

Revolutionary War Period

The marker installed at the Raymond Library depicts the time in East Hartford History during the Revolutionary War.

The war started in April 1775. Riders galloped to East Hartford bringing news of the Concord and Lexington fight in Massachusetts. A contingent of men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel George Pitkin joined the war shortly afterward. East Hartford had 86 men in the service of their country in 1781.

On July 10, 1780, a large French fleet, bringing General Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur Comte de Rochambeau and 5,000 troops landed in Rhode Island. In June 1781, the French army marched west and reached camp #6 in East Hartford in the meadows off Prospect Street. Rochambeau made trips to Wethersfield for meetings.

Each of the 4 regiments stayed on the east bank of the Connecticut River in East Hartford for 2 days in order to give its artillery and baggage train time to catch up so they would cross the river at the same time. Also, a reason not to camp on the west side was that the outskirts of Hartford were full of gardens and orchards and the camp would be too far from town.

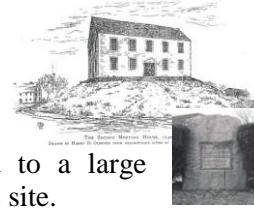
East Hartford was also large enough to accommodate the divisional headquarters. Rochambeau was quartered at Squire Elisha Pitkin's house. Pitkin was a Yale graduate, a magistrate of justice and major commandant of artillery in the Revolution. He also was identified with the manufacture of gunpowder. The Pitkin House, built in 1764 on Pitkin Street, was moved in 1955 to Guilford,



Connecticut.

Nearby was the Old Meeting House. It was the second Meeting House, 1740-1835, at Main and Pitkin Streets that was used as a hospital by the French Army 1781-1782.

A bronze plaque, affixed to a large boulder, marks this historic site.



This building was taken apart in 1836 and the wood reused to build the First Congregational Church on the Corner of Connecticut Blvd. and Main Street.



Barrels of coins were reported stored in the Forbes House. Mr. Forbes was paid \$2.00 a day to haul the money to New York in his wagon.



Silver Lane, a dirt tract, was a public highway from 1730. The French Quarter Master was housed here at the Warren Farm and paid his troops from this house according to Warren descendants. Warren Farm original drawing 1780s.



Stories of dances, barbecues and cattle roasts were told locally for many years. The French soldiers loved the delicious apples growing in the Silver Lane orchards. The French named the apples "Belle Bonne" meaning good and handsome. The name was shortened to "Bounders".

A plaque commemorating the 1781 and 1782 encampments of the French army in East Hartford stands just east of the I84 overpass on Silver Lane.



The French troops continued their march to

Yorktown, Virginia. The allied victory at Yorktown was the crowning military achievement of the American Revolutionary War. Rochambeau's army marched north in 1782 and camped again in East Hartford in camp #45 on Silver Lane. This is the only time all the French troops were camped together. The event is the painting on the back cover by David Wagner. Most of the troops sailed from Boston on Christmas Eve 1782.

East Hartford

But before and after this event, East Hartford had an interesting history. Podunk Indians first settled the 11,000 acres that is presently known as East Hartford. In the year 1639, John Crow was the first English settler in East Hartford. William Pitkin followed in 1654 and built the first sawmill along the Hockanum River. Industry grew in town during the 1700s with the advent of the first paper mill. This joined sawmills, gristmills and the first powder mills in Connecticut.

Much gunpowder was sent from East Hartford to American militiamen during the Revolutionary War. The fine quality of the powder helped us win the Battle of Saratoga in New York. The mill was productive for 100 years. The paper mill on Forbes Street is said to be the oldest site in the United States still used for the same type of manufacturing for which it was established. Paper for the *Hartford Courant* was made here and printed here.

Hockanum waterfall and paper mill.



