



The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park



“Connecticut’s Valley Forge”

Bethel/Redding CT

July 2011 NewsLetter

Logistics Enables An Army To Operate

The backbone of any successful army is its logistical supply support. Without this support, an army is dead in the water. Assuming that the troops were trained and capable of battle, they had to get to the battleground, be clothed, fed, provided with weapons, ammunition, camp tools, and shelter. Blankets and/or clothing depended on the weather conditions. When all these items were provided ... they were then ready to perform their war functions.

No army was ever successful without a logistics system....

Supply Logistics Departments:

<u>Quartermaster Dept.</u>	<u>Commissariat:</u>	<u>Clothing Dept</u>	<u>Ordnance Dept.</u>	<u>Hospital Dept.</u>
▪ Land Transportation:	▪ Cattle/Hogs	▪ Blankets	▪ Powder	▪ Hospitals at camps
▪ Transport all supplies	▪ Drovers	▪ Stockings	▪ Arms	▪ Hospitals –General
▪ Forage Dept.	▪ Slaughter men	▪ Hunting shirts	▪ Ammunition	▪ Physicians/ Surgeons
▪ Supply Depots	▪ Butchers	▪ Overalls	▪ Cannons	▪ Nurses
▪ Wagon Dept.	▪ Pack in Barrels	▪ Breeches	▪ Wagons	▪ Drugs/Medicines
▪ Teams – Army/Civ.	▪ Salt/Brine	▪ Hats	▪ Caissons	▪ Surgical Instruments
▪ Wagon Masters	▪ Coopers/Barrels	▪ Waistcoats	▪ Conductors	▪ Bandages. Dressings
▪ Teamsters	▪ Bakers	▪ Shoes	▪ Cartridges	▪ Bedding
▪ Manufacture/Repair	▪ Ovens	▪ Cloth	▪ Cannon	▪ Blankets
▪ Entrenching Tools	▪ Flour/Corn	▪ Leather	▪ Muskets	▪ Vaccinations/ Pox quarantine
▪ Construction Tools	▪ Vegetables	▪ Imports	▪ Artillery Artificers	▪ Surgeries
▪ Furnishes Tenting	▪ Rice	▪ Hides Dept.	▪ Laboratories	▪ Hygiene
▪ Water Transport	▪ Rum Beer, Cider			
▪ Ferries Management				
▪ Roads/Bridges/surveys				
▪ Cartography				



The Continental Army’s Logistical Supply System looked good on paper... but often broke down.

If you look at the above list, everything on it was transported by wagon ... except people and animals. Some of the major disasters of the War of Independence for the American army were failures in the logistical system. Food and clothing shortages at Valley Forge, Redding, and Morristown winter encampments were the results of failures in the supply system. There were a variety of reasons for these failures – weather, neglect of the Continental Congress, and having the wrong people in charge of the supply system. The reasons were varied ... the results were the same.

The baggage trains of an army could have been several miles, or more, in length. The Quartermaster Department decided in which order the train would be organized. There were often hundreds of wagons led by teamsters. Hundreds of animals pulled the heavy military supply loads. There were two categories of draft animals - horses and oxen. The load dictated which type of animal to use. Horses were usually used for the lighter field cannon, because they could maneuver faster in battle conditions. But the heavy-duty trucks and tractors of the army were the oxen.

The first well-recognized use of oxen in the beginning of the war was the trip through the ice and snow when Henry Knox brought 60 tons of British cannon from recently captured Ft. Ticonderoga to Boston. The cannon were mounted on top of Dorchester Heights and aimed down at the British stronghold. This forced the British to evacuate Boston.



Oxen hauling 59 British cannon to Boston.

The rugged oxen teams pulled the armament across ice covered rivers and over the mountains in western Massachusetts. “Knox’s Trail” can still be followed today.

Oxen – The Heavy Duty Trucks of the Revolution



A yoke of oxen. Over 4,000 lbs. of tractor power to pull the army's supply wagons.

Oxen, depending on the breed, weigh anywhere from 1,300 to 3,000 lbs. and they can pull 2 to 3 times their weight. Put into yokes of two, a pair weighing 2,000 lbs. each could pull a load of 12,000 pounds. (Horses can pull around 1.5 times their weight). While horses are faster, oxen can pull much heavy loads for longer periods of time.

One fact often missed by today's public is that all animals had to be fed. Just like putting gasoline into today's semi tractor trailer trucks. Fuel had to be transported along with the baggage trains. Wagons of forage traveled along with the fleet. There were differences, though, between the tractors. Horses required forage (hay), plus other meal like oats (which also had to be transported). Oxen on the other hand needed only forage to be happy. They could even graze in a pasture along the route. Of course the time of year could impact the availability of food for these noble animals.

The oxen were matched up (and trained) to operate in a pair, or "yoke". When the teamster saw the load he was to transport, he would decide on how many yokes were required, and then rigged the wagon accordingly.

A teamster walked aside his lead pair. From this position he would shout out his directions to the animals. He carried a wooden staff, or sometimes a whip, which he could lean over the animals heads and give a command. and a poke. A good teamster needed mostly just his voice commands.

