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## Withlacoochee Chapter Sons of the American Revolution

March 2021

### Withlacoochee Chapter of the FLSSAR Presents Florida Highway Patrol Trooper Curtis Vaughn with the Law Enforcement Medal

Our February 13<sup>th</sup> Luncheon was a proud and special day for the Withlacoochee Chapter. It was our honor to present the Law Enforcement Medal to Highway Patrol Trooper Curtis Vaughn.

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Trooper Vaughn responded to an active pursuit of a suspect in Citrus County. Trooper intercepted the pursuit near U.S. Route 41 and assumed the lead position in the pursuit. Trooper Vaughn at his peril attempted several pursuit tactics to immobilize the suspect's vehicle.

Vaughn's patrol car struck the windshield of another patrol car in the pursuit. Luckily the officer was not injured. Trooper Vaughn knew time was running out before someone was seriously injured or killed. Without concern for his own safety, Trooper Vaughn was able to pit the suspect's car causing it to overturn. The pursuit was over, and the injured suspect was taken into custody. Trooper Vaughn's courage and dedication is a testament to the law enforcement officers that keep our streets and neighborhoods safe for all of us. Thank you!



*President David Hitchcock Presents Trooper Vaughn with the SAR Law Enforcement Medal*

However, the F250 truck that the suspect was driving was much heavier than the patrol car making pursuit intervention more difficult and more dangerous. At this time, the suspect began to fire on the patrol cars. Several rounds went over Trooper

### Presentation of the Flag Certificate



*President David Hitchcock and Secretary Tom Hellem Present Beverly Epstein with the SAR Flag Certificate*

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Ms. Beverly S. Epstein of Dellrose Avenue, Brooksville, FL was presented a Flag Certificate for exemplary display of Her American Flag. The Withlacoochee Chapter of the Florida Society of the Sons of the American Revolution President, David Hitchcock presented the certificate in front of her flag on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 2021. This SAR program is set to recognize those individuals who display the flag properly and hopefully motivate the community to honor our flag.

### Stewart Dunaway Receives the Certificate of Appreciation



*President David Hitchcock presenting Stewart Dunaway with a Certificate of Appreciation at our March Meeting.*

Our Chapter has been very fortunate to have a local Historian the likes of Stewart Dunaway come and give some excellent presentations. The latest was a talk focused on Pyle's defeat which took place on February 24, 1781. Approximately 100 Tories were killed, and more were either wounded or taken prisoner. Thank you, Stewart! Looking forward to more presentations.

### Welcome New Compatriot!

Paul Sweeney was officially inducted into the Withlacoochee Chapter of the Florida Society of the

Sons of the American Revolution at our March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Luncheon. Paul's ancestor Ezekiel Leonard served at the Battle of Fort Ticonderoga. Paul also served our country in the United States Air Force. We are looking forward to Paul's contribution to our Chapter and some more history surrounding his ancestor's service to our country. Welcome Paul!!



*Paul's wife Lucille pinning the SAR Rosette on his jacket lapel.*

### History Corner

*Submitted by Mark Labadia*

Hello Compatriots! Every Quarter I would like to add an article, artwork etc. for our readers to enjoy. If you have a story to share, please email it to me at: [labadia58@yahoo.com](mailto:labadia58@yahoo.com).

I decided to put together an article highlighting the Battle of Ridgefield Connecticut. The engagement took place during April 1777. Stacy and I would drive by the battle site many times on our way to Ridgefield Connecticut to visit friends. The battle site was approximately 17 miles from our home in Brookfield Connecticut. Sometimes when things or places are in your own backyard you tend to appreciate them less. It wasn't until recently when



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our friends in Ridgefield invited us to the annual reenactment of the battle that I discovered the significance of this almost never mentioned battle. I hope you enjoy the read and more importantly you learn more about the sacrifice paid by our Revolutionary ancestors. To write this article, I relied upon the following references:

- 1) McDevitt, Robert F. *Connecticut Attacked: A British Viewpoint, Tryon's Raid on Danbury*, Guilford: Globe Pequot, 1974.
- 2) Jones III, Keith Marshall. *Farmers Against the Crown*, Ridgefield: Connecticut Colonel Publishing Company 2003.



