

INVITATION: Saturday, May 21 – "Coffee and Donuts at the Fort"

Joseph Studlick <jstudlick@mac.com>

Sat 5/7/2022 4:51 PM

To: Melissa Cordeiro <mcordeiro@bristolri.gov>

📎 4 attachments (5 MB)

Invitation to 21 May Event Final .pdf; BoRIA_Brochure_5-4-22_DIGITAL.pdf; Release #22-1 Announcing BoRIA 5Mar22 .pdf; BHFR_Brochure_5.6.22_DIGITAL.pdf;

Dear Ms. Corderio,

Please see the attached invitation. We hope you can join us rain or shine in kickstarting this statewide effort to restore our almost forgotten Revolutionary War fort in Portsmouth for Celebrations in 2026 and getting the story of Rhode Island's role in the Revolutionary War widely told. We would appreciate if you could forward this to your Town Council and appropriate Town Administration/ Staff.

We contacted Dr. Catherine Zipf, Exec. Director of the Bristol Historical Society, about a month ago and we had her agreement to partner in our efforts.

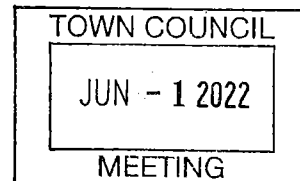
RSVP

Regards,

Joe Studlick
Director
BoRIA
832.472.1334

TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND
2022 MAY 10 AM 9:56

I have attached some further information on our efforts and plans.





Battle of Rhode Island Association

Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee



Coffee and Donuts at the Fort

The Battle of Rhode Island Association and the Butts Hill Fort Committee cordially invite you to "Coffee and Donuts at the Fort." This is an opportunity to see the progress we have made over the year that we have been working on the project to restore the Fort and introduce it to new generations of Rhode Islanders.

We plan a one-hour program that will include a brief history of the Fort and the plans of the Battle of Rhode Island Association. Nick Edwards, the Secretary of State's Program Coordinator for the RI250 Commission, will present the Commission's planned state-wide effort to celebrate the semiquincentennial. The program includes an optional, brief tour of the Fort.

The invitation list includes local legislators and town councils, local historical societies, Congressional Representatives and Senators, State patriotic groups, members of historical reenactment units, and local and State print, on-line, and TV media outlets.

The program will be held at Butts Hill Fort in Portsmouth on Saturday, 21 May at 9:00 a.m. It will go rain (in a tent) or shine. We recommend sturdy shoes. Please park in the large parking lot on Dyer Street.

This is a free program, but reservations are requested so we can have enough donuts for all. To reserve, please email Nancy Crawford at redhatscrapper@gmail.com. Nancy will then send a map to direct you to the Fort and parking.



Battle of Rhode Island Association

Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 5, 2022

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Burton Quist

Director, Battle of Rhode Island Association

401-439-0187

bcquist@cox.net

New Organization Promotes RI Revolutionary War History

As the U.S. and Rhode Island prepare for the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, a new non-profit organization has been formed to spotlight the role of Rhode Island in the War for Independence. The Battle of Rhode Island Association (BoRIA) mission is to raise awareness of Rhode Island's unique Revolutionary War history, particularly that pertaining to the Rhode Island Campaign and Butts Hill Fort.

The new Association grew out of the effort to restore Butts Hill Fort. The work was initiated a year ago by the Portsmouth Historical Society in the form of the Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee. As the restoration effort progressed, it became obvious that to gain the public support and resources needed to restore, and particularly to maintain, this historic Revolutionary War artifact, it would be necessary to bring to bring the story of Butts Hill Fort and its role in the War to a statewide audience. Rhode Island's place in the Revolution is in general not widely known. It is an interesting story and deserves to be told.

Rhode Island is, at best, mentioned in the history books for the burning of the *Gaspee*. Those willing to dig a bit deeper may find reference to the one-day fight known as the Battle of Rhode Island which is itself a part of a broader series of events known as the Rhode Island Campaign. The Battle of Rhode Island Association intends to tell the story of the British Occupation of Aquidneck Island, the Battle of Rhode Island, including the Siege of Newport, and the arrival and departure of our French allies. It is a story important to a full understanding of the War for Independence in general and for Rhode Island history in particular.



The new Battle of Rhode Island Association aims to be a focal point for exchange of information on Rhode Island's role in the War of independence.

