

A TOUCH OF WAR



Helen Mason was an invited guest to the rededication of the cannons because her ancestor, John Crossman, and his son, fought in the battle of Compo Hill.

Two hundred and twenty-two years ago our serene little community of Weston was touched with a taste of war. Although no battles took place in Weston during the

Revolution, many of our most famous citizens fought and died for our independence. Among those who fought were: Joshua Adams, Thomas Banks, Ebenezer Coley, Christopher, Daniel, Elias, Isaac and Johnathan Godfrey, Isaac Jarvis, Rueben Lockwood, David and Darniel Morehouse and Daniel, Eliphalet, Nathan, Peter and Thaddeus Thorp.

Many of the men from Connecticut set out for Lexington and Concord after the first of the battles broke out. By 1776, with the Revolution underway, our troops marched to Ticonderoga, Crown Point, New York, Long Island and Rhode Island. Those that stayed behind formed small groups, called Minutemen, to protect our countryside.

During the winter of 1776 General Burgoyne was to come from Canada and rendezvous at Albany with Clinton who was to come up the Hudson River. This was part of a plan to split the colonies. However, Burgoyne met with difficulties he had not planned on and a new plan had General Tryon hitting Connecticut on the East to teach us a lesson.

On April 25, 1777, 26 British ships anchored at the mouth of the Saugatuck River. Approximately 2,000 soldiers landed at Cedar (now Compo) Point, under the command of General Tryon. The contingent started on their way to destroy Danbury. They encamped on Weston's borders overnight and the following morning continued their march. They met with small resistance near the village of Bethel at the bottom of Hoyt's Hill (located off Rt. 58 near Steck's

Nurseries).

The troops reached Danbury in the afternoon and destroyed 19 dwellings, 22 barns and storehouses, and almost 1700 tents by fire. The Congregational Church, the most expensive and beautiful structure, was also burned to the ground. The only houses that escaped the fire were those of people sympathetic to the Tories. A white cross was painted on the front of their homes, thus keeping them from burning.

While destroying Danbury, the militia of neighboring towns were gathering under the command of General David Wooster, Benedict Arnold and Gold Silliman. The force of 600 Americans was unsuccessful in their attempt to block the British retreat from Danbury. General Wooster was also killed in the action. General Arnold continued to throw up barricades but on April 28, 1777, the British forded the Saugatuck River and were able to return to their ships, now anchored off the coast of Norwalk. The Minutemen had been successful in chasing off the British before they could do any more harm. It is rumored that the property in and around 90 Georgetown Road (and Indian Valley Road) was used as a signaling position for the scattered Minutemen located near Compo Beach. The property has been named Signal Rock, although

there is no documentation as to its use. In recent years as well, two cannonballs have been found on properties located on the upper end of Newtown Turnpike. It is believed that the British may have left behind some of their ammunition because of its weight and their hurry to get back to their ships.

Although the cannons located at Compo Beach were never actually used during the revolutionary war, they are a symbol of the battle of Compo Hill. They were placed there about the turn of the century and are currently under repair, spearheaded by the Westport Rotary Club. Contributions can be made to this restoration of our local history. There are also many Revolutionary War graves located in our Coley Cemetery located on Rt. 57 south of the Broad Street/Goodhill Road intersection.

Although Weston saw no harm done within its borders, many of its fathers and sons laid down their lives for our freedom in 1777, and throughout future years.



The Beach at Compo, Westport, Conn.

1912 Post Card Collection of William Scheffler of Westport