



Painting by Don Troiani

The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park

“Connecticut’s Valley Forge”



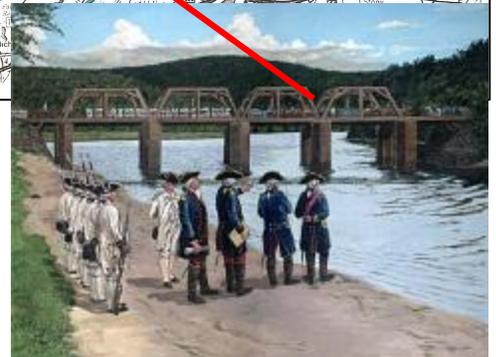
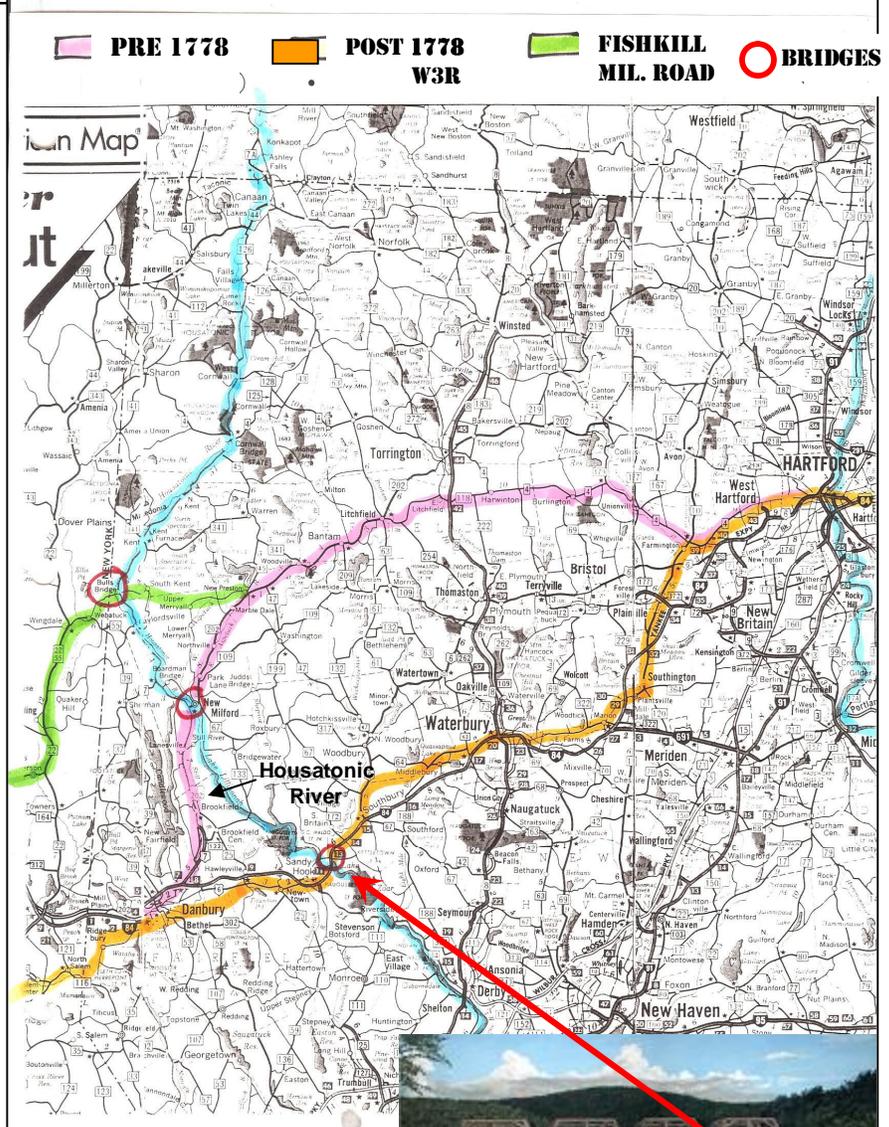
Bethel/Redding CT

June 2012 NewsLetter

Routes Of Travel From Danbury to Hartford During Revolution

The first main route of travel to Hartford from Danbury was in a crescent shape up through New Milford, to Litchfield, to Farmington, to West Hartford and then into Hartford. Why such an extended route? Because the first, and only bridge across the Housatonic River, all the way from the Sound, was built in New Milford. There were ferry crossings at other locations, but for large amounts of people and the heavy loads – like military supply trains- a bridge was needed. This road was also connected to the Fishkill military route, crossing at Bulls Bridge, and then hooking up with the main road in New Preston. One of the largest taverns and inns was the Cogswell Tavern in New Preston. Gen. Washington stopped there on several occasions on the way to military planning meetings, including with French Gen. Rochambeau.

