

Battle of Fall River Was Fought in 1778; British Repelled by Outnumbered Natives

The Battle of Fall River took place on Sunday morning, May 25, 1778.

At that time there were often British ships lying in Narragansett Bay, and from them raiding parties were sent on sorties. There were raids on Portsmouth and Tiverton, but this seems to have been the only one on the hamlet of Fall River.

For Fall River was then so small that even the name "hamlet" seems to overstate the case. There was just a cluster of houses where the Granite Block and the City Hall now stand, and a few houses along the Quequechan River.

Nevertheless the British sent 500 troops under the command of a Major Ayres to raid the village.

They landed in boats on the east shore of the Taunton River, and started to climb the hill.

On the way they were seen, an alarm was sounded, and the men of the village, under the command

of Col. Joseph Durfee, rallied to the defense of their homes.

They wisely waited for the British at the brow of the hill, where the City Hall now stands, and as the invaders reached the crest they opened fire.

No Native Casualties

The Fall Riverites are said to have been outnumbered five to one by the British, but whether their advantageous position determined battle, or whether they fought harder because they were fighting for their homes, they repelled the Redcoats without the loss of a single man.

Two British soldiers were killed in the engagement, and were buried by the Colonials at noon the same day.

When the British landed, they set fire to the nearby new home of Thomas Borden, which stood about where the Firestone plant is now. Later, on the way back down the hill, they set several other homes

afire, and then took to their boats with the Fall Riverites in pursuit.

With them, in one boat, they took an elderly hostage, Richard Borden, whose house they burned. As the boat was passing Bristol Ferry American sharpshooters were waiting for it and fired at it from the shore.

Borden, to escape being shot by his own people, threw himself flat on the bottom of the boat. Two of the British seized him and held him upright, but the sharpshooters on the shore killed both the men who were holding him without injuring the aged American. Borden was afterward released by the British.

The spot on which the Battle of Fall River was fought is commemorated by a plaque on the front of City Hall.

The inscription on the plaque reads:

"The Battle of Fall River was fought near this site, May 25, 1778.

A small company of Americans were attacked by one hundred and fifty British whom they bravely repulsed. This tablet is erected by Quequechan Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution of Fall River, Massachusetts, May 25, 1879."

Year of 1803 Was Eventful

Fall River came into being in 1803, a year marked by two other noteworthy events in the history of the United States.

Most prominent was the Louisiana Purchase, the outstanding event of the administration of Thomas Jefferson as President.

The other event, which was not ratified until Congress acted upon it this year, was the admission of Ohio into the Union,