

W3R[®]-US Auto Tour through Massachusetts

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Brief Overview of the French Military Presence

From June 1780 to December 1782 Boston was the main port for resupply and repair of the French fleet in U.S. waters. In 1781 June a British squadron was blocking the sea route to Providence RI, where Rochambeau's forces were gathering for the march west to join the Continental Army in New York. Consequently a squadron bringing 600 reinforcements for Rochambeau's army docked at Boston rather than at Newport RI. About 400 of the new troops were well enough to march south to Providence RI. The auto route below parallels the route of these French troops in 1781.

When the French returned north in 1782 (a year after the siege of Yorktown) most of the 4,000-man French army retraced the 1781 route north to Boston. Several thousand French troops camped at Wrentham, then at Dedham, and boarded troop transports in Boston, bound for the Caribbean Islands.

Consider the economic benefit to Massachusetts from repairing and provisioning many French warships and troop transports for 30 months.

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 in Boston* at the Boston Massacre Monument, at the corner of State and Congress Streets (It is very hard to park in this area.)
SIDE TRIP: Boston National Historical Park (You could walk here.)
Take Congress St N 0.25 miles, then turn R on Haymarket Square
At 0.1 mile the road curves L to become North Washington; take that N 0.6 miles
Turn right on Chelsea St E 0.25 miles, then turn right on Constitution Road and park
- 2 -- Go 0.2 miles W on Court St and turn left onto Tremont St.
Go 1.2 miles S and turn left onto Dwight St.
Go 0.2 miles E and turn right onto Washington St.
- 3 -- Go 9.7 miles S through Roslindale to Dedham*.
Washington St becomes Rt 1A
- 4 -- Go 9.9 miles S through Norwood to South Walpole.
Turn left on Water St and then right onto Rt 1.

Go 8.7 miles S through Wrentham* to North Attleboro.
Bear right on North Washington St.

5 -- Go 0.8 miles S and bear right onto Old Post Road.

At 2.0 miles this becomes Newport Ave.

Go 3.1 miles S to South Attleboro.

At Irving (or Lockwood) Ave turn right and then left onto Rt 1.

6 -- Go 2.7 miles S, turn right on Exchange St

Go 0.2 miles E crossing the river and turn left on Roosevelt Ave

Go 0.2 miles S to end at Slater Mill Site in Pawtucket RI.

Pearls along the Necklace -- Nearby Revolutionary-Era Sites

BOSTON: There are many Revolutionary War sites and markers here, but few are for the W3R[®]. However there is a nice walking-biking trail paralleling the W3R[®] historic trail going south out of Boston.

=> The Freedom Trail is a 2.5 mile red-brick walking trail that connects visitors to sixteen major Revolutionary War sites, including Kings Chapel Burying Ground (with the grave of a French officer), Benjamin Franklin Statue / Boston Latin School, (Huguenot) Paul Revere's Home, and the U.S.S. Constitution (a 50-gun frigate from the War of 1812). The trail starts at the Boston Common Visitors Center, 139 Tremont St, Boston, MA 02111.

To get to the Boston Common Parking Garage set your GPS unit for 0 [yes, zero] Charles Street, Boston, MA 02116. URL: <http://www.thefreedomtrail.org/index.html>

=> Boston National Historical Park, Building 5, Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston MA.

This is the harbor where French warships and transports were repaired and re-provisioned for 30 months.

DEDHAM: **French Camp 54** was the last campsite for the French troops as they marched north toward the transport fleet in Boston. The Charles River (half a mile to the north) provided water for the troops and their horses and oxen. The historical marker is located next to the traffic circle where Marsh St. ends at Court St. in Dedham MA.

WRENTHAM: **French Camp 53** was located where the King Philip Regional High School now stands at 201 Franklin St., Wrentham MA. There is no historical marker here. The French army stayed here on December 1, 1782, on its way north to Boston. They used the water of Lake Archer, a quarter mile west.