

W3R[®]-US Auto Tour through Connecticut

Print It -- Read It -- Drive It

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Historical Overview

In 1781 June some 5,500 men of the French Expeditionary Force (FEF) left their winter quarters in Newport RI and marched via Providence RI west through Connecticut to New York to join the U.S Continental Army. A month later the allied armies marched south to Yorktown VA.

Consider the economic benefit to Lebanon CT from housing and provisioning the hussar companies in the winter of 1780-81 and providing campsites, food, and fodder for the French troops and their horses and oxen as they marched west in 1781 (and then east in 1782), then follow their footsteps west across the entire width of Connecticut.

When the French returned north in 1782 they reversed their 1781 route to go east through Connecticut to Providence RI and then marched north to Boston, from which they embarked for the Caribbean Islands.

For more details on the 1781 history and march route click the History link in w3r-archive.org and choose the link to this state. The link to Historical Maps leads to ten NPS maps with a shaded path where the roads taken in 1781 are overlaid on a modern roadmap.

Auto Tour of the W3R[®]

1. Start at the Rhode Island border where Route 14 splits to Route 14A.
2. Follow Route 14A (Plainfield Pike, then Cemetery Road) 10.8 miles to Canterbury.

SIDE TRIP: If you wish to visit Lebanon*, where Lauzun's Legion stayed during the winter of 1780-81,

- a) turn left onto Route 169 (S. Canterbury Road), follow it about 6.2 miles south,
- b) turn right onto Route 138, go about 2 miles to Baltic.
- c) Turn left across the river and follow Route 207 west through North Franklin about 16 miles to Lebanon. There are many historic Revolutionary War sites to visit in Lebanon.
- d) To return to the main army route take Route 87 north about 10 miles to join Route 6 (about 4 miles west of Willimantic).

3. The main army route from Canterbury goes straight on Route 14 for 10.3 miles through Scotland* to Windham. (Note Willimantic is a "city" within Windham)

4. Continue on Route 14 for 3.2 miles, where Route 14 merges with Route 66.
5. Follow Route 66 and Riverside Road through Willimantic, and at 2.0 miles follow Route 66 as it splits off to the left.
6. After 2.8 miles continue straight onto Route. After 5.6 miles the historic route splits off to the left in a path parallel to modern-day Route 6. You can't drive that route today since it is overgrown with trees, so continue 3.2 miles more on Route 6 and turn left on Steel Crossing Road.
7. After 0.6 miles that ends at Old Bolton Road. Go left 0.5 miles to the center of Bolton*. Bear right and take Bolton Center Road 0.4 miles, where it becomes Route 85 North.
8. Continue 1.5 miles and turn left onto Route 6. Follow this for 4.0 miles through Manchester, then leave Route 6 and continue straight on Route 502 for 5.0 miles.
9. Go right on Roberts St and take the ramp to I-84 West. This goes across the river, through Hartford. At 6.5 miles take exit 49 to Farmington Ave (Rt 4).
10. Continue out of Hartford on Route 4 to Farmington, then take Route 10 south to Southington.
11. At Milldale take Route 322 (Meriden Road) west toward Marion. After this becomes Route 69 take a right onto East Main St. into Waterbury.
12. Exit on West Main St. and take Park St. to the end. Go left on Watertown Road to the end. Go right on Breakneck Hill Road and then the first left onto Artillery Road. Take a right onto Route 64.
13. This merges with Route 188 and after Middlebury Route 64 goes off to the right. Stay on Route 188 and branch right on Old Waterbury Road just before Route 188 crosses Route I-84. Follow this into Southbury.
14. Take West Main St. about two miles, then cross I-84 on Ichabod Road and take an immediate right onto River Road. After a mile take Glen Road left into Sandy Hill and right on Route 34 which soon becomes Route 6 into Newtown CT.
15. Continue on Route 6 until it meets I-84, then go left on Old Newtown Road into Danbury CT. Go left three blocks and then right onto Lake St. for 5 blocks, then left on Park Road, which becomes Backus Road and then Miry Brook Road, then the George Washington Highway into Ridgefield CT.

16. Go left on Route 53 (Ridgebury Road). After one mile it passes Hussar's Camp Place on the right. After 0.4 miles more you come to a tee. Go right (W) 0.15 miles, where the road turns left (S). After 0.1 mile make a sharp right turn onto Mopus Bridge Road, which joins Spring Valley Road briefly then goes off to the left (SW). On crossing into New York this becomes Wallace Road and joins Route 116 / 121.

17. Follow Route 121 (after Route 116 goes off to the right) all the way past Cross River to Bedford NY. This might be the easiest place to end your tour.

Pearls along the Necklace -- Nearby Revolutionary-Era Sites

Information on most of the sites below is available at <http://ctvisit.com>. Use their Quick Search function. These are in alphabetic list by town name.

BOLTON: nearby is COVENTRY: **Nathan Hale Homestead** - An inexperienced young U.S. spy, Hale was apprehended in New York City and hanged by the British. His alleged last words, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country", have inspired courage in many citizens since then. The house and farm reflect the lifestyle of early U.S. citizens.

FARMINGTON: **Stanley-Whitman House** - A National Historic Landmark and living history center focused on 1642-1810. There are tours, an exhibit gallery, a research library, a children's loft, and historic gardens.

SCOTLAND: **Huntington Homestead** - This has a fine display about the W3R[®], including a miniature model of the French troops marching by in 1781.

WATERBURY: The **Mattatuck Museum** includes artwork by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists including Frederick Church, William Jennys, John Kensett, Charles Ethan Porter, John Vanderlyn and John Ferguson Weir.

WETHERSFIELD: The **Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum** complex includes the 1752 Joseph Webb House --where George Washington and French General Rochambeau met in May 1781 to plan the Yorktown campaign and the Silas Deane House, circa 1770 -- built for America's Revolutionary War diplomat to France

WINDHAM - side trip to LEBANON: This town has many historic homes, the mile-long **Lebanon Town Green** and the **Trumbull House** - a Revolutionary War Office responsible for buying and shipping arms and provisions for the Continental Army.

Other Bike / Drive Tours

For a self-guided bicycling tour see www.CTAmericanRevolution.com; choose "Tours" and then "Washington/Rochambeau and Victory at Yorktown".

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