

The Friends & Neighbors of Putnam Memorial State Park

December 2007 NewsLetter



Bethel/Redding CT



December Winter Walk 2007

The annual December Winter Walk was held on Saturday, December 1st. All participants agreed that it was the best Winter Walk event yet. The weather was sunny but cold, just like the planners hoped for. The event is held each year to press home the fact that the first week of December is when the troops marched into the camps in 1778. They had to build their log huts in which they would live for the next 5 or 6 months. Contemporary diaries of troops who were there tell us of the cold and snow storms which added to the misery of building their huts.



New FANs president Steve Levine welcomes the public to the park and tour.



FANs historian and tour guide Dan Cruson begins his history narrative inside the visitor center where it was warm!



The group heads toward the main gate where it will pick up its escort.



The 5th CT Regiment marched down to the front gate to act as escort for the tour.



The 5CR leads the tour group up the rampart into the camp...



...toward the memorial monument which honors all the troops in Redding during the 1778-79 encampments.



Reenactors read excerpts from actual diaries of soldiers who were stationed at the camps.



Soldiers line up next to the marker which honors those who died at the 1778 camp. Thought to be the camp cemetery for more than a hundred years, recent archaeology digs found that the site held an officer's double-chimney log cabin.



Dan Cruson relates the story about the cemetery that wasn't a cemetery.

The Skirmish with the Loyalists

As the tour group approached Fireback Row and Company Street, American Loyalist troops opened fire on the Connecticut regiment in an ambush. Beside the more well known players in the revolution, the British, the Americans (Patriots), and the Hessians (Germans mercenaries), there was another large group called American Loyalists. One must remember that the American population was divided almost in thirds as to their feelings about independence. There were patriot Americans, loyalist Americans – still loyal to the King of England - and an undecided category which tried to stay neutral.

There were thousands of Loyalists. Different brigades were formed to fight the Americans on their own, or in concert with the King's troops. The famous British Raid on Danbury, for example, was accompanied by Loyalists from this area. They acted as guides and informers as to who the patriot leaders were, and pointed out the homes and buildings of the patriots to be put to the torch by the British.



The ambush was made by the Westchester County (Loyal) Militia, also known as James DeLancey's Refugees. They made hit and run raids along the New York and Connecticut lines. They commandeered and stole forage and supplies which they could then sell to the British in NYC.



The loyalist units were a very dangerous bunch. Many of them had been driven out of their homes and villages by the patriots, so there was always a revenge factor mixed in with their objectives.

PHOTOS BY BRENT COLLEY



The 5CR troops had the superior force in numbers, enough to drive off the dastardly loyalist trouble-makers.



This scene pictures one of the dangerous moments in time for any troops fighting with muskets. After they fired a deadly round of lead ball ... they had to stop, many times out in the open, to reload their weapons. How fast they could reload sometimes swayed the outcome.



5CR flankers. These soldiers went around the ends of the enemy line trying to disrupt their attack or defense.



5CR supply chest at their campsite. Tons of supplies had to move along with the troops during the war.

Wilton Militia, Artillery Company

The Wilton Militia, Artillery Company joined this year's Winter Walk event. Both the cannon and skirmish were surprise additions to the Winter Walk.



The Wilton Militia Artillery Company fires off its Verbruggen brass cannon during the memorial service at the park monument. Two things liven up any reenactment: musket fire and cannon fire. The thundering boom, cloud of smoke and the smell of burnt black powder change a scene quickly.

The "Grasshopper"

In 2003 the Wilton Militia acquired a replica of a Revolutionary War cannon. It was cast in 1968 and modeled after the British three pound Verbruggen cannons of the Revolutionary period. The Americans captured a number of these cannons at Saratoga and put them to good use against the British. One of the cannons actually captured at Saratoga was used as the pattern for making the 20th century castings. The style of the cannon carries the nickname "Grasshopper", because the cannon is light enough to be quickly moved up and down a battlefield to match the flow of the battle. The cannon barrel weighs a little over 200 pounds and is made of a bronze alloy.



The artillery crew firing off the "Grasshopper" by the front entrance of the park. Besides the noise and smoke, it was very noticeable that the artillery crew was well-trained in every step of the cannon drill, which puts safety at the forefront. Most spectators don't realize the training that all reenactors are required to go through. Black powder muskets, bayonets, swords all need safe handling.



The Verbruggen Cannon



Training, training, training. All good reenactment units require each of its members to undergo weapons handling and safety training. Reenactors by definition are in front of the public. They have to know how to handle weapons safely. The artillery personnel take *Cannon Certification of Competency Training*, and are examined before becoming certified.

**5th CT Regiment
Campsite at the
Park**

To contact us: friendsofputnampark@comcast.net



Camp follower keeps the fire burning while the regiment is out on escort duty!



Mourn Arms

The 5th CT Regiment performed the “MOURN ARMS” drill in front of the monument memorializing the officers and men of the three different brigades under Maj. Gen. Israel Putnam during the winter of 1778-79.

A ceremony, which was often performed by the British Army, was adopted by the Continental Army as well.

The soldiers would start out at ‘Present Arms’, then raise their muskets high, then lower the weapons in a slow moving arc, ending up with the gun barrels down.

The troops would then lean on the butt plate while a prayer or eulogy was said by the troop commander. This was a moving ceremony – even to hardened troops.



The memorial monument, honoring troops from all three brigades in Redding during the winter of 1778-79, was erected in 1880. The inscriptions include the names of Maj. Gen. Israel Putnam and the three brigadier generals commanding the three camps: Poor, Parsons, and Huntington.



Happy



Holidays



The next FAN's Meeting will be on **Tuesday, January 8th, 2008**
at **7:00PM** at the **Visitor Center** at Putnam Park.