



# DANBURY TIMES

## From Paquiack to Danbury



Before the land was called Danbury, the Potatuck Indians called it Paquiack. The name meant “open or cleared land.” The Potatucks were an Algonquin-speaking tribe. Their name meant “Indians of the Great Falls”. They used the land in and around Danbury for both summer and winter campgrounds. The natural resources provided for all their needs. *(A natural resource is something that can be found in nature and used by people.)*

In the summer, the Potatucks would travel up and down the Still River. They planted crops of corn, beans, and squash. They ate fish, clams, and mussels found in the fresh water. They picked berries and nuts. They were also able to hunt and trap.

The Potatucks made tools from sticks, stones, wood, shells and other natural resources.



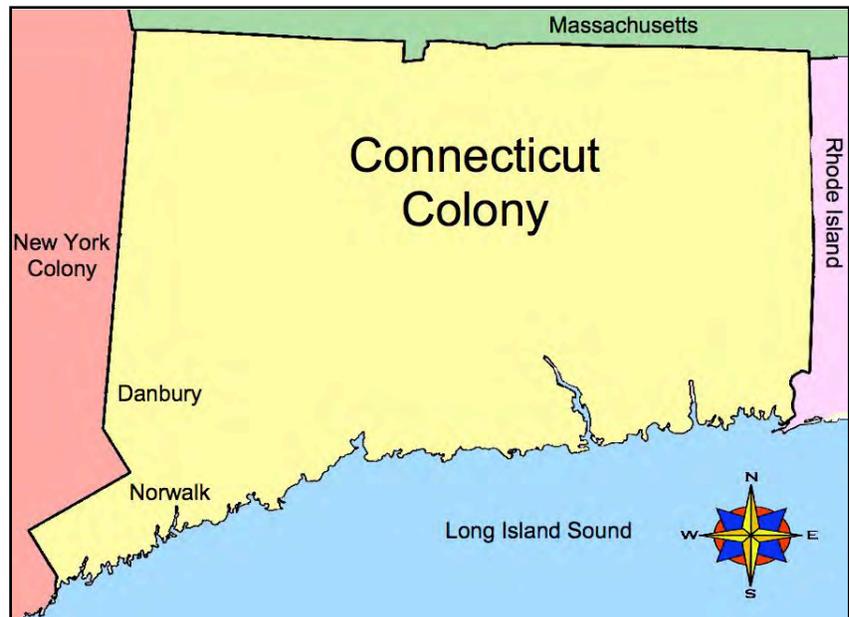
Map of Connecticut circa 1676

When they moved their camp from place to place, the Potatucks had to clear the land for planting and for their homes. They needed rich soil to farm. They used the slash and burn method for clearing the land. They would kill the trees and set them and the surrounding brush on fire. The Potatucks moved around so that the land would not be overused.

## New Town Location

The Connecticut General Court feared New York would expand into Connecticut unless a town was there. The court decided that a new town should be located on the New York border, north of Norwalk.

The settlement would provide a new border, or line that divides two places, between New York and Connecticut. The new town became Danbury.





### A New Beginning . . .

John Hoyt of Norwalk, was selected to search for an area to build a new town. In 1684, he followed an Indian trail that went north of Norwalk. Once he selected the area, he purchased the land from the Potatuck Indians.

Danbury’s first settlers planned to build permanent homes and clear the land for farming. The settlers built a water-powered mill and made iron tools.

Unlike the Potatucks, they used oxen and plows to clear the land. They raised sheep, cattle, and pigs to meet some of their basic needs. These animals helped to provide food and clothing.



### What’s In a Name?

Early settlers had some trouble deciding on a name for Danbury. At first they thought they would call the town Swampfield.

Finally, it was agreed that the new town would be called “Danbury.” They named the town after Danbury in Essex, England.

Later Danbury got it’s first nickname. It was called Beantown after a small white bean grown here.



### An Ideal Place

“Danbury is the perfect place to settle,” reported John Hoyt. He and the other settlers found that living in the Still River Valley was working out better than they had planned. They had plenty of water for crops, cattle, mills, and themselves.

Danbury had other benefits, too. The soil was good for farming. The flat lands were great for building roadways. Settlers built roads between their houses and their farmland on the outskirts of Towne Street (now called Main Street).

Danbury became a crossroads, a place where two or more main roads meet. A crossroad can also be a place where there is a lot of activity for a large area.

Danbury was a stopping point on the North-South route between Long Island Sound and Litchfield County. When traveling an East-West route, Danbury connected New York with central Connecticut. Settlers knew that roadways help a town prosper.

