



HERITAGE LIBRARY

News

A Publication of The Heritage Library Foundation, Inc.

Volume XI Issue 4

Winter 2008

Heritage Library News

BIRDIES FOR CHARITY TIME *Sign up now!*

It's Birdies For Charity time and we have been invited to take part again this year. We ask you to please use the form included in this newsletter and pledge One Cent or more for every birdie scored in the 2008 Verizon Heritage golf tournament to be played on The Harbour Town Links April 14th thru 20th. If you would rather, you may pledge a fixed amount.

The Heritage Classic Foundation, which runs the tournament, sets aside approximately \$100,000 from tournament distributions to charity and distributes it among the Birdies for Charity participants according to the funds each group raises. We realized \$4,354.64 last year.—\$3,094.29 pledged by 41

(Continued on page 2)

INAUGURAL FESTIVAL WINDS UP WITH A BANG

The Library finished its tenth anniversary year with a festival at Historic Honey Horn in early October celebrating not just our library's accomplishments since its founding in 1997, but more importantly the history of the Island and the diverse cultures and heritage of its residents and visitors. By all accounts it was greeted with great enthusiasm by those attending the Sunday Afternoon



Sounds of the Civil War—Ten Pound Parrot Gun in Action

festivities under the live oaks and on the fields of Historic Honey Horn.

The audience, modest but enthusiastic, thrilled to the demonstrations of military contingents representing the Revolutionary and Civil War periods in our history. They cheered on the dancers and singers from the Hilton Head School for the Arts,

the Barbershoppers, and the Step-pin' Stones Band.

Dr. Tay Goins, CEO of the Eastern Cherokee, Southern Iroquois and United Tribes of South Carolina entertained the crowd with moments from the American Indian culture with song and story.

Mayor Tom Peebles and his wife Mary Ann were on hand for the opening and stayed to enjoy the day's events.

A sampling of photographs from the festival appear on page 4.

Inside This Issue

<i>President's Column</i>	<i>Page 2</i>
<i>About Our Members And Volunteers</i>	<i>Page 3</i>
<i>Festival Photos</i>	<i>Page 4</i>
<i>Annual Meeting Notice and Proxy</i>	<i>Page 5</i>
<i>Feature Article— General David Wooster</i>	<i>Page 7</i>

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

The 2008 Annual Meeting of The Heritage Library Foundation, Inc. will be held at The Heritage Library

3:00 PM WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 20, 2008

All members and friends of The Heritage Library Foundation are encouraged to attend.

Whether you are planning to attend or not, to help insure a quorum is present please complete and return the PROXY form found on page 5.

Heritage Library Foundation, Inc.
Board of Directors
Officers

E. W. Altstaetter—President
 G. Norma Harberger—Vice President
 Nancy M. Burke—Secretary
 Open—Treasurer

Directors

Term expiring 2008

E. W. "Bill" Altstaetter
 Isobel Bitner
 Robert P. Smith
 Iva Roberts Welton

Term expiring 2009

Emory S. Campbell
 G. Norma Harberger
 Hunter Montgomery
 Robert E. H. Peeples

Term expiring 2010

Nancy M. Burke
 Earl S. "Smittie" Cooler
 Ed Dowaschinski
 Natalie Hefter

Operating Divisions

Hilton Head Island History Division

Historic Preservation Projects
 History Research and Studies
 Fort Mutchel
 Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery
 Sites Identification and Marking

The Heritage Library

History & Family Heritage Library
 Books, Periodicals, Microfilm &
 CDs DSL Internet Connection

Heritage Library Press

Specialty Book Publishing
 Newsletter Productions
 Book Repair Assistance

Heritage Library Workshops

Genealogy Classes and Workshops
 History Lectures, Seminars and
 Conferences

Heritage Library News is a publication of The Heritage Library Press, a division of The Heritage Library Foundation, Inc., Hilton Head Is., SC 29928-4640

Views, opinions, and conclusions expressed in the feature articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the management of The Heritage Library News or the Heritage Library Foundation.



