250th Anniversary of the American Revolution



First Connecticut Council of Safety Meeting held at the War Office (June 7, 1775 – June 7, 2025)

". . ., of the Records of the Colony of Connecticut, this book contains **the record of the Council of Safety from their first sitting, June 7th, 1775**, to October 2d, 1776, which was their last meeting before the session of the first General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, held on the second Thursday of that month." [1]

"The Council of Safety had been created in May, 1775, to act with the governor on detailed and emergency matters connected with the war. Although a preliminary treaty of peace with England was signed November 30, 1782, the war dragged on well into the following year. Consequently in May, 1783, the Assembly authorized the Council of Safety to continue its operations until the rising of the Assembly the following October (p. 120). The last recorded meeting of the emergency body took place on October 28, 1783, although its record contains one letter written by the governor on November 15 (pp. 250, 251). With these events the Council of Safety passed out of existence." [2]

"With the exception of New Hampshire, Connecticut kept her Council of Safety longer than any of the other states. This was due to the fact that although the surrender of Cornwallis practically ended the war, the British still held New York and it was necessary for Connecticut to maintain and superintend a force adequate to protect the southern and western frontier. The last session of the Council of Safety was held October 28, 1783." [3]

Present at the first Council of Safety meeting held at Lebanon were:

Jonathan Trumbull, Esq., Governor
Matthew Griswold, Esq., Deputy Governor
Jabez Huntington, Esq.
William Williams, Esq.
Joshua West, Esq.
Jedediah Elderkin, Esq.
Nathaniel Wales Jr., Esq.
Benjamin Huntington, Esq.

Absent: Eliphalet Dyer, Esq., and Samuel Huntington, Esq. [4]

Back in January 2022 while pondering possible events to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. I suggested that CTSSAR commemorate the first meeting of the Connecticut Council of Safety. This historical event is particularly significant for our Society since we own and maintain the building where Governor Jonathan Trumbull and the Connecticut Council of Safety met while in Lebanon, Connecticut. This is really the War Office's main claim to fame, and why it has been preserved for all these years.

So far sub-committee members include Dan Dudley and Mark Sheldon. I've also included both the Color Guard Commander David Perkins and Property Steward David Packard as sub-committee members, since they both will play a big part in this. Compatriots interested in working on this sub-committee, let me know.

We're fortunate that June 7, 2025, falls on a Saturday.

Some ideas to discuss:

(1) Create a special U.S. postal cancellation stamp, like the one created for the Gen. Israel Putnam 300th Birthday event in Brooklyn, CT, back in 2018.

This cancellation could be designed in the shape of the War Office. We could have Commemorative 250th Anniversary War Office/Council of Safety postcards printed, stamped, and cancelled on June 7, 2025. We could sell these 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution souvenirs during the SAR National Congress and at the War Office. We would need to meet with the Lebanon Postmaster early next year to discuss this idea. This would be up to the Postmaster, and how much interest he has in helping us promote the American Revolution.

(2) State of Connecticut and Town of Lebanon Proclamations declaring June 7, 2025, as, "Connecticut Council of Safety Day," or something like that.

(3) Since we have the minutes of the June 7, 1775, meeting of the Connecticut Council of Safety held at Lebanon, Connecticut, we could create a skit/drama recreating that first

meeting. We could videotape the reenactment and post it to the War Office section of the Connecticut SAR webpage, social media, etc. The NSSAR could also post it on their new YouTube page. In 2008/2009 we recreated a Connecticut Council of Safety meeting at the War Office for a historical documentary titled, "East of the River," which appeared on PBS.

(4) SAR patriot grave markings for the 8 Council of Safety members present at the June 7, 1775, meeting in Lebanon, Connecticut. This could be combined with a wreath ceremony at the War Office. This idea could also be the main event. Something like we did back in 2005 for Captain Nathan Hale's 250th Birthday, with five wreath ceremonies (Coventry, New London, East Haddam, New Haven, Hartford) around the State. It's easier for this event since they are all roughly in the same area of the State.

