

## Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park HISTORIC FACTS

- *Fort Griswold was the site of the bloodiest battle fought in Connecticut during the Revolution, with more than 150 killed - patriots, loyalists, British, and Hessian mercenaries.*
- *The Battle of Groton was the only Revolutionary War battle fought on the patriots' side entirely by a local militia of armed patriots.*
- *Groton's sailing vessels fought as commissioned privateers throughout the Revolution. The British attack on Groton aimed to destroy this fleet.*
- *As a diversionary tactic to stall Washington's march on Yorktown and ultimate victory, the Battle of Groton was the "Last Hurrah" of the British Empire in what was to be the free United States.*
- *The attacking British force was led by Benedict Arnold, America's most famous traitor, and a native of nearby Norwich. For the colonial Loyalists, however, the Revolution was a civil war, and Arnold was a heroic leader of a losing cause.*
- *When the patriots were finally overwhelmed during the battle and Colonel Ledyard offered his sword in surrender, he was cut down by that same sword. Most of the patriots who died were massacred in a bloodbath which followed. The Town of Ledyard was named after the patriot commander.*
- *Nine members of one of Groton's oldest families, the Averys, were killed. Six more from the Perkins family fell, and four other families lost four each.*
- *The Groton Congregational Church lost 63 of its 64 male members in the battle.*
- *Two African Americans fought for the patriots and died in the Battle of Groton. Though the memorial plaque lists their names side by side with all who died, their separate standing in society as "negro" is also noted.*
- *A Native American also fought for the patriots and was wounded. An independent U.S. would soon abandon all treaties with the Native American.*

- *Groton Monument at Fort Griswold is the oldest patriotic monument in the U.S., completed in 1830. An obelisk, it is also the earliest example of the Egyptian Revival style -- the "architecture of death" -- in the United States. It would set the standard for the Washington Monument designed ten years later.*
- *The architect of the monument, Ithiel Town, was one of the most important architects of his time. His firm of Town and Davis is considered the first true architectural firm to practice in this country.*
- *The walls and gates which surround the battlefield were built during the City Beautiful movement which swept this nation during the administration of Teddy Roosevelt. It was a time when many great civic landscapes were created -- a time when the National Parks literally took to the streets.*
- *From the battlefield, one can see Electric Boat Shipyard, our nation's premier designer and manufacturer of submarines. Groton's submarines were the major underwater force during WWII, and the USS Nautilus, the world's first nuclear submarine, was designed and built here. Attack class submarines and America's largest submarine, the Seawolf, are manufactured here today.*
- *A fortified village of the Pequot Nation once stood near Fort Griswold. In 1636, it was the site of the first English attack on a Native American people in North America. The Pequot War culminated in the massacre of as many as a thousand Pequots in nearby Mystic. The Pequot Nation, however, survives to this day - their reservation and resort is ten miles north.*
- *The surrounding village of Groton Bank was a whaling and clipper ship port in the years after the Revolution. Throughout the village, you will find many fine examples of architecture ranging from the first rebuilding after the Revolution to the twentieth century -- Federal, Greek and Gothic Revivals, Victorian, and Craftsman styles are all here. The village has been designated an historic district by the National Park Service.*

---

*This pamphlet was written and designed by James Gibbs, Mystic Environmental Design, under the auspices of the Town of Groton Planning Department, 1996.*

This project has been financed in part by the Connecticut Historical Commission with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Commission or the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the Commission or the Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or sexual orientation. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write to the Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

petitioned the Connecticut General Assembly to fortify the harbor. As a result, fortifications were ordered in April of 1775 for both sides of the river.

Before these could be established, the first act of hostility in the area took place, on the 5th and 6th of August 1775, when nine English ships plundered the islands and coast of Fishers Island Sound of farm animals and other produce. This action led to the expedited construction of the planned fortification on Groton Heights at Groton Bank, named Fort Griswold for the deputy-governor of the State, and now the site of Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park. Another fortification commenced more slowly on the opposite bank of the harbor in New London, and was named Fort Trumbull after the governor of the state. Under the direction of Parke Avery and Ebenezer Ledyard, the fortifications were finished by the summer of 1777. Fort Griswold's first commander was Edward Mott of Groton, succeeded soon after by Oliver Coit also of Groton. Artillery companies were raised for each fort, and William Ledyard was made the first captain of the artillery for Fort Griswold, appointed the 3rd of July 1776, a day before the Declaration of Independence.

Fort Griswold was designed by a Colonel Samuel Mott in the tradition of the great French fortifications of the preceding century. Construction was overseen by Colonel William Ledyard of Groton Bank. Earthen ramparts took the plan of an "etoile" - a radiating star. Triangular bastions provided artillery cover for the flank of the fort, but did not obstruct diagonal sight lines. The fort was built by "cut and fill", again in the French tradition, with soil from surrounding trenches used to raise the ramparts. While ramparts were low to sweep an attacking force with artillery fire, trenches hindered scaling by an attacking foot soldiers. This was a trench warfare fortification.

