

**THE BATTLE OF GROTON HEIGHTS:
A STORY OF THE STORMING OF
FORT GRISWOLD, AND THE
BURNING OF NEW LONDON, ON
THE SIXTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1781**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649753161

The Battle of Groton Heights: A Story of the Storming of Fort Griswold, and the Burning of New London, on the Sixth of September, 1781 by Rev. Norman Hammond Burnham & R. Avery & A. Downer

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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REV. NORMAN HAMMOND BURNHAM & R. AVERY & A. DOWNER

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A STORY OF THE
STORMING OF FORT GRISWOLD,
AND THE
BURNING OF NEW LONDON,
ON THE
SIXTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1781.

BY REV. N. H. BURNHAM.

CONTAINING ALSO

THE NARRATIVE OF RUFUS AVERY,
(FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT)

AND

STATEMENT OF AVERY DOWNER, M. D.

TOGETHER WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF COL. WILLIAM LEDYARD
AND MOTHER BAILEY,

INCLUDING A

POEM BY LEONARD WOOLSEY BAÇON,

Delivered on the Centennial Anniversary of the Battle of Groton Heights, September 6, 1881.

NEW LONDON, CONN.:
BINGHAM PAPER BOX CO.'S PRINT, MOUNTAIN AVENUE.
1903.



The Groton Monument.

The Groton Monument.

MOVED by the patriotic sentiments which the memory of such a day in our national history as September 6th, 1781, is calculated to arouse, "a number of gentlemen in Groton, in the year 1826, organized an association for the purpose of erecting a monument." This simple memorial shaft is composed of granite quarried from the same soil which those to whom it is dedicated, defended with their lives. The corner stone was laid September 6th, 1826, and the monument was dedicated September 6th, 1830, in a manner befitting the place and the occasion.

During the centennial year of 1881, the height, originally one hundred and twenty-seven feet, was extended, so that the column now measures one hundred and thirty-five feet. Other important improvements were also made. The monument is in form an obelisk, twenty-two feet square at base of the shaft, and eight and one-half feet at the base of the pyramidion, resting on a die twenty-four feet square, and this again on a base twenty-six feet square. The top is reached by a circular stairway of one hundred and sixty-six steps, and is two hundred and sixty-five feet above the waters of the Thames. From the apex a picture of unrivaled beauty presents itself, covering the opposite bank of the river, the hills to the west of Montville, and extending far out over the waters of Long Island Sound, as well as Fishers Island Sound and Fishers Island.

The original marble slab inserted in the west wall of the die contained the following inscription:

This Monument

Was erected under the patronage of the State of Connecticut, A. D. 1830,
and in the 55th year of the Independence of the U. S. A.

In Memory of the Brave Patriots

who fell in the massacre of Fort Griswold near this spot

on the 6th of September, A. D. 1781,

when the British under the command of

the traitor Benedict Arnold,

burnt the towns of New London & Groton, and spread
desolation and woe throughout this region.

The visitor to the scenes of Fort Griswold should not fail to note the well, which is the same existing at the time of the massacre, and to which dying men "in fevered anguish wistfully turned and vainly craved of the implacable Briton its cooling draught."

The Groton Monument.

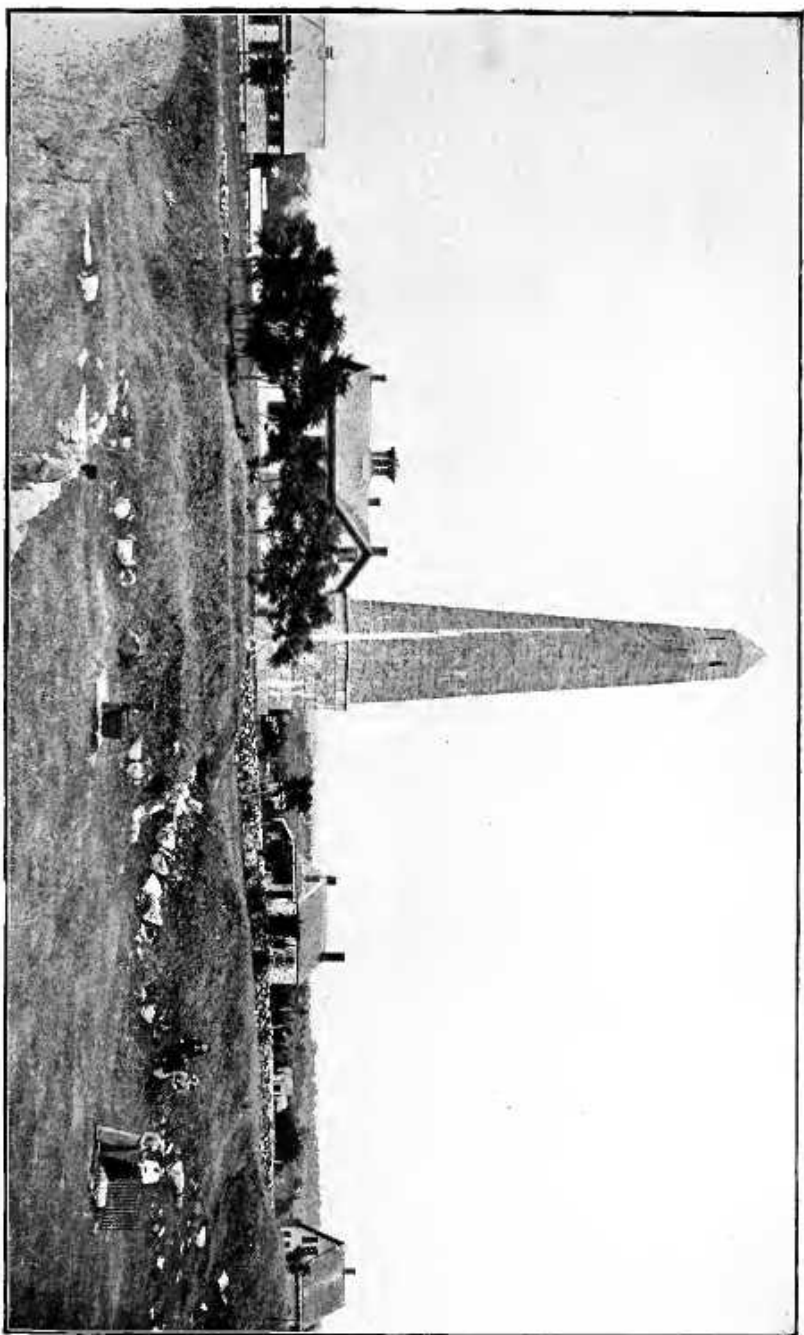
On the left of the entrance and enclosed by an iron fence is a granite slab marking the spot where Colonel Ledyard fell, and bearing the inscription :