"It is important to note," said Joe Studlick, Co-Chair of the Restoration Committee, "that the new organization in no way detracts from the efforts to open the restored Butts Hill Fort for public historical, educational and recreational pursuits. The Association will support the Fort's restoration while serving as the focal point for the exchange of historical information, educational resources, and events relative to the Rhode Island in the Revolutionary War. The story covers the State."

The Association's website, which should be operational by mid-year, has drawn interest from such organizations as the Rhode Island Maritime Archeological Project, the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association, and *Souvenir Francais* USA. These and others have expressed interest in participating in, and contributing to, the site.

Directors of the Association recently met with Nick Edwards the Program Coordinator for the State's RI250 Commission. Edwards was enthusiastic about the Battle of Rhode Island Association's work and suggested that we brief the entire Commission. Rhode Island Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea chairs the RI250 Commission and frequently emphasizes Rhode Island's role in the shaping of our country.

Recently the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati has provided a grant of \$7000. The Society of the Cincinnati is made up of descendants of officers who served in the Continental Army, several of whom served here during the Rhode Island Campaign. Many units from the Massachusetts State Militia also served in this campaign. The fact that this organization from another state would generously give to this effort is an indication of the type of interest the Association expects to generate and more people become aware of both Butts Hill Fort and the related events.

The Whalley Foundation of Houston, Texas has provided \$10,000 toward the development of a Master Plan for Butts Hill Fort Restoration. The Master Plan is a critical goal for 2022. BoRIA has also applied for other grants to fund the Master Plan, which is expected to cost more than \$50,000. Once the Master Plan is approved by the Portsmouth Town Council and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, the way ahead for the restoration of the Fort will be fixed.

The Heritage Harbor Foundation, founded by Rhode Island State Historian Laureate Dr. Patrick Conley, recently provided \$2500 to be used also for the BoRIA website.

Butts Hill Fort, the largest Revolutionary War earthwork in southern New England, was central to Rhode Island's role in the War for Independence. This historic site exists today, little changed since 1778.

Even though it's on both the Register of National Historic Places, and the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, the Fort is hidden from view, unavailable to the public.

The Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee needs your help to restore the Fort and return it to the public for educational, historical and recreational use.

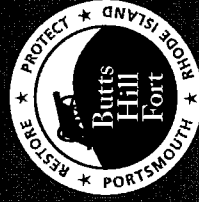
The mission of the Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee is to rededicate the Fort during our nation's 250th birthday in 2026 and to have an education center with public facilities completed by the anniversary of the Battle of Rhode Island in 2028.

Public and government support is critical to restoring and preserving this important, unique and historic site. Your tax-free donations can be made to the BATTLE OF RHODE ISLAND ASSOCIATION either by mail to PO Box 626 Portsmouth, RI 02871 or via PayPal.

The Committee is also seeking volunteers to assist with administrative and logistical tasks as well as with the removal of vegetation from the Fort. If you wish to volunteer or would like further information on the project, please email Seth Chiaro at seth.chiaro@gmail.com

Visit us at: www.battleofrhodeisland.org

Background map:
Plan de Rhode Island. Library of Congress,
Geography and Map Division.



THE BUTTS HILL FORT RESTORATION COMMITTEE is a committee of the BATTLE OF RHODE ISLAND ASSOCIATION. The mission of the Committee is to restore and maintain the Revolutionary War fort in order to provide a safe and accessible educational and recreational site that raises public interest in this National Historic Landmark and its role in the Battle of Rhode Island. The Association is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit committed to raising awareness of Rhode Island's role in the War for Independence. Donations may be made payable to "BoRIA" at PO Box 626, Portsmouth, RI 02871.

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Butts Hill Fort Restoration

Battle of Rhode Island Association
Portsmouth, Rhode Island



Early Development of Butts Hill Fort

In 1776 Patriots build "a well-situated fort at the north end of the Island... It in some measure commands the passage to Bristol by the ferry."

In December 1776 British forces land in Portsmouth and occupy the Fort and Aquidneck Island. They expand the Fort to hold 200 men and 6 cannon, requiring citizens of Portsmouth to work 3 days per week on the project. Later a barracks for 300 is built and enclosed within the earthworks.