The first naval force authorized by Congress in the United States was assembled and outfitted, under the direction of Silas Deane of Groton, at Thames River harbor in January of 1776. The fleet, under Commodore Esek Hopkins, consisted of four vessels, with from fourteen to thirty-six guns each. Eighty of the crew were from the local community. In February of that same year, the fleet sailed south and attacked the British seaport of New Providence in the Bahamas, returning to the Thames River in April with seventy prisoners and a bounty of military stores, including eighty-eight cannon. On the 9th of April, Commodore Hopkins met in New London with General George Washington, who received much of the New Providence bounty for his Continental Army, though many of the captured canon were retained to arm the two new forts. Washington left Hopkins with two hundred men to assist in a proposed naval assault on the British war ship *Rose*, which had led the recent plundering of the coastal towns. The naval fleet, with two more boats in addition to the original fleet of four, were however unsuccessful in their pursuit of the *Rose* and soon sailed to

Just days before the Battle of Groton Heights, local privateers captured the *Hannah*, with reputedly the greatest value of any cargo seized by the Americans to that time. Despite these successes, fully three quarters of the Groton and New London privateers were eventually casualties of the War. Frances Caulkins writes in 1860:

*It has been customary to make a distinction between the regular navy of the country and those private armed vessels, called letters of marque or privateers, as if the former were an honorable service, and the latter but little removed from piracy. The distinction is unjust; one was as fair and lawful as the other. Both were sanctioned by the custom of nations; the object of each was the same. The continental vessels no less than the privateers seized upon peaceful merchantmen; and as much historical credit should be awarded to the brave privateers-man, as to the commissioned officer.*

Until 1781, despite five years of embargoes and clashes offshore, no attack had been made yet against the Thames River harbor. The harbor was for all intents and purposes the headquarters of the Continental "private navy". Indeed, the harbor was full of vessels and seized merchandise when, in 1781 as the War was approaching its end, a massive British attack was begun on both banks of the harbor and the vessels anchored and berthed there.

While the attack was intended primarily to destroy the privateering fleet of the Thames River, it has been suggested that the attack was also meant to divert the Continental Army which then was marching under Washington to Yorktown and ultimate victory. Washington had recently marched 8,000 French troops from Rhode Island, across Connecticut, to New Jersey, where he was joined by several thousand more American troops. The British General Henry Clinton, stationed in New York, met with Benedict Arnold who a year before was ostensibly on the side of the patriots. Whether he had been a double agent all along, or simply traded sides for money and power, has never been adequately explained. As a native of Norwich, however, he knew the Thames River and the communities along it well. In an attempt to deter Washington's campaign against Cornwallis, it was decided that the British would amount an attack on the ships and provisions of the Thames River. A successful attack it was hoped would force the return of troops to these shores. It was also presumed that the *Hannah* and her valuable cargo would be returned. Arnold would direct the attack himself.

The English fleet had been outfitted at New York, which the British still held, and was under the command of the American traitor General Benedict Arnold, a native of Norwich at the head of the Thames River who knew the layout of both Groton and New London. His plan was to surprise the community at night, on a mission of destruction of both the ships located

It was on the east bank, in Groton Bank, that the patriots took their stand, and though there had been a few casualties in New London, the death would be far worse in Groton. The Division which had landed at Eastern Point in two successive debarkations, under Lieutenant Colonel Eyre and his second in command, Major Montgomery, consisted of two British regiments plus a battalion of New Jersey Loyalists, and a detachment of Hessian mercenaries. About 165 minute-men, mostly farmers and local artisans, men and boys, as well as indentured servants, under the command of Colonel Ledyard and Captain Latham, armed Fort Griswold, a fort designed for over 500 troops. Eight hundred British troops stood to attack -- a five to one advantage.

Despite the overwhelming numbers that stood against them, the patriots twice rejected offers to surrender, hoping for reinforcements that had been promised but who would not arrive in time. Colonel Ledyard has been quoted as saying:

*We will not give up the fort let the consequences be what they may.*

The British assault began. Twice the patriots repulsed the British advance, with considerable losses on the attacking side -- perhaps fifty of killed to less than ten of the patriots. This is where the historic controversy begins. Lowering a side's flag was a sign of surrender during war, and this is what the British claim to have seen, thereby suspending the second assault. The patriots' account was that the flagstaff had been shot down by cannon fire, only to be raised again as the British approached for the third time. Thus, the British claimed afterwards that they were ambushed as they approached the fort which they believed to be under surrender. The patriot claim is that this was an excuse orchestrated after the events which would follow -- perhaps the worst undefended massacre of Americans during the Revolution. At any rate, the patriots fought back upon the third advance by the British, and it was during this last confrontation that the British Major Montgomery, second in charge, was killed. Soon after, the British Major Eyre was bayoneted as he scaled the ramparts of the fort -- he would later die from his wounds. Legend says it is was Lambo Latham who wounded Eyre -- he was the African American servant (and probably slave) of the patriot Captain Latham. The southwest bastion was overtaken first, and the gates were forced open. The garrison soon was occupied by the British forces, now under the command of a Major Bromfield. Upon securing the fort he is said to have asked:

*Who commands this fort?*

Colonel Ledyard according to legend then replied:

*I did Sir but you do now.*

more of the patriots were taken on board as prisoners and shipped to the British base at Manhattan. Fourteen patriots were said to have escaped.

Of the attacking British forces, Major Montgomery, several officers, and some forty soldiers who had died during battle were buried on the battlefield. According to Arnold's report a total of forty-eight British were killed during the attack and another one hundred forty-five were wounded; thirteen, including Colonel Eyre, would soon die and be buried at sea in Gardiners Bay. The battle which had lasted less than one hour cost more than one hundred and fifty lives on both sides. It was one of the bloodiest to take place in the entire Revolution. Six weeks later, the English surrendered at Yorktown.

