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NEWSLETTER JUNE 2014

Sunday is the first day of Summer and Father's Day. Best wishes to all our fathers.

ACTIVITIES

ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

All are invited to our Open House anytime Friday June 27 Noon to 4 PM and Sat June 28 10 AM to 2 PM. The open times coincide with the reunion of the Westcott Family Association who are celebrating in Rhode Island this year. Both the Westcott Collection and our Rocky Point Collection will be on display and DVD's of the Westcott Collection will be available for sale. We will also dedicate the Westcott Cemetery at 2 pm on Saturday at the cemetery site.

We will have a brief meeting at noon on Saturday to elect our slate of officers for next year.

President: Felicia Castiglioni Gardella
Vice-Pres: Henry A L Brown
Treasurer: Bob Chorney
Rec Sec: Trish Harmon
Corr Sec: Judy Jencks [Membership]
At Large: Alan Clarke
Bob Geake
Andrew Novak
Lucille Mota-Costa [Scholarship]

Scholarship: We presented our yearly scholarship in May to Toll Gate student Elizabeth Farnsworth. We accept donations to our scholarship fund at any time. This is a fine way to remember friends and family.

Cemetery Clean-ups: Some of our members spend a great deal of their time cleaning historical cemeteries and locating, digging up, repairing and erecting headstones and footstones. Below are photos of Bob Chorney, Treasurer and Pegee Malcolm, Chair of the Warwick and Rhode Island Cemetery Commissions, working recently with high school students at Cemetery #75 on Buttonwoods Ave.



City Hall Display: We will be removing the Civil War Display. If you haven't already seen it you need to do so soon. We have received a lot of favorable comments on the material that is shown.

MEMBERSHIP

The 2013/2014 membership year expires on June 30th. If you haven't already done so, fill out the application found on p. 7 and return it with your dues. Failure to do so will mean you will be dropped from our list and will no longer receive the newsletter or be notified by e-mail of any changes or upcoming events. For those who have paid, thank you for your support.

MEMORIAL BRICKS

We will be placing an order soon for bricks. If you would like to order one, fill out the form on p. 6 and return to us with your check. One form for each brick if you order more than one.

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Beginning on p. 8 you will find ads for our corporate sponsors. We greatly appreciate their support and ask you to give them your business and let them know you saw their ad here. Their ads will be in our newsletters for one year and they receive a free membership. Sponsorships are \$50 and any member who brings in a corporate sponsor will get their yearly membership for free.

WHO FORGOT THE CELEBRATION?
The 200th Anniversary Celebration of the War of 1812 That Wasn't!
By Charles M. Vacca Jr.

While Civil War buffs are celebrating the 150th anniversary of that major conflict, has anybody noticed that the 200th birthday of the War of 1812 is about to come to an end?

The War of 1812 is a curious chapter in United States History. Called "Mr. Madison's War" (after presiding President James Madison), the conflict was perhaps the most unpopular American war until Vietnam. It was fought from 1812 to 1815 between the fledgling US Republic and the British Empire (particularly Great Britain and British North America), using mostly local militia as the nation maintained an undermanned and under budgeted national army. England had the most dominant navy in the world (while the US was in the midst of building six warships, including the U.S.S. Constitution or "Old Ironsides".)

The war erupted for several reasons, including: trade restrictions passed by Great Britain to impede American trade with France; impressments (forced recruitment, and the most popularly recognized cause) of US citizens into the Royal Navy; and British military support of American Indians against US westward expansion. This was also the beginning of American expansion to the Pacific Ocean, which served as the seeds for latter day "Manifest Destiny". That also included the seizing of territorial rights to parts of Canada (an area which American colonists pursued during the Revolutionary War).

Historians have revised their opinions of this conflict, calling it a means for the young Republic to test its wings on the international and military levels. Ironically, the War of 1812, once considered a minor conflict which resolved virtually nothing in America's best interests, brought about some interesting consequences:

- It was the only American war, resulting in the invasion and destruction of the nation's capitol. The British burned much of Washington, DC in 1814, including most public offices and the Presidential Mansion;
- Following the burning of DC, Fort McHenry in Baltimore Harbor was bombarded unmercifully by the British. The Americans' defense inspired an American lawyer, Francis Scott Key, to write the lyrics of the "Star Spangled Banner", which later became our National Anthem;
- The War of 1812 produced more generals who later became president than any other American conflict: Andrew Jackson (7th president, 1828-1836) and William H. Harrison (9th president, 1841), and nearly a third, Lewis Cass, who was narrowly defeated for the presidency;
- The war's most famous battle, at New Orleans, took place two weeks after the Treaty of Ghent officially ended the War of 1812. Gen. Andrew Jackson decisively routed the invading British forces utilizing predominantly local militia units. The battle well served Jackson all the way to the presidency in 1828.

