



The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park



"Connecticut's Valley Forge"

April 2009 NewsLetter

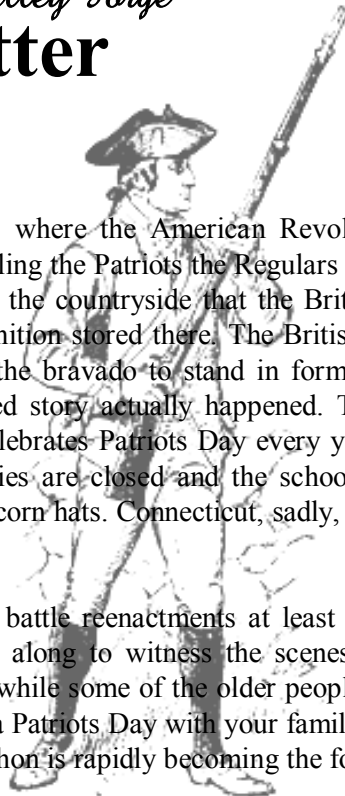
Bethel/Redding CT

To Arms ...to Arms..!



Each April we spotlight Lexington and Concord ... where the American Revolution began in earnest. The lanterns were hung in Old North Church in Boston (telling the Patriots the Regulars were coming by water). Then Paul Revere's famous ride through the night to warn the countryside that the British Army was on its way to Concord to destroy the American supplies and ammunition stored there. The British Army column was brought up short in Lexington where the town's militia had the bravado to stand in formation on their town green in defiance of the King's troops. All of this oft repeated story actually happened. Today's school systems keep reducing history in the lesson plans. Massachusetts celebrates Patriots Day every year on the closest Monday to April 19th. It is a state holiday where many companies are closed and the schools are closed. There are still parades and lots of "minutemen" walking around in tricorn hats. Connecticut, sadly, does not recognize the day as a benchmark in the American Revolution.

Everyone, should attend the Lexington and Concord battle reenactments at least once in their lifetime. More, importantly, the kids and grandkids should be taken along to witness the scenes on how America began its journey to become an independent nation. Take them while some of the older people can still explain the history to the kids; before the day slips into oblivion. Plan on a Patriots Day with your family next year! The schedules of events are all posted on the internet. The Boston Marathon is rapidly becoming the foremost event on this day!



The Lexington/Concord Family Trip:




4:00 AM

1. This is not a trip for the fainthearted. You should arrive at the Lexington Green around 4:00AM. It may take you a few minutes to find a parking spot in the vicinity. Everyone should have made a pit stop before getting there. There are no porta-potties near the green. Also, hold off on coffee til' later on – same reason. Dress warmly – blankets, jackets, hats and warm shoes.

4:30AM

2. By the time you have parked and walked to the green, it should now be around 4:30AM. The action doesn't begin until 5:30AM, but it is imperative to get as close to the green as possible now. You will be vying with a few thousand other patriots! This next hour is the toughest. After you cool down from your march to the green, you will start to notice that it is cold and damp at this time of day.



Some local patriots bring their step ladders for better viewing and later arrival. 



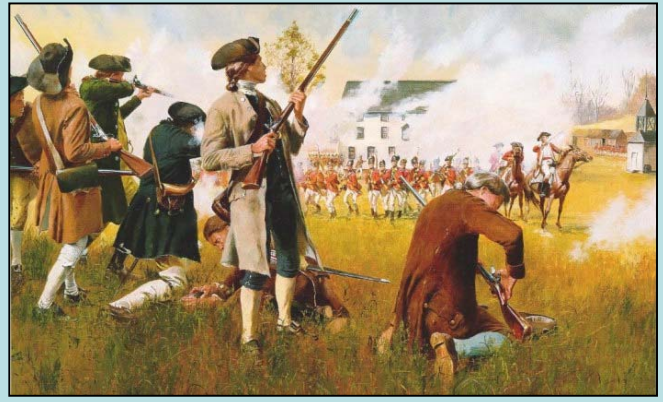
5:00AM

3. As the damp fog begins to lift, you will start to see other beings around the green, and others who are milling around on the green itself. With all these sleep deprived people ... it is not a beauty contest! The people on the green are members of the Lexington Minutemen, or their families. Strange as it may seem, many spectators turned out to watch military confrontations in 1775.
4. The green is a huge triangle with the point headed toward Massachusetts Avenue and Boston. This is the direction British Army will come from.