The village of Groton Bank at the time of the battle was centered along a single street, now known as Thames Street. Before leaving, the English burned virtually every house and building on it -- in all, twelve houses, the schoolhouse, two shops, four barns, and two warehouses were burned. Today, the stone walls, earthen bulkheads and trenches of Fort Griswold remain as a memorial state park, and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (In recent years, the home of Ebenezer Avery, which survived the battle as medical ward for the wounded, was moved from Thames Street to a site adjacent to the battlefield where it stands as a museum house.) Fort Griswold would later be enlarged with an additional redoubt and stone ammunitions warehouse during the War of 1812. The Fort was reactivated during the Spanish-American War of 1898, and again as an outlook during both World Wars.

In 1826, the state chartered the Groton Monument Association for the purposes of building a memorial at the site of the Battle of Groton Heights, and in the next year construction began on the granite obelisk that stands today. It was dedicated in 1830 as part of an impressive Masonic ceremony, just shy of the fiftieth anniversary of the battle. The Groton Monument is the oldest patriotic monument in the United States.. It is also very much a monument to the Masonic traditions of our republic's early leaders.

---

*This pamphlet was written and designed by James Gibbs, Mystic Environmental Design, under the auspices of the Town of Groton Planning Department, 1996.*

This project has been financed in part by the Connecticut Historical Commission with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Commission or the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the Commission or the Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or sexual orientation. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write to the Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

impact of cannon shot. On the other hand, the most effective return fire by cannon was by a low raking and rather flat projectile, which meant mounting cannon as low as possible. The trajectory of the arrow had been a high arching one. The trajectory of the cannon ball, however, was quite straight, so artillery had to be kept low to sweep an attacking army. To deter scaling by attacking soldiers, ditches were excavated around the rampart -- filled with water a ditch became a moat. Construction was classic "cut and fill", with earth dug from the trenches used to build up the earthen ramparts.

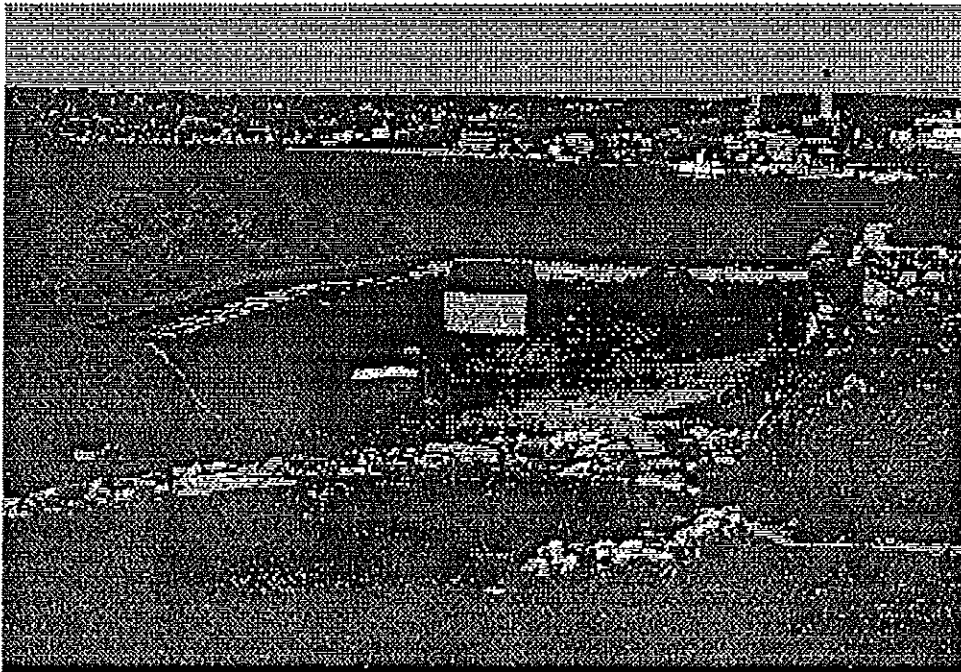
By 1500, cannon fortification had come to age. At the corners of the fort, bastions were built which stuck out beyond the flanks of the fort. This allowed cannon and musketeers to fire directly across the face of the fort, thereby defending against foot soldiers attempting to scale the same. The bastions were triangular or pentagonal in shape so that return fire from the flank would not be obstructed by the bastions. In time, the design of forts became star shaped in plan so that every position of the fort would have an unobstructed view of an attacking army, and so that every position could be covered. The plan of forts thus was the result of diagonal sight lines. Fortifications could be surrounded by similar ramparts, and on and on. Trenches and earthworks had taken the place of the medieval castles.

Science and art were merging, and no less than Michelangelo was called on to design the new fortifications of the time. The cannon fortification reached its greatest level of design by the middle of the 1600's through the work of the French engineer Sebastien le Prestre de Vauban, the greatest military engineer of the era, and whom the historian Vincent Scully has called the "gardener of the frontiers". His Citadel at Lille, France, with its curtains, bastions, tenailles, and demi-lunes, set the standard for military engineering. So rational was the "etoile" that it became the model for the "parterre" of the great formal French gardens and even cityscapes of the seventeenth century - a Cartesian ideal of complex but formal symmetries, with orchestrated views radiating to infinity. It was also the model for Fort Griswold.

