

# BENJAMIN WESTON

*Patriot*



*The Battle of Lexington, 19 April 1775, Oil on canvas by William Barns Wollen, 1910. National Army Museum, London*

Benjamin Weston was born on his parents second wedding anniversary, Feb 15, 1748, in Plympton, Province of Massachusetts Bay. He was the child of Joshua Weston (b. 1725) and Lucy Sturtevant (b. 1728) both of whom were born and married (Feb 15, 1746) in Plympton. He was the great great-great-grandson of Mayflower passenger and Mayflower Compact signatory, George Soule. Benjamin's mother was believed to have died young, sometime after her 29<sup>th</sup> birthday, when Benjamin was just 9 years old. Joshua Weston died sometime after December 15, 1774. Both of Benjamin's parents are believed to be buried in Connecticut (MFIP Soule # 244i). Little



is known about his early life, or when, and what circumstances led Benjamin or his parents to leave the Massachusetts Bay area.

### **Wethersfield, First Church, and the movement for Liberty**

Benjamin reemerges at the age of twenty-six after settling in Wethersfield, Connecticut, a hotbed of the American Revolution. There he met and courted local Mary Woodhouse, born October 27, 1750, to William Woodhouse and Mary Walker (Stiles, 2007) (MFIP Soule # 244i). The Woodhouse Family were notable shipbuilders and seafarers in the area (Avedian, Image of Wethersfield Heritage Walk Plaque# 17, 2022). Weston married Mary Woodhouse on August 30, 1774, united in matrimony at Wethersfield's First Church by the Reverend John Marsh (Stiles, 2007) (Wilmes, 2002) (Bailey, 1968).

Reverend Marsh, a graduate of Harvard College in 1761, had remained in Cambridge to serve as a tutor at the college until being installed as Minister at First Church a short time before the Revolutionary War. First Church, one of the oldest churches in America, was established in 1635 by seven Puritan settlers from Watertown, Massachusetts



*Alter where Benjamin & Mary were married. 2022 John Avedian*

who initially named their settlement Watertown as well. At that time, Wethersfield was considered a frontier settlement, and what the early English colonists called the "remote wilderness" but the town soon became a gateway for settlers migrating to new remote lands. By 1639, the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut was drafted by fourteen men, five of whom were members of First Church. This document is regarded as the prototype of the Federal Constitution. Construction on the First Church sanctuary lasted from 1761 to 1764, financed by taxes some of which were derived from the sale of Wethersfield's primary crop, red onions. Just two weeks prior to the





*First Church of Wethersfield. 2021 John Avedian*

marriage of Benjamin and Mary Weston, on August 15, 1774, future President John Adams stopped in Wethersfield and climbed the church's steeple. He wrote "We went up the steeple of Wethersfield meeting-house, from whence is the most grand and beautiful prospect in the world, at least, that I ever saw." First Church is one of only three colonial meetinghouses still standing in Connecticut and the only one made of brick.

The church's steeple is believed to be modeled after the infamous Old North Church in Boston (Von Wodtke, 2023) (Avedian, 2021).

On March 22, 1765 the Stamp Act became law, taxing "every skin or piece of vellum, or parchment, or sheet or piece of paper, used for legal purposes, such as bills, bonds, notes, leases, policies of insurance, marriage licenses, and a great many other documents, in order to be held valid in courts of law" (Lossing, LL.D., 2023). On the evening of September 19, 1765, Stamp-Master Jared Ingersoll was riding his horse on the Boston Post Road, travelling from New Haven to Hartford. As he approached Wethersfield, around Five Hundred Sons of Liberty from Wethersfield and eastern towns, all on horseback and carrying hand hewn staves, intercepted him (Dexter, Litt. D., 1918). Ingersoll was taken to a local tavern where he was compelled to sign and seal a written resignation from his office. He was then taken to the front of the home of Colonel John Chester, on Broad Street and in the yard, under a large elm tree was forced by the crowd to shout the words "Liberty and Property" three times, he then threw his hat in the air, which was followed by Huzzahs from the crowd and Ingersoll's release (Dexter, Litt. D., 1918) (Trumbull, 1886). In 1774, King George III's Parliament passed the Coercive Acts in response to ongoing colonial opposition to the Sugar, Stamp and Townshend Acts, and perhaps more importantly as punishment for the Boston Tea Party in 1773. British General Thomas Gage was tasked with enforcement of these 5 laws. Gage

