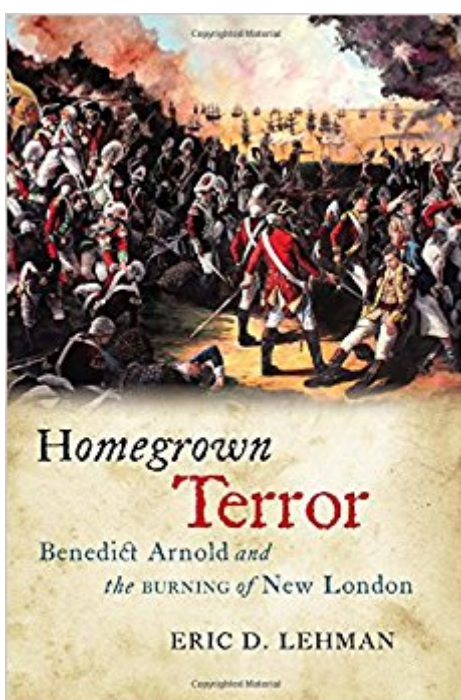


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Homegrown Terror: Benedict Arnold And The Burning Of New London (The Driftless Connecticut Series & Garnet Books)



Synopsis

On September 6, 1781, Connecticut native Benedict Arnold and a force of 1,600 British soldiers and loyalists took Fort Griswold and burnt New London to the ground. The brutality of the invasion galvanized the new nation, and "Remember New London!" would become a rallying cry for troops under General Lafayette. In *Homegrown Terror*, Eric D. Lehman chronicles the events leading up to the attack and highlights this key transformation in Arnold--the point where he went from betraying his comrades to massacring his neighbors and destroying their homes. This defining incident forever marked him as a symbol of evil, turning an antiheroic story about weakness of character and missed opportunity into one about the nature of treachery itself. *Homegrown Terror* draws upon a variety of perspectives, from the traitor himself to his former comrades like Jonathan Trumbull and Silas Deane, to the murdered Colonel Ledyard. Rethinking Benedict Arnold through the lens of this terrible episode, Lehman sheds light on the ethics of the dawning nation, and the way colonial America responded to betrayal and terror. Finalist in both Historical Nonfiction and Regional Nonfiction for the 2016 Next Generation Indie Book Awards.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Homegrown Terror is more than the dramatic story of Benedict Arnold’s betrayal of America. It is a richly textured and lively portrait of revolutionary era Connecticut. Readers interested in the American Revolution and historical New England will enjoy this book.” —Joel Richard Paul, author of *Unlikely Allies: How a Merchant, a Playwright, and a Spy Saved the American Revolution* —Eric

Lehman's *Homegrown Terror* is the biography of evil personified by America's greatest antihero. It is a tour de force of research, showing that evil can draw a society or nation together as effectively as can good.

• Christopher Collier, author of *Decision in Philadelphia: The Constitutional Convention of 1787* "Benedict Arnold was a traitor and a terrorist, as Eric Lehman vividly shows in his chilling account of Arnold's savage raid on New London. At the same time, Lehman presents a new look at the psyche of a Revolutionary War general who was both a hero and a villain."

• Thomas B. Allen, author of *Tories and George Washington, Spymaster* "Author Eric D. Lehman brings to life Connecticut during the Revolutionary War in *Homegrown Terror*. Lehman's book is a welcome addition to an understanding of Connecticut's role in the American Revolution and provides a fresh approach to this topic. Previous biographies of Benedict Arnold only touch on the attack on New London; Lehman's book completely focuses on it. | Indeed, the detailed account of the attack of New London is but a small part of the book, the culmination of a fascinating account of Connecticut during the Revolutionary War."

• Rebecca Taber-Conover, *Connecticut History Review* "Lehman's literary skills are undeniable and he deftly illustrates Arnold's world in Connecticut for his readers."

• Gary Sellick, *On Point: The Journal of Army History* "It tells how Connecticut native Benedict Arnold and 1,600 British soldiers and loyalists captured Fort Griswold and burned down the settlement of New London in 1781, describes life in those times and explores how and why Arnold betrayed his countrymen and killed his neighbors."

• Carole Goldberg, *The Hartford Courant* "[T]he book reads well, offering many details about Arnold's background, his relationships with childhood friends and rebel commanders, and his developing relations with the British."

• S.A. Klein, *Choice* "Lehman has read widely on his subject and tells Arnold's story with the intent of captivating the modern reader. | Its style, evidence of Lehman's skill for creative writing, and its short chapters make for a breezy read."

