



# The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park



*"Connecticut's Valley Forge"*

## June 2008 NewsLetter

Bethel/Redding CT

### Park Walking Tour



#### Visitor Center-



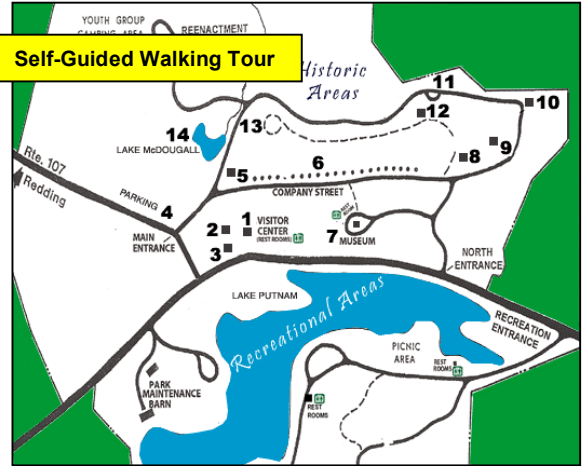
1893 Pavilion



2005 Visitor Center

This building was originally built in 1893 as the park pavilion. It was used as a shelter during inclement weather, for dances and picnics, and for town events. The upstairs was used as the original park museum. The building was dismantled board by board in 2005, and reconstructed into a 4-season climate controlled visitor center where visitors can get a park orientation prior to entering the historic encampment.

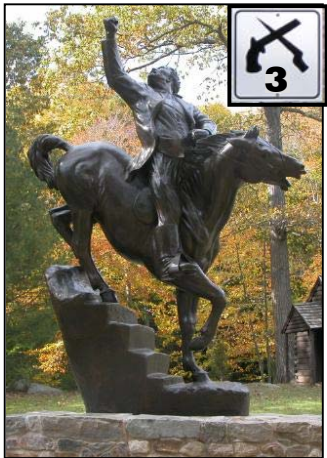
#### Self-Guided Walking Tour



Go to: FANs new Web site at [www.putnampark.org](http://www.putnampark.org)



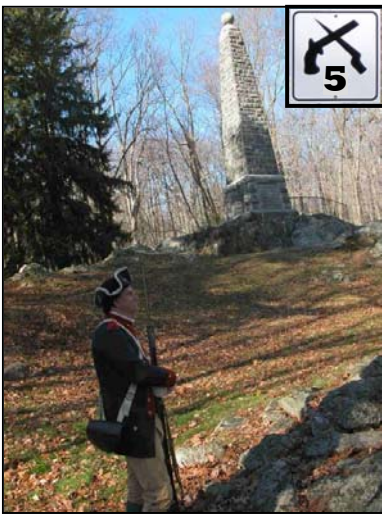
**Camp Guardhouse-** A log hut which was reconstructed about 1890 on the footprint of a hut from 1778. The actual purpose of the original structure is in question, although local lore said it was the Guard House. The construction and size of the hut gives the visitor an approximation of one of the 116 enlisted men's soldiers huts. Each enlisted men's hut contained 12 soldiers. The main guardhouse for Putnam's Division was located on Umpawaug Road near Gen. Putnam's head-Quarters. It was the Division Guardhouse that held the prisoners awaiting execution at Gallows Hill.



**"Putnam's Escape at Horseneck" – Bronze Statue** – is on the front lawn of the Visitor Center. It was sculpted by renowned local artist Anna Hyatt Huntington at her estate just a few miles from the park. Ms. Huntington was 94 years old when she completed the statue for its 1969 dedication at the park. The bronze depicts General Israel Putnam's legendary ride down the stone steps in Greenwich, then called "Horseneck", where he narrowly escaped capture from the British light dragoons. Putnam was staying overnight at Knapp's Tavern, called Putnam Cottage today. It is open for visitors. Just a block down E. Putnam Avenue (Old Post Road) you can see the famous stone steps cut into the ledge bank. Its is a super steep walk down, let alone to ride a horse.



**Main Entrance Area -** Civil War cannons and miniature blockhouses flank the road. Blockhouses were used in frontier areas during the French and Indian War where Israel Putnam achieved fame for his courageous exploits. There are several other Civil War cannons inside the park. These weapons were surplus arms from the Civil War which ended only a few years prior to the park's commissioning. The gateway view focuses on the Monument



**Memorial Monument** – Constructed in 1888, one year after the commissioning of the memorial park, this monument honors the men of the three different camps in Redding during that winter of 1778-79. The monument was the very first structure erected at the park. The visitor can read the names of the different brigade generals who commanded the camps under Major General Israel Putnam's command.

The obelisk is built of native granite taken from the site and is forty-two feet high with a two foot granite ball on top. The monument was the very first thing to be constructed after the park commissioning.



### **Collapsed Chimney Remains (Firebacks) and Company Street**

The enlisted men's encampment consisted of 116 log huts set in a double row for almost a quarter mile down the company street. The only above ground remains of those huts today are the piles of collapsed stone chimneys. Each stone pile, or fireback, marks the location of a 1778 hut. The men camped in this location belonged to Brig. Gen. Enoch Poor's New Hampshire Brigade and the 2nd Canadian Regiment under Col. Moses Hazen. The fireplaces and chimneys were made of local fieldstone. The huts had dimensions of 16 x 12 feet. Each hut held the 12 soldiers.



**Museum** – This building contains exhibits and historical materials including artifacts unearthed at the campsite during archaeological excavations. The museum was built in 1921 by long time Redding Town Historian Margaret Wixted's father. This building replaced the original museum housed on the second floor of the old 1893 Pavilion. Park Guides are present to tell visitors about the park and answer questions. Hours are posted at the park gates or at the Visitor Center.