"Mr. Madison's War" had political ramifications, as the Federalist Party---of which the first two presidents, George Washington and John Adams, had aligned themselves---

clearly opposed the war. The Federalists were alive and well in New England, although they were non-existent in the west and south. Madison's Republican Party (not to be confused with today's Republicans) wholeheartedly supported US involvement. New England was at the forefront of anti-war activism; as there were instances of mob terrorism throughout southern New England, including several towns in Rhode Island.

That non-support extended to Massachusetts and Connecticut failing to send their militias to war. While the northeast failed to lend much money to the war effort, businessmen from those parts continued to trade with the enemy, resulting in deposits tripling at 33 Massachusetts banks. Gold at those institutions quadrupled. Such business centers as Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley thrived as foreign imports dried up; forcing the creation of local manufacturing centers soon resulting in millions in assets.

Here, in Rhode Island, which had taken until 1790 to approve the Constitution (making it the 13th state of the newly-aligned United States of America), there was much opposition. Rhode Island was expected to bear the brunt of a largely naval war. The local congressional delegation voted against entering the war; and a privateer being fitted out in Providence was sunk during a night raid by unknown private citizens.

Rhode Island Gov. William Jones of Newport (1811-1817) subsequently made a tactfully worded threat of secession: "...notwithstanding our respect for the laws and our strong attachment to the union of states, there may be evils greater than can be apprehended from a refusal to submit to unconstitutional laws." In 1813, the state's General Assembly appointed a committee to determine whether Rhode Island's prior acceptance of the Constitution could be considered invalid.

Despite this opposition, Rhode Island actually sent 1,033 men to serve in the War of 1812. According to the State Archives Office, many of those individuals were credited for having "served" by providing provisions to the military. It is unknown to what extent any individuals served during the war, including their residency within Rhode Island. (The State Archives Office lists Jeremiah McGregor and Remington Cummings as being the only residents of Coventry having served in the militia during this time.) McGregor may just be the only War of 1812 veteran buried in a Coventry cemetery, (CY #8, Rice City). Maj. Henry Potter (WW#25) served in the military during the war.

Gov. Jones eventually sent Rhode Island's quota of 500 troops to serve during the war---serving as part of the 25th regiment, US Infantry (compare that to more than 23,000 men serving in the Civil War). Rhode Island's most famous contribution to the War of 1812 was Oliver Hazard Perry, who served as a naval commander during the decisive defeat of a British fleet on Lake Erie in 1813 ("We have met the enemy and they are ours," he later wrote to Gen. William H. Harrison in what may be the most famous American military quote.) However, for the most part, Rhode Islanders did not see any military action, having been restricted to garrisoning newly built Fort Adams in Newport and citizen groups providing river guard in Providence.

In a little known chapter of US history, under increasing pressure of the western states holding much political and economic clout in Congress; Massachusetts in the fall of 1814 called for the New England states to meet at a convention in Hartford, CT. Expectations varied among the delegates, with some anticipating striking a peace deal with Great Britain. In Newburyport, MA, the press and pulpit strongly urged secession from the Union. While Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island sent full delegations; Vermont and New Hampshire (Maine was part of Massachusetts) sent representatives from four counties. Rhode Island Federalists refused to enter the protest of the minority in their journal (as the vote to send delegates was 39-23.).

The coming of an apparent peace between the nations virtually ended any further secessionist movement at the Convention; as the report read that unconstitutional federal acts (such as the declaration of war against Great Britain) should be countered by the states to shield their citizens. The Convention actually adopted the Republicans' theory in the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1798. In the end, moderates ruled the day, as George Dangerfield said, "...they only threatened civil war if they did not get their way."

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IN MEMORIAM:

We regret to inform you of the passing of long time member and supporter Ed Greer.

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again." – Maya Angelou

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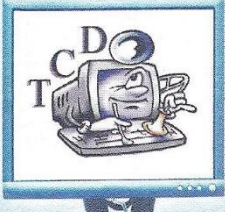
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