Fort Griswold was constructed between 1775 and 1778, to the design of Colonel Samuel Mott. Construction was overseen by Colonel William Ledyard. It is an earthworks works *etoile* - a 5-pointed star in plan. The two points which face downhill overlooking the harbor are true bastions. The sloping face of the rampart was covered by stone, with an abatis of sharpened wood stakes set into it. The top of the rampart was level and this is where the cannon were mounted (the cannon had been seized in 1775 by an American naval raid on New Providence in the Bahamas). A wooden barricade surrounded the top of the earthen ramparts, forming a parapet with embrasures for weapons to fire through. Within the fort were a well for drinking water and a wooden barracks building.

Downhill from the main fort is the so-called Lower Battery, also referred to as the River Battery. Actually older than the main fort, it is L-shaped in plan, built directly on a rock outcropping. Rebuilt during the War of 1812, it was designed primarily as a defense against attacking ships, and not foot soldiers, though its hillside location would certainly deter any land force approaching from the shoreline below (however, the British landed at Shennecosset and approached the fort from above during the Revolutionary War battle). The "hot shot house" or furnace which stands at the Lower Battery was also constructed here during the War of 1812 -- here cannon balls could be heated to red hot prior to firing at the wooden ships below. The twenty cannon that were in place during the War of 1812 were removed two years later. The simple stone building which stands near the Lower Battery today was an ammunition magazine built in 1840. The Lower Battery was again improved in 1898, during the Spanish American War, and the gun mounts that one sees there today date from this period.

\*



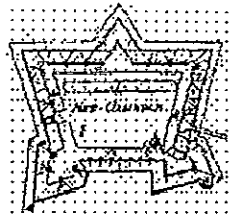
*The Lower Battery, also known as the River Battery.*

---

*This pamphlet was written and designed by James Gibbs, Mystic Environmental Design, under the auspices of the Town of Groton Planning Department, 1996.*

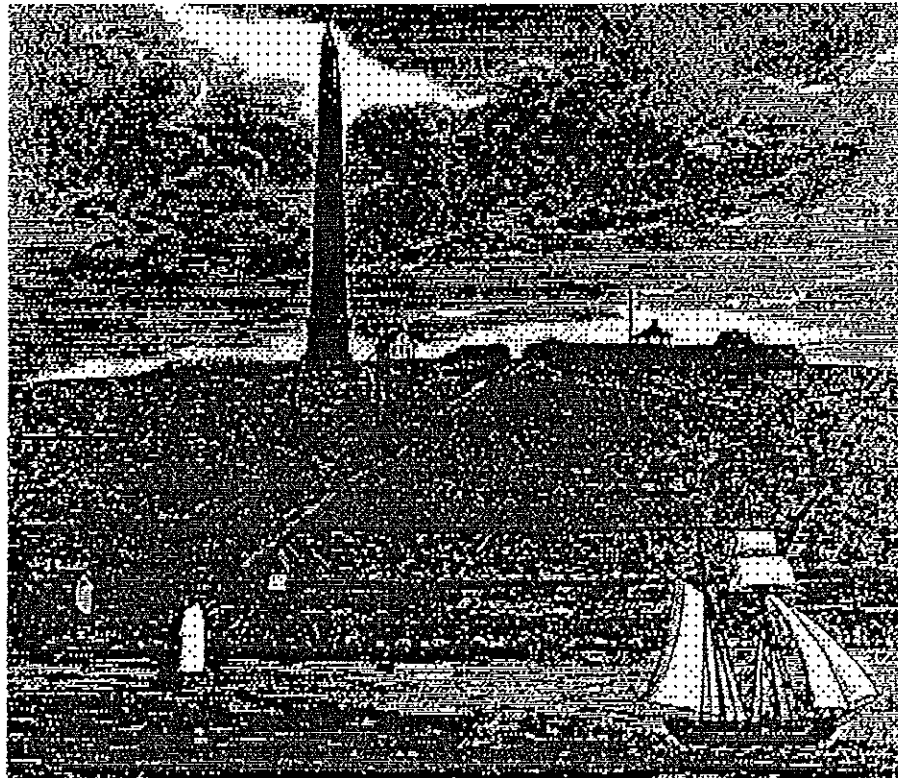
This project has been financed in part by the Connecticut Historical Commission with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Commission or the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the Commission or the Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in federally-assisted programs on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or sexual orientation. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write to the Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.





## Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park **THE PATRIOTIC MONUMENT**

The *Groton Monument* at the Fort Griswold Battlefield is the oldest patriotic monument in the United States. Like the Washington Monument in Washington, DC, the Bunker Hill Monument in Massachusetts, the Washington Monument in Baltimore, and the Bennington and Hubbardton Monuments in Vermont, the Groton Monument is considered to be of exceptional significance in its own right, both architecturally and historically. This is the story of the fort and obelisk as *monuments* to our patriotic heritage.



**GROTON MONUMENT**

It was near the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence that Revolutionary War monuments were first conceived. This was also the period of *Manifest Destiny*, when our nation was striving to conceive not only its own identity, but to disperse that identity from sea to sea. This was

vested in the traditions of the Freemasons. The fact that Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin were Freemasons is well known. The fact that Groton was an early bastion of Freemasonry is less well known. The political power of these early Democratic-Republican leaders was virtually synonymous with Freemasonry. The fact that President John Adams had railed against the monumental may have had something to do with the fact that he was a leader of the opposition Federalist party. Indeed, the Opposition would soon take its name from its very stance against the Masonic power structure of Virginia - the "Anti-Masonic Party" was founded the same year ground was broken for the Groton Monument. Groton had been "dissident" from its founding in 1705, and it would continue to oppose what it always saw as the established Puritanical oligarchy, of which President Adams was very much a part. Thus the Groton Monument is a memorial for the fallen patriots of the Battle of Groton, but it is also a monument to the early Masonic leaders of our republic, to the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment, and to the seminal secularism of the Town of Groton itself.

