



# The Company Informer

The Fifth Connecticut Regiment of the Continental Line



**Si Recte Facies "Immortal Honor"**

*March, 2006*

## March Events:

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8—BOARD MEETING

**TIME:** 7:00

**PLACE:** Hot Shots, Newtown, CT

**DIRECTIONS:** Exit 9 off Route 84. Take a left off the highway if coming from Waterbury and a right if coming from Danbury. Go a 1/4 mile to the end (a stop light on Mt. Pleasant/Route 6). Turn Right on Mt. Pleasant and the restaurant is up the hill on the right.

### SATURDAY, MARCH 18 - ARMORY DAY

**TIME:** 10:30 - 3:30

**PLACE:** Portland Library, 20 Freestone Avenue, Portland, Ct

**DIRECTIONS: Via Route 66 Eastbound from Meriden:** After crossing the Arrigoni Bridge, Turn right at the second traffic light on to Freestone Avenue. Turn left in to Library's drive.

**Via Route 2 Westbound from Norwich:** In Colchester, take Route 16 West to Route 66 in Cobalt. After you cross the railroad tracks in Portland, turn right on to Cross Street. Go one block. Turn Left on to Freestone Avenue. The library is three blocks on the right.

**PURPOSE:** Prepare muskets and bayonets for the 2006 campaign. Tom Linskey will lead us in field-stripping our firelocks and shining them the 18th-century way with brickdust and tow. The new BAR required flashguards will be installed. All attendees receive a free can of black powder for the May/June events. Coffee and donuts compliments of the Regt.

**WHAT TO BRING:** Brickdust and tow will be furnished. Just bring your firelock, cartridge box, bayonet, a wiping rag, and your musket tools.

## The Rest of the 2006 Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Show</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
April 28	\$ School Show, New Canaan Middle School	T. Castrovinci
April 29-30	School of Instruction (BAR)	
May 6	\$ Loyalty Day, Simsbury, CT	T. Angels
May 20-21	Wethersfield, CT 225th Rochambeau's Visit	S. Carmosino
June 17-18	\$ Southbury, CT 225th Rochambeau's Camp #9 (BAR)	A. Weber
July 1-2	\$ Ridgebury, CT 225th Rochambeau's Camp #11 (BAR)	K. Jones
July 22-23	Grand Reconnaissance 225th, Ward Pound Ridge, NY (BAR)	T. Castrovinci
Sept. 29	\$ School Show, Newtown Middle School	M. Filler
Oct 18-22	Yorktown, VA (BAR)	T.Traue
Dec. 1-2 ?	Putnam Park	

## Connecticut's Light Infantry in the Yorktown Campaign

### By Edward L. Wittkofski

#### *Introduction:*

This two part series will tell of the history of the Fifth Connecticut's Light Infantry in the decisive Yorktown Campaign of 1781. The first part of this series will be a brief history of the campaign leading to the Siege (Battle) of Yorktown which will focus on the Light Infantry's role, and the second part is Lieutenant Rueben Sanderson's diary of the campaign. His story is of the second Corps of Light Infantry which was established to support the Main Army's move south and to ultimately join Lafayette's existing Corps in the Siege of Yorktown. Let us begin.

#### *Part 1 – Yorktown*

In October 1780, the Congress, following the recommendations of General Washington, reorganized the Continental Army into 49 Infantry Regiments, Hazen's special Canadian Regiment (4 battalions), 4 artillery regiments, 4 legionary corps, 2 partisan corps, and an artificer corps. There were also a number of highly specialized support units. The Connecticut Line was reduced from nine regiments to five. The commander of the Fifth Connecticut Regiment, Colonel Phillip Burr Bradley, chose to retire. The new Fifth Connecticut Regiment, consisting of the consolidated 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Regiments, was to be commanded by Colonel Isaac Sherman. It was assigned to the Highland Department. <sup>1</sup>

