



Image by Don Troiani

The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park



"Connecticut's Valley Forge"

Bethel/Redding CT

April 2010 NewsLetter

The Beginning . . . In the clear chill of an early April morning in 1775 Captain John Parker, commanding the Lexington minutemen, directed his drummer boy to go across the road to the Common and beat the call to arms. When sixteen year old drummer William Diamond did this ... the War of the American Revolution began - Arthur Tourtellot



by William Barns Wollen (1857-1936), 1910.

The Drum



© LEXINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Wm. Diamond's drum, is on display at the Hancock-Clark house in Lexington. The pistols belonged to British Marine, Major Pitcairn.



Drummer Diamond says, "Don't be shy! As the drummer you will be the main line of communication between the commander and the troops."



When you're on the battlefield, the captain will give the commands and it's often loud. The drummer will be right next to the captain so the firing militia will hear the calls through the drum. Drum commands signify 'Prime and Load,' 'Make Ready,' 'Present Fire'...to assemble, to retreat."

The Drum and the Continental Army



The use of drums for military purposes goes back to ancient times. The Swiss Army began using drums as an integral part of their communications back in the 1500's. European armies borrowed the practice and introduced their own techniques. The French, Germans and British all used drum commands before the American Colonial period in the 1600's. No surprise, the British drum practices became the standard usage for the British colonies in America. America's original settlements had their own military leaders, i.e., Capt. Myles Standish at Plimoth, and Capt. John Smith at Jamestown. All early settlements that evolved during the 1660's were required to have train bands (militias). The drum was part and parcel to all of these military organizations.



Military drum signals used for marching, battle and in camp was called "Field Musick".

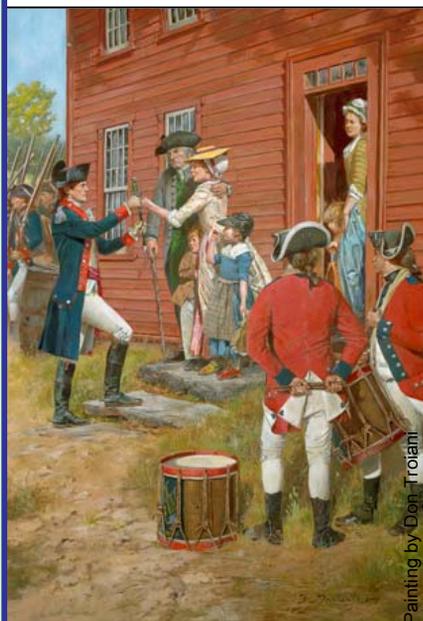
The drums were used for two main military purposes: the first for cadence while marching; and the second, and most important, for relaying commands to the troops. The drummers, usually one per company, stayed close at hand to the company Captain. Many of the instructions to the troops were relayed by drum calls. These calls were standardized in the Continental Army. A drummer (and then with addition of fifers) earned the same pay as a corporal. There are various arguments as to the reason for the higher pay, like the drummer marched in battle either out in front with the Captain, or on the side of the front line with the Captain. This made him a primary target, especially during hand-to-hand combat which pitted a drummer with a seventeen inch drum stick against a Brown Bess musket with bayonet with a reach of 75". With the number of drum calls they had to learn (and be good at) skill was certainly a factor. Music for entertaining was another story. Even though this occasionally happened, Entertainment music, or Band Musick, was never played during normal camp or march periods, so has not to confuse critical commands like the *Assembly* call played before the skirmish at Lexington..

Standard Drum Calls for Camps:

- Reveille:** beat as soon as the day began to dawn.
- **Adjudants Call:** beat to mark the beginning of the Troop.
- **Troop:** usually around 9 o'clock. Roll call, inspection, day's orders.
- **First Sgts. Call:** assemble non-coms for orders.
- **Go For Provisions:**
- **Go For Wood:**
- **Go For Water:**
- **Retreat:** beat at sunset to assemble for roll call and evening "orders".
- **Tattoo:** beat at 9:00 or 10:00. (this call was only played in forts or towns – never in camps.)

No beating of the drum to occur after The Retreat except in case of alarm in which case the beat "**To Arms**" would be played.

Additionally, calls for **Battle** and **Marches** are many. The drummers *and* the troops had to know these calls by heart. All of these calls together are in the category of "**Field Musick**", not to be confused with entertainment-type which is called "**Band Musick**".



The drummers uniforms were usually the reverse of the regimentals. These drummers could be easily picked out by their company officers when needed in the heat of battle.

Paste this url into your browser to see some of fife and drum teams at work (big and small)



The drummer had to have stamina along with his musical skill. He was the first one up in the morning to sound Reveille. He was on the job thru Retreat at night. He was on beckon and call with the Captain 24/7.

Rev War historian John U. Rees did a study on the ages of the drummers (and fifers, too). Some drummers actually joined at the ages of 10 and 12, but most were 16 or 17 when joining. Some drummers were in their 30's. Each regiment had a Drum Major and a Fife Major. These two men were in charge of the musicians. They spent from two to four hours a day in instruction for their drummers and fifers ...*away* from camp.

Camp Reading (Putnam Park) Dec. 18, 1778



Gen. George Washington was a taskmaster with his officers. He demanded that "Returns" be sent in weekly so he could see at a moments notice just how many troops he had ready to fight ... at every location. The return below is one of several we have for what today is Putnam Park. The return is broken down by each of the four regiments, and lists how many effective men were at the camp by categories of officers, staff, non-coms, and rank & file which were the privates. It also lists how many were sick, away on special duty, on furlough etc., and the number of drummers and fifers who were at camp assigned to the different regiments. The "Wanting To Complete" section told how many of the various categories of Sergeants., Drum & Fife, and Rank & File were lacking to complete a full roster.

