



# DANBURY TIMES

## The Beginning of Our Independence

Connecticut was a colony of Great Britain (England) in the 1700s. A colony is a group of people who leave their homeland to settle in a new place. England made our laws and collected taxes from Americans.

Not all the colonists were happy with England making all the rules for America. The Americans who believed that we should be a separate country were called Patriots or Rebels. The Americans who wanted to stay part of Great Britain were called Tories or Loyalists.



*An American Militiaman.*



*Supplies, such as this powder keg, were stored in the supply depot.*

### Danbury, the Supply Depot

A supply depot was located in Danbury for the Patriots in the Continental Army. Danbury was on a river, had flat roads, and was protected by small hills. It was away from the ocean, where the British soldiers landed their ships. There was a military hospital on Park Avenue. Thousands of soldiers passed through the town. These things made Danbury a good, safe place to store military supplies.



*Danbury also had many craftsmen and women, making goods for the war and to sell to other colonists.*



*The British soldiers were from England. They fought to keep America part of Great Britain.*



# Danbury's Burning!

## General William Tryon led the British Raid

April 25, 1777: British General Tryon led 2,000 troops on a march to Danbury. They marched from the shores of Compo Beach in Norwalk (now Westport). Their mission was to raid the military supply depot in Danbury. They wanted to take medicine, tents, shoes, and bedding supplies.

When they got to Danbury, they started searching for the supplies. They took the supplies they couldn't carry out into the middle of the street and set fire to them. The British burned homes, the New Danbury Church, and more than 20 other buildings. British troops tried not to burn Tory houses, because Tories were loyal to Britain. The Tory houses were marked with a red cloth.



*British soldiers were sometimes called "Redcoats" because of their red uniforms. They burned much of Danbury to prevent the townspeople from helping the patriots.*

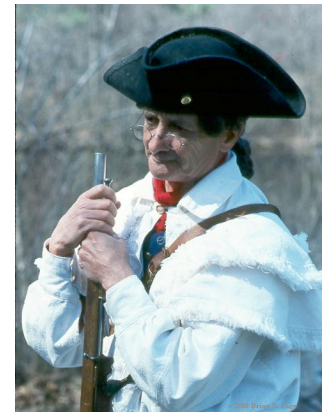
As night came, it began to rain. The rain could not put out the huge flames. Falling sparks started fires in other buildings. Smoke came from houses while ashes filled the streets with mud. The rain stopped the colonists from attacking. They could not fire their guns in the rain. So Danbury continued to burn and the British traveled on towards Ridgefield.

News of the burning of Danbury traveled quickly. Sybil Ludington, a young girl, helped to spread the news in neighboring New York towns. Neighbors banded together to force the Redcoats to leave the area. General Wooster led the militia and forced the British back to their ships at Compo Beach.

After the raid, many Tories became Patriots. Citizens saw no reason for the British to burn homes and farmlands. They hated leaving their homes in search of safety only to come back and see their homes burned.



*General David Wooster led the Patriot militia against the departing British.*



*The Patriot militia helped to force the British to leave Danbury.*





*A statue of Sybil Ludington by Anna Wyatt. Huntington stands in the courtyard of the Danbury Public Library.*

### Sybil Sounds the Alarm

Loud knocking startled the Ludingtons as they sat down to dinner. “What could that be?” thought Henry Ludington. He was a general in the Continental Army. He had just returned from battle for a two-day leave. When he opened the door, he saw a very tired messenger.

“Hurry,” the man said. “The British are burning Danbury.”

General Ludington knew the troops would have to be gathered quickly. Danbury was only twelve miles away. What if they came closer? How would he get word to the troops? The messenger was far too tired to ride any longer.

Sybil looked at her father. She could tell what he was thinking. “I can do it!” she said. “I can ride and tell the militia to come.”

