

Introduction

Visiting an historic site is not the same as following a storyline. Our nine Connecticut American Revolution tours build narratives. How does the plow in the museum at Putnam Memorial State Park in Redding connect to the mural in the Greenwich Library? How does Ore Hill Pond relate to the Salisbury Furnace on Ethan Allen Road? Study the lovely handmade maps. Pick a route or even a portion of a route to drive or bicycle (or a bit of both!) and see Connecticut's American Revolution story unfold as you move through the landscape. Suddenly small historic markers will have context and French flags near stone memorials will make sense.

And what a cast of characters Connecticut had, from the famous—**Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold, Nathan Hale, Israel Putnam**—to the quietly influential, like General **David Humphreys**, aid-de-camp to General George Washington and diplomatic advisor to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. Of course some of the most colorful players we'll never know by name, just by action. During the American Revolution privateers—essentially pirates sanctioned by the state of Connecticut to go after British loot—packed New London with cargo and supplies seized from the Redcoats. One of the most vicious attacks of the war took place in the same town as the traitor Arnold returned to his home state in 1781 to flush the privateers out and wound up burning the town to the ground. Civilians died. People lost everything they owned.

Despite such dramatic tales, many of the most interesting aspects of Connecticut's remarkable contributions to the war lie in the subtle corners. Governor Trumbull organizes a cattle drive to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and helps save General Washington's troops from starvation. A spy ring takes root along the shores of Long Island Sound. The Salisbury factory produces more than 800 cannons; Connecticut provided more military and basic supplies to the Patriot cause than any other state, earning it the nickname the Provision State.

In 1985 Connecticut made Nathan Hale, a young Yale graduate and school teacher hung by the British as a spy in 1776, the official state hero. Coventry just erected an elegant new statue to its native son, his hair pulled back in a ponytail, his hands tied by rope. Visit the family homestead, the new statue, the schools he taught in and feel the life he lived and the life he gave.

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