moved to strip the authorities of the lower house of the Massachusetts General Assembly and replace it with the loyalist Mandamus Council. As a result, the people of Massachusetts' towns began to fear for the coming days and took action. Whereas many towns in the colony kept weapons, powder and ammunition in storehouses, they slowly and quietly began emptying these. When Gage learned from Major William Brattle that all that was left were 250 half-barrels of colony-owned gunpowder at the Old Powder House in what is now Somerville, Massachusetts, he ordered it moved to Castle William in Boston Harbor. This event, and the reaction that followed was known as the Powder Alarm (Rust, 2023). Two days after the Powder Alarm and in reaction to it, on September 5th, Wethersfield leaders were selected to form a Committee of Correspondents. These included Captain John Chester, son of Col. John Chester, at whose home Jared Ingersoll resigned as Stamp-Master some 9 years prior, and Silas Deane, stepfather of Samuel Blachley Webb. Weston would later serve under the command of both men. At a convention held in Hartford 10 days later, on September 15<sup>th</sup> Wethersfield delegates ordered a supply of 500lbs of powder "with bullets and flints in proportion." Silas Deane was one of the most active members of the Continental Congress that year (Trumbull, 1886).

Wethersfield's importance in the movements leading to the American Revolution cannot be understated. Many young patriots in the Wethersfield community, including Benjamin Weston were led by First Church's Reverend Marsh as they contributed a great deal to the movement for liberty. According to Samuel Adams, three hundred and ninety bushels of corn, two hundred and forty-eight and a half of rye, and thirty-four of wheat were sent by the community of Wethersfield to Boston (Trumbull, 1886).

### **Outbreak of the American Revolution**

Early on the morning of Wednesday, April 19, 1775 the British marched on Lexington and fired "the shot heard round the world". Around ten o'clock that morning, Israel Bissel, a rider from Watertown, Massachusetts mounted his horse having been "charged to alarm the Country quite to Connecticut." He rode so hard that by the time he reached Worcester, Massachusetts his horse was dead. He procured a new horse and reached Norwich and New London, CT from which an additional rider delivered the news to Wethersfield by Friday, April 21 at ten



o'clock. Silas Deane wrote that they immediately beat to Arms and alarmed the town, recruiting volunteers and making preparations of provisions (Reynolds, 2023). Newlywed Benjamin Weston prepared to leave his wife behind as he volunteered with 115 other Wethersfield men, including one of John Chester's enslaved men named Timon, to answer the "Lexington Alarm" (Smart, 2023) (Trumbull, 1886). The local Committee of Correspondence was ordered to provide twenty days provision, ammunition, carriages, packs, horses and all other necessities. Benjamin and each of his fellow men, was provided with 64 rounds of ammunition and a uniform described as wholly blue, turned up with red. Weston's company was one of only two Connecticut regiments in uniform en route to Lexington, the other being under the command of Benedict Arnold (Reynolds, 2023). Under Captain John Chester's Connecticut 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment, then Private Weston marched around 100 miles to participate in the Battle of Lexington (Trumbull, 1886) (Heitman, 1893). Most of the men in Chester's Company served under his command for only six days (Reynolds, 2023) including Weston. Chester and a smaller contingent of his company, with Samuel Blachley Webb as Ensign, went on to Boston to meet General Artemus Ward, who was in command until the arrival of George Washington, and served in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