19th of April – Lexington Green

Added here for perspective is Don Troiani's painting of the confrontation on the green that morning in 1775. The British soldiers had come onto the green and then lined up facing the Minutemen of Lexington. 75 Minutemen lined up in two lines on the green around 5:30 AM. Threats and yelling broke out.

The British Army had 841 troops in their column. Of these, two columns (71 troops) went onto the green and faced the Americans. The senior British officers tried to prohibit any gun play, but somewhere one or two shots rang out and the British opened fire. The Americans had 8 killed and ten wounded. The British 2 wounded.



The Lexington/Concord Family Trip: - continued.

5:30AM

5. It is now light enough to capture the whole scene being laid out on the green. The Minutemen have formed two lines of men, going across the middle section of the green. They are nervously awaiting the troops of the dreaded Kings army. All talk, commands and even bravado is carefully choreographed. Both the American and British speak the lines that were spoken 234 years ago on this green. Both sides have gone through rehearsals with the choreographers during the weeks leading up to the battle.



5:45AM

6. This is the big scene you've been waiting for.. You're watching the gunfire, confusion of soldiers, and the casualties falling onto the green. The British officers are shouting orders to form up and march off the green to the Concord Road ... leaving the townspeople and families to tend their fallen ones. You have made it through the toughest part of the day. As the smoke settles, head for one of the half dozen area churches for the annual pancake breakfasts. This is highly recommended. A chance to eat, get warm and sit down for a while. They all have rest rooms!



7:00AM

Pancakes

7. Okay, ready for the next battle? While we have been eating breakfast, the Brits have been marching toward Concord on their mission to destroy the military stores. Pile back in the car and head to Concord ... about 6.5 miles. Head for the Concord town green and look for a parking space. The walk to the Old North Bridge is about a ½ mile from there.



Minuteman on Patriot's Day 2009. Also, editors' grandson.



Minuteman Statue on Lexington Green. John Parker, Capt. Of the Lexington Militia in 1775

The Lexington/Concord Family Trip: - continued.



The British reached Concord about 9:00am. The forces were divided. Some troops were to search the homes and shops of the village. They found cannon carriages and tons of lead ball in the mill pond. Another force was sent out across Old North Bridge to Col. James Barrett's farm to look for cannon. Barrett was the commander of the Concord Militia. One company of Brits crossed the bridge and marched on to Barrett's farm. Three companies remained at the bridge to guard it. They stayed on the Village side of the river.. Two things happened that sparked the action. The Concord Militia was just on the other side of the bridge. They saw smoke risings from the vicinity of the village (the British were burning some of the gun carriages they had found.)

Then some of the Regulars went out onto the bridge and began removing the wooden planking. Tension and nerves were taught on both sides. The British fired first, killing a militia man immediately. The Acton and Concord Militias then opened fire, killing several of the British. After several back and forth volleys the British turned and hurried back to the village. The skirmish was quick and bloody. Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous lines *"the shot fired heard round the world"* actually referred to this battle even though the first actual shooting took place on Lexington Green. Emerson's grandfather Rev. William Emerson, Concord's minister, lived in the Manse which still stands next to the bridge property. The British column barely got back to Boston. It took more than 7 hours, including a rescue party to escort them in. British casualties for the day were 272. American side, 94.



