



The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park

"Connecticut's Valley Forge"



May 2012 NewsLetter

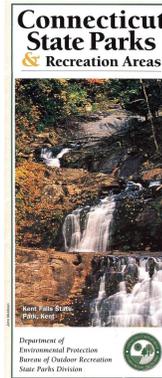
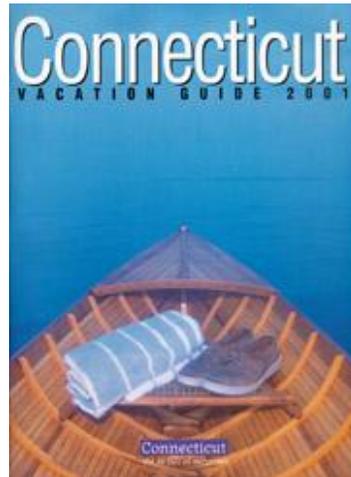
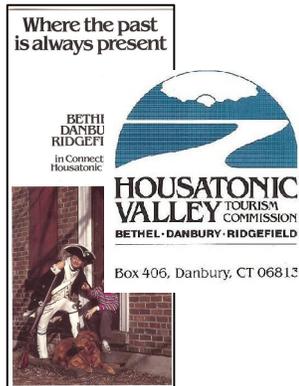
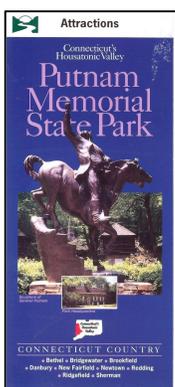
Bethel/Redding CT

Back In The Days Of Good Park Publicity



When we first started running events at the park, back in 1997, 98, 99 and 2000, we had a lot of help from a couple of outside sources. The wonderful organization called the Housatonic Valley Tourism Commission had its offices up on Main Street in Danbury. The office was headed up by a couple of professional tourism and publicity experts, both ladies. They not only were pros at their jobs, but they knew the entire region geographically, media contacts, printers, and had direct lines to the Hartford state tourism organization, of which they were a part.

These folks, with state tourism funds, designed and printed color rack cards about the park to be used at the Tourism Information Centers located at the main entry highways into Connecticut. They could also be used at other local tourism sites in our area. They saw to it that our park was duly listed in the annual Housatonic Valley Regional, and Connecticut State Vacation Guides. Not only were these folks easy to work with ... they used to periodically attend our monthly FANs meetings. They even helped pay for our event program agendas used at the reenactments. There were eight or nine of these tourism regions in the state. Each office was expert in its respective region. Then, some politician decided it cost too much money to support all these offices. The general assembly reduced the number of regions to five. The Housatonic Valley Region was closed down, and its area was thrown into the new Northwest Region, based in Waterbury. Our help with tourism and planning and even financial assistance came to an end. The new government agency handling this is a multi-purpose one – The Department of Economic & Community Development Offices of the Arts, Historic Preservation, and Culture & Tourism.



Rack Cards, brochures and maps that were created and produced by the now defunct Housatonic Valley Region Commission – which were placed at Information Centers.

The Connecticut State Vacation Guide Books published annually

State Parks locations and map, and the park brochures which were used at the park for two or three decades. These were produced by the State Parks Div. of the DEP.

The other agency supplying maps and brochures at the park and on a state-wide basis was, and still is, the State Parks Division of the DEP (now called the DEEP – Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection). As far as event publicity, the FANs is totally responsible. The state tourism office hasn't been seen by us for eight or nine years now.

The FANs has also assumed the lead in signage for the park's historic sites as well as the information panels on the kiosks in the Visitor Center. Park maps and walking tour guides, programs for events are produced by the FANs as well. DEEP Hartford now has a History/Museum arm that provides excellent assistance and AV presentations like the video tour in the Visitor Center. They controlled the production of the historic panels on the kiosks.

Danbury Region Has Suffered Along With State On Lack of Tourism Info



Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism



The Danbury Region of Western Connecticut has taken a back seat for years in visitor and tourism promotion by the state. The state tourism effort itself declined to an all time low in the last several years. Government slashed tourism dollars back to the bone to “save” money for more important projects. In fact Hartford Courant wrote article which quoted Gov. Dan Malloy statements... “ Malloy began his push for Connecticut tourism last year when he made money available so the state could pay \$100,000 in dues and renew its membership with *Discover New England*. The regional tourism group left Connecticut off a website map after the state slashed its tourism marketing budget and failed to pay the dues.