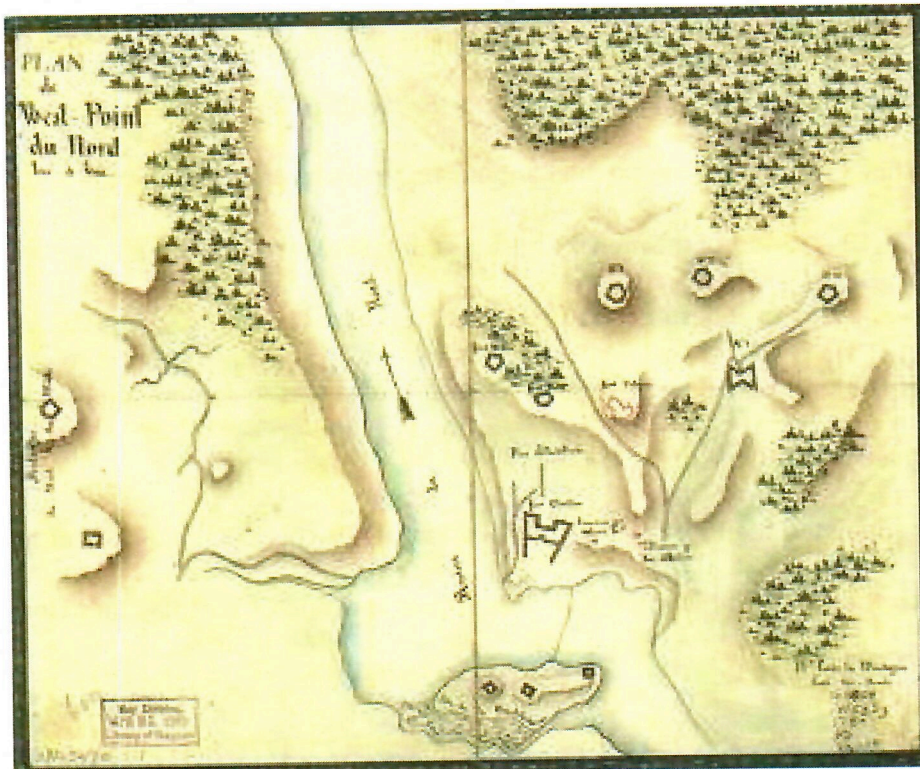
General George Washington appointed then twenty-one-year-old Samuel Blachley Webb as one of his personal staff, probably influenced by the fact that his stepfather Silas Deane was one of Washington's close confidants (Trumbull, 1886).

Weston's first child, Mary was born on May 22, 1776 (Stiles, 2007). On August 23, 1776, Benjamin Weston and seventy-two of the Wethersfield militiamen boarded the Wethersfield sloop *Anne*, under the command of Captain John Hanmer, and sailed down the Connecticut River for New York City in threat to the British Fleet in what would be known as the Battle of Long Island (Adams, 1904).

Weston later served in Webb's so-called "additional regiments" authorized by the Second Continental Congress that were not associated with any particular state quotas (Webb, 1882). The additional regiments of which there were sixteen in total, were raised to comprise the "Continental Line" of 1777. Beginning March 10, 1777, Weston served with the rank of Sergeant in Colonel Samuel Blachley Webb's 9<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Regiment.



Recruits came mostly from Hartford County and eastern Connecticut. That spring, Webb's Regiment went into camp in Peekskill, NY on the east bank of the Hudson River. They later served in Parsons' Brigade under General Israel Putnam during the movements of the following summer and fall. Weston and his men saw action at the Battle of Setauket in August 1777 in the campaign of Long Island. In December 1777 while aboard a transport to destroy supply stores on Setauket and Southold Col. Webb and several of his men were captured by a British frigate. Webb would not be released until 1781 (Trumbull, 1886). Weston was not believed to be captured and



Map of West Point showing the location of Fort Webb (Plan de West-Point du nord, levé a vue., 2023)

went on to serve at the Battle of Forts Clinton and Montgomery. The Regiment spent the winter of 1777-78 at West Point, where about 200 men, including Weston, assisted in the construction of fortifications (Johnston H. P., 1997) (USMA History Department, 2008). These fortifications are known as the Webb redoubts after the commander of the militia regiment that built them,

between April and July of 1778. These infantry redoubts and artillery batteries were identified by General Samuel Parsons as being necessary to protect Fort Clinton from southern approaches along the Hudson River. They were primarily earthen and wooden with scarps and ramparts of stone. The area comprised a 134-yard perimeter, twice the size of other redoubts. There were believed to be two 6-pound cannons and four 3-pound cannons on raised



gun platforms. Eight-foot-thick parapets existed on the West and South for artillery protection. The Webb redoubt was integrated with those of Wyllys and Meigs (USMA History Department, 2008).

