

receive the second division, but he had a free hand to plan the 1781 campaign.<sup>48</sup> His manpower problems would be eased by some 600 reinforcements on the way from France,<sup>49</sup> and to address his father's financial needs, the vicomte also brought some 6,6 million livres in cash and bills of exchange. Even more important was the news that on March 22, 1781, Louis XV had promoted François Joseph Paul, comte de Grasse to Rear Admiral, and sent him to the West Indies with 20 ships of the line, three frigates and 156 transports. Ségur and Castries suggested Rochambeau cooperate with de Grasse, who might be able to provide the all-important naval support. Here was an option that would never leave Rochambeau's mind again.

## 5. The Conference at Wethersfield, May 19-26, 1781

Now that Rochambeau knew what his resources for the summer campaign would be, there was no time to lose. Throughout the spring Washington had talked about an attack on New York,<sup>50</sup> By May 13, Washington had received word of the arrival of Barras and the vicomte. Rather than meet in Hartford, which was bustling with legislators assembled for their annual meeting, Washington suggested the quiet village of Wethersfield a few miles south of the capital. The day was to be May 21,<sup>51</sup> but just as Rochambeau and his party were about to leave Newport, British vessels once again appeared off of Newport and forced Admiral de Barras, Ternay's replacement, to remain behind. Since he wanted to have a second general officer present, Rochambeau asked the marquis de Chastellux to accompany him to Wethersfield.

If eyewitness accounts about the Hartford Conference at least exist, we know much less about proceedings at Wethersfield. Rochambeau most likely traveled the same route he took to get to the Hartford Conference, but in the case of Wethersfield we do not know who accompanied Rochambeau and Chastellux on the way. None of the seven aides who left diaries, journals, or letters -- his son,<sup>52</sup> Baron Closen,<sup>53</sup> Axel von Fersen,<sup>54</sup> Mathieu Dumas,<sup>55</sup> Cromot du Bourg,<sup>56</sup> the marquis du Bouchet,<sup>57</sup> and the comte de Lauberdière<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Rochambeau's instructions from the marquis de Ségur, Minister of War, of March 9, 1781, and from the marquis de Castries, the Naval Minister, of March 21, are printed in Doniol, *Histoire*, vol. 5, pp. 466-470.

<sup>49</sup> The convoy carrying 592 infantry replacements and two companies, 68 men, of artillery for a total of 660 men, arrived in Boston on June 11, but only about 200 were healthy enough to join their units. Some 260 men afflicted with scurvy and 200 healthy arrivals remained with Choisy as a garrison in Newport; so did the siege artillery with some 30 officers and men, the sick, and a small detachment, about 90 men under Major de Prez of the Royal Deux-Ponts, to guard the stores in Providence. Rochambeau added 200 men from his regiments to the garrison and detached 700 men to replenish the thinned ranks of the navy.

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., his letters to Rochambeau of April 8, and 10, 1781, in Washington, *Writings*, vol. 21, pp. 435/36 and 441/442.

<sup>51</sup> *The Diaries of George Washington, 1748-1799* John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., 3 vols (Boston, 1925), vol. 2, p. 213. Washington did not keep a diary during the conference at Hartford the previous fall.

<sup>52</sup> See Rochambeau, *Journal*, pp. 218/19.

<sup>53</sup> See *The Revolutionary Journal of Baron Ludwig von Closen, 1780-1783* Evelyn M. Acomb, ed., (Chapel Hill, 1958), p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> See Fersen's letter of 3 June 1781. *Lettres*, p. 117. The plan for the campaign of 1781, so Fersen, was a closely guarded secret which even he did not know.

<sup>55</sup> See Dumas, *Memoirs*, pp. 50/51. Dumas called the town "Westerfield."

<sup>56</sup> Cromot du Bourg, "Diary," pp. 211/12.

-- mention Wethersfield on their itineraries. Though it is unthinkable that the generals rode to Wethersfield alone, we do not know who their aides were at the conference.<sup>59</sup>

On Saturday, May 19, 1781, Rochambeau and Chastellux once again set out for Connecticut. Rochambeau, as usual, is rather terse in his 1781 *Memoir*: "Thus when the Comte de Rochambeau had decoded his dispatches, he did nothing more pressing than to suggest a conference with General Washington which was set up at Weathersfield (sic), near to Hartford, for May 23. The Comte de Barras was not there."<sup>60</sup> The first night was again spent somewhere in Rhode Island, the second night, from May 20 to May 21, once again at White's Tavern in Andover.<sup>61</sup> **(SITE 1)**

On Monday, May 21, 1781, Washington, who had arrived at Wethersfield on the 19<sup>th</sup> and whose suite included Generals Knox and Duportail, rode up to Hartford to welcome Rochambeau and Chastellux. While the Americans were lodged in the home of Joseph Webb,<sup>62</sup> **(SITES 9 and 10)** the French lodged nearby at Stillmann's Tavern.<sup>63</sup> In the terse words of Washington's diary:

"21<sup>st</sup> (Monday). The Count de Rochambeau, with the Chevlr de Chastellux, arrived about Noon -- the appearance of the British fleet off Block Island prevented the attendance of the Count de Barras."<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> See the *Journal d'un Emigré* by Denis Jean Florimond Langlois de Mautheville, marquis du Bouchet, in the Division of Rare and Manuscripts Collections at Cornell University, esp. pp. 212/13.

<sup>58</sup> Lauberdrière, *Journal*, p. 50.

<sup>59</sup> I have been unable to get access to the letters of an eighth aide, Charles Malo François comte de Lameth, who may have accompanied Rochambeau and Chastellux, in the archives of the Département Val d'Oise, J. Watson Webb, *Reminiscences of Gen'l Samuel B. Webb of the Revolutionary Army* (New York, 1882), p. 70, writes: "Tradition says, that the suites of the two commanders consisted of sixty-five persons; and that only Washington and Rochambeau, with one Aide-de-camp each, slept in the house; while the other members of the two suites were billeted upon the hospitable villagers." The villagers may have been "hospitable," but nevertheless refused the bills offered by the state as payment for expenses. On May 18, the American deputy quartermaster in charge of accommodations had to appeal to the General Assembly for "real" money to cover expenses. "As no Person or Persons in that town can be found ... to make the necessary supplies without some part of the payment in Specie," he urged a grant of £ 35 pounds in hard money in addition to the £ 500 in state bills already appropriated. Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 2, p. 345.

<sup>57</sup> Rochambeau, *Mémoire*, p. 51.

<sup>61</sup> Chastellux used the opportunity to mail Washington "a confidential and rather scheming letter indicating the substance of a plan likely to be discussed at the conference." Chastellux, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 563, note 6. The letter, dated "May 21, 1781," at "White Tavern" is among the unpublished papers of Washington in the Library of Congress. Washington wisely decided not to show the note to Rochambeau. Chastellux himself does not comment on the conference at all in his *Travels*.

<sup>62</sup> Letters and reminiscences of members of the Webb family do not mention the presence of Washington and Rochambeau at all! See Worthington Chauncey Ford, *Family Letters of Samuel Blachley Webb, 1764-1807* (New York, 1912). The only mention I could find is a letter of June 17, 1781, when Washington sent his "measure for a pair of draw-Boots [Horse-skin] to be made of the Leather Manufactured at your Works" to Joseph Webb. He promised to pay "in specie, which shall be immediately forwarded to you." Quoted in Worthington Chauncey Ford, *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb* 3 vols., (New York, 1893), vol. 2, pp. 342/43. On pp. 