Since 11 July 1779, regiments had been organized into nine companies; eight line infantry and one light infantry. The formation of the permanent light infantry companies enabled General Washington to develop a special strike force. On campaign, the Light Infantry Company from each Regiment would be combined into the Corps of Light Infantry. In practice, it was a semi-permanent organization. It is interesting to note that every member of a regiment trained in both roles as a line and light infantryman. This would be important in the upcoming Yorktown Campaign. The Light Corps itself was used in skirmishing as well as in linear formations. The nine company structure continued as part of the 1781 Campaign reorganization. <sup>2</sup>

Between December 1780 and May 1781 the British sent two expeditions, the first under General Benedict Arnold, who was later to be joined and superseded by Phipps, to carry out a series of raids in Virginia. Eventually, Phipps and Arnold decided to march south to join Cornwallis. For his part Cornwallis elected to march northwards into Virginia. The two met at Petersburg, Virginia, on 30 May when their combined force totaled 5,700 men. <sup>3</sup>

The Marquis de Lafayette took command of the Corps of Light Infantry on 20 February 1781. This Corps, on 29 April, was sent by Washington to reinforce Virginia. Lafayette's force arrived at Richmond and together with existing forces now totaled 3,550 men. <sup>4</sup> The main strike element of the force included the light infantry companies of all of the Main Army's regiments which were stationed in the Hudson Highland's fortifications.

#### **Light Infantry Corps Operating in Virginia:**

##### *1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Provisional) (Vose)*

8 LI Companies Massachusetts

##### *2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Provisional) (Gimat)*

5 LI Companies Connecticut

2 LI Companies Massachusetts

1 LI Rhode Island Company

##### *3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (Provisional) (Barber)*

2 LI Companies New Hampshire

3 Line Companies New Hampshire

2 LI Companies New Jersey

1 LI Company Hazen's Canadian

Continued next page.

1 Wright, Robert K., Jr., *The Continental Army*, Center of Military History, Washington, DC, 1983.

2 Ibid.

3 Mollo, John & McGregor, Malcom, *Uniforms of the American Revolution*, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1975

4 Ibid.

Throughout May and June, Cornwallis tried to bring Lafayette to battle and led him a dance through eastern Virginia. First Cornwallis forced Lafayette to retire to the north-west, pursuing him and sending raiding force westward to Charlottesville, just as 1,000 reinforcements arrived from the Pennsylvania under General Wayne. Cornwallis immediately turned towards the sea so as to be near the protection of the British fleet. On 4 August, Cornwallis occupied Yorktown under the watchful eyes of Lafayette.<sup>6</sup> Lafayette, notified Washington, encamped in West Point, New York, of the British position and preparations.<sup>7</sup>

After learning that Admiral de Grasse was sailing for the Chesapeake with 29 warships, Washington concurred with a plan presented by the Comte de Rochambeau to attack Cornwallis. Leaving some 2500 troops behind to defend the forts along the Hudson River and to mislead the British command in New York City about his main objective, Washington set out for Virginia on 21 August with about 7000 men, including French regular troops under the Comte de Rochambeau. In order to have a screening and skirmishing force on its march to Yorktown, Washington created a second Corps of Light Infantry under the Command of Colonel Alexander Scammel (1<sup>st</sup> New Hampshire Regiment),<sup>8</sup> for the Main Army. The units that formed this Corps consisted of a Regiment of provisional light infantry companies created from the line regiments that remained in the Highlands as well as a Light Infantry Battalion consisting of the two permanent New York Light Infantry Companies. They arrived at Williamsburg on 14 September 1781. Meanwhile, the French fleet under de Grasse had driven off a British fleet under Admiral Thomas Graves and succeeded in blockading Chesapeake Bay, thus preventing a possible British escape. In addition, 3000 French troops had disembarked from de Grasse's ships and joined Washington's army.