In 1778, the Regiment took part in the Battle of Rhode Island, where it was noted for its performance. Following this battle, the Regiment wintered in Rhode Island (Johnston H. P., 1889). On April 10, 1779, Benjamin Weston became an Officer in the Continental Army when he was promoted to the rank of Ensign (Heitman, 1893). Just ten days later, Officer Weston's second child, a girl named Wealthy was born on April 19, 1779 (Stiles, 2007). Benjamin Weston resigned from the Army on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1779, and was revered as a valiant soldier in the War of the Revolution (Heitman, 1893) (Leake, 1912).

Weston's third, fourth, and fifth children, George (b. June 28, 1781), Hannah (b. Dec. 15, 1783), and Betsy (b. Aug. 8, 1787) were born in the years that followed (Stiles, 2007). Captain John Chester, under whom Weston served in the Battle of Lexington was one of two delegates from Wethersfield who was sent to the Connecticut convention to ratify the National Constitution in 1788. Captain Chester was also elected to the Continental Congress in 1787-1789. Silas Deane, stepfather of Col. Samuel Blachley Webb, under whom Weston served in the 9<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Regiment, also served as an elected member of the Continental Congress in 1774 and 1775 (Trumbull, 1886, p. 462). Col. Samuel Blachley Webb remained a close friend of General George Washington's and served as the Grand Marshall of his Presidential Inauguration in 1789 (Griffin, 2023).

### **Later Life and Death**

In 1793, Captain James Francis married Pamela Welles, both of Wethersfield, and endeavored to build a home for them at 120 Hartford Ave. Francis and his brother-in-law Daniel did the framing, joists, floors and walls, while the masonry was completed by Benjamin Weston, Ashbel Savage, and Daniel Woodhouse, Mary's first cousin. The home was expanded from one to two stories in 1814, and donated to the Wethersfield Historical Society in 1969 and is still intact today (Meehan, 2023). This documentation of Weston's masonry work provides the only insight into his possible occupation in civilian life.



On August 23, 1794 Mary Weston gave birth to their sixth and last child, a daughter named Abigail, in Wethersfield (General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 2020) (Gilmore, 1991). Their daughter Betsy died on October 4, 1797 at the age of 10 (Stiles, 2007). It is unknown when or exactly why the Westons chose to leave Wethersfield but when they did, they moved to the Butternut Valley region of Otsego County, New York. In 1814, Benjamin Weston was living in Ward 9 of the town of New Lisbon, N.Y. where he was recorded in the New Lisbon Register as performing 1 day of labor, working on the local roads as a type of annual tax. He performed this duty alongside his son-in-law Cyrenus Noble and Cyrenus' brothers. He continued this in 1815, 1817, and 1818. (New Lisbon Register). A search of Otsego County land acquisition records suggest that Benjamin did not purchase property while living there. This, and the fact



*Portrait of Abigail Weston. Courtesy of Duane David.*

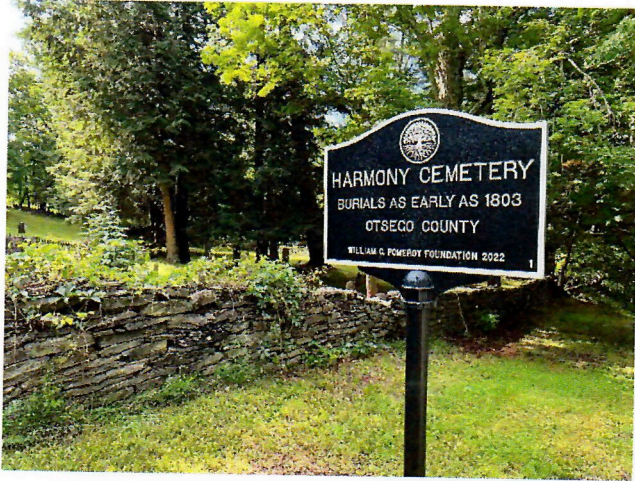
that he paid the road tax in Ward 9 where their daughter Hannah and her husband Cyrenus Noble lived suggests that Benjamin and Mary likely lived with Hannah and Cyrenus until their deaths. Cyrenus and his brother Elnathan