"When I became governor, Connecticut had been thrown out of New England," he said. [The map of Connecticut was missing]

The stakes are high as U.S. states compete fiercely for tourist dollars. As of last year, Connecticut tourism generated about \$11.5 billion in spending, \$1.2 billion in state and local tax revenue and employed about 111,000 workers. [Always be suspicious of numbers assembled for political purposes. How did they get these amounts?]

Anyway, the fact was in the last several years our area had no visitor information.

Governor Announces New Tourism Plan For State.

Connecticut
still revolutionary



"*Connecticut: Still Revolutionary*" Connecticut brand, part of a two-year, \$27 million state marketing initiative. The campaign will include TV and radio commercials as well as print and digital advertising to be run in surrounding states, PA, NY, MA, RI in an attempt to lure visitors to our state. The new tourism slogan — "*Connecticut: Still Revolutionary*" — could boost history-related attractions, but it's also meant to remind residents and visitors that the state is a leader in the arts, science and engineering, and civil rights.

A marketing strategy to boost tourism in the state called “Connecticut Still Revolutionary” is about our rich history in the American Revolution, was created by Chowder, a NYC-based agency. The commercials were set to an original song, “Better With You,” performed by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra and sung by UCONN student Dinelle Glaze. The \$27 million program will cover two years. The TV commercials began literally the same day the campaign was announced by the governor.

**There's an adage in advertising that half the money is wasted
- you just don't know which half! - Gov. Jodi Rell**

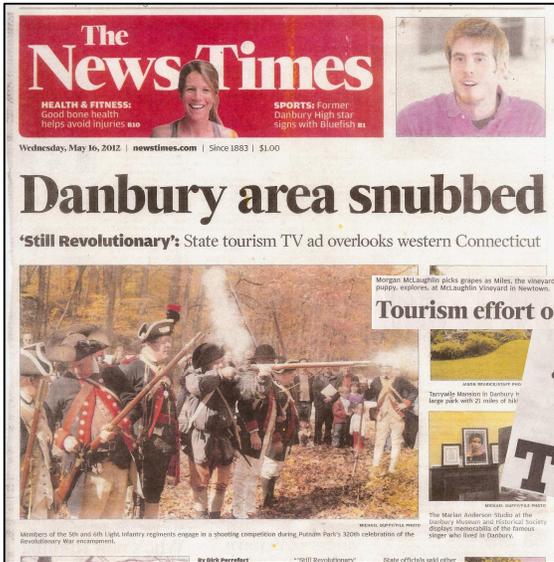
Gov. Rell did end up eliminating all state funds for Connecticut tourism programs. Not a good way to attract visitors.

Go to www.CTvisit.com to watch the commercials Then decide for yourself if you think the ads fit the theme, and whether or not the ads would make people want to visit Connecticut. .

One of the many criticisms of the commercials is the fact that the ad agency and the tourism commission and the governor say the theme is based on Connecticut's strong involvement in the Revolution. In fact one of the top three out of the original 13 colonies. Yet when you view the commercials there is only one tiny segment lasting 2.5 seconds that shows a couple of militia soldiers. That's it for all the TV ads.

It has also been suggested that maybe we should have appointed a Connecticut agency that is familiar with our history and geography. As the next page will point out, there were absolutely no scenes from Western Connecticut in the ads.

Danbury Region Gets Left Out Of Tourism Plan



Danbury's News Times sends up red flares to State Tourism Office and governor. Revolutionary War photo taken at Putnam Park.

Just two days after the governor's *Connecticut Still Revolutionary* tourism campaign was announced, the Danbury region media was firing back at those responsible for creating the ads. The News Times pointed out that our area was completely snubbed by their initiative. No Putnam Park. No Keeler Tavern and the Battle of Ridgefield etc. etc.



This year's Connecticut Visitor Guide has the Danbury Region in no-man's land. Not with the Fairfield County section, but with the Litchfield Hills map.