ON THE SPOT
COL. WILLIAM LEDYARD
FELL BY HIS OWN SWORD IN THE HANDS
OF A BRITISH OFFICER TO WHOM HE HAD
SURRENDERED IN THE MASSACRE OF
FORT GRISWOLD, SEPT. 5, 1781.

In the year 1893, the Groton Monument Association applied to the State Legislature for an appropriation of five thousand dollars, which was promptly granted. This appropriation was expended in needed repairs upon the monument and in extensive improvements on the adjacent grounds. A panel of white bronze bearing the same inscription as the former marble slab, which had become cracked and otherwise defaced, was inserted in the same place in the monument as that occupied by the one removed. The above repairs were completed in the early part of 1894.

Recently the Anna Warner Bailey Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, through their regent, applied for the use of the stone house adjoining the monument, as a repository for such revolutionary relics and mementos as are now, or shall hereafter come into their possession, and for other purposes.

Thus the Groton Monument stands today as a shrine, to which all who dwell beneath its shadow may often turn, or to which they may welcome those who, as pilgrims, shall visit it to learn or to recall the cherished names and mighty deeds of those brave men, to whom it has been erected as a constant and enduring memorial.



View of Grenon Monument from Old Fort.

Showing spot where Colonel LeMay's field, surrounded by iron cones, the old Well and the North Gate.



Fort Griswold and New London Harbor.

The Battle of Groton Heights.

THE Battle of Groton Heights, fought September 6th, 1781, well deserves to be ranked with the contest at Lexington and Bunker Hill—those famous preludes to Saratoga and Yorktown. In this conflict, as in those, the heroic patriotism of our Revolutionary sires was displayed with a simple and touching grandeur that must ever awaken in the heart of every true American feelings of the deepest gratitude and admiration.

To outward seeming the battle was a defeat. In reality it was a glorious victory, whose every incident is worthy of being treasured up among the precious memorials of those revolutionary days. A small band of patriotic warriors defending their own and the liberties of thousands, yet unborn, against the forces of tyranny and oppression, such was the contest upon which the sun looked down on that memorable September day, more than a hundred years ago. While, on the other hand, the foes of the liberty strove with an equally clear and determined purpose.

Sir Henry Clinton, greatly chagrined at the manner in which he had been outwitted by General Washington, determined to retrieve his error by striking a decisive blow that should at once and forever deliver the high seas from the hated presence and depredations of those bold and adventurous American privateers, whose daring and successful exploits had so grievously injured British commerce, and so exasperatingly insulted and persistently defied British pride and British power. And, since from its harbor there had gone forth multitudes of these determined and successful opponents of the royal cause, upon their return had found a ready mart for their prizes and spoil among its townspeople, it was determined to make a bold and resolute attack upon New London. And thus, at the same time, to satisfy the desire for revenge and the thirst for plunder, a plunder most rich. "The cargo of the merchant ship Hannah alone being valued at four hundred thousand dollars."

For this expedition great preparations were made and the command of it shrewdly given to that Judas of the Revolution, Benedict Arnold, who, in September, 1780, had "deserted the American cause and had been received into the British service with the rank of Brigadier General."

It was the fleet of thirty-two sail, bearing the troops to their destination, that Sergeant Rufus Avery discovered from his lofty station in Fort Griswold at the earliest dawn of that renowned September morning. Instantly informing his superior officer, Capt. William Latham,