8. **9:30AM** When you reach the Concord Green (Wright's Tavern will be on your left) look around for a parking spot. The road to Old North Bridge will be blocked off to vehicular traffic. You will see spectators walking the half-mile down to the bridge. Most of the spectators will stand or sit on the stone walls leading down to the monument and bridge. The Concord Patriot's day committee have always done their "own thing" with almost no coordination with the Lexington folks. Try to get someplace to sit and then be patient for the ceremonies at the British graves and the subsequent battle reenactment to begin. After the bridge skirmish, you will have seen the "battle" parts of Lexington & Concord. The 7-8 hour bloody retreat back to Boston by the crippled British plays out in different locations on the almost 20 miles back to Charlestown and Boston. Hopefully, the sun is shining and you are much warmer than you were at 4:00 this morning. You're also ready to take a nap! You have participated now for about 8 hours. The War for Independence lasted 8 years!

Walking Tour Signs Going Up at Park



This picture shows the evolution of signage at the park:: the new frame, the white numbered post that relates to our walking tour map, and the old 70's dark signs cut out by a router.



Year round walking tour/map box.



Nate Hale's crew led by Ranger Andy Sullivan is erecting the new Historic Walking Tour signs around the park. They will be up for park opening next month.

April 2009 FANs Meeting

To contact us:
friendsofputnampark@comcast.net



The April meeting was held at the visitor center on Monday, April 13th, 2009.

Notes from the prez ...



- 1. President's Opening:** Steve opened the meeting. He brought up the recent mural proposal and what transpired. The consensus was that it was time to move forward and work to be supportive of the Parks staff in their efforts to improve the Visitor Center and Museum.
- 2. Treasurer's Report:** We are happy to have T.G. back and he updated us on finances, etc. He procured an anonymous donation of \$1,500 for maintenance expenses for the VC and museum, is working on another donation of \$1,300 to cover the additional expenses in redoing the VC Interpretive Displays, is looking into the donation of two mannequins for the uniform donated by Rob Doscher, has purchased copies of "My Brother Sam is Dead" and period flags to sell in the gift store. He has also procured a stand to display postcards that are now or will shortly be in production and ready for School Week (to be priced at \$1 each).
- 3. Park update:** Andy filled in for Nate. He says that they have painted the inside of the museum and put a new door to the office and said that Al and Nicole have spent time cleaning out/moving around some of the displays. He also said that they will be starting to put in the new historical marker signs throughout the park.
- 4. Membership update:** Buzz said that we got a couple more members. It was discussed that the best way to get new members was to hand out member flyers when people visited the park, whether in the VC, Museum or in the park brochures in the box at the entrance.
- 5. School Week:** Nancy gave us an update. Currently she has 870 students coming over the five days. She also has each station staffed. Anyone that can help out please let her know. Also, she wanted to make sure she will have the tents set up as last year.
- 6. Guardhouse camp out:** Brian said that while nobody spent the night, it was a good day. Perhaps 100 people came by. Brian, Jim and Dave were there as well as several others from Massachusetts.
- 7. Other Events:** Neil Hobbs of the 40th Foot is still looking to hold an event on May 30, 31. Joel Boyd of Fitches Co. of the 4th CT Regiment (?) is planning on doing something on Sept. 26, 27. Brian said he'd work with T.G. to help with the "Special Use License" and insurance that are necessary. FANS offered to help with promotion to the Redding Pilot, Newtown Bee.
- 8. Other VC Events:** Steve brought up the Summer/Fall evening events. Currently Dan offered to do something, Brent offered to do a program on My Brother Sam is Dead, and we have proposals from the Reel Thing for a music and dance event, and something from Bob Berthelson, an area lecturer. Jeanine and Buzz "offered" to work with Steve to work out a schedule and discuss how to implement.
- 9. Website Photos:** The FANS park website now has a place for people to post photos (FLICKR). It was suggested that a sign should be displayed in the visitor center to let people know they can do it, perhaps also on the other side of the outdoor kiosk map by the entrance.

New Postcards On Order

Col. Kline, the guide at the Visitor Center, has placed the initial order for the first series of post cards showing various sites around the park. The cards will be sold at both the museum and the visitor center facilities. They will be ready for sale at the upcoming Living History School Days and the park opening in May.



Dear Mom,
having a great time
wish you were here.

The next FAN's Meeting will be on Monday, **May 11, 2009**

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

New schedule : 2nd Monday of each month