Ithiel Town, who is considered one of this nation's first true architects, was hired to design the Groton Monument. He had already designed one of the first Gothic Revival structures in America, the 1814 Georgian Center Church and the 1815 Trinity Church, both in New Haven. In time, Town would become one of the leading proponents of the Greek Revival style. But for Fort Griswold, Ithiel Town looked to the architecture of ancient Egypt, both for its sobriety as for its classical simplicity. No other precedent in classical architecture could have the prominence that an obelisk would on the heights overlooking the Thames River. Always the antiquarian, Town would erect at Fort Griswold what is believed to be the first example of the Egyptian Revival style of architecture in the United States, a style that would come to typify the "Architecture of Death" for the next half century.

But the roots of the obelisk go beyond simple revivalism, for Egypt was also the source of many of the symbols of Freemasonry, a guiding force throughout the so-called *Age of Enlightenment* of the eighteenth century. Indeed, many of our nation's first leaders were Masons, as was the Marquis de Lafayette. In Egypt, Freemasonry found a symbolic common ancestry for western civilization - a heritage that accommodated Christian, Jew, and Muslim alike. The American Revolution was very much part of the Age of Enlightenment, and it is certainly not coincidental that the two other great Revolutionary War memorials of the time are also variants of the same theme. The grounds of the Bunker Hill Memorial had been dedicated by Daniel Webster in 1825, a year before ground was broken for the Groton Monument, but the Bunker Hill Memorial would not be completed until 1843. A decade after the Groton Monument, in 1836, the Washington Monument would be designed in a similar Egyptian Revival style, but would not be completed until well after the Civil War. The Groton Monument,

Inscribed at the base of the monument are these words:

*This monument  
was erected under the patronage of the  
State of Connecticut AD 1830,  
and in the 55th year of the independence of the U.S.A.  
In the memory of the Brave Patriots  
who fell in the Battle of Fort Griswold near this spot  
on the 6th of September AD 1781  
when the British under the command of  
the traitor Benedict Arnold  
burned the towns of New London and Groton and spread  
desolation and woe throughout this region.*

\* \* \*

In 1881, fifty years after the dedication of the Groton Monument, and on the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Groton Bank, the top of the obelisk was raised seven feet to its present configuration. While the height was barely increased, the effect was to redesign the top of the monument visually. Instead of the open castellated outlook, the top now boasted a true obelisk point -- the pyramidion top which we see today. It would also now be similar to the Washington Monument in Washington, DC, which was finally nearing completion. General John W. Barlow of the U.S. Engineers Corps was in charge of the Centennial improvements of 1881, and was Chief Marshall of the festivities which accompanied the rededication of the monument. Among the dignitaries who attended the Centennial celebration was the Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, who noted even then that:

*Fort Griswold is the best preserved Revolutionary  
fortification in existence.*

\* \* \*

The grounds of the Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park contain another monument from the nineteenth century -- a Civil War commemorative statue of a soldier which stands to the rear of the Monument House. It was erected in the years following that war by a veteran in memory of his fellow soldiers who fought on the side of the Union in the Battles of Fredericksburg, Drury's Bluff, Port Hudson, and Gettysburg. A twin of the Civil War monument can also be found in the middle of Main Street in downtown Mystic.

The turn of the Twentieth Century was an era of great expansion of our National Park System under Teddy Roosevelt. It was also the era of the *City Beautiful* movement which saw the dedication of many of this nation's finest urban parks and formal boulevards - a time when the National Parks literally took to the streets. Fort Griswold and the Groton Monument were not overlooked and in 1911, just four years after the dedication of the new Monument House, the grounds of the Battlefield became a true civic park. Stone walls were erected around the site, and the handsome *Monument Gateway* was provided at the end of Monument Street. A simpler though similarly styled gateway was placed at the northeast corner of the battlefield. Yet another gateway was placed at the foot of Fort Street, opposite a Thames Harbor waterfront lot reclaimed for park use. A simple monument made of a millstone was erected at the water's edge - it is dedicated to the 38 patriots taken on prison boats after the Battle of Groton. A simpler gateway was erected where Fort Street turns onto Slocumb Terrace, opposite the entrance to the Lower Battery - flanking cobblestone piers capped by a single canon ball each. Slocumb Terrace itself was renamed after the fort's recent champion. Finally, a new pair of stone steps were built from Slocumb Terrace to Monument Street, at the steep head of Latham Street. One now could walk along a formal pedestrian way from the Thames waterfront, up Fort Street to Slocumb Terrace and the Latham Street stairway, to the new Memorial Gateway.