**Officers Quarters** - The chimney remains mark the site of a company officer's hut. The hut was an 1890 replica built on the original site. The hut was destroyed by fire years ago. The company-level officer's huts were located behind the enlisted hut line. There are several other firebacks of these junior-officer hut remains in the woods behind the enlisted hut line

The hut was still standing until the 1980's, but was suffering vandalism and weather damage. The hut was finally taken down for safety reasons. Only the chimney remains today. The path to the remains crosses a seasonal brook, so watch out for the wet areas. The huts for junior officers probably held 4 to 6 men.





**Philips Cave** – Local legend says a shallow cave in this rock outcrop was used by one Mr. Philips. Philips was a soldier who returned after the war to live in this cave. He led the life of a hermit, including liberating an occasional chicken or produce from local farmers. He was evicted by the community. Another version said he was “permanently” removed!



**Officers Quarters/Magazine** – this structure was reconstructed on the original foundations that are cut into the hillside. Long thought to be an officer’s barracks, recent information is now leading archaeologists to believe it was actually the camp magazine which held the kegs of gunpowder. The location, far away from troop quarters and being semi-enclosed in the earthen bank, support this theory. More research will be done on this site.



**Barlow Circle** - A resident of Redding, Joel Barlow graduated from Yale in 1778. An accomplished poet and writer, Barlow was thought to have visited the Redding army camps during the winter 78/79 encampments. He was a chaplain for three years in the Continental Army. He was one of the writers group called the *Connecticut (or Hartford) Wits*. He was sent to Algiers to secure U.S. prisoners and negotiate treaties with Tripoli. He became a French citizen and was involved in Napoleon’s retreat from Russia. He died in Poland in 1812.



**Bake Oven and Structures on the Camp’s Upper Level** - The identity and location of buildings on the upper level are not certain at this time. We know that the Bake Oven was located in this ravine on the southeast foot of the Barlow Circle slope. It needed the water in the stream flowing next to it. Other buildings were known to exist on this upper relatively flat level: The Soap Boiler, the Commissary, the Quartermaster, Carpenters, Tailors, Quarter Guards, and Sutlers, in addition to the Field, Staff and Commissioned Officers.



**Cemetery/Command Officer’s Quarters** – Another bit of hand-me-down lore at the time the park was created in the 1880’s was that the two mounds of stones, inside the square formed by the granite posts, were thought to be the camp cemetery. Accordingly, a memorial monument was erected to mark the site in 1890? Archaeology work from the 2002-04 seasons has proven the site actually to be a double-ended (two chimneys) Field Officers quarters. Further research has pointed to the distinct probability that the hut belonged to Lt. Col. Henry Dearborn who was the ranking officer living at the camp (Some senior officers were quartered at area homes).



The June meeting was held at the visitor center on Tuesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

## Notes from the prez ...



- President's Opening:** Steve opened the meeting and passed out the FANS Bylaws that were last amended in May 1999. He noted that much of the Bylaws were being followed in "spirit" but asked that people take a look at them. Steve also noted that the Bylaws call for committees to oversee functions of the group that are now handled more individually. In order to have these type of committees, the FANS group would need to increase membership, something that is essential to our future survival. Those interested in receiving a copy should let him know.
- Treasurer's Report:** T.G. outlined our financials including the revenue brought in at the recent School Week. He noted that we will have a tax liability for the sales of gifts in the Visitor Center.
- Membership Report:** Buzz was unable to attend but had reported that 73 letters had been sent out on June 4 to past FANS members that had not renewed their membership. People at the meeting thanked Buzz for writing such a good letter and getting it out. T.G. said that he had already received two positive replies!
- State Park Update:** Nate said that crews were hard at work keeping the park mowed and in good shape. He had put up signs at the entrance indicating Museum and Visitor Center hours and that he will be placing a map box so that people can follow the new historical markers when the Visitor Center is closed. Nate also offered to construct informational signs for the historical sites similar to the entrance signs. Harry will provide the copy to him for this.
- Visitor Center Update:** Harry, who was unable to attend, reported that he is still waiting to hear back from the DEP people in Hartford as to their recommendations for creating displays for the Visitor Center.
- School Days Recap:** The School Days program in May was a big success thanks to the hard work and determination of Nancy. She earned a well-deserved thanks from the FANS group for her efforts. For the most part the weather held up and the school groups and participating re-enactors went away happy. As usual, the Gift Shop was a big hit.
- Summer Crafts Program:** Nancy reported that she has a few craftspeople lined up but that there are numerous weekends that have not been filled. We discussed adding the program to the event calendar on the website and having a sign to place by the road promoting the crafts program. In addition, we must find other ways to promote the weekends to the community to get more visitors.
- 230th Anniversary Event Update:** We had a very "lively" discussion on who and what we will be doing for the weekend of November 1-2 to commemorate the encampment. Here's what was decided: Tom's group, the 5th Connecticut Regiment will host the event; Brian's group, the 10th Massachusetts Regiment and Dave's group, Butler's Rangers will play an active role and work to invite other groups to participate. The FANS group will provide them with support and promote the event to the public. While there are details to work out, the event will include an encampment through the weekend, a re-enactment on Saturday afternoon and an evening "Ghost Tour", something new and exciting. I would personally like to thank each of these groups for stepping up to make this event



Lake McDougall



**Bunker Hill Day was June 17<sup>th</sup> in Charlestown, MA. This was the first mass engagement between the Patriots and the British regulars. Connecticut leader Israel Putnam was one of the commanding officers that day in 1775. While the British finally took the hill, their losses were devastating.**

The next FAN's Meeting will be on **Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008**  
at **7:00PM** at the Visitor Center at Putnam Park.