• Christopher F. Minty, *The New England Quarterly* "A new book on Arnold's dark career argues that terror more than treason should be his legacy. *Homegrown Terror: Benedict Arnold and the Burning of New London* is a fresh take on a familiar story and may be the first book on Arnold to give his attack on New London and Groton, little known outside these parts, its due. | While calling Arnold a terrorist is an attention-getter, Lehman makes his case with nuance, arguing that the terms we use to define good and evil change over time."

• John Ruddy, *The Day* "Easy to read, fast-paced, and filled with historical detail and well-documented sources, this look at Arnold will interest historians of the American Revolution as well as those with an interest in Connecticut history."

• Maine Antique Digest

ERIC D. LEHMAN is a professor of creative writing at the University of Bridgeport. His fiction, travel stories, essays, and nonfiction have appeared in dozens of online and print journals and magazines. He is the author of several books, including *The Insider's Guide to Connecticut* and *Becoming Tom Thumb: Charles Stratton, P.T. Barnum, and the Dawn of American Celebrity*.

Lehman's historical narrative is an excellent retelling of this horrific and often overlooked part of the Revolutionary War. The discussion of Arnold's treason and subsequent massacre is superb and historically documented, while also being fun to read. His narrative style is excellent and I couldn't put it down. As an ancestor of the Averys who fought and died at the Battle of Groton Heights, including my 7th great-grandfather Lieutenant Ebenezer Avery who was killed, I am thankful for this addition to the historical record.

I thought I knew a lot about Benedict Arnold. I did not realize the extent of what he did after his betrayal. A little bit biased at times, which is about my only minor complaint. The author seemed to go out of his way a couple times to indicate that the colonial troops were always well-behaved and committed no atrocities, when we know that was not the case. Other than that, this was a thought-provoking book, and it really made me feel George Washington's sense of betrayal and bewilderment when he learned what happened here. This book is not a biography of Arnold, if that is what you are looking for, although the author did a nice job of filling in some of the key biographical information when needed. The book also gives you a sense of the incompetency of some in Congress and in colonial government, including Thomas Jefferson.

A wonderfully informative slice of history. I highly recommend Eric Lehman's book, *Homegrown Terror: Benedict Arnold and the Burning of New London*, for a fascinating portrayal of Connecticut during the American Revolution. This book should be used in classrooms to teach students about this era, and specifically the events that led to Arnold turning traitor. An exceptional account of the life of Benedict Arnold and other historic characters such as Jonathan Trumbull, Nathan Hale and Silas Deane, to name just a few.

In the current saturated market of books on Benedict Arnold (as well as founding fathers), this book makes fresh connections between Arnold, his Connecticut brethren, and the decisions behind the terrible burning of New London and Groton. Lehman gets into the psyche and motivations of Arnold

through meticulous scholarly research using MANY primary sources including letters from his friends, neighbors, and military associates (including George Washington who admired him greatly until he turned). But, there was no keeping a fake Patriot Arnold happy and we all know what happened. What I appreciated the most about Lehman's book was his picture of wartime Connecticut, a colony often overlooked in the annals of the American Revolution. We are presented with new information about the importance of this colony and its great leader Jonathan Trumbull in the war effort and its justification of its title of "Provision State." Connecticut cattle probably saved the whole army at Valley Forge. We are also reminded of the very real terror that people experienced in Connecticut from these quick and dirty British raids, the last one at New London being the worst. In the end, we find out that it really was a major mistake late in the war to go after New London when the British needed all the support they could get in Virginia. In fact, it could be argued that it was a contributing factor to the subsequent surrender at Yorktown. Thus, brave New Londoners suffered terribly but can be credited with taking a hit for the sake of winning the long war.

If you think you've read all there is to read about the Revolution you need to read this.

Chronologically, "Homegrown Terror" picks up where Nathaniel Philbrick's "Valiant Ambition" leaves off. And it is easily as interesting and well-researched as any of Philbrick's histories. The book has a Connecticut-centered point of view, yet places events and Arnold's many relationships within the context of the broader war. So I would reject anyone calling this a "local interest" book. The attack on New London and Groton is thoroughly retold in riveting detail. The author went to many original sources to build the narrative and there are copious notes with interesting tidbits to enjoy after you've reached the end. Which, in my case, came quickly.

When it comes to recounting historical events -- and describing characters -- in compelling and vivid ways, Lehman delivers a story deserving of the movie treatment. Definitely a great subject, tackled with skill and made to come alive in the telling. Bravo!

We all know Benedict Arnold as a traitor but we know so little of why he did it and what he was like before. Lehman writes a compelling story that you will not want to put down that fills in some of the empty spaces in our knowledge.

Met the Author last evening at a Book Signing. He gave a 45 minute power point talk, on his book, and it was quite impressive. I had brought my book, to our local Library, and he signed it for me. It

was a well spent evening and I would suggest, that anyone who is interested in the Revolutionary War, purchase this wonderful book. HUZDAH!

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