General Barlow, who had been in charge of the Centennial improvements a quarter century earlier, delivered the formal address at the dedication of the Memorial Gateway. On it is a plaque with a list of names of those who died, who were wounded and pardoned, who were taken prisoner, and who escaped at the Battle of Groton Heights

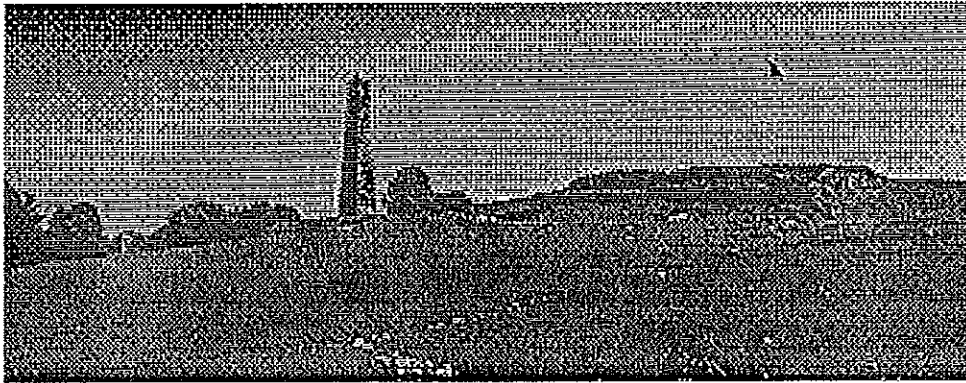
\* \* \*

In 1931, on the occasion of the Sesquicentennial of the Battle of Groton Heights, another celebration was held. Ernest Rogers, Lieutenant Governor of the state, Chairman of the Fort Griswold and Groton Monument Commission, and President of the New London Historical Society, had previously petitioned for return of the fort to the state. Twice during the preceding decade, the federal government had considered selling the property to the private sector. Rogers stood fast on the importance of preserving the fort as a patriotic monument. Largely due to his efforts, on the occasion of the Sesquicentennial, the *fort* was returned officially by the federal government to the State of Connecticut for its use as a *monument*.

A Sesquicentennial proposal had been made to finish the improvements of Fort Street, as a formal gateway to the park from the waterfront, but the nation was now in the midst of the Depression and funds never materialized for the project. Instead, there was a parade and a reenactment of the battle.

Recently, a local citizens group, the *Friends of Fort Griswold*, has been established to promote a greater awareness of the extraordinary history of both Fort Griswold and the monuments which have been raised to it. Jonathan Johnson is one of the groups members. He is a member of the *Fort Griswold Barracks of Veterans of WWI*, he attended the Sesquicentennial Celebration of 1931, and he is a life long supporter of Fort Griswold. In a speech he gave in 1992, he summarized by saying:

*Let us consider the fort as a link to human beings. A link to Colonel Ledyard or a link to fifteen year old Danny Williams. And their lives. If we carry images of red-blooded human beings in our minds, linking them to us today, and let our families, friends, and visitors share with us those links, will not that image -- linkage -- be worthwhile? Won't it help our generation -- us -- to preserve and protect the physical symbols -- the monument, the fort -- so future generations will understand better how our country got started with, among other things, the determination of human beings, including those men and boys, and their families, who served the cause of liberty and gave on Groton Heights September 6, 1781.*



---

*This pamphlet was written and designed by James Gibbs, Mystic Environmental Design, under the auspices of the Town of Groton Planning Department, 1996.*

This project has been financed in part by the Connecticut Historical Commission with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Commission or the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the Commission or the Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or sexual orientation. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write to the Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

Benjamin Latrobe is credited generally with introducing the Classical Revival styles to America, having emigrated from his native England in 1795 (Latrobe was one of the architects of the U.S. Capitol) . His many apprentices would come to dominate the next generation of architecture in America. One of these was Robert Mills of Philadelphia, who would form an architectural trilogy with Thomas Jefferson, the only architect to become President of the United States, and Latrobe -- the three would dominate the building of our nation's capitol through 1820. Mills himself claimed to be the first architect who was born in the free United States (Ithiel Town, the architect of the Groton Monument, was just three years younger).

It was Robert Mills who *designed* the first true architectural monument in the United States. In 1814, he won a design contest for a monument to George Washington to be built in Baltimore. His design was that of a 160-foot tall column atop a triumphal arch. Economic depression however delayed construction, and the monument (considerably changed from the initial design) was not completed until 1842. In 1836, Mills' design for the Washington Monument in Washington, DC, was accepted.

Ithiel Town (1784-1844) was influenced by the work of both Benjamin Latrobe and Robert Mills, but soon became one of the great architectural instigators himself of the early republic. He was an early leader in the Greek, Gothic, and Egyptian Revival styles which would form the first distinctly American architecture. He was also an innovator in engineering, especially of bridges -- a talent he no doubt used in constructing the slender obelisk of the Groton Monument with its spiral stair case inside. Town worked out of both New Haven and New York City.

Ithiel Town was also a leading scholar, and his library was sought by many architects. Roger Kennedy calls him the "great engineer and engine of architectural history". Kennedy notes:

*They wrote, thereby, the latest chapter in a classical tradition revived in the Renaissance and sustained to this day by people who take seriously the propagation of the gospel of beauty. That sort of statement makes cynics uncomfortable, but there have always been people who are serious about beauty and are prepared to go to considerable pains to help others attain it. Such people made it possible for the American Greek revival to carry to thousand hamlets the fruits of a tradition two thousand years old.*

Having introduced this nation to the Gothic style a decade earlier (Ithiel Town designed two of the first Gothic Revival structures in America -- the 1814 Georgian Center Church and the 1815 Trinity Church, both in New Haven), Town would soon turn his attention to the neoclassical revival of

Gothic, Greek, and Egyptian styles popularized by Town. Dakin worked out of New York City and New Orleans. Yet another important student of Town was John Francis Rague (1799-1877) who practiced in Springfield, Illinois, and who in turn disseminated the Ithiel town's Greek ideals throughout the Mississippi valley. The village of Abraham Lincoln was thus endowed with the architecture of American Free Classicism.