### Founding Families of Danbury

- John Hoyt
- Judah Gregroy
- James Benedict
- Samuel Benedict
- James Beebe
- Thomas Taylor
- Thomas Barnum
- Francis Bushnell



## The Colonial Period 1710-1775

### The Beginning of Danbury

Although some people were scared of Indians, they moved into the settlement anyway. By moving to Danbury, they wanted to have land to farm and a place of their own. The area was easily protected from hostile Indians. Two homes were built on each end of Towne Street for protection from Indian attacks.

Religion was important to the early settlers. A meeting house was built and a minister was hired. Town and church meetings were held so everyone could attend and share their opinions.

The Ecclesiastical Society was in charge of education and collecting taxes to pay the minister of the church. As more people moved in, there were more churches and religions in town. Houses, shops, and taverns spread out to the north on Towne Street, the main street in town.

*Danbury's One-Room Schools in 1769:*

Beaver Brook  
Great Plain  
Boggs  
King Street  
Long Ridge  
Mill Plain  
Miry Brook  
Pembroke  
Starrs Plain  
Stony Hill



Little Red Schoolhouse at the Danbury Museum

Colonists used pottery for many purposes.



This colonial boy is knitting socks. Both girls and boys had to help with the household chores.



Women and girls wore long skirts and kept their hair covered.

Settlers farmed the land in the area. Most colonists grew their own food such as corn, wheat, and apples. They raised chickens, cows, and sheep for the meat. They also ate fish. Families cooked their food over an open fire.

Proprietors were the people who were in charge of dividing up the land. Each time they divided land, the proprietor would get one share of land. Over time the proprietors became rich and powerful. Small villages (hamlets) began to grow. By 1774 there were over one thousand people living in Danbury.



## Center of Trade

As Danbury grew, it became an important center of trade. The people grew more food than they needed so they had a surplus. They traded products for other goods they could not grow on the farm. Danbury became a strong agricultural (*farming*) region which exported, or sent, products such as beef, pork, and produce to New York and the West Indies.

## The Area Changes

Towns were growing all around such as Newtown, New Milford, Redding, Ridgefield, and New Fairfield. They used Danbury's grist mill to grind their grain for trade. Danbury's valley location and crossroads made it an important center for trade. It was easy to travel to New York and other towns in Connecticut. Danbury was no longer a frontier town.

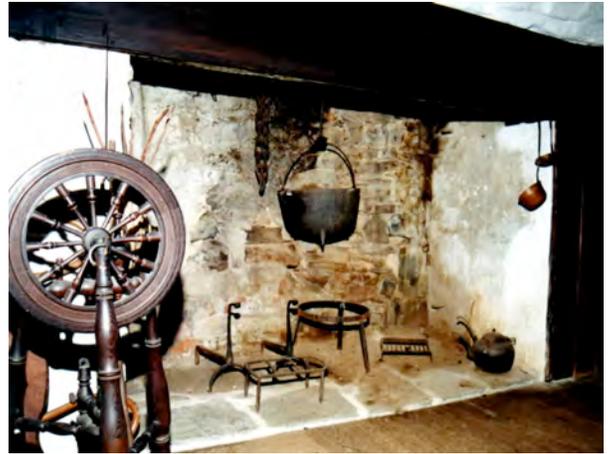


A Tavern in Colonial Williamsburg

People from many other places were moving to Danbury, including 50 African Americans.

The area was growing and better roads were needed to get to other towns. The court ordered other roads to be built. These new roads were just rough paths or trails. More travelers were also coming to town. Tavern keepers provided lodging (*a place to stay*) for travelers.

In 1774, there were 2,526 people living in Danbury.



A typical colonial kitchen . . . See the spinning wheel used to make yarn.

### Timeline

- 1684** Danbury is settled by eight families from Norwalk.
- 1696** The First Congregationalist Church is erected.
- 1702** Charter of town was granted.
- 1763** The First Episcopal Church is built on South Street.
- 1764** Danbury's first "Public School" is built on Wooster Street
- 1769** The First Society in Danbury divides the Society for Schools into 9 districts
- 1777** Danbury is occupied and burned by British troops

## Political Change was coming . . .

England still ruled the colonies. A colony is a group of people that settle in a new land far away but still follow the laws of the country that they left. The King of England made the colonists pay taxes (*money paid to a government*) but some colonists did not want to pay them.

They felt that taxes were not fair. The colonists had no voice (someone to speak for them) in England and they did not get anything in return from paying taxes. This was called taxation without representation.