President's Column

By Bill Altstaetter

At the beginning of the "second decade" for your Foundation, the year 2008 dawns bright with opportunity, opportunities to advance the level of historical knowledge about our island home.

New information is rapidly coming to light by virtue of our records searches at The National Achieves. Data on island land acquisitions during the years of the 1860s previously buried deep in the Achieves files has surfaced and when analyzed, indexed, and cataloged will be extremely valuable to residents and visitors alike in their quest for "details of the past."

New projects are in development to engage the youth of the community in the excitement of searching the past for glimpses of the future. In the coming months you will learn of opportunities to participate in, and lead these projects. While the new year dawn is "bright," there are "storm clouds" aplenty hovering around.

Storm clouds which must be faced with increasing urgency. They are the twin issues we have been facing in recent years, "space" and "money."

Space is the first twin. As the library collections grow and more patrons find out how valuable the resources of The Heritage Library are in their searching for an understanding of their personal past and

BIRDIES FOR CHARITY TIME

(Continued from page 1)

members and friends of the library and \$1,260.35 contributed by the Heritage Classic Foundation. This is an easy fundraiser for all of us to take part in for the library—let's do even better this year! Feel free to copy the form and give it to friends so they may also take part.

Please send your pledges to the address on the form—not to the library. The Rotary Club of Hilton Head Island—Sunset is the coordinator of the program. You will receive a bill after the tournament has taken place.

Thanks in advance.

Norma Harberger, Chair
 Heritage Library Birdies For
 Charity Committee

the heritage of our country, we are again reaching the limits of our physical plant.

We must find a permanent home, a permanent home we can afford! For some years we have been exploring options for a long term solution at another island location. But the solution remains illusive and at a minimum is four or five years in the future.

Of immediate concern are the next three to five years. Do we stay where we are or do we go someplace else?

Which brings us full circle to "money."

"Money," the other of the twin storm clouds! Money to pay the monthly bills. Money to invest in our plant and equipment. Money to grow

(Continued on page 3)

About Our Members and Volunteers

President's Column

(Continued from page 2)

the future.

These twin storm clouds likewise present each and everyone of us with opportunity. The opportunity to rise to the challenge and secure the FUTURE OF THE HERITAGE LIBRARY.

In the weeks leading to the Foundation's Annual Meeting February 20th you will receive my report covering the operations of our tenth anniversary year. It will deal in depth, with some of the actions your board and management are taking to address our immediate operational issues resulting from the successes and failures of 2007.

This will present the first of your opportunities. The opportunity to respond with comments, ideas, and suggestions on the course to be charted for the next ten years. If we are to take The Heritage Library in the direction you, the members wish, we must have a clear understanding of your wishes.

We are asking for your ideas and for an indication of your willingness to subscribe to securing the future by an increased level of funding.

Take this opportunity to respond, in writing, by e-mail or snail mail, by phone, or in person. Silent indifference is not an option!

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;"

— William Shakespeare

Please respond. DO IT NOW!

I am looking forward with keen anticipation to hearing from you.

SPECIAL NOTICE

HERITAGE LIBRARY NEWS MOVES TO ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION

With the next issue of Heritage Library News we will begin electronic distribution in lieu of the present system of distribution by special permit through the United States Postal Service.

This will provide a significant reduction in the costs of printing and distributing the newsletter in the future.

When the newsletter is ready for release, those of you who have provided us with a web mail address will receive notice that it may be downloaded from the Library's web site <www.heritagelib.org.

Printed copies will be available free of charge at the Library. Persons wishing to receive printed copies by first class mail may order them through to Library Bookstore at Five Dollars per issue.

SPECIAL PROGRAM NOTICE

*"Genealogy On-Line—
Tips for On-line Searches."*

Wednesday, Feb. 13 - 2:00-3:30 pm

Carol Clemens will discuss a number of web sites which are little known but have a wealth of information. Some of these may help you break through that "wall" that continues to frustrate your search.