During the fall of 1778, Gen. Washington had his main army with him at Fredericksburgh NY (where Patterson and Pawling are today). He had around 15 brigades of troops with him camped from the Hudson River to Danbury, with the main grouping in Fredericksburgh. Washington was in a quandary, that fall, as to where the British troops were heading. Some of the strong possibilities were Boston, Newport, or the Connecticut coastal towns. Of course his number one concern was always the Hudson Highlands. It was during this time that Washington decided he needed a faster and straighter route to Hartford from the critical army supply depot located in Danbury. The route had to be through the inland western Connecticut corridor to avoid Long Island Sound and the British naval forces controlling those waters. He ordered his engineers to build a bridge across the Housatonic at the Southbury-Newtown crossing. The route then went north through Middlebury, Waterbury, Southington and then up through West Hartford. This route served the Continental Army in moving its supplies, cattle and troops for the entire war. Later, in 1781 and 1782, it was the path of thousands of French troops and supply trains on the way to Yorktown, VA.



Painted by David R. Wagner

Carleton's Bridge built in 1778. An I-84 bridge travels near the spot today. The marker today reads Rochambeau Bridge.

The Military Highways From The Bridge To Danbury

The new bridge and route changed the line of march from coming into Danbury from New Milford ... to coming in by way of Southbury, Newtown, and Bethel.



- From the Flagpole in Newtown, go onto West St
- Then onto Castle Hill Road
- The onto Great Hill Road, which turns into Plumtrees Road.
- Turn off of Plumtrees Rd onto Taylor Rd. until in dead-ends into Shelter Rock Rd. Stay on Shelter Rock Rd, turn left after Meckauer Park onto Shelter Rock Rd.
- Go up and over the Shelter Rock and down into Danbury via South St.
- From Flagpole in Newtown, go Northwest on Mt. Pleasant St.
- Turn left onto Old Bethel Rd.
- Old Bethel Rd. will turn into Walnut Hill Rd at the Bethel Line.
- Walnut Hill Rd will come to a stop at the Old Turnpike Rd, and take a left and wind down the switchback road (still Walnut Hill) to it runs into Shelter Rock Rd. Take right hand turn onto Shelter Rock Rd. and then turn left after Meckauer Park onto Shelter Rock Rd. Go up and over the Shelter Rock and down into Danbury via South St.

[Note: Where the Old Bethel Road turned off of Mt. Pleasant St. in Newtown there was no further road toward Danbury on what is now US Rt. 6. Old Bethel Rd was the main route to Danbury.]

Both routes were used in the colonial days. The roads back then were terrible compared to today. They were narrow, crooked and winding. They went around natural barriers like ledges and ponds. In many places they were very steep. This could tax the animals being used to haul the heavy wagons. In many instances, it was just a dangerous going down a steep hill as brakes were almost non-existent. Most of us today can get to the Rochambeau Bridge on I-84 in less than a half hour. In those days travel with wagons made about 12 to 15 miles per day, depending on the terrain and road conditions.

When the Rochambeau's French troops came through in 1781 (and returned in 1782) they used the Walnut Hill route. There is a memoir written by one of the Hoyt's of Bethel describing the French Army and baggage train going past the home he was staying in. The thousands of troops, and hundreds of wagons, and thousands of oxen and horses were literally stretched out for miles going by their house on Walnut Hill Road near Old Hawleyville Rd. The troops were headed for Massachusetts for departure back to France.

Winter Encampment After Redding Camps – 1779/80

The Redding camps broke up during March, April and May depending on the various regiments next duty assignments. The two Connecticut brigades returned to the Hudson Highlands. Hazen's Canadian Regiment headed toward NH/Vermont to hopefully work on the military road they planned on cutting through to Canada. This was the Canadians number one objective (the project was eventually halted). Gen. Poor's New Hampshire Brigade of the 1st, 2nd and third regiments were assigned to the famous Sullivan Expedition in Upstate NY. The objective was to exterminate the six tribes of the Iroquois League for their part in assisting the British against the Americans and raiding frontier settlements. This was a brutal campaign in which villages Indians [including women and children], crops and homes were systematically destroyed.

Winter Encampment After Redding Camps – 1779/80 - Cont'd

Poor's New Hampshire Brigade came back south to Pennsylvania with the rest of the expedition. The three NH regiments eventually worked their way back into Connecticut for their winter encampment. This winter they were assigned to Danbury. The camp was in today's Bethel. It should be explained that during this time period, Bethel was part of Danbury. It was a separate church parish, but still officially a portion of Danbury. Gen. Poor was in attendance this year. The lead NH officer of the Redding encampment, Lt. Col. Henry Dearborn, was approved for furlough for the winter. In fact, while home in New Hampshire, he got remarried. You may remember from past articles that the year before, on his way to the Redding encampment, his first wife died. He went open on leave for the funeral and then returned to be the top senior officer in Camp Reading.

