

Eastchester's Most Overlooked Hero: Captain Samuel Crawford

By Richard Forliano, Eastchester Town Historian

On a national and local community level, America must do more to commemorate its heroes, imperfect as many of them are. Arguably, Eastchester's most overlooked local hero is Captain Samuel Crawford, who served in the Westchester/Dutchess militia during the American Revolution. A number of prominent historians do not dispute that he is the most important Patriot leader from Westchester to sacrifice his life in the service of his country in the midst of the war that created the American nation.

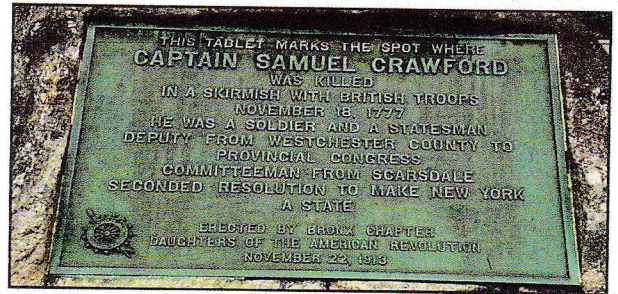
In the year 1913, a now-defunct Bronx Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated a plaque to Captain Crawford and the other militia members who were killed during a bloody skirmish with Loyalist militia under the command of a British Captain. Any person traveling through the village of Tuckahoe on White Plains Road has passed that plaque commemorating the encounter. Sadly, too few are aware today of its significance. In the not-so-distant past, that was not always the case.

WHO WAS CAPTAIN SAMUEL CRAWFORD?

In 1766, at age 33, Crawford, a cooper by trade, bought an 88-acre piece of property on the Bronx River is near the present-day Scarsdale train station, just north of the Eastchester border.

By April 19, 1775, when the opening shots of the American War for independence were fired at

Lexington and Concord, Crawford was a successful businessman operating a saw and grist mill in Heathcoat Manor (Scarsdale today) Samuel Crawford was more than just a successful businessman. In 1774 a corrupt British Parliament closed the port of Boston and placed the city under martial law. Crawford became even more active in the resistance movement and the Patriot cause.



This plaque stands at the top of Winterhill Road where it intersects with Route 22 in the Eastchester village of Tuckahoe. Recently uncovered sources show that Captain Crawford was mortally wounded near this spot on March 16 not on November 22, 1777.

Along with recently elected Eastchester Town Supervisor Stephen Ward, Crawford joined future Founding Father John Jay as a member of the New York Provincial Congress, an organization the British considered illegal and possibly traitorous.

By early May of 1775, John Jay, Stephen Ward, and Samuel Crawford were members of a Committee of Safety in Westchester County to seize resources, identify Loyalists who were ignoring the non-importation agreements (boycotts), and explore the possibility of recruiting militia (minutemen). In Eastchester and Lower Westchester, courage was needed to take the Patriot Cause. A decided majority of the citizens were more sympathetic to the Loyalist cause, more interested in



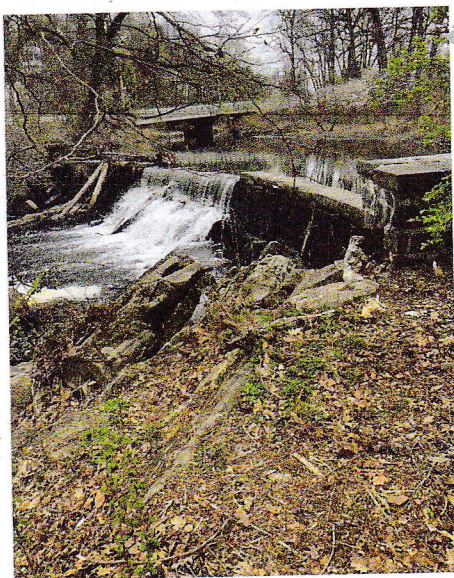
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The partial remains of Samuel Crawford's mill along the Bronx River near the Scarsdale Train Station bordering the town of Eastchester

The high point of Crawford's political career affords him a place in the annals of New York.

State history came on July 11, 1776, when on the courthouse steps in White Plains, Crawford seconded a motion that the Provincial Congress support the Declaration of Independence at "the risk of lives and property." After reading the Declaration of Independence the Provincial Congress officially became the permanent legislature for the State of New York.

Unwittingly, his public declaration on the courthouse steps in White Plains might have contributed to his killing a little more than nine months later near the abandoned home of his friend and colleague, Eastchester Town Supervisor Stephen Ward.

their prosperity and tranquility than their liberties and objections to unfair taxes.

Captain Samuel Crawford, Town Supervisor Stephen Ward, and future Founding Father John Jay opposed the passive and contented Loyalist majority. They supported the Patriot cause not to create but to maintain their freedom. They realized that their way of life was threatened, tyranny was afoot, and they would have to fight to maintain their freedom.



John Jay, one of the more prominent Founding Fathers from nearby Rye, who worked with the Eastchester Town Supervisor, Stephen Ward, and the Militia Officer, Samuel Crawford in the resistance movement against British oppression

Why was Captain Samuel Crawford killed in a bloody skirmish in Eastchester 246 years ago?



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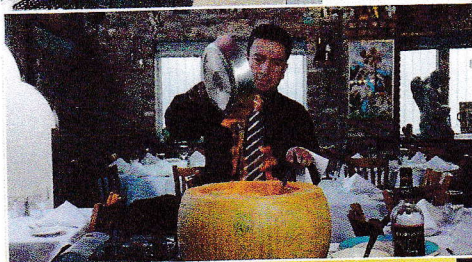
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