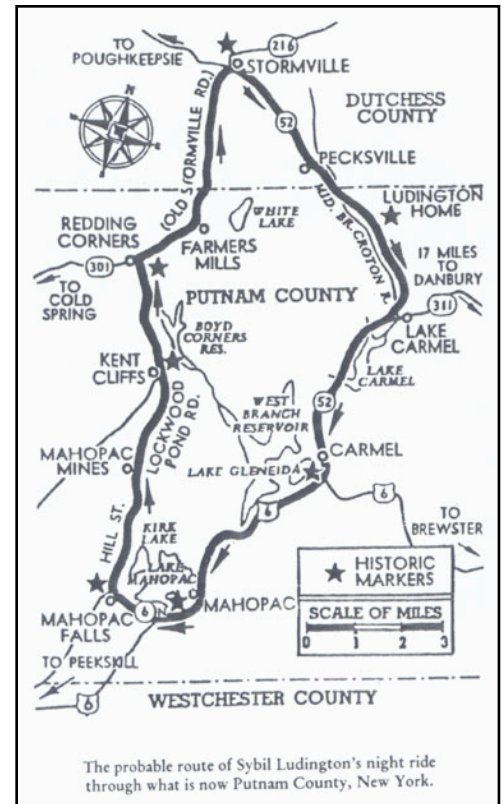
Sybil’s mother looked worried, but her father said, “You ride well Sybil, do you think you can do this?”

“Don’t worry.” Sybil said. “I know the land well. I’ll be careful and I’ll hurry.”

General Ludington walked Sybil to the barn and helped her saddle Star, her horse. He said, “You need to be very careful. It’ll be dark soon. Loyalist spies may be hiding in the woods.”

“I’ll be careful, and I’ll hurry.” Then she mounted her horse and galloped off.

Sybil rode over forty miles that night. She rode in the rain and on dark, wooded roads. She stopped at houses and towns all along the way. She shouted, “Gather at the Ludington’s. The British are burning Danbury!” She said it over so many times her voice began to hurt. When she finally arrived home the next morning, soldiers were already gathering. They were ready to fight the British. Sybil was proud of herself. She had helped the Patriots.



### AFTER THE BURNING OF DANBURY

#### Danbury Rebuilds

The fighting never came back to Danbury, but it changed the economy of the town. Fewer people farmed the land. Many craftsmen created their goods and used Danbury as a base for their trade. They made many items for the war. By 1780, Zadoc Benedict was making 3 hats a day!



*Dodd's Hat Shop*



PEOPLE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



*Enoch Crosby*

**A Spy!**

Enoch Crosby lived in Danbury. He joined the Continental army and was sent to fight battles in the north. When his service in the army was over he went home to Danbury. He

decided to enlist again and on his way he ran into some Tories. Thinking he was a Tory, they told him where all their secret meetings were held. Crosby reported this to the Continental army who captured the Tories.

Crosby asked to be a spy in the Continental army. He was good at spying and was able to lead the Continental Army to capture many loyalists. He sometimes used the home of General Ludington as a hiding place.

A famous author, James Fennimore Cooper, wrote a book called *The Spy* which was thought to be based on Enoch Crosby.

**... And a Traitor**

Ever heard the phrase, “like a Benedict Arnold”? Benedict Arnold was a leader in the Continental army. He had fought in many battles. George Washington trusted him. He fought with General Wooster in the Battle of Ridgefield.

Arnold continued to fight for the Continental army. He was smart, ambitious and wanted success. He was successful, but it took a long time for him to be promoted to General.

Later, after Tryon’s Raid, Arnold became a spy for the British. No one is really sure why he became a traitor. He may have been unhappy that he wasn’t made General faster. He may have wanted money. But, no matter the reason, he changed sides. To this day, someone who changes sides is called a “Benedict Arnold.”



*Benedict Arnold*

**Food Anyone?**

A soldier’s food was not very good. Not only did soldiers cook their food over an open campfire, but they had to find the food too. Each day a soldier was given a daily ration: a pound of salt pork, dried peas, cornmeal or flour, and maybe vinegar or molasses for seasoning. Sometimes they would steal corn from a farmer’s field.

Some women followed the troops taking care of chores like cooking, laundry, and sewing.



**A Sense of History**

**One of the effects of Tryon’s Raid and the burning of Danbury was the loss of original buildings. All the early historical records were burned in the fire too.**

**Our understanding of Danbury’s early history comes from the memories of people who lived then. These memories were collected and written down.**

**Works Cited:**

Photos courtesy of [www.picts4learning.com](http://www.picts4learning.com) and [www.danburyhistorical.org](http://www.danburyhistorical.org)

Enoch Crosby <http://www.mahopaclibrary.org/localhistory/chapter3.htm#crosby> and [http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/400/404/crosby\\_1.htm](http://etc.usf.edu/clipart/400/404/crosby_1.htm)

Benedict Arnold <http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/served/arnold.html>

Ludington map <http://www.hudsonrivervalley.net/amerRevLesson/sybillessonplan.php>