Actually, last Quarter's History Corner story of Washington's winter camp and attack on Trenton is a perfect segue for the engagement that took place in Ridgefield in April of 1777.

General William Tryon

The Commanders: George Washington of the Continental Army and Sir William Howe commanding the British forces. As the Spring of 1777 approached, Washington was in a difficult spot. What was Howe's next move? Move up the Hudson? Attack New England; or move south to take Philadelphia? Concurrently, Howe was planning an ambitious attack; but he would need more reinforcements. Howe didn't get the reinforcements he wanted; he also had another problem; he needed supplies, mainly food for his troops in New York. Howe obtained intelligence that Danbury Connecticut has a stockpile of supplies. An attack on Danbury could serve two strategic needs. One, supply his army; two, mislead

Washington into thinking that the British are moving North instead of south towards Philadelphia.

Enter General William Tryon. Tryon was Governor of North Carolina where he earned a reputation for sternness. When he arrived in New York he was eager to get a command in the field. So much so, that he wrote a letter to Lord Germain in England underscoring his want to win a victory for the Crown. In the letter he writes "I understand the temper of the warmest patriots in Connecticut is much softened". He and Howe thought that a campaign in Southwest Connecticut could bring more loyalist into the fold. He also made a petition to advance his military career. "I trust this tarnish to the campaign will in due season be wiped away by some brilliant enterprise of the King's forces, who entertain the keenest sense of the insult". What insult? The defeat at Trenton. And here is Tryon willing to bring honor back to the crown. Tryon's petitions worked. Howe gave him command of the Danbury expedition. However, Howe sends along General William Erskine. Erskine was battle tested; he fought the French at Fontenoy and was knighted for capturing 16 enemy banners on the fields in Germany. Tryon's expedition leaves New York on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1777. Washington learns of the departure; however, Washington is still in a pickle, where is Howe going? He alerts General McDougall in Peekskill NY warning of potential enemy movement towards his position. On April 25<sup>th</sup> he writes to General Parsons "the enemy's designs against the magazines at Danbury". However, a small but effective British diversion towards Peekskill kept Washington more concerned with a move up the Hudson. Thus, Danbury was left unprotected.

The British expedition neared the Connecticut coast April 26<sup>th</sup>. The planned landing was to be made at Norwalk. However, the American costal defenses all along Fairfield county forced the British to land more east at Compo Beach in today's Westport. The approach to the Connecticut shore wasn't unnoticed several batteries and patriots along the shores of Darien engaged the transport *Halifax* which returned fire. By 11:00 P.M. the entire

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British force was on shore and secured the beachhead. The landing was uncontested; the march to Danbury commenced at 11:30 P.M. The British force: 1500 men from the 4<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 44<sup>th</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> regiments of Foot. Three hundred men from Browne's Provincials (Loyal American Volunteers raised in and around New York) and a detachment of Artillery supported by the 17<sup>th</sup> Dragoons. These were battle tested units; the 4<sup>th</sup> was bloodied at Concord and Lexington and suffered significant casualties at Bunker Hill.

Local militia and units from Stamford and Norwalk assembled but did not engage the superior force now on the march. However, word of the British landing



*General Benedict Arnold*

sounded the alarm throughout Southwest Connecticut. General Silliman called for his militia in Fairfield and Generals David Wooster and General Benedict Arnold in New Haven prepared to join the fight. Silliman's order for all militia units to join him at Fairfield left Danbury defenseless against a sizeable seasoned British force. Danbury was left with approximately 150 militia which wisely withdrew to the high ground north of town as Tryon's men approached. The resistance was little; militia fire from the high ground wounded three of the British 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment. After his forces secured the town, Tryon quartered himself in the home of Nehemiah Dibble a loyalist. The home was located on South Street near Triangle Street. I know the area well; a great Italian Restaurant called Gisella's Ristorante is close by. I do miss their food.