The drummers and fifers were assigned to each company in a regiment. There were usually eight companies at this point in the war. Each company would have one drummer and one fifer. The drummers and fifers were all led by one Drum Major and one Fife Major. These two men were responsible for instructing the men in the various calls that were used daily or on the march or in battle. Sometimes this instruction lasted 2-4 hours each day, on top of the musicians' normal duty calls.

Return of the Brigade of Foot Commanded by Enoch Poor Esqr. Brigadier General

Camp Reading		Officers present fit for Duty														Rank & File					Wanting to Complete			Alterations Since Last Returning																
December 18, 1778		Field				Commiss'd				Staff						NonCommiss'oned					Pres fit for Duty	Sick Pres	Sick Abs	On Com	On Fur	Total	Drm & Fife	Rank & File	Dead	Disch'd	Des'd	Sent to Invalid	Prom	Joined						
State	Colonels Names	Col	Lt Col	Major	Cap	1st Lt	2d Lt	Ens	Chap	Adj	Pay Mas	Qr. Mas	Surg	Mat	Sgt Maj	Qr Maj	Drm Maj	Fife Maj	Sgt	Drm & Fife																				
United	Hazen	"	"	"	6	2	"	5	"	"	"	1	1	"	1	1	"	"	29	16	318	26	53	27	15	439	11	11	327	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1		
N.H.	Cilley	1	"	"	4	"	3	4	"	"	1	"	"	1	1	1	"	"	21	7	275	20	54	26	20	395	5	5	245	"	"	1	"	"	"	"	"	"		
Do	Hale	"	"	"	3	1	4	2	"	"	1	"	"	1	1	1	1	1	19	10	263	28	38	24	2	295	5	5	345	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1	
Do	Scamm'l	"	1	"	4	"	3	1	"	"	"	"	1	1	"	"	"	1	1	9	10	179	24	40	19	5	267	6	5	373	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Total		1	1	"	17	3	10	12	"	"	2	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	78	43	975	98	185	96	42	1396	27	26	1289	"	"	1	"	"	"	"	"	2		

The December 18th 1778 return listed 2 Drum Majors, 2 Fife Majors and 41 drummers and fifers. The 'Wanting to Complete' section said they needed 26 more drummers and fifers to have a full complement.. However, the regiments were under-filled, too.



These images show the Canadian Regiment soldier with one of his drummers. Note the reverse uniform color scheme.

Most Famous Painting of Rev War



Archibald Willard's famous Yankee Doodle. Willard painted this masterpiece in 1876 for the centennial of the Declaration of Independence. It is also known as "Yankee Doodle" and it depicts a parade during the Revolutionary War. Not all musicians were young boys.



The drummer & fifer are a favorite at our annual Living History School Days for the kids.



The monthly general meeting was held on Monday April 12th at the Visitor Center.

Notes from the meeting...



The British Drummer Boy

1. **Opening:** Stetler and Gibson were present. Scott Stetler opened the meeting.
2. **Treasurer's Report:** TG Henderson was not present. He gave Gibson financial data, but it was inadvertently left home.
3. **Park Update:** Nate reported that he has the same budget and staff as last year (which is good in today's tight budget crunch. **Flag:** – first flag cleaned and repaired. Second flag is at cleaners. **Flat Screen TV** for AV section in Visitor Center. Electrician coming to wire for TV in NE corner. **Benches** will be made for seating of visitors. Hartford staff is creating an **AV presentation** to be shown on new equipment. Should be ready by the May 5th exhibit opening.
4. **Events: State Friends Exhibits at State Capitol:** March 10th. Harry, Jeanine and Carlton attended with our exhibit. Harry passed around photos of the exhibit. **School Day May24-28th:** Nancy says all schools from last year are coming again. Nancy signed up a list of volunteers at meeting. We can still use help. Call Nancy at 203-797-8604 or, Lauren Contorno at 203-744-7943. **Reenactment – Nov. 6-7th:** Brian read an email communication from Mike Filler of the 5th CTR. (Note the 5th did not attend tonight). The letter raised some questions about the overall coordination of the event. The group decided to reinstate the Reenactment Committee, who will have full control of the event planning. Jim Freebairn, Brian McCoy and Dave Solek are the committee **Antique Coins:** for event was presented by Dave Solek, and approved by the group.
5. **Visitor Center/ Museum: Exhibit Opening-** May 5th 10:00AM(?) Hartford is organizing. More info to be sent out under separate cover. Nancy and Jeanine will coordinate refreshments. (Need head count). **Walking Tour/Map:** Harry has ordered 3,000 sheets padded in 50 each. **FANs Exhibit:** Harry asked that some space be given the FANs/DEP Display on the Visitor Center floor. Nate will see if space can be assigned. **FANs/DEP Exhibit Booklets:** Harry passed out copies of a specially made run of the exhibit to the attendees.

The End....



Yorktown

At 10 o'clock on Oct. 17, during a heavy cannonading from the Allied guns and mortars, Washington's men saw a British drummer mount the enemy's parapet. His beating could not be heard for the cannon; but, when a British officer finally climbed up beside him waving a white kerchief, it became evident the drummer was sounding a parley. All around the lines firing ceased; the British officer was blindfolded and led behind the American lines where General Washington received Lord Cornwallis' request that hostilities be suspended and a joint commission be named to draw up terms of surrender.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpuJIKkJRM4&feature=player_embedded#



Painting by Don Troiani

The Drummer:

Not the little drummer boy with a soft easy job ... but a demanding, hard, tough and thankless job that was extremely dangerous. They played field musick which directed the armies daily lives both on the march, in camp and in battle.

The next FAN's Meeting will be on Monday **May 10th, 2010**
at 7:00PM at the **Visitor Center** at Putnam Park.