The location of the 1779/80 campsite was land located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Plumtrees Road and Old Hawleyville Road. Even on old maps, after the that winter, the land was called the "Hut Lots". If you look at the map on the page at the left you will see the little graphic of a wooden hut. Why was this location chosen? The map makes it quite clear that the camp was located right on the main military highway. The troops could be in Danbury in short order, on the road to Hartford and other points north, or near southbound roads to the Sound.



The 1779/80 winter encampment was located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Plumtrees Rd. and Old Hawleyville Rd. On the Military Road.



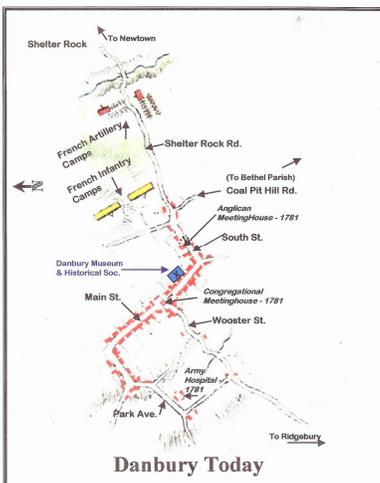
Bethel landmark, Blue Jay Orchards, borders the old army camp on its southern borders.



Looking across the road from the Blue Jay store, you will see a wooded area at the left rear side of the orchard. This is where the camp was located. While there were 3 regiments camped there, the land today is covered by a residential area. The entrance was probably off Old Hawleyville Rd.

Off and on during 1777, 78 and 79, Washington had assigned various regiments and even brigades to Danbury to protect the critical military and supply route down the western part of the state. The one time when troops were withdrawn from Danbury to answer the call for support in the Hudson Highlands ... a 2,000 man British force raided Danbury.'

On The Other Side of the Shelter Rock ...



The French drawn map shows Danbury in the Revolutionary period. It shows where both churches were located. The locations of the French camps are in the upper section toward Shelter Rock.

The steep road went up and over the Shelter Rock a rocky glacial ridge that runs between Danbury and Bethel. The top of the ridge was assuredly a major picket post manned by troops, as it was the gateway to the town. The map at the left was originally drawn by a French army engineer while they were camped in Danbury during the Yorktown march. The original map was lettered in French. We transposed English wording on the map so we can related to the roads and buildings sites today. One of the most interesting sites is the Anglican Church which was the being used as a warehouse for the Army Supply Depot. Because it was the Church of England, the building was spared. The contents were dragged out and burned.



Painted by David R. Wagner

The largest warehouse of the Army Supply Depot was the Anglican Church. The building supplied the army of the Continental Army with supplies starting in early 1777, just prior to Danbury being destroyed in the British raid. The scene above shows the French Army picking up supplies for their march to Yorktown. They had 5 or 6,000 troops and hundreds of wagons in their baggage train. This was also like a modern day 'truck stop' where forage and grain was re-supplied for their thousands of draft animals and military horses. They had to haul tons of forage along the journey until resupplied at the next supply stop.

June 2012 FANs Meeting

To contact
us: fansofputnampark@att.net



Notes from the prez ...

1. President's Welcome
2. Treasurer's Report:
3. Park Update, Nate Hale: Rebuilding Museum shutters complete. Main door done. Barn roof – materials are on the way. Rob Doscher's loans-3 panel descript. Stands have been purchased. Finalizing text. Redo officer's qtrs. (magazine). \$60 K est.-Construction to start in June. Visitor Center roof shingles falling off. Why?
4. Membership Update – Buzz – 16 WELCOME TO REDDING letters sent out. 4 new members.
5. Fall Reenactment: . Prelim. public schedule and reenactor schedule completed. Check list meeting to be scheduled before June meeting.
6. VC/Museum: Alan Fitch voucher document for museum. Al Levere has completed but not installed.

Future Historian At The Helm in Museum And Visitor Center This Summer.



Victoria Anderson, 19, of Redding, a history major at the University of Connecticut, works as an interpretive guide at the Putnam Memorial State Park Museum in Redding, Thursday, June 7, 2012. Photo: Carol Kaliff / CT From a feature story in the Danbury News Times on students finding jobs. Welcome, Victoria ...

The next FAN's Meeting will be on Monday, **July 9th, 2012**
at 7:00PM at the [Visitor Center](#) at Putnam Park.
Check out our FANs Web site at www.putnampark.org