Howe's intelligence was correct Danbury had large stores of food and much needed tents. The problem was Tryon didn't have the means to transport it back

to Compo beach to the moored transport ships. Also, Tryon received information that a large patriot force was gathered in Bethel and that Benedict Arnold was among them. The British respected Arnold's ability on the battlefield and Tryon did not want a major engagement in Bethel. His retreat would have to take another route. First, he would destroy the patriot supplies at Danbury. In addition to the large amount of food (beef and flour) and supplies, a number of patriot homes were also torched. Best estimates indicate approximately twenty homes and a number of barns and buildings in Danbury were burned to the ground. On April 27<sup>th</sup>, Tryon's troops departed Danbury and started their retreat towards Ridgefield.

While Tryon's troops occupied Danbury, Generals Silliman, Arnold and Wooster arrived in Redding just to the Southeast of Danbury. The patriot forces were not going to let Tryon escape without a fight. However, the patriot Generals didn't know where Tryon was heading next. The plan they composed was that General Wooster would harass the British rear while Silliman and Arnold would head to Ridgefield to intercept Tryon's leading Regiments. Wooster had approximately 300 men, a 100 of



*General David Wooster*

which were from the Danbury-based 16<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Militia. Also, a contingent of men from the 140<sup>th</sup> Continental troops from Massachusetts arrived. Wooster's men headed west out of Bethel and came upon the rear guard of Tryon's column while they were stopped for a rest and food. Wooster's men killed two British soldiers and captured another 12-13 men. Wooster withdrew and continued to follow the British column looking for another opportunity to strike. The British were not to be surprised again. The rear

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guard stopped on high ground south of Ridgefield to position some cannon. Wooster decided to take the artillery. Wooster's first charge was met with a British volley that brought down his horse. Wooster commanded another mount and yelled to his men "come on boys, never mind such random shots! Follow me." It was then a musket ball hit him in the waist and severed his spinal cord. The paralyzed Wooster was carried back to Danbury by carriage and died several days later. He is buried in Wooster Cemetery in Danbury. I know his monument well it stands across the street from where I worked at Danbury Hospital. Although it was a small engagement, Wooster's sacrifice gave Arnold valuable time to prepare his defense of Ridgefield.

Arnold chose a defensive position that was flanked by rocky ridges that fell upon swamps below. The British would have to advance through a narrow gap. Arnold deployed the militia at hand to defend the flanks. Lieutenant Colonel Abraham Gould's 4<sup>th</sup> Militia guarded the right flank while Colonels Hinman and Mosely of Woodbury's 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment took to the High Ridge Road on the left. Arnold positioned the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Continentals at the center of the line.



Tryon's front reached Arnold's position around noon on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Knowing he was no military match for Arnold, Tryon relinquishes military command to Sir William Erskine. Erskine proceeded to concentrate six pieces of artillery

### *Sir William Erskine*

on the patriot center. Arnold's men held their ground. Next, Erskine detailed units to both flanks. General Silliman noted "they were received warmly". Erskine bolstered the flanks and sent a

column of 600 men directly into Arnold's center. The patriots put out a murderous fire killing 16 and wounding more. However, the British bayonets at close quarter exacted their toll. Patriots from Redding, Easton, Canaan and Stamford lost their lives along the American center. At this time Arnold's flanks began to give way. Gould's 4<sup>th</sup> Militia on the right flank bore the brunt of British volleys, killing Gould. With the flanks collapsing and the front weakened, Arnold's troops begin their retreat. Arnold's mount was shot out from under him. Arnold freed himself; drew his pistols and killed an advancing British soldier. Arnold showed no fear; an eyewitness account describes "he walked deliberately off". The patriots continued to skirmish with the British throughout the village before leaving for Westport. Unfortunately, more patriots commanded by Arnold died on Compo beach before Tryon's men gladly left the Connecticut shore.

Tryon's plan to bring southwest Connecticut into the fold never materialized. British strategy going forward would focus on coastal operations; leaving inland Connecticut free to provide men and supplies to the Continental army for the rest of the war.