Call 686-6560 for reservations.

Fee: \$17 for current members of the Heritage Library Foundation and \$20 for non-members.

*from the Membership Desk
By Gwen Altstaetter*

Happy New Year!

We want to thank those of you who participated in the 10th Anniversary Celebration week-end! Those who attended any or all of the events appeared to really enjoy the activities. It is unfortunate that more of you could not have taken part in the celebration.

Since the last Newsletter we are happy to welcome 17 new members. Ed and Kathryn Funk, Donna Waller, Mike Morse, Henry Hutson, Debra Frieden, Walter and Corinne West, Margaret Pratt, James and Lucille Peppers, Barbara Born, Robert Albrecht, Evelyn Sheppard, Gary Frank and Linda Piekut. Also a "Welcome back" to Robert Blust and Sharon Lewis. A very sincere thanks also goes to all the members who have continued to support the library by renewing their memberships. We do depend on your interest to keep the doors open and enable us to help those who are just starting and those who are back working on the various branches of their "trees."

New volunteers at the Library are Donna Waller on Monday mornings and Al Burns on Monday afternoons. Saturday mornings you will see the smiling face of Jane Grob as she greets our patrons. In the last few months we have lost some of our active volunteers and need to replace them so we can keep service up to what has been the expected "norm." Please check your calendars for 2008, and give us a call to let us know when you can give some time, either for individual projects, behind the desk, or assisting our patrons in their research.

FESTIVAL PHOTOS



Military Heritage on display



11th SC Artillery Regt (Revolutionary War)
SC Company of Historical Re-enactors



Re-enactors from The National Park Service
Black Powder Demonstration Team
Fort Pulaski National Monument
Savannah, Georgia

Special Guests of Honor
Mayor Tom Peebles and wife Mary Ann



Cultural Heritage on display



Steppin' Stones Rock Band



Pageant singers and dancers from
The Hilton Head School for the Arts



Dr. Tay Goins—Eastern Cherokee, Southern
Iroquois & United Tribes of South Carolina



Hilton Head Island Barbershoppers
Chorus

Annual Meeting Notice and Proxy

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the Heritage Library Foundation, Inc. is scheduled for Wednesday, February 20, 2008 at 3:00 p.m. in the Library, Suite 300, The Courtyard Building, 32 Office Park Road, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, 29928-4640.

All members are encouraged to attend. If you cannot attend please complete the proxy below and mail to Nancy Burke, Secretary, The Heritage Library Foundation, 32 Office Park Road, Suite 300, Hilton Head Island, SC 29928-4640 prior to the meeting date.

**Heritage Library Foundation, Inc.
2008 Annual Meeting Proxy**

I, We _____, the undersigned member(s)(the "member"), hereby designate the Secretary of the Corporation Nancy N. Burke or her designee (the "Proxy") as proxy for the member(s), with respect to the member's voting rights in The Heritage Library Foundation, Inc. (the "Foundation").

By this designation, the Member(s) hereby revokes any prior designation of proxy that the Member(s) may have given previously.

This designation of proxy shall be effective for the Annual Meeting of the Members of the Foundation to be held on Wednesday, February 20, 2008 at 3:00 p.m., and at all adjournments of such meeting.

The Proxy shall have the full power, as the member's substitute, to represent the member(s) and vote on all issues and motions that are properly presented at the meeting(s) for which this designation of proxy is effective. The Proxy shall have the authority to vote entirely at the discretion of the Proxy.

