Know Your Westchester

The Thaddeus Avery House of the Revolution is the right wing of this residence which stands on the grounds at Grasslands and is occupied by Commissioner of Public Welfare Stanton Stonewall and his family. On a tablet attached to the ancient kitchen fireplace in the old wing of the house is the following inscription: "From this house Capt. Thaddeus Avery went forth to fight the cause of freedom. He and the neighboring gentlemen (resident of Greenburgh of the Elmsford area) banded themselves together and offered their services and their lives to resist aggression." The tablet, of silver, was installed in 1900 by the New York City Daughters of the American Revolution. The tablet further reads: "Capt. Thaddeus Avery was branded with hot irons in this room and his wife threatened with death by the Hessians when they refused to divulge the hiding place of the Eighth Continental Army. Here Mrs. Avery baked bread for the Revolutionary War soldiers." One of the great social leaders of Victorian society in New York, Mrs. Robert Ogden Doremus, was the great granddaughter of an Avery girl who was born during the Revolution in this house. Thaddeus Avery, who married Elizabeth Underhill in 1779, was born in Harrison but lived on the farm of what is now Grasslands for most of his life and he died there in 1836. 

An ardent patriot and member of a militia cavalry regiment, like the Hammonds who lived nearby in the little farm house bearing their name on Grasslands Road, Thaddeus Avery was one of the sturdy farmer soldiers who helped keep at bay the British Army at this point in the Saw Mill River Valley, thereby gaining for General Washington the time needed to assemble and train American troops at the great Revolutionary War training center at Colonial Village north of Peekskill. Charles Avery, whose name is revered in the City of Pittsburgh, Pa., the fourth child of Thaddeus Avery, was one of the industrial leaders in the development of modern Pittsburgh where he died in 1858.