Trumbull Cemetery, Lebanon, Connecticut: **Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, Sr.** (1710-1785), **William Williams** (1731-1811)

Windham Center Cemetery, Windham, Connecticut: **Jedediah Elderkin** (1718-1793), **Nathaniel Wales, Jr.** (___ - 1785)

Goshen Cemetery, Lebanon, Connecticut: **Joshua West** (1715-1783)

Duck River Cemetery, Old Lyme, Connecticut: **Matthew Griswold** (1714-1799)

Old Norwichtown Cemetery, Norwich, Connecticut: **Jabez Huntington** (1719-1786), **Benjamin Huntington** (1736-1800)

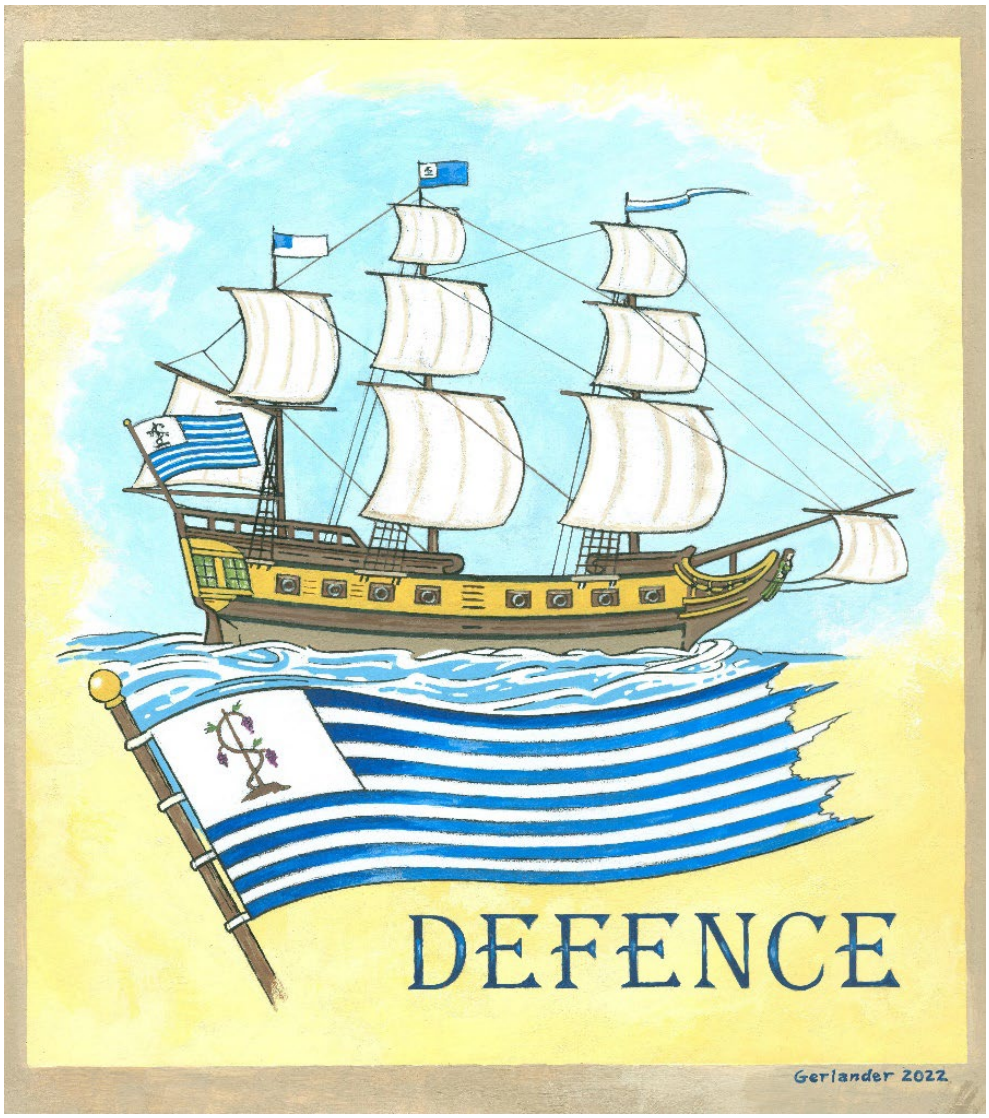
* Have commemorative 250th Anniversary ribbons, coins, pins made to commemorate the event.