Ferries were used on the river. Then the Hartford Bridge Company was incorporated in 1808 to provide a bridge

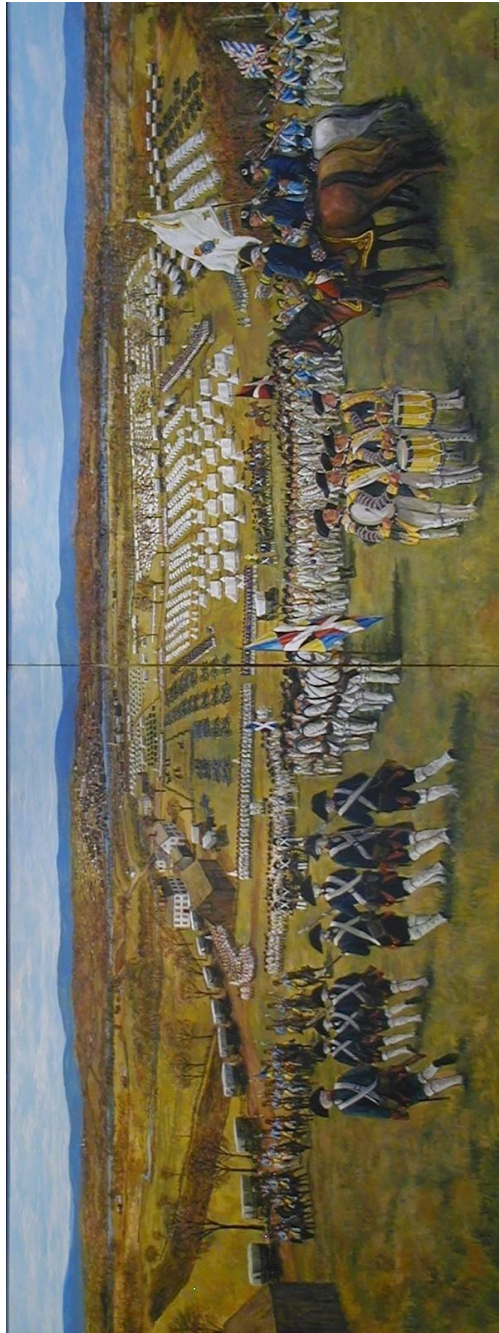
Center Cemetery was founded in 1709. Gov. Pitkin is buried there plus soldiers of many wars. At the rear of the cemetery is Fort Hill, the site of an old Podunk Indian stronghold. A walking tour booklet by Friends of Center Cemetery is available. Contact Ray Tubbs, 135 Central Ave, East Hartford, CT, 06108; 860-528-2987; BrairtonTubbs@aol.com.



After the town of East Hartford was officially separated from Hartford in November 1783, the town continued to grow and flourish. Flat land and good soil helped develop the market farming and tobacco industries in the 1800s.

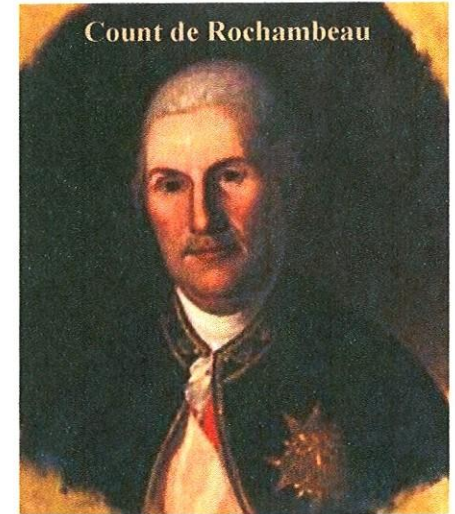
Roads, railways and bridges advanced and then in 1929 Pratt and Whitney came and was the largest manufacturer in East Hartford. During World War II, the population increased as people arrived to help in the war effort. Their air-cooled Wasp engine was in use in most commercial aircraft and our country's military airplanes. In 1954, East Hartford was the fastest growing town east of the Mississippi River. From 1960 to the present, the town has grown at a slower pace. About 50,000 people proudly call East Hartford home. We look forward to a future as bright and proud as our past.

There are few houses that were built in the late 1600's and a scattering throughout town of houses built in the 1700s and 1800s. On view in Martin Park, at 308 Burnside Avenue, are three older buildings: the National Register Makens Bement House, also called the Huguenot House, 1761 (c); the Goodwin School House 1821 (l); and the Edwin Burnham Blacksmith Shop (r), mid 1800s, which was built of ship's lath type construction. (Seasonal. Information on tours is found on www.hseh.org/programs.)



This is David Wagner's painting of "French Army Encampment at East Hartford, October-November 1782". It shows Rochambeau on horseback surveying all the regiments of his army with Hartford in the distance. This was the only time all of the French Troops were together.

WASHINGTON ROCHAMBEAU REVOLUTIONARY ROUTE EAST HARTFORD CONNECTICUT



**Historical Society Of
East Hartford**



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