The new tourism and visitor guide vehicles leave our part of the state out of all of their videos, and media vehicles. The state officials say other parts of Connecticut will be included in future editions ... but no promise of which parts. Meanwhile:

- ❖ The new Revolutionary theme campaign has a total of 2.5 seconds of their two minute commercials that contain any reference to the Revolutionary War. Maybe the theme is too totally detached from the Revolutionary War. Mismatch?.
- ❖ Putnam Park is not even listed in the Litchfield Hills Section of the guide book where our region is listed. Squantz Pond is listed.
- ❖ The Danbury Region has fallen way behind in coverage of our area ever since the Housatonic Valley Regional Tourism Commission was discontinued years ago. Tourism high points now are along the coast and up the Connecticut River.
- ❖ There will only be new ads created twice each year. So one quarter of the \$27 million is already gone, sans us.
- ❖ The ad agency chosen for this project is out of New York City. Maybe a Connecticut agency would have a better understanding of our history and our geography.
- ❖ The state is going to provide a consultant to convey the significance of places like Ft..Griswold, the site of the only Revolutionary War battlefield in CT. Helloooo ... how about the British Raid of Danbury and the Battle of Ridgefield. Those American casualties were just as dead as those at Griswold! That's why Putnam's troops were sent to Redding!
- ❖ The State Tourism folks are partial to their own historic sites: the Prudence Crandall House, the Henry Whitfield House, the Old New-Gate Prison and the Eric Sloane Museum. None of these sites were centered around the Revolutionary War with the exception a few political and Rev War prisoners being kept at New-Gate. \$6 million goes to them.
- ❖ The Welcome To Connecticut Visitor Information Center at Exit 2 on I-84 remains locked up and closed to the public.



In Summary, the \$27 million that you and I are paying for tourism/visitor attraction to our part of the state, and specifically to Putnam Park ... is all for naught! We are going to have to approach the state tourism people and demand that our venues be placed in their guides, if not commercials. It may even require purchasing some ad space in their coveted publications.

May 2012 FANs Meeting

To contact us: fansofputnampark@att.net



Notes from the prez ...

1. President's Welcome
2. 2. Treasurer's Report:

The minutes of the meeting have still not arrived at the printer, so it is assumed a good time was had by all! ~ The Editor

The Most Important FAN's Event Of The Year!

The following excerpt was taken from a grant proposal the FANs was submitting to the Meserve Fund for a professional restoration company to inspect the old 1893 Pavilion, which sat rotting on the knoll by the front entrance to the park. The letter was dated September 1997. It must be noted that the FANs in those days were very active in volunteering for park clean-up and maintenance. Ranger Andy was only part-time staff at the park in those days. (He was assigned to Squantz).

"The Friends Group works closely with the Park Superintendent and rangers who staff the park. The group volunteers time for park maintenance, clearing trails, raking leaves and even larger projects like clearing out and restoration of a huge reflecting pond constructed in the 1920's. The group has donated maintenance tools and equipment to the park staff.

The second area, with highest priority of the organization is the historic and educational program being developed for visitors and specifically school groups who are studying Revolutionary War in their school's curriculums. The group held its 1st annual Living History Weekend last June. A huge success and good fundraiser in one. Separate programs are scheduled on a continuing basis for school group park tours."



This week the buses rolled into Putnam Park for this year's Living History School Days



Nancy Cowles, FANs School Days creator and chair.

Nancy Cowles heads up two important programs at Putnam Park for the FANs organization. Living History School Days and The Summer Craftsmen Program . Nancy is a charter member of FANs. In her first life she was a teacher, moving around the U.S. including Pennsylvania, California and Connecticut. This background has been invaluable for her communications with the schools she invites to the program each year ,as well as planning the program content itself. The School Days program event is probably the most complicated to organize because she has to mesh schedules of schools, craftsmen and reenactors' availability, and dates and times ... for it to happen. Theoretically, there are no "Rain Dates". She has created "School Kits" for each participating school, so teachers can give pre-event lessons to the kids on the war, the camps in Redding and what they will see at the park.

The month of May is like betting at the casino... it can be sunny, rainy or both!



The next FAN's Meeting will be on Monday, **June 11th, 2012**

at **7:00PM** at the Visitor Center at Putnam Park.



Check out our FANs Web site at www.putnampark.org