\* \* \*

---

*This pamphlet was written and designed by James Gibbs, Mystic Environmental Design, under the auspices of the Town of Groton Planning Department, 1996.*

This project has been financed in part by the Connecticut Historical Commission with federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Commission or the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the Commission or the Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or sexual orientation. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of federal assistance should write to the Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

The neoplatonic ideals of beauty in geometric shapes uncompromised by nature goes back to the Italian Renaissance, and culminates in the Age of Reason, that period of intellectual thought centered in France and which was so influential on the early leaders of our own nation. Through the manipulation of scale, geometry is transferred and proper relationships are established. The fundamental order of the universe is thus revealed in what was termed "pourtraiture". Quoting Scully again:

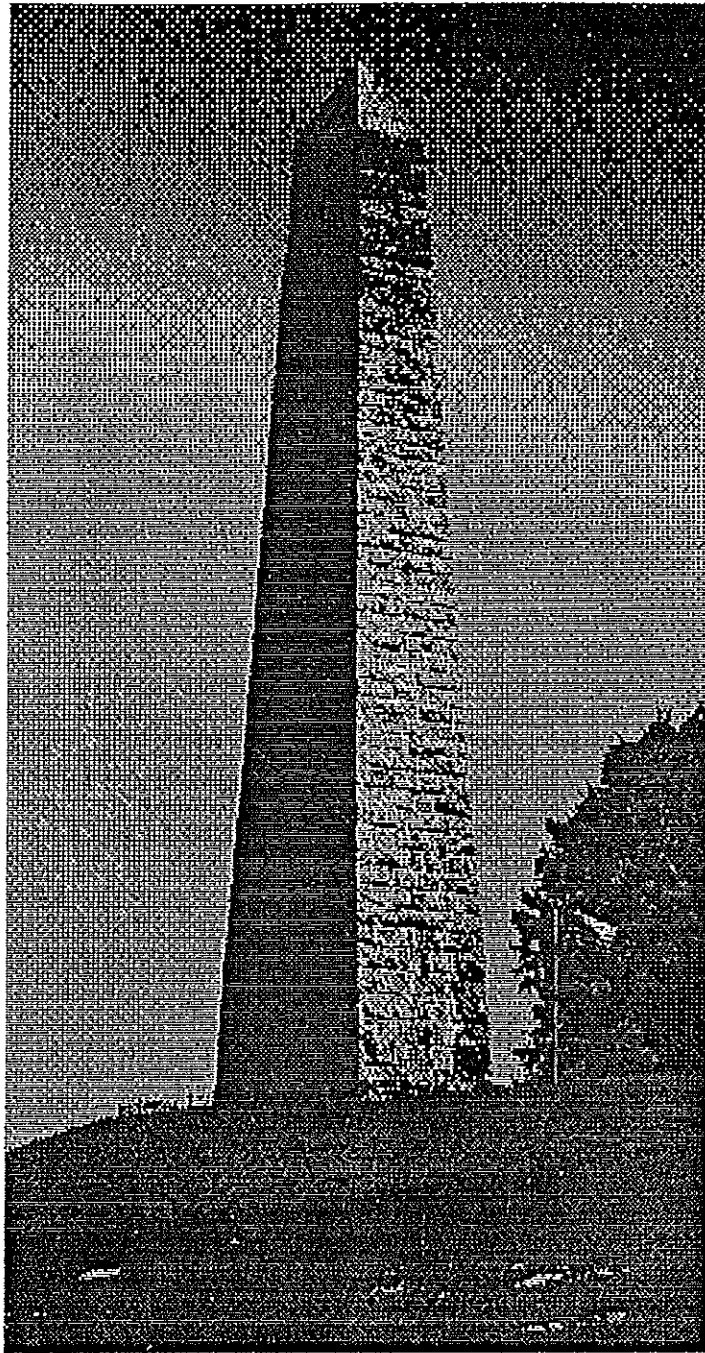
*In this process of pourtraiture, geometry may be seen as Ideal and Neoplatonic, but the scale is pragmatic, scientific in a Cartesian sense. It is, indeed, professional, and it is the major professional tool of the landscape architect's art.*

Republican ideals and architectural ideals were seen as intertwined. If all this seems romantic, of course it was. The Jeffersonian ideal of a self-sufficient society living off its own land was a romantic one. The agrarian ideals of Jefferson were also firmly based on English notions of Romanticism. While temples might be set alone within the landscape, in true neoclassical fashion, the landscape itself was mannered and very much part of the Arcadian ideal of our intellectual beginnings as a nation. And it is in romanticism that monuments are endowed. It should be no surprise that Washington and Jefferson were both Freemasons -- "Et in Arcadia ego".