PHOTOS

Above: Attacks upon Rhode Island, 1778. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

Below, L to R:
Map of Lands, vicinity of Butts Hill, W. H. Lawton, 1903.
Portsmouth Historical Society, Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

Butts Hill Fort, at Portsmouth, Scene of the Battle of Rhode Island, ca. 1910. Portsmouth Historical Society, Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

View of the parade, Butts Hill Fort, James Garman, 1976.

Fort outline superimposed on overhead view, The Rhode Island Marine Archaeology Project, 2009.

Brush removed on the parade, Butts Hill Fort, C.J. Viveiros, August 2021.

The Battle of Rhode Island

The French fleet arrives in July 1778. British forces withdraw from the north end of the Island to positions running across Middletown.

General Sullivan leads a militia army across the Sakonnet Strait from Tiverton and establishes his headquarters at Butts Hill Fort. Continental Forces under General Nathanael Greene and General Lafayette arrive. Troops are deployed in Middletown to fix British troops outside Newport. French forces plan to take the city, but a hurricane damages the French fleet, causing it to sail to Boston for repairs.

The British attack north to evict Sullivan's troops. Colonial troops put up a stiff resistance. The Black Regiment repulses several attacks.

Over the night of August 30, Sullivan's forces conduct an orderly withdrawal of all troops and equipment from Aquidneck. It has been called the "Dunkirk of the Revolution."

The French Arrival and Departure

The French Army under command of General Rochambeau arrives in Newport in July 1780. They occupy Butts Hill Fort in case the British return and to protect the ferry landings.

In June 1781 the French leave Newport to join Washington's Army in New York. The Fort protects the line of march to and across the Bristol Ferry. Militia occupy the Fort to protect French soldiers too ill to march. The combined American-French army then goes south to defeat the British army at Yorktown, Virginia.

Since the Revolution

The Reverend Dr. Roderick Terry buys the property and around 1918 deeds it to the Newport Historical Society. In 1934 the State of Rhode Island acquires the land and transfers it to Town of Portsmouth in 1968.



Battle of Rhode Island Association

The Association began as an outgrowth of the Butts Hill Fort Restoration Committee. The Fort is the largest Revolutionary War earthwork extant in southern New England.

It was successively occupied by Americans, British, and French forces and was the headquarters of American forces in the Battle of Rhode Island in 1778. This historic site exists today, little changed since 1781.

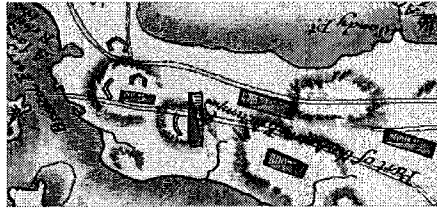
The Battle of Rhode Island Association was created in 2021 to extend appreciation of Rhode Island's Revolutionary War participation, including the British Occupation, the Siege of Newport, the Battle of Rhode Island, and the arrival and departure of the French allies.

This history is not just of local importance. The Campaign was the first American-French operation of the War. It included militia, not only from Rhode Island but also from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire as well as Continental Line troops. These Rhode Island events led directly to the defeat of British forces at Yorktown and the end of the War.

PARTNERS

American Friends of Lafayette, American Society of Le Souvenir Français, Bristol Preservation Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, Fort Barton (Tiverton Open Space Commission), Gaspee Days Committee, Heritage Harbor Foundation, Jamestown Historical Society, Massachusetts Sons of Cincinnati, Middletown Historical Society, Naval War College Museum, Newport Historical Society, Portsmouth Historical Society, RI Historical Society, RI Marine Archaeology Project, Varnum Armory, and Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association.

ABOVE: Detail, *Attacks upon Rhode Island, 1778*. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.



Our Goals:

- Become a focus for outreach to historical, educational, military, and patriotic groups interested in the Rhode Island Campaign.
- Enhance history education by ensuring wide recognition of Rhode Island's unique Revolutionary War experiences, particularly those pertaining to the Rhode Island Campaign and Butts Hill Fort.
- Create the website for the exchange and documentation of historical information, educational resources, and events, related to Rhode Island's role in the War for Independence.
- Partner with local, state, and federal groups and tourism agencies to encourage visits to Revolutionary Era sites.

Visit us at: www.battleofrhodeisland.org

PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT is critical to getting this story written and distributed and to restore and preserve Butts Hill Fort.

Your tax-free donations can be made to "BoRIA" by mail to PO Box 626 Portsmouth, RI 02871 or via PayPal.