The baggage trains usually covered around 15 or 20 miles a day. The big tractors of the day needed their rest and fuel, so time was scheduled accordingly. The baggage trains went as an army moved, but supply runs were made throughout the year in all kinds of weather. When alone, a teamster would go as far as his team permitted. Teamsters were of two kinds: they were part of the Continental Army, or they were independent contractors to the army.



A teamster with a double-yoke on this supply wagon.

Continental Army - Danbury Supply Depot

One of the biggest threats to supply and troop movements in Connecticut, was any route along the coast. The British had a trump card up their sleeve called a NAVY. With their own fleet of war ships and landing barges, the British could pounce upon the American forces at will. This was the reason for moving the main supply routes inland. If one looks at a map of New England, it will be apparent that this western corridor through Connecticut filters down into a funnel at Danbury. All supply shipments from all over New England filtered in through this funnel. That is why the Continental Army chose Danbury as one of its main supply depots. Danbury utilized all available barns, sheds, and outbuildings as storage facilities. Oddly enough, the largest warehouse was the recently built Episcopal Church (or Church of England) located on South Street. The other large church in town was the Congregational, which was also the town meeting house and seat of town government.

We do know that Danbury had a rather large army hospital, which was located up on Park Ave. There were different shops for wagon manufacture and repair, wheelwrights, and probably a slaughter yard where the meat was butchered and packed into salt packed barrels. The operations were apparently scattered around the area, and no specific locations are identifiable today.

Continental Army Teamster- Joseph Joslin Jr.

The Connecticut Historical Society has a rare gem of a diary. It was written by young Joseph Joslin Jr. of Killingly, Ct. Joslin joined the Continental Army as a Teamster in March of 1777, and remained in the service until August of 1778. He was assigned to the Danbury Supply Depot. His job was to drive freight wagons of army supplies to various posts in the CT/ Hudson River Valley areas. (This diary can be accessed on the internet by searching for Joseph Joslin Jr.) Joslin began his service in March 1777. His diary reports various transport deliveries to Hartford, Norwalk, Stamford, Farmington, Peekskill, Fishkill, Fredericksburgh etc. Some of his excerpts follow:

Army Teamster Joslin - Excerpts



22 April - Joslin had been on a delivery of iron bars to Jeremiah Wadsworth in Hartford. He picked up a load of salt from Wadsworth to take back to Danbury. On the return trip via Farmington, Litchfield and Mt. Tom and New Milford... going back into Danbury ...

Diary 26 April ...

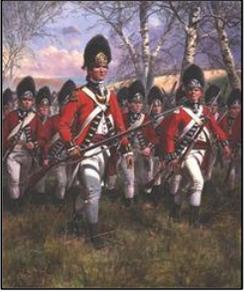
"26 we Came through Lichfield and it was very bad Carting to Day I Say and it was Cloudy but Some warm & we Came to the top of Mount tom & I heard that the Regulers to Danbury now

27 it Rained in the forenoon and we Staid up the mount yet But in the afternoon it Cleared away and was very Cold But we Staid here the Day and we herd that the Enemy had Burnt the Stores at Danbury

28 List knigh it froze on the Heads of the barrels almost a Quarter of an Inch thick and we came Down mount tom along to new milford and onloaded our Salt & there we turnd out our teams at one Bostwics and Did lie in a bed and I See a piece of wheat about half leg high

29 it was a very Cold Cloudy Day for the time ah it Squalled Some and we Staid in town waiting for orders and our Cattel fare well now about 12 a Clock I heard that the Enemy had got on Board of their Ships about Sun Set last knight and So it is on friday the 15 of April 1777 the Enemy landing at Cumpo and just at knight and by Saturday 2 or 3 o Clock got to Danbury and there they Did Destroy Stores

30 last knight went up to mr Starrs and got one hogshed of Clove warter and brought it Down to Rostwicts we Set of out from New Milford and Came to Danbury and it is Cloudy well then I Did see the houses was Burnt and we went to Capt hoyts and kept oxen all there which was jo or 60



Joslin sees the destruction of Danbury which was put to the torch by the British raiding party.

The Church

Throughout the diary, Joslin makes mention of the "Church". When the British arrived in Danbury there were two churches; the Congregational Meeting House on Main St., which also doubled as the center of town government, and the Episcopal Church (Church of England). The Episcopal church had been taken over by the local patriots and put to use as a storehouse for the Continental Army, as part of the Army Supply Depot. It was full of army supplies.

Diary 11 May ...

11 and herrick and I Carted one load of hay for our oxen and then we Pickt Some herbs and Stinking Pork with Some beef for Dinner and this Did Seem Some like a Sabbath for we Did not much you hear I Some better

12 I Carted one hogshed of Rum from the uper End of town to the Church & 2 load of wood and it is not cold to Day But windy N W.



The Congregational/ Town Meeting House was burned to the ground with all of the town records.