The dialogue between neoclassical and romantic ideas took its full form in America architecturally in what is called the Greek Revival style. While Greek forms predominated, the style actually incorporated a number of ancient motifs, including both Roman and Egyptian elements. Indeed, the Egyptian Revival style is often treated as a separate style, but in reality it is a product of this same school of reasoning -- the iconography might differ but the ideals were the same. Thus, the architecture that we see in the obelisk of the Groton Monument at Fort Griswold is part of a broader movement the historian Roger Kennedy has termed "American Free Classicism". The story of the architecture of the Groton Monument at Fort Griswold is a dialogue between these notions of Classicism and Romanticism.

The foremost architect of the neoclassical style in the first years of the new republic was neither American nor French, but an Englishman educated in Germany -- Benjamin Latrobe. He emigrated to the United States in 1795, and soon after settled in Philadelphia -- the nation's first capitol. His 1798 Bank of Pennsylvania is considered by scholars to be the first true neoclassical building in the country -- a Greek temple to capitalism. Latrobe soon became a major factor in the design of the nation's new capital, the District of Columbia, further establishing the ideals of ancient Greece, where democracy had been founded in ancient times, as the appropriate ones for a new democracy of the United States. But it was also Latrobe who





**THE GROTON MONUMENT**

But while the Groton Monument is based on the Egyptian obelisk, it is by no means a faithful replication of the same. A true obelisk was a slender form of a single piece of solid rock. The monument is rather more a tower. A true obelisk has a pyramidal cap stone; while the monument as first built did not (the capstone was added in 1881, on the occasion of the centennial of



## Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park FALLEN PATRIOTS

The following American patriots are known to have been killed during the Battle of Groton Heights:

*Nathaniel Adams  
Capt. Samuel Allyn  
Capt. Simeon Allyn  
Belton Allyn  
Benadam Allyn  
Serg. Christopher Avery  
Ensign Daniel Avery  
David Avery  
Lieut. Ebenezer Avery  
Capt. Elijah Avery  
Capt. Elisha Avery  
Serg. Jasper Avery  
Serg. Solomon Avery  
Thomas Avery  
John Babcock  
Serg. Ezekiel Bailey  
Andrew Baker  
Corp. Andrew Billings  
John Billings  
William Bolton  
John Brown  
Capt. Hubbard Burrows  
Jonathan Butler  
Lieut. Richard Chapman  
Daniel Chester  
Serg. Eldredge Chester  
Frederick Chester  
Jededia Chester  
John Clark*

*Elias Coit  
Lieut. James Comstock  
William Comstock  
Philip Covill  
Daniel Davis  
Daniel Eldredge  
Jordan Freeman  
Capt. Elias Henry Halsey  
Samuel Hill  
John Holt, Jr.  
Serg. Rufus Hurlburt  
Eliday Jones  
Moses Jones  
Benoni Kenson  
Barney Kinney  
Thomas Lamb  
Lambo Latham  
Col. William Ledyard  
Capt. Youngs Ledyard  
Capt. Cary Leeds  
Daniel D. Lester  
Ensign John Lester  
Jonas Lester  
Lieut. Joseph Lewis  
Wait Lester  
Corp. Edward Mills  
Thomas Miner  
Capt. Nathan Moore  
Corp. Simeon Morgan*

*knownxley  
David Palmer  
Asa Perkins  
Elisha Perkins  
Elnathan Perkins  
Lake Perkins  
Corp. Lake Perkins, Jr.  
Simeon Perkins  
Capt. Peter Richards  
David Seabury  
Capt. Adam Shapley  
Corp. Nathan Sholes  
Capt. Amos Stanton  
Serg. Daniel Stanton  
Lieut. Enoch Stanton  
Serg. Nicholas Starr  
Thomas Starr, Jr.  
Serg. John Stedman  
Sylvester Walworth  
Lieut. Patric Ward  
Joseph Wedger  
John Whittlesey  
Stephen Whittlesey  
Daniel Williams  
Lieut. Henry Williams  
Capt. John Williams  
Thomas Williams  
Christopher Woodbridge  
Henry Woodbridge*

- Harris, William Walker, & Allyn, Charles, *The Battle of Groton Heights*, Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1882 (Groton Library Special Collections).
- Hurd, D. Hamilton. *History of New London County, Connecticut, with Biographical Sketches of Many of its Pioneers and Prominent Men*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1882 (Groton Library Special Collections).
- Johnson, Jonathan. Manuscript of speech. 1992 (Friends of Fort Griswold).
- Kelley, Martha. *Fort Griswold State Park: After two centuries, more gaps are filled*. Center for Archaeological Studies, Boston University, 1990.
- Kimball, Carol W. *The Groton Story*. Stonington, CT: Pequot Press, 1965 (Groton Library).
- Lyster, Constance, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Fort Griswold*, Connecticut Historical Commission & National Park Service, Washington, DC, 1970 (UConn Library Special Collections).
- Pfizer Capsule*, Vol. XV, No.116. "The Battle". Periodical, September 6, 1981.
- Rogers, Ernest. *Battle of Groton Heights and the Burning of New London*. Connecticut Sesquicentennial Committee, 1931.
- Simmons, R.C. *The American Colonies: From Settlement to Independence*. NYC: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976.
- Stark, Charles R. *Groton, Connecticut, 1705 - 1905*. Stonington, CT: Palmer Press, 1922 (Groton Library Special Collections).
- VFW Magazine. *When in the Course of...* (Revolutionary War chart), July 1776.
- White, David O. *Connecticut's Black Soldiers*. The American Bicentennial Commission, Chester, CT: Pequot Press, 1973 (Groton Library Special Collections).