Apr 4, 2020</td>
<td>Putnam Branch Annual,</td>
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<td>Apr 18, 2020</td>
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<td>Oct 24, 2020</td>
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<td>Nov 14, 2020</td>
<td>Semi-annual All Member Meeting,</td>
<td>Spinning Wheel, Redding</td>
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<td>Feb 20, 2021</td>
<td>CTSSAR BOM Meeting,</td>
<td>Griswold Inn, Essex, CT</td>
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240th W3R Challenge Coin

The latest additional to our CTSSAR challenge coin collection will be available at our Annual State Meeting on April 18. This year’s coin will honor the 240th anniversary of the Washington-Rochambeau Route from Rhode Island to Yorktown that started with the landing of French troops in 1780. This will be is a limited set of 50 coins.