Diary 5Oct...

it is Cooler and we heard that the Enemy was on the land a Come in to bedford and we Drawd the Carts to the Church in order to Load if there was ocaation at a minutes warning

The town meeting house with all the records, deeds and archives was one of the first buildings put to flames during the raid. All records dating from 1684 to 1777 for the town were destroyed along with other patriot homes and barns. The Episcopal Church was filled with army supplies and food. The British refused to harm "their church"! Troops were ordered to empty the structure of all supplies. These were piled in the street and torched. Burning fat from barrels of pork and beef ran ankle deep. The gift back to the Continental Army was the storehouse was literally back in business the next day! The church stood on the site of the South Street School on South St. A huge plaque is on the wall which tells of the raid and destruction.



The Episcopal Church was back in service the day after the British left Danbury. It remained the key supply warehouse until the end of the Revolutionary War. The scene above shows The French Army picking up supplies at the "Church" on their march to Yorktown in 1781.

The Danbury Supply Depot was not a single building or a site, but rather it was spread out over a wide area around town. Multiple barns and sheds were used for the activities. Blacksmiths, coopers, wheelwrights, wagon makers were all working to support the Continental Army effort of supplying the line army. Wagons and teams were a necessity in this service. Providing and maintaining vehicles were a major part of the effort in Danbury. They were forever on guard against another British foray into the town.

The Two Routes To Hartford

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Diary 12 Oct...

we Came into Danbury & loaded 3 hogsheds Cod fish Apeice 2
Clock Set out to litchfield and went Newbury and Lodgd at one
Camps and Slep in the barn Sir Sider we got here
13 we went through new milford and Staid at Esqs Cogswells
in Rawmoge and fared very well Sir we Did So

Diary 16 March...

16 we went through woodbury Parrish Called Southbury and the
Small Pox was very thick by the Side of the Street & we Came to the
River and there was a Drove of Cattel a Coming over the fery & we
Could not git over But 2 teams to Day and the Small Pox very thick
about and I was Some afraid But we Staid at the Yellow house & we
Did lie in a bed & live very well &



Cogswell Tavern, New Preston, Ct. was the main traveler's and teamsters stop between Danbury and Hartford on the western route. Geo. Washington stopped here 3 times.

Hinman's Ferry was the old transportation crossing the Housatonic River at Southbury/Newtown. Note that even cattle got rides across the river (for a price).



The first bridge across the Housatonic River, all the way upstream from Long Island Sound, was in New Milford. The ice would devastate wooden bridges each spring thaw. Thus the reason for the oldest main road from Danbury to Hartford. The road went up to New Preston, Litchfield, Farmington and into Hartford. Cogswell Tavern served travelers coming across from NY state via the Bulls Bridge crossing as well as from Danbury. The Southbury(Woodbury) crossing was dependent upon a ferry crossing, which could take excess time and trouble with large loads. Finally, in 1778, Gen. Washington who was quartered at Fredericksburgh, ordered a bridge to be constructed at Southbury. This was to improve military travel. It was named Carleton's bridge after the army engineer who built it. After the bridge was erected, this became the preferred route to Hartford. French general Rochambeau's army used this bridge going to and from the Battle of Yorktown. (Thus the name on today's bridge used for I-84 crossing the Housatonic.)

Hoyt's Hill Pastures

September 1777

1 I Rode to the Chief of the Lots yesterday I Salted Some of our oxen and took Some Corn for the Sheep and Salt for all the fating Cattel hoyt hill to Day and it Rained Some in the after noon and I put our oxen in the white birch lot

2 we Drawed Some back allowance Rum and Carried it up to Deacon knaps and Sold it for 22 Dollers one Quarter 18 Quarts and then I went to hoyt hill and Lookt on all the Creatures and preachd one sermon to them about the unruly ox it was Recorded in the 24 Chapter of hoyt hill and 49 verse the words are these:

if the ox had nof known

So much it had ben better for him

and So I went on and Proved it So Surely and then I Came home and in the after noon I went to more of the Lots

The main pastures for the oxen teams were atop Hoyt's Hill in today's Bethel. The main colonial road from Fairfield to Danbury came up over Hoyt's Hill. Oxen, horses and sheep were pastured here. There were also extensive wood lots on the hill which Joslin mentions providing wood for axletrees for the wagons, wood for wheel spokes and yokes. When a team was need for a trip, Joslin would come to Hoyt's Hill and assemble the required number of yokes of oxen dependent upon the size of the load.

Redding Fodder Resources



Diary 26 Dec..

26 I went to bethel and got one Pair Shod then John and Josiah lion & I went to Reading to Hezekiah Sanfords after hay it Clouded up in the after noon at knight it Rained Some and froze and ice upon Every thing I lay in a bed very Cold knight But I was Cumfortabel Enough

The farms of Redding were a much needed resource of hay in the winter season. Joslin made trip after trip to Redding to haul hay for fodder back to Danbury Supply Depot, as well as for their own teams up on Hoyt's Hill. The animals had to be cared for to keep them in top shape for their heavy-duty hauling chores... just like we maintain our cars and trucks today.

The next FAN's Meeting will be on Monday, **September 12, 2011**
at **7:00PM** at the Visitor Center at Putnam Park.



There is NO meeting in August