Jr. built a home on the southeast corner of Rt 14 (Pegg Rd) and Rt 12 in what became known as the Noblesville area of New Lisbon. It was located diagonally from the Noble's Store, still standing today. The house was designed to be inhabited by the two families of Elnathan and Cyrenus. The home still exists today as a private residence.



*A view of the Butternut Valley from Filor's Corner SW of Morris, N.Y. John Avedian, 2023*





*Harmony Cemetery, Morris, N.Y. 2023 John Avedian*

Benjamin died on May 7, 1818, in New Lisbon, NY and was buried at the Harmony Church Cemetery, Old Church Burying Ground in Morris, NY (Boltwood, 1878). Mary Woodhouse Weston died on November 17, 1842 and is buried next to her husband (Foote & Washbon, 2023). As of 2022, Benjamin's headstone was missing but a footstone is still present with the initials "B.W." On September 2, 2023 a new headstone, acknowledging his

rank and service in the American Revolution was placed by his descendants, and the local community.

### **Other notes of interest**

Mary Woodhouse's niece Sophia (1799 – 1883), daughter of John Woodhouse and Sarah Buck was a notable entrepreneur as a single woman. She became famous for her Leghorn bonnets by altering the technique of their manufacture. The original Leghorn Bonnets were imported from Livorno, Italy which was expensive. Sophia maintained the general style of the Leghorn but modified the materials used. Namely, she used a native plant known as spear-grass, found in the meadows near the Connecticut River in Wethersfield. Sophia's bonnets led her to be the recipient of the Hartford County Society for Promoting Agriculture and Domestic Manufacturers in Hartford award, as well as The Society of Arts of London, England award. Her bonnets were granted a U.S. Patent. President John Quincy Adams's wife Louisa wore one of Sophia's bonnets often, and this publicity led to demand in the U.S. and England. To meet this demand Sophia hired local Wethersfield Women to work from home manufacturing her bonnets. In 1835, fire consumed Woodhouse's shop and she closed her business. Several Woodhouse bonnets survive in museum collections, and one is on display at the Wethersfield Historical Society (unknown, 2023).



This information was compiled by Benjamin & Mary Weston's 5<sup>th</sup> Great-Grandson, John Thomas Avedian of Winchester, Massachusetts. Copyright © 2020.