### **Lafayette's Division at Yorktown ,**

#### **Brigadier General Muhlenberg's Brigade**

##### **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Provisional) (Vose)**

8 LI Companies Massachusetts

##### **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Provisional) (Gimat))**

5 LI Companies Connecticut  
2 LI Companies Massachusetts  
1 LI Rhode Island Company

##### **3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion (Provisional) (Barber)**

2 LI Companies New Hampshire  
3 Line Companies New Hampshire  
2 LI Company New Jersey  
1 LI Company Hazen's Canadian

#### **Brigadier General Hazen's Brigade**

##### **Canadian Regiment (Antill)**

##### **Light Infantry Regiment (Provisional) (Scammel)<sup>10</sup>**

1 LI(P) Company New Hampshire  
5 LI(P) Companies Connecticut  
4 LI(P) Companies Massachusetts

##### **Light Infantry Battalion (Provisional) (Hamilton)**

2 LI Companies New York

Moving from Williamsburg, Virginia, American and French troops reached Yorktown on September 28. Some 16,000 strong, they laid siege to the British positions. All of the light infantry forces were placed in a two brigade division under the command of Lafayette. Allied assault forces consisting of units of the now combined American Light Infantry Corps, including the companies from the Fifth Connecticut Regiment and of French units captured two key British strongholds on the night of 14 October. A British counterattack proved ineffective. Recogniz-

Continued next page.

<sup>5</sup> Wright, op cit.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, op cit

<sup>8</sup> Lauber, Almon W., Orderly Books of the Fourth New York Regiment, 1778-1780, The Second New York Regiment, 1780-1783, The University of the State of New York, Albany, 1932, p.591

ing the hopelessness of his position, Cornwallis requested a truce on 17 October and signed articles of surrender two days later. En route to Yorktown, a British reinforcement of 7000 troops under Clinton had to sail back to New York upon receiving news of the surrender on 29 October.

Washington achieved the victory at Yorktown by coordinating his widely scattered land and sea forces in what is considered one of the most skillful military operations in history. Although peace was not officially proclaimed until 1783, in America, major hostilities virtually ceased after the end of the siege. <sup>11</sup>

**In the next article of this series, the campaign dairy of a Fifth Connecticut Officer in a Provisional Light Infantry Company will be presented in its entirety.**

<sup>9</sup> Mollo and McGregor , op cit..

<sup>10</sup> Scammel died on 6 October. On 8 October, the regiment was divided into two battalions. One commanded by Lt Col Laurens (1 New Hampshire LI(P) Company and 5 Connecticut LI(P) Companies) and one battalion commanded by Lt Col Hamilton (2 New York LI Companies and 4 Massachusetts LI(P) Companies) *Yorktown Staff Ride Pamphlet*, US Center of Military History, 1985

<sup>11</sup> Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2003. © 1993-2002 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.



## 2005 Soldier of the Year

At our George Washington Ball, held at J Timothy's Tavern February 18th, the judging committee faced a difficult challenge. Three strong candidates were in contention for the highly coveted, yet never actually witnessed, engraved 2005 "Soldier of the Year" trophy. Mike Zap the elder who attended 10 5CR events, Albin Weber with 11 events, and the judge's selection for Soldier of the year, Tom Castrovinci who attended 12 events, hosted one, and coordinated another. The invisible award was unveiled with a flourish and presented in-absentia by Adjutant Mike Filler.

## COMMANDER'S MESSAGE



Ladies and Gentlemen of the 5th: It's a real honor to share the pleasure of your company for the upcoming campaign of 1781/2006. My commitment to you is to be at every planned event, and my vision is to see 25 men-at arms at the big shows. As host regiment of three Connecticut venues, this is our year in the vanguard of the BAR.... a year of forging memories that will last forever. We begin with armory day on March 18, where we field strip our weapons, install the new flashguards and don our black and red light infantry plumes. Then on to Simsbury for drill, Wethersfield for 225th W3R ceremony, Southbury for a 225th W3R big three major field tactical, Ridgefield for a W3R 225th French encampment, Pound Ridge W3R tactical, then on to glory at Yorktown. Along the way shall eat, drink, drill, burn powder, thrill to sock puppets, and sleep under canvas together -- all in the footsteps of the original 5th CT. Goosebumps!