The Committee is also seeking volunteers to assist with administrative and logistical tasks as well as with the removal of vegetation from the Fort. If you wish to volunteer or would like further information on the project, please email info@battleofrhodeisland.org.

COVER: *The 5th Connecticut, 54th Regiment of Foot, Kingston Reds and members from the Artillery Company of Newport, Butts Hill Fort, Portsmouth, Rhode Island*. Joe Studlick, 2021



BoRIA 5/22



*"A Victory for the Patriots.
The Dunkirk of the War."*

—Dr. Patrick T. Conley
Historian Laureate of Rhode Island



Portsmouth, Rhode Island

British Occupation of Aquidneck Island

On December 8, 1776, British forces – more than 7,000 British and German soldiers – landed on Rhode Island (Aquidneck Island). Meeting little opposition, the invading army spread throughout the island and occupied the fortifications the Americans had begun, including a position on Butts Hill (Windmill Hill) in Portsmouth. The occupation would last until 1779, creating severe hardships for the people of the island and nearby communities. Homes were taken for barracks; trees, fences, homes, and wharves were used for firewood. Farms were destroyed to build defensive positions, using ordinary citizens pressed into service. Nearby towns on the mainland were attacked and burned.

Siege of Newport

In July 1778, learning that a French fleet commanded by Admiral d'Estaing was enroute to American waters, General Washington ordered General John Sullivan to gather American forces to retake the island. The Patriot forces included Continentals, state regiments, militia, and independent volunteer companies. Tiverton, RI became the staging area. The American forces would attack the British occupiers from the north while the 4,000 French marines from d'Estaing's fleet would attack the British in Newport. With the arrival of the French fleet in Narragansett Bay on August 7th, the British pulled their troops from the north into defenses closer to Newport.

On August 9th, the Patriot troops crossed the Sakonnet (East Passage) from Tiverton to the north end of the island at Howland Ferry while the French landed at Jamestown (Conanicut Island) to train.

General Sullivan, from his headquarters at Butts Hill Fort, commanded a force of 12,000 which had advanced on Newport to the point where they could see the enemy lines. On August 19th the Americans began firing. The British returned fire. Newport was under siege by the Patriots.

With a British fleet approaching from New York, the French left the Bay for the open Atlantic to prepare for battle. Before the battle was joined, both fleets were hit by a hurricane that raged from August 11th to the 13th. Both fleets were severely damaged. The British returned to New York. The French left for Boston.

When the Americans heard that the French would not return, morale sank. Militia and some of the Continentals whose enlistments had expired left for home. Sullivan did not have enough forces to fight the British alone, so he planned an orderly retreat. Siege operations continued, but equipment began to be moved north and off the island.

Battle of Rhode Island

On August 28th Sullivan ordered the retreat. As the Americans moved north on the 29th, the British attacked. A withdrawal of troops while in contact is one of the most difficult of military operations, but Sullivan had planned well and his soldiers fought well. The Patriot's main defensive position was anchored at Butts Hill Fort and extended some two miles across.

BELOW: Detail, *The French squadron entering Newport under the fire of the batteries and forcing the passage on August 8, 1778: day that the Americans passed on the Isle of Rhode Island by way of howland's ferry.* (Translated from the French,) Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

the island to Quaker Hill, Turkey Hill, and Almy's Hill. First contact between the forces occurred about 7 a.m. It was obvious that the state and militia troops had been trained well. Delaying actions at key locations protected withdrawing troops. The 1st Rhode Island Regiment, The Black Regiment, repulsed three attacks by the Hessians in heavy fighting. Bloody Run Brook got its name from the battle-field bloodshed. By 4 p.m. the general fighting subsided, replaced by sporadic artillery fire. British deaths were 38 while the Americans lost 30. Over the night of August 30/31, Sullivan evacuated all his men and equipment to Tiverton. It was the only battle fought in Rhode Island and the last fought in New England.

French Allies Come to Newport

In 1779 the British evacuated Rhode Island. On July 11, 1780 a French fleet delivered about 5,000 French troops commanded by General Rochambeau to Narragansett Bay. The citizens were skeptical of another large force occupying the island, but Rochambeau and his officers soon overcame the ill will left by the French departure in 1778. French engineers worked with American forces (including the Black Regiment) to improve Butts Hill Fort. In June of 1781 Rochambeau's troops, with Rhode Island troops watching from Butts Hill Fort, began their march toward the final victory over the British in Yorktown.