## References

- Adams, S. W. (1904). *History of Ancient Wethersfield*. New York: Grafton Press.
- Avedian, J. T. (2021, June 17). Image of Wethersfield Heritage Walk Plaque# 3. Wethersfield, CT, USA.
- Avedian, J. T. (2022, Sept 8). Image of Wethersfield Heritage Walk Plaque# 17. *Hanmer Park; Seafarers, Shipbuilders, and Soldiers*. Old Wethersfield, Connecticut, USA.
- Bailey, F. W. (Ed.). (1968). *Early Connecticut Marriages as Found on Ancient Church Records Prior to 1800* (Vol. 3). Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.
- Boltwood, L. M. (1878). *History and genealogy of the family of Thomas Noble of Westfield, Massachusetts with genealogical notes of other families by the name of Noble*. Hartford, Connecticut: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?id=S-QLAWAAQBAJ>
- Burton, C. M. (2017). *The City of Detroit, 1701 - 1922* (Vol. 3). Germany: Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck.
- Dexter, Litt. D., F. B. (1918). *Jared Ingersoll Papers*. New Haven: Forgotten Books & c. Ltd.
- Foote, J., & Washbon, J. (2023, 06 21). *Harmony Church Cemetery Old Church Burying Ground (1997-1998 Survey)*. Retrieved from theusgenweb.org: <http://theusgenweb.org/ny/otsego/cemetery/harmony.htm>
- General Society of Mayflower Descendants, 98887 (May 12, 2020).
- Gilmore, J. F. (1991). *Early Fairchilds in America and Their Descendants*. Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc.
- Griffin, P. R. (2023, 05 07). *Samuel Blachley Webb: Wethersfield's Ablest Officer*. Retrieved from Journal of the American Revolution: <https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/09/samuel-blachley-webb-1753-1807/>
- Heitman, F. B. (1893). *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army during the War of the Revolution, April 1775 to December 1783*. Washington, D. C.
- Johnston, H. P. (1889). *Record of service of Connecticut men in the I. War of the Revolution, II. War of 1812, III. Mexican War*. Hartford, Connecticut: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co. Retrieved from <http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924032736849>
- Johnston, H. P. (1997). *The record of Connecticut men in the military and naval service during the War of the Revolution, 1775-1783*. Baltimore, Maryland: Clearfield.
- Leake, P. (1912). *History of Detroit: A chronicle of its progress, its industries, its institutions, and the people of the fair city of the straits* (Vol. 2). Detroit, Michigan: Lewis Publishing. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?id=ZkUOAQAAMAAJ>
- Lossing, LL.D., B. J. (2023, June 18). *1765 - The Stamp Act*. Retrieved from The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Connecticut: <https://www.colonialwarsct.org/1765.htm>
- Meehan, J. (2023, June 18). *Wethersfield's Homebuilders: 1634 – 1900*. Retrieved from Wethersfield Historical Society: <https://www.wethersfieldhistory.org/articles/wethersfields-homebuilders-1634-1900/>

- MFIP Soule # 244i. (n.d.). Plymouth, Massachusetts: General Society of Mayflower Descendants.
- New Lisbon Register. (n.d.). New Lisbon, N.Y. Retrieved July 2023
- Plan de West-Point du nord, levé a vue.* (2023, 08 27). Retrieved from Library of Congress:  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/gm71005430/>
- Reynolds, R. L. (2023, June 19). *Wethersfield Enters the Revolution*. Retrieved from Wethersfield Historical Society: <https://www.wethersfieldhistory.org/articles/wethersfield-enters-the-revolution/>
- Rust, R. (2023, April 14). *The Powder Alarm of Massachusetts in 1774*. Retrieved from American History Central:  
<https://www.americanhistorycentral.com/entries/powder-alarm-1774-massachusetts/>
- Smart, M. (2023, June 20). *Wethersfield Historical Society*. Retrieved from Slavery and Wethersfield:  
<https://www.wethersfieldhistory.org/articles/slavery-and-wethersfield/>
- Stiles, H. R. (2007). *Families of Ancient Wethersfield, Connecticut* (Vol. 2). Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books.
- Trumbull, J. H. (1886). *The Memorial History of Hartford County Connecticut, 1633-1884* (Vol. 2). Boston: Edward L. Osgood.
- unknown. (2023, June 21). *SELECTED BIOGRAPHIES OF WETHERSFIELD RESIDENTS*. Retrieved from Wethersfield Historical Society: <https://www.wethersfieldhistory.org/burying-ground-digitization/biographies/>
- USMA History Department. (2008, August). *West Point Fortifications Staff Ride Note Cards; Fort Webb (Card#1)*. Retrieved from westpoint.edu: [https://www.westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/WEST%2520POINT%2520FORTIFICATIONS%2520STAFF%2520RIDE\\_0.pdf](https://www.westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/WEST%2520POINT%2520FORTIFICATIONS%2520STAFF%2520RIDE_0.pdf)
- Von Wodtke, H. (2023, June 17). *Our History, A Brief Historical Overview*. Retrieved from First Church:  
<https://firstchurch.org/about-us/our-history>
- Webb, J. W. (1882). *Reminiscences of General Samuel B. Webb, of the Revolutionary Army*. New York: Globe Stationery and Printing Co. Retrieved from  
<https://archive.org/details/reminiscencesofg00webb/page/n9/mode/2up>
- Wilmes, D. F. (2002). *The Barbour Collection of Connecticut Town Vital Records, Wethersfield 1634-1868*. (L. C. White, Ed.) Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.