



1776 Mack Truck

The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park

“Connecticut’s Valley Forge”



Bethel/Redding CT

Aug./Sept. 2010 NewsLetter



Washington marching 12,000 soldiers into Valley Forge in December 1777. Notice the men in rags and those with no shoes or stockings.

*Valley Forge ...
a lesson in
inefficiency and
incompetence.*

Even though the weather was certainly a factor in delaying delivery of food and supplies to the troops at Valley Forge, There was a severe shortage of wagons and teams to bring in those supplies. Many critical supplies were not available because Quartermaster and Commissary Departments had not obtained the supplies or transportation.

On December 19, 1777, over 12,000 members of the Continental Army arrived at Valley Forge. Weary, ill-fed and poorly equipped, the men struggled to construct shelters for protection against the rapidly approaching winter.

While no battles against the British were fought that winter, casualties mounted at alarming rates as the army faced irregular food supplies and inadequate clothing. Over 2,000 soldiers died from disease such as dysentery, pneumonia, typhus and typhoid. Little help arrived from Congress and the suffering continued to grow worse... WHY?



The “Original Tea Party Men”

The Continental Congress spent 1775 and 1776 under the wishful thinking that the squabble with Britain and their colonies would be settled, and life would get back to normal. For two years Congress tried to run a logistical system to supply the army with food, clothes, tents and ammunition.

One must understand that these delegates to Congress thought along the same track as today’s Tea Party:

- Less spending There was no money in the bank!
- Lower taxes. And with representation!
- Smaller government. We can manage ourselves!



ANOTHER GROUP OF REACTIONARY, RACIST TEA PARTIERS MEETS TO SUBVERT THE ENLIGHTENED, LEGITIMATE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT.

Congress, sometimes half-hearted attempts at trying to run the supply system, failed miserably. The army in the field suffered from the haggling and indecision which delayed supplies, or worse, shut down the system. The disaster of Valley Forge (over 2,000 deaths) was like a fire alarm for Congress. They took the blame.

The birth of the United States Army ...

On June 14, 1775, the Second Continental Congress adopted, as its Army, the variety of New England militia that had surrounded the British forces occupying Boston. An additional 10 companies of riflemen from Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland were authorized by Congress to support the New Englanders already in the field. These acts, 235 years ago, marked the birth of the United States Army. Equally important, for the Army's heritage were the measures taken in the days immediately following June 14th.

The very next day, Congress unanimously selected George Washington as the commander "of all the continental forces, raised or to be raised, for the defense of American liberty." In his commission, Congress told Washington that "you are hereby vested with full power and authority to act as you shall think for the good and welfare of the service." This gave Washington considerable powers, but it was directly followed by the exhortation that he would promptly observe and follow orders and directions that he "shall receive from this or future Congress." Whatever authority Washington wielded, he would do so under the control of Congress. Consequently, as soon as the American Army was created, the military leadership came under the control of civilian leadership. Washington formally accepted his position June 16.

Congress adopted the Articles of War to govern the military establishment June 30. In the meantime, Washington had travelled to Cambridge, Mass., where on July 4, he placed the Army under the authority of Congress.

Congress gave Gen. Washington full power and authority ... and then, almost immediately, took it away from him! Congress ruled the war. This was a major mistake. No one in Congress had any military background.



The U.S. Army was started on June 14, 1775 by order of Congress.

1775-83 Supply Logistical Support Departments: (Totally Controlled by the Continental Congress)

Quartermaster Dept. Commissariat: Clothing Dept Ordinance Dept. Hospital Dept.

Land Transportation:
 ▪ Transport all supplies
 ▪ Forage Dept.
 ▪ Supply Depots
 ▪ Wagon Dept.
 ▪ Teams – Army/Civ.
 ▪ Wagon Masters
 ▪ Teamsters
 ▪ Manufacture/Repair
 ▪ Entrenching Tools
 ▪ Construction Tools
 ▪ Furnishes Tenting
 ▪ Water Transport
 ▪ Ferries Management
 ▪ Roads/Bridges/surveys
 ▪ Cartography

▪ Cattle/Hogs
 ▪ Drovers
 ▪ Slaughter men
 ▪ Butchers
 ▪ Pack in Barrels
 ▪ Salt/Brine
 ▪ Coopers/Barrels
 ▪ Bakers
 ▪ Ovens
 ▪ Flour/Corn
 ▪ Vegetables
 ▪ Rice
 ▪ Rum Beer, Cider



▪ Blankets
 ▪ Stockings
 ▪ Hunting shirts
 ▪ Overalls
 ▪ Breeches
 ▪ Hats
 ▪ Waistcoats
 ▪ Shoes
 ▪ Cloth
 ▪ Leather
 ▪ Imports
 ▪ Hides Dept.



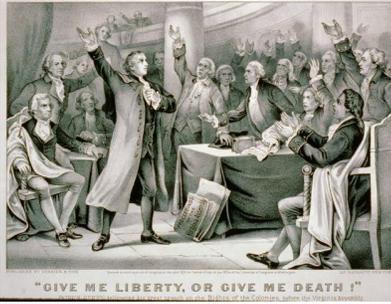
▪ Powder
 ▪ Arms
 ▪ Ammunition
 ▪ Cannons
 ▪ Wagons
 ▪ Caissons
 ▪ Conductors
 ▪ Cartridges
 ▪ Cannon
 ▪ Muskets
 ▪ Artillery Artificers
 ▪ Laboratories



▪ Hospitals at camps
 ▪ Hospitals –General
 ▪ Physicians/ Surgeons
 ▪ Nurses
 ▪ Drugs/Medicines
 ▪ Surgical Instruments
 ▪ Bandages. Dressings
 ▪ Bedding
 ▪ Blankets
 ▪ Vaccinations/
 ▪ Pox quarantine
 ▪ Surgeries
 ▪ Hygiene



The Congress appointed hundreds of managers, deputies, assistants, and staff to run the myriad of duties to supply the army. But like their paranoid reign on the army ... they over controlled and micro managed the supply system. Managers were not allowed to manage their subordinates. Pay scales were kept low. They refused to pay commissions, which were normal for the day. Top managers resigned and sometimes were not replaced for months. In their place unqualified men were hired. Confusion reigned. Troops suffered as a result.