Provided, however, with respect to the following issue(s) the Proxy shall vote as follows:

For _____ Against _____ the election to the Board of Directors as recommended by the Board of the following individuals:

*For three years 2008-2011
Iva Roberts Welton
Lawrence S. Rowland*

*For two years 2008-2010
Isobel Bitner (two years)*

*For one year 2008-2009
Robert P. Smith*

Date of Signing: _____

Member Printed Name: _____

Member Signature: _____

Cut along this line

Fold here

From _____

PlaceFirst
Class
Stamp
Here

Nancy M. Burke, Secretary
The Heritage Library Foundation, Inc.
32 Office Park Road, Suite 300
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928-4640

2008 Annual Meeting Proxy

Fold here

Feature Article — General David Wooster—Part II

By Lyman D. Wooster, Staff Feature Writer

Editors Note— The feature article in this issue concludes Lyman's study of his ancestor General David Wooster, hero of the American Revolution from Connecticut begun in the Summer 2007 Issue Volume XI Issue 2. Part I may be seen on-line at www.heritagelib.org/newsletter.

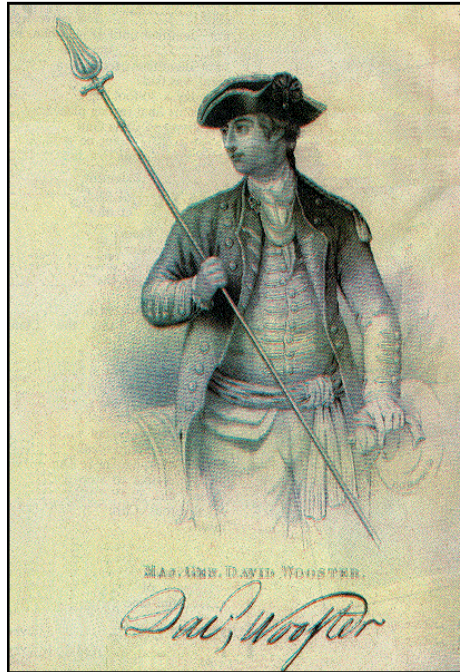
General Schuyler was a commanding figure: slender but well-muscled. He evidently was courteous to his equals but not to men he considered to be of a lesser station. An historian, Christopher Ward, in his *The War of the Revolution*, had this to add to his assessment of Schuyler: "In depth and breadth of mind, in stability of intention, in firm decisiveness to plan and to execute, in the ability to meet a confused situation, discern its essentials and expend his energies upon them only, Schuyler was somewhat deficient. . . . He was wrongly placed as a military officer; his proper place was at the council table."

This apparently was the nature of the man who was Wooster's immediate superior during America's ill-fated military move against Canada. Ward states that there were no orders or directions to invade Canada, but Congress on June 27, 1775 recommended "aggressive movement if Gen. Schuyler should find it practical and not disagreeable to the Canadians." Problems between the two men went beyond their personality differences; there were intercolonial jealousies as well. Some of Wooster's Connecticut men, according to Ward, refused to adhere to the New Yorkers' orders until Wooster was present.

Deming, in his oration, reported that Wooster on his way from the New York City area to Ticonderoga had "provoked the enmity of his immediate chief" by permitting some of his men to return home on furlough and by ordering a general court-martial for offenses during the brigade's march. These actions Schuyler considered a presumption of his authority and he so informed Wooster, who replied that his men were under Connecticut

martial law and thus subject to his authority. As for military etiquette, Wooster declared that no disrespect was intended. Schuyler was not appeased. He demanded to know if Wooster considered himself above General Montgomery in rank, to which Wooster replied, "I have the cause of my country too much at heart to attempt to make any difficulties." He cooperated fully with Montgomery and actually considered him a personal friend.

The two generals, Montgomery and Wooster, led their forces against Canada's St. John's, which capitulated, after which they marched on Montreal. Then, Wooster remained in command of the troops holding Montreal while Montgomery moved on Quebec where he was killed during the December 31, 1775 assault on that city.



Montgomery's death left Wooster in command of the American army of 2,000 men, of which more than half were unfit for duty: many were physically ailing (small pox was rampant); most were underpaid and desertions were common; and winter clothing was lacking as was equipment such as artillery. To attack Quebec with such a force was impractical so a siege was

begun. The difficult situation was made more so because Wooster was again bedeviled by Schuyler, and acrimonious correspondence between the two men led them both to refer their grievances to Congress.

The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* says that "Wooster had embarked on a series of arbitrary and ill-judged actions over the winter of 1775-76 which broke most of Montgomery's promises. He closed the Mass Houses on Christmas Eve, attempted to arrest loyalists, . . . and announced that all who opposed Congressional wishes would be arrested as traitors." Why Wooster allegedly imposed these "actions" is not evident from the account in that *Dictionary*, but June Callwood in her *Portrait of Canada* asserts that it was the anti-Catholicism of Wooster and his troops, a religious prejudice not uncommon among 18th Century New Englanders. Wooster was apparently criti-

(Continued on page 8)

Feature Article— General David Wooster

(Continued from page 7)

cized by one of the Canadian commissioners to the Continental Congress; and Wooster's enemies worked to prejudice others in authority. In April, however, he assumed command of the forlorn American army before Quebec until superseded by Thomas.

The on-going dispute between Schuyler and Wooster prompted the latter to recommend to Congress that it should investigate his administration of affairs and conduct in Canada and this the Congress did. In the [Genealogy of Woosters in America](#), it is noted that as a result of a thorough and long investigation and the examination of witnesses and correspondence, even Wooster's enemies in Congress were forced to unite with his friends and acquit him of every charge. He was now 66 years of age and, having been away from his family for nearly a year, he obtained leave of Congress to return to Connecticut. He resigned his commission as brigadier general in the Continental Army but was reappointed a major general and commander-in-chief in the state's militia by Connecticut authorities.

In spite of the degrading treatment Wooster had to contend with as a result of the Canadian experience, his devotion to the Revolution remained as strong as ever. Upon returning to his home in Connecticut he used his influence and standing in the state to recruit soldiers and to gather supplies and equipment; and he often traveled throughout the area in his capacity as commander-in-chief of the Connecticut militia. One nearby town of particular importance was Danbury where there was stored an abundance of military provisions: 3,000 barrels of pork, more than 1,000 barrels of flour, several hundred barrels of beef, 1,600 tents, 2,000 bushels of grain as well as rum, wine and rice. It was to destroy this depot's supplies that the British chose to launch an attack on Danbury.

Brigadier General William Tryon, in a letter to King George, gave his account of this raid. Under orders from General Howe, 2,000 troops, including some Hessian mercenaries, a small contingent of Indians, and 300 loyalists, sailed on April 25, 1777 from New York into Long Island Sound. The force landed at Compo Hill (near Westport) and then the next day in a heavy rain it moved inland arriving in Danbury in the late afternoon. There, the British went about destroying the depot's food and other supplies and setting fire to 19 houses.

In a follow-up letter to the king, Tryon wrote of events on April 27: "Your Majesty: Having achieved

our objective of destroying the Danbury, Connecticut Supply Depot [the depot was in fact a church] we became aware through intelligence sources that the Rebels were gathering in militias to force a confrontation. I immediately ordered a withdrawal to our ships at Westport via an alternate route, but apparently some of the locals became aware of our changed plans and alerted their militias by midnight rides through the countryside. It is becoming increasingly apparent that we cannot count on the loyalty of the locals. Indeed, in this instance they went so far as to dispatch a 16-year old girl to alert the enemy to our whereabouts, an indication of the desperation. As we made our way down a country road we were attacked from the rear by a contingent of some 400 troops under the Rebel command of Brigadier General David Wooster, who has long been on our list of hostile enemy combatant leaders. After experiencing some casualties, several as a result of overturned wagons, our forces were able to beat back Wooster's militia and the General himself was struck by our superior firepower, and we believe he will not survive the night. Nevertheless it was incumbent upon us to hasten our withdrawal.

"Unfortunately, we were blocked by a force of 400 Rebel militia at the town of Ridgefield under the command of Brigadier General Benedict Arnold. At this point it became obvious to us that the Rebel forces were not as disorganized and demoralized as we had been led to believe by some of our informants. Despite three cannon and the force of our coalition troops, General Arnold seriously delayed our progress. He himself was twice unseated from his horse by cannon, but nevertheless managed to escape unharmed. (There are rumors afoot that Arnold may be willing to defect, depending upon certain conditions he has stipulated privately. Meanwhile, he continues to be a formidable foe.)"

The American account of what became known as the Battle of Ridgefield differs interestingly from the British. For one thing, it notes that the large quantity of liquor among the stores in Danbury was consumed by the British troops, most of whom were so intoxicated that they would have been incapable of coping with an attack by the Patriots if the Americans had known of the situation. General Tryon was concerned enough that at two a.m. he ordered his troops to prepare to depart for their fleet at Compo and to travel by a route different from the one they had taken from Compo to Danbury.

To go back in time for a few days: when the Americans became aware of the British force arriving on the Connecticut shore, Generals Wooster and Arnold were both in New Haven and they immediately gathered up

(Continued on page 9)

Feature Article— General David Wooster

(Continued from page 8)

militia forces and started for Fairfield in a heavy rain to meet with General Silliman and his 500-man militia. Upon their arrival the combined force totaled 700 men. When Wooster subsequently learned that Tryon was leaving Danbury, the American forces were divided: 500 men under Arnold were sent to Ridgefield where they were expected to intercept the British, and Wooster, taking a different route, went cross-country in the general direction of Ridgefield, expecting to approach the British from the rear. This in fact occurred, and upon overtaking and surprising the British troops, who were having breakfast, at around eight in the morning of the 27th, Wooster's militia captured 40 men and inflicted some damage. He then withdrew until the British were on the march again.

Wooster's militia made their second charge about two miles from Ridgefield village and were met by heavy musket and cannon fire that frightened his men and slowed their advance. Subsequent action is described in some detail in a History of Ridgefield. To rally his troops, Wooster turned in his saddle and shouted, "Come on, my boys, never mind such random shots." After that exhortation, "he was struck by the fatal musket ball. He fell from his horse and his sash was stripped from him and used to bear him from the field of battle. . . . The brave general was carried back a half mile over the line of march just passed by his foes. Upon a large flat rock on the westerly side of the road, the wounded patriot was laid. Dr. Turner, a surgeon with the militia, dressed his wounds. The General was then placed in a carriage and taken back to Danbury."

Mary Clap Wooster, who was in New Haven when notified of her husband's condition, left immediately for Danbury; she arrived before he died, though he was unconscious and failed to recognize her. After suffering severe pain for several days General Wooster died on May 2 and two days later, on a Sunday, his funeral was held in a Danbury church. He was reportedly buried in an unmarked grave in the church's cemetery.

Wooster died insolvent. He had sometimes paid his troops with his personal funds, but the written evidence of such transactions was destroyed by the British. Two years after Wooster's death, General Tryon, the British officer who had set the destructive fire in Danbury and whose unit had been attacked by Wooster's militia, raided New Haven in July 1779 with, according to one

source, the Wooster house as his specific target. The British troops are said to have made a bonfire in the street with the house's furniture, and they carried off two trunks filled with early records of Yale College and with personal papers of the Wooster's. Without written financial accounts, which were lost by the British raiders in the waters of Long Island Sound, as evidence, it was not possible for Mrs. Wooster to recover the money her husband had advanced to his troops; she was declared a debtor and forced to appeal to the state legislature for financial relief. She died in New Haven in June, 1807 at the age of 78.

Several biographies note that the Continental Congress, upon learning of General Wooster's death passed a resolution on June 17, 1777 that a monument be erected to his memory. It further appropriated \$500 for that purpose, but the money was never forthcoming. Another biography notes that in 1822 the U. S. House of Representatives passed a resolution and appropriated \$500 for the purpose of constructing a monument honoring Wooster. The Senate, however, did not concur because of the numerous requests for similar expenditures. It was the Masons, of which David Wooster had been the founder of Connecticut's first lodge, that had a monument of Portland granite erected in the Danbury cemetery (now called the Wooster Cemetery). It was unveiled and dedicated on April 27, 1854 with a crowd of 10,000 in attendance and with Henry C. Deming, a prominent political figure, delivering a biographic oration.

That public ceremony suggests that the one blemish on Wooster's military career had been forgotten by the generation of Connecticut residents living in the mid-Nineteenth Century. The blemish has not, however, been forgotten by historians. The author, S.M.P. (the initials of Stanley M. Pargellis, a noted historian), of Wooster's biographic sketch in the Dictionary of American Biography describes the general as tactless, brutal, dull, and uninspired. SMP indicates that his source was J. H. Smith, author of "Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony," and notes that Smith was "unsparing" in his criticism. Both Smith and SMP were writing of Wooster more than a 100 years after Wooster's death and thus making judgments without benefit of a personal acquaintanceship. One possible source of their pejorative opinions is the report of two commissioners, Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll, who had been sent to Canada to investigate the military situation there, although neither man had had any military experience. Their report to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, stated that General

(Continued on page 10)

Feature Article— General David Wooster

(Continued from page 9)

Wooster is “unfit, totally unfit to command your Army and conduct the war” and they suggested that he be recalled. Without having access to the full text of that report it is not possible to know what factors of unfitness were found by the commissioners. Another historian, James Nelson, writing in the 21st century a biography of Benedict Arnold, used such words as “crotchety,” “pompous,” and “contentious” to describe Wooster. A contemporary of Wooster’s that is a likely source of those uncomplimentary words used by Nelson, by the views of the commissioners, and by some historians is Schuyler. He and Wooster quarreled on more than one occasion and their correspondence revealed Schuyler’s intemperateness, so that the New Yorker’s opinion of Wooster -- like his judgment -- was almost certain to be harsh. Historians rely on other historians when assessing the character of persons they could not have known personally, and they are attracted to those descriptions that tend to fit the views they wish to emphasize and that put the subject of their biography in the best possible light.

There is little question that the assessment of General Wooster by most historians is largely based on his role in the 1775-76 Canadian campaign, and the critics of Wooster’s generalship there were either ignorant of the conditions or their judgment colored by bias. And what has too often been overlooked in assessing Wooster’s conduct is the Congressional investigation of his role in the ill-fated Canadian campaign of 1776: that is the report that acquitted him of all blame, of all charges. It was not neglect or ignorance that prevented him from attempting to conquer Quebec. It was, instead, a proper assessment of the military situation, that the British forces there had been reinforced, that the Patriot’s forces had been severely depleted, and that his own forces had not been reinforced and key equipment not resupplied as requested. In short, Wooster correctly estimated that the Americans were outnumbered and had no chance of defeating the Canadians. He was much more capable than “a general . . . of a hayfield,” which is what one critic asserted.

The large crowd at the granite monument’s dedication ceremony was in effect paying homage to David Wooster’s courage, his patriotism, his generosity, and his military acumen. The Dictionary of American Biography, in a sketch lacking specificity, stated that Wooster displayed “incapacities,” presumably meaning military incapacities. What did people who weren’t



Monument to David Wooster

alive when David Wooster served his country know of his capacities and incapacities? Well, men who served under him and who moved to Ohio after the war thought well enough of him and his contribution to the Revolution to name a town and subsequently a college for him, and some of those at the dedication ceremony may have been children of men who had served under Wooster and had learned from their parent something about Wooster; others may have been students of history; and in 1854 the Revolutionary War was recent enough for many to be knowledgeable of its course and the contributions of its leaders.

David Wooster’s record in combat was almost certainly well known in 19th Century Connecticut. His con-

(Continued on page 11)

Feature Article— General David Wooster

duct in the French and Indian War as well as in the Revolution showed him to be personally courageous, and the affection his men had for him must have paid off in creating units, whether a company or a regiment or a brigade, that faced the enemy bravely. But generals are supposed to be more than unit commanders. So what can we surmise about his abilities as a strategist and tactician?

As for strategy, one can look at the group in which Wooster was a leading member that planned and financed the 1775 attack by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold on Ticonderoga, the results of which were a major accomplishment: not only had the Patriots acquired a strategically located fort, but the conquest yielded 100 pieces of invaluable artillery. Upon receiving the news of that achievement, Gen. Washington dispatched Knox, then a colonel, to Ticonderoga with instructions to get some of the cannon to the Continental Army in the Boston area, and that Knox accomplished by oxen-drawn sleds during the winter of 1775-76. As a strategist and tactician, there is also Wooster's decision to resist the recommendation of some Patriots to resume in 1776 the attack on Quebec; he knew an attack would be futile. Then there is his tactical decision in 1777 to divide the 700 Connecticut militiamen, one group being sent to Ridgefield with the objective of intercepting and harassing Tryon's British forces there and the other group, Wooster and his 200 men, harassing the 2,000 British troops from the rear. That two-way tactic succeeded in slowing the much larger British force and inflicting some casualties.

Nelson in his book on Benedict Arnold referred to David Wooster as a New Haven merchant but Wooster had had in 1775 more military experience than most other Americans serving in the War for Independence. He had had over 30 years of active military duty and with that service and the experiences of a 66 year old man, one who was still physically and mentally alert, he was a good deal more than a merchant. In the Revolutionary War he was surely an asset, but one not fully appreciated by some members of the Continental Congress and some of the officers in the Continental Army -- and some historians. But the crowd that gathered in a Danbury cemetery in the spring of 1854 to dedicate a monument to David Wooster remembered him as a resolute patriot and a man of remarkable character and sound military judgment

Sources Used in Researching David Wooster's Life and Career

American Historical Society. Encyclopedia of Biogra-

phy. "Wooster: Revolutionary Soldier." Pp. 22-24. New York. 1917

Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography. Six Vols. New York: D. Appleton and Co. 1887-1889. web.cortland.edu/woosterk/Gen David04.html

Callwood, June. Portrait of Canada. Doubleday & Company. 1981

Carruth, Gorton. The Encyclopedia of American Facts and Dates. 10th Ed. New York: Harper Collins Publishers. 1997.

David, Mathew L. Memoirs of Aaron Burr. Volume 1.

Deming, Henry C. "Life of Gen. David Wooster." Oration. (Delivered April 27, 1854). Printed <http://web.cortland.edu/wooster/deming.html>. Published version has 45 footnotes, indicating that it was a well-researched paper.

Dictionary of American Biography. Wooster, David. Vol. X, pp. 524-525. American Council of Learned Societies. 1936. (Author was S. M. P.; or Stanley M. Pargellis, a noted historian).

Dictionary of Canadian Biography. Ramsey Cook, General Editor, University of Toronto Press.

Wooster, David. Genealogy of Woosters in America, Descended from Edward Wooster of Connecticut. M. Weiss, San Francisco, 1885. web.cortland.edu/woosterk/Gen David01.html. The Genealogy includes the "Public Letters of General David Wooster from April 1775 to 1777, The Date of His Death."

History of Ridgefield. "The Battle of Ridgefield." pp.107-111 (Out of Print).

McKay, Ian Danbury Raid. The Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution

National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans. Vol. II. Manson Bancroft New York 1835.

Nelson, James L. Benedict Arnold's Navy. McGraw Hill. 2006.

Orcott, Samuel History of the Old Town of Derby, Connecticut, 1642-1880. web.cortland.edu/woosterk/Gen David02.html

Riche, Bob "Mission Accomplished." www.lively-arts.com. (The British Raid on Danbury, Connecticut, Apr. 26 1777. Document recently uncovered in archives of Windsor Castle.)

Ward, Christopher The War of the Revolution. Vol. I. MacMillan and Company: New York, 1952.

~~~~~

*History comes alive at  
The Heritage Library  
On Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*



*The Heritage Library Foundation, Inc.  
32 Office Park Road Suite 300  
The Courtyard Building  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928-4640*

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 93  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29928