Your Most Humble and Obedient Servant  
Keith Jones, Commander



## Ridgefield March-to-Victory Weekend July 1&2, 2006

225th Anniversary re-enactment of Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R) Camp #11 in Ridgefield's Ridgebury Parish

On June 30, 1781 General Jean Baptiste Donatien le Vimeur comte de Rochambeau received an urgent summons from General Washington to break camp in Newtown, CT and march post-haste to the White-plains. Here their combined armies would simulate an offensive against British-held New York then veer southward to rendezvous with history at Yorktown, Virginia. Le comte swiftly reorganized his army by brigades, rather than as individual regimental divisions as they had been marching since departing Newport, RI the 10th of June. The first brigade, consisting of the Bourbonnais and Deux-Ponts regiments, left immediately with Rochambeau for their next camp in Ridgebury, arriving mid-day on July 1st. The second brigade (Soissonnais and Saintonge regiments) tramped in the following day. The French main camp lay across from Ridgebury Congregational Church (still standing today) at the intersection of Ridgebury Road and the George Washington Highway. Eightmiles to the southwest, Hussars of Duc du Lauzun's mounted legion screened the French flank. An advance camp of chausers under Captain Alexandre Berthier then took up a protective position along Ridgebury Road about a mile to the south of Rochambeau. That evening, le comte celebrated his 56th birthday dining at Samuel Keeler's tavern with his officers on frog legs reputedly gathered from local ponds.

In the lee of Berthier's original ridge-top advance camp, the Town of Ridgefield is hosting New England's largest W3R 225th anniversary French encampment on July 1 & 2, 2006. Although the original French camp was undisturbed by Crown forces, British Captain Frederick Mackenzie's diary tells of brief encounters with Lauzun's Hussars a few days later. "*The French*" Mackenzie wrote, "*are only formidable from their reputation and discipline.... Should the British troops attack the French, our men should be instructed to make free use of the bayonet in the first onset...*"

In the spirit of Mackenzie's remarks, Ridgefields W3R 225th Anniversary Brigade of the American Revolution (BAR) encampment will feature New England's only regimental competition with the bayonet. All participating Continental, Crown, and French units are invited to enter a four-man team in this competitive exercise with a full-size dummy in the open field. The winning team will receive four new bayonets from gggodwin, plus the priceless adulation of their peers. Re-enactors who like to burn powder will enjoy a four-hour continuous unscripted open field skirmish as Crown lights harass the Allied camp. And, complimentary whole roasted pigs and home-baked fruit pies will be delivered to the camp Saturday evening. Topping off the weekend is a formal Ball to honor Rochambeau's 56th birthday at Lounsbury House (National Historic Register building) in Ridgefield, complete with frog legs, string quartet, country band, harpist, magician, and gaming. For Ball tickets, re-enactor unit registration details, and weekend event info visit our website: [ridgefieldvictorymarch.org](http://ridgefieldvictorymarch.org). or log on to the host regiment site: [5cr.org](http://5cr.org).

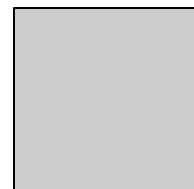
Thanks to Keith Jones for this article.

## St Patrick's Day—Morristown Encampment, 1780

On April 29, 1780 the "Gaine's Weekly Mercury", a New York City loyalist newspaper, published an account of an American army St. Patrick's Day Celebration. The paper obtained information from "rebel ... deserters" that General Washington had ordered a holiday celebration complete with music, a proclamation and the hoisting of a specially designed flag. The flag was described as "exhibiting the thirteen stripes, the favorite harp, an inscription declaring in capitals, THE INDEPENDENCE OF IRELAND." The biased account insinuates that G. Washington had hoped to appease some disgruntled Irish-American troops who were being detained beyond their enlistment and who planned to leave the camp as a body on March 17th. This author is sure that THE GENERAL's only motive was to honor those who would join with an independent America to fight oppression here and across the sea. It is left unclear whether the flag, the proclamation, the music or the keg of spirits was most instrumental in persuading the men to stay, but stay they did.



Fifth Conne]icut Regiment  
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To the attention of:

In this issue:

Armory Day

CT Light Infantry

Ridgebury Information



Connecticut Commission  
 on Culture & Tourism

HE WHO TRANSPORTETH SUSTAINETH  
 PRINTED NEAR THE RAM'S PASTURE, NEWTOWN CONNECTICUT