Delegate Patrick Henry orating in the floor of Congress. Many words but few timely decisions.

How General George Washington ever won the war against the British, the Hessians ... and the Continental Congress is mind boggling!

Congress tied itself in knots. They orated, pontificated, delayed and dilly dallied. An op-ed in the NY Times this past week described them thusly, “The truth is that the disputatious founders – who were revolutionaries, not choir boys- seldom agreed about anything. Never has the country produced a more brilliantly argumentative, individualistic or opinionated group of politicians”.

What happened at Valley Forge? (... and at Redding and Morristown)

Congress, always suspecting that too much power was being given to the managers of the commissary system, refused to pay the managers and staff on a commission basis. The devaluation of the Continental currency, which the Treasury kept printing, set situations where the commissary and staff were losing money. This caused resignations from the top down in the commissariat. So going into the winter camp season, there were few qualified staff people to obtain supplies for the troops. Many of these vacancies were not filled for months.

The shortage of food at Valley Forge was not its scarcity – crops were abundant that year – but the lack of wagons to transport it to camp; both of drivers and wagons. In an effort to hold down the cost of labor, congress had limited the price of hiring a wagon, driver and 4 horses to 30 shillings a day. Teamsters were able to get much more from private contractors. The Quartermaster General, Thomas Mifflin, resigned because of the congress’s irresponsible decisions, or lack thereof. It took congress 5 months to appoint a successor. This almost proved fatal to the army.

It would be inaccurate, however, to place all the blame of the suffering at Valley Forge on congressional shoulders. It was not their fault that the roads were snow and ice covered for most of the winter; or that the rivers were iced over, preventing supplies from coming down to camp by boat. Congress appointed committees to go to Valley Forge and elsewhere to find and report back the many problems. The reliance on these committees was also harmful to the troops because Congress was reacting sometimes long after the fact.

Continental currency devaluation continued to harm the system. Farmers could get more money for crops and forage from private contractors for the states. The states, because of the shortages of to their troops increased their own supply system ... that was in direct competition with the Congressional system. The same scenarios with wagons, teamsters, blanket and clothes.



Snow and ice meant rough hauling for the teamsters and oxen.



When streams froze the grist mills shut down. Flour and corn meal stopped.



As the treasury printed more and more Continental money, the value kept dropping. Supplies cost five, ten, and even 200% more to purchase. Or, no purchase at all.

Adverse weather conditions did cause shortages in ways that are hard for us to imagine today. Weather conditions in the summer and fall of 1779 clearly illustrate these problems. A wheat. Mills were also shut down that year when severe winter weather froze the streams, shutting down the grist mills and preventing farmers from grinding their wheat. Result = no flour.

All supplies had to be transported. There were times that drought also prevented good crops of hay. Forage was the fuel of the wagon trains (just like diesel fuel is today for the big tractor-trailers.). When forage stopped so did the supply trains.

When did Congress ever find time to write the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution?



September 2010 FANs Meeting

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The monthly general meeting was held on Monday Sept. 11th at the Visitor Center.

Notes from the meeting...



1. **Opening:** Stetler went right into the topics without duly welcoming the throngs of members. He promised to have a prelude to the meeting next month.
2. **Treasurer's Report:** TG Henderson
3. **Park Update:** Nate reported that he has been making the wooden dummy muskets for the upcoming reenactment event in November. Jim Freebairn has been manufacturing the dummy guns to be sold at the VC. Nancy Cowles is to see about purchasing a decorative stamp to be used on the muskets sold. Nate also updated the group about building flag stations on the VC front walk similar to the display the Cannon Master used at his weekend at the Summer Craftsman events. Carlton is readying the flags to be used.
4. **Events: November Living History Weekend:** Most of evenings discussion was spent on the November 6/7 reenactment. The committee is making progress. Brent Colley is being asked to create this year's flyer which will eventually be posted on the FANs web site. Meanwhile Brent can place a more generic announcement on the web site giving out dates, place, etc. The flyers should be completed prior to the October FANs meeting so they can be passed out to members for posting. Harry Gibson is being asked to create this year's event brochure which will be passed out at the event itself. It is important to refine the event schedules, cast of participants, and information for the two day event, so these flyers and brochures can be drafted and finalized. Jeanine Herman will contact the Girl Scouts about selling food., arrange for the portapottys, and arrange for the Saturday evening participant dinner.
5. **Fort Nathan Hale:** Rafael Rodriguez and Leonard Adams came from the Fort Nathan Hale Restoration Project and talked about their efforts.



GOLDEN OLDIE

A woman gave this photograph to FANs member Nancy Cowles, several months ago. Nancy told the woman that we would place the photo in our newsletter.

The only information we have about the man in the photo is written in pencil on the back of the old picture. The info is hard to read , but here is our best cut at it:

Edwin Alfred Ferdinordstock
(maybe: Ferdinandstock)

Born: 10/9/1901

Died: 7/18/1964

The photo was taken with Edwin sitting atop the cannon in front of the monument. Note the pile of cannonballs which were displayed in a half dozen places around the park. The photo was probably taken in the 1920's or 30's.

The next FANs Meeting will be on Monday **October 11th, 2010**
at **7:00PM** at the Visitor Center