Notes:

1. The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from May, 1775, to June, 1776, inclusive, with the Journal of the Council of Safety from June 7, 1775, to October 2, 1776, and an Appendix containing some Council Proceedings, 1663-1710., Charles J. Hoadly, LL.D., State Librarian, Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, Hartford, 1890, Preface Page III.
2. The Public Records of the State of Connecticut for the Years 1783 and 1784, with the Journal of the Council of Safety from January 9, 1783, to November 15, 1783, Compiled by Leonard Woods Labaree, State Historian, Published by the State, Hartford, 1943, Page VII.
3. The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution, Agnes Hunt, Ph.D., Press of Winn & Judson, Western Reserve University, Cleveland, 1904, Page 61.
4. The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from May, 1775, to June, 1776, inclusive, with the Journal of the Council of Safety from June 7, 1775, to October 2, 1776, and an Appendix containing some Council Proceedings, 1663-1710., Charles J. Hoadly, LL.D., State Librarian, Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, Hartford, 1890, Page 84.

250th Anniversary of the American Revolution

This ceremony could be held in March 2026 and/or March 2029

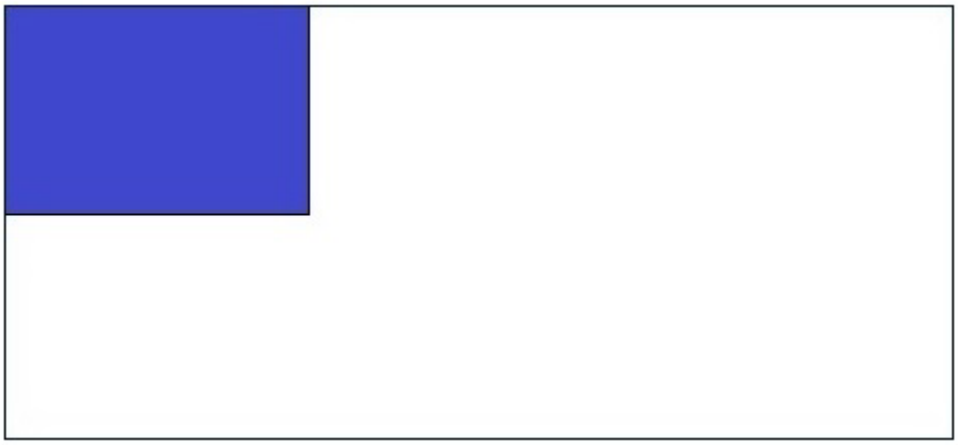


DEFENCE

Ideas regarding a proposal for a CTSSAR 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution Event remembering the Connecticut State Navy Ship Defence, and patriot grave marking or remembrance ceremony for the 4 or 5 patriots who drowned, March 10, 1779, under the command of Captain Samuel Smedley.

As I mentioned previously, I first became interested in this ship after CTSSAR received the white flag with blue canton back from the NSSAR Museum in 2016. This flag was donated to CTSSAR in 1891 by Compatriot Jonathan F. Morris, and it was adopted as the first Society flag of the CTSSAR, and used from 1891 to 1901 when it was replaced by the NSSAR flag we know today. The quote below and others started my research to discover whether this flag was something else, other than the first Society flag of the CTSSAR. It does not look like something you would have created specifically for the Society. This is also when the Society colors were white and blue, not today's blue, buff, and white.

"A 23 February 1776 voucher records payment to Anthony Perit for "11 yards blue Tammie, 26 yards white Tammie for the colors of ye brig Defence". The design of the Defence's colors is not known, but from the quantities of cloth one might guess that it was white with a blue canton." [1]



In one surviving letter from an SAR member who had a phone conversation in 1989 with the late Mr. Whitney Smith, Ph.D., Executive Director of The Flag Research Center, before the flags were examined,

"During our conversation I mentioned the companion flag from the Lebanon War Office and his offhand view is that this is probably a signal flag flown by a naval or merchant vessel as a means of identification. Knowing that Revolutionary War Time Governor Trumbull was an important importer a further examination of this flag might well be given consideration."

In addition to CTSSAR,

NJSSAR could be invited to this ceremony. Captain Richard Lloyd (1754-1792) of New Jersey, a Captain in Col. Moses Hazen's 2nd Canadian Regiment "Congress' Own," part of Gen. Enoch Poor's New Hampshire Brigade, part of the detachment stationed at New London under command of Gen. Samuel Holden Parsons, on board the Connecticut State naval ship Defence, March 10, 1779. He was a member of The Society of the Cincinnati in the State of New Jersey. Major Richard Lloyd is buried in the Old Newton Burial Ground, Newton, Sussex County, New Jersey.

NHSSAR could be invited to this ceremony since a portion of this detachment of Continental soldiers from The New Hampshire Brigade at Camp Reading, under the command of Enoch Poor, which included Col. Moses Hazen's 2nd Canadian "Congress' Own" Regiment were part of the Continental detachment under the command of Lt. Colonel Henry Dearborn, and under the overall command of General Samuel Holden Parsons at New London, Connecticut. Captain Richard Lloyd of Hazen's Regiment was an officer of this detachment on board the Defence.

NSSAR could be invited to this ceremony since Col. Moses Hazen's 2nd Canadian "Congress' Own" Regiment were part of the Continental detachment under the command of Lt. Colonel Henry Dearborn, and under the overall command of General Samuel Holden Parsons at New London, Connecticut. Captain Richard Lloyd of Hazen's Regiment was an officer of this detachment on board the Defence. This regiment was composed of men from the **thirteen states** and Canada.

International SAR (CANADA) could be invited to this ceremony since Col. Moses Hazen's 2nd Canadian "Congress' Own" Regiment was composed of men from the thirteen states and **CANADA**.

The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park could be invited to this ceremony since the Continental detachment aboard the Defence was taken from the Winter encampment at Camp Reading (1778-1779).

Invitations could also include the U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, Towns of Waterford & New London, local historical societies, etc.

The Shipwreck of the Defence happened off Goshen Point, on or around Bartlett's Reef (Goshen Reef) in Connecticut waters off Waterford, Connecticut. A popular fishing location today. After a visit to Goshen Point last year with Compatriot John Keeney, he believed that it was more off Watertown Beach Park. This seems to make more sense, in his journal, Lt. Colonel Henry Dearborn states, "the ship Defence of 18 guns **ran on shor near the mouth of this harbour [New London]** & is lost. Crew & Stores saved." Bartlett's Reef would also be farther out for lighters (flat bottomed barges) to reach. Since the exact location of the shipwreck is unknown, the proposed site is in the vicinity, and it's a beautiful site.



Proposed site of the ceremony.

Something like what we did in April 2002 for the 225th Anniversary of Tryon's Raid at Compo Beach in Westport, Connecticut. It was a very impressive ceremony on the beach.



This proposal is for the Connecticut naval ship Defence, not to be confused with several other ships named Defence during the American Revolution. This is not the privateer Defence, part of the Penobscot Expedition, which sank in August 1779, and this is not the armed brig Defence captured in January 1778 and brought to Jamaica.

From historical accounts 4 or 5 men drowned. The question is, did these men drown in the hold of the ship, and are they interred amidst the shipwreck at the bottom of Long Island Sound. Or did these men drown, their bodies recovered, and buried in local New London County cemeteries. This is still unknown. Nobody seems to know anything about this?

A bronze or stone SAR marker could be placed. After visiting Watertown Beach in 2022, I think a land ceremony is the best option, since the reef is within sight of the beach. A parade down the beach concluding with a ceremony and musket salute could be held on the rock outcropping looking out at the reef.

It's an interesting idea for a future CTSSAR 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution ceremony. Something unique and rare since we have the shipwreck of a Revolutionary War Connecticut naval ship off the Connecticut coast.

I think it would be a great project for the Connecticut State Society.

Commemoration ideas could include:

Parade, ceremony, and musket salute.

CTSSAR – Connecticut Navy Ship Defence 250th Anniversary challenge coin.

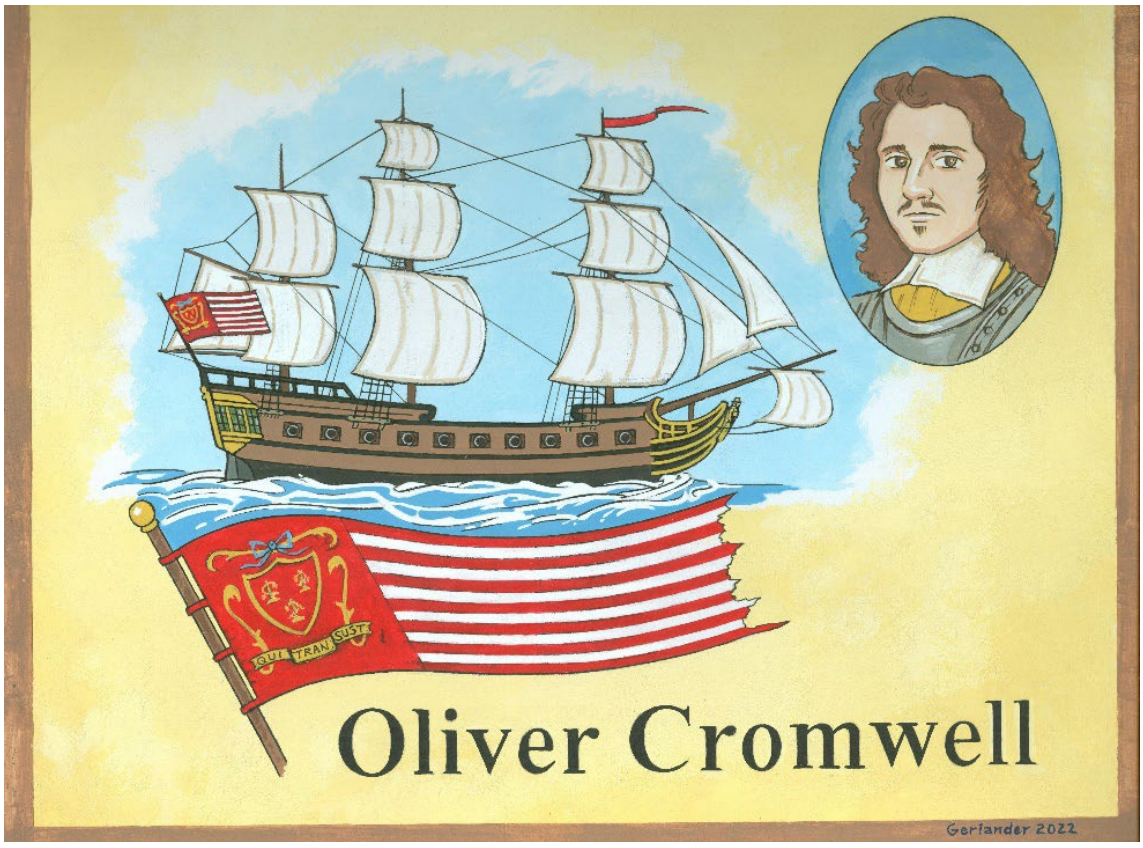
SAR bronze/stone marker on the Waterford Shore.

Patriot Grave marking ceremonies at local cemeteries. SAR grave markers.

Notes: (1) Flags of the State Navies in the Revolutionary War: A Critical Overview, Peter Ansoff, Raven: A Journal of Vexillology, NAVA (North American Vexillological Assoc.), Vol. 17, 2010, pages 23-46.

250th Anniversary of the American Revolution

This ceremony would be held on Saturday June 13, 2026



Oliver Cromwell

Ideas regarding a proposal for a CTSSAR 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution Event remembering the Connecticut State Navy Ship Oliver Cromwell, which was launched from Essex, Connecticut on June 13, 1776.

I have contacted the Connecticut River Museum in Essex, Connecticut, expressing our interest in this commemoration. Back in 2006, the Connecticut Line, Living History/Color Guard Unit of the Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution set up a one-day Revolutionary War encampment at the Connecticut River Museum during the grand opening of their exhibit on Connecticut Privateers called, “Launching Liberty.” We could also hold a commemoration ceremony and place a wreath for the Oliver Cromwell.

We’ll see if the Connecticut River Museum and/or Essex has anything planned for 2026.







250th Anniversary of the American Revolution

This ceremony would be held on Saturday June 20, 2026



Connecticut Independence Day

Commemorating the 250th Anniversary of Connecticut's Declaration of Independence, June 18, 1776.

War Office, Lebanon, Connecticut

The Revolutionary Spirit was evident in Connecticut, when on June 16, 1776, the General Assembly directed our delegates to the Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, to vote for Independence. This was followed two days later with a Proclamation by Jonathan Trumbull, the Patriot Governor, which has become known as Connecticut's Declaration of Independence.

We have commemorated this event in the past starting in 2005, and again in 2006 for the 230th anniversary. The last time was in 2019.

The event includes a wreath laying ceremony and musket salute. Also on display is a copy of the text of Connecticut's Declaration of Independence.

Patriotically,
Todd Lee Gerlander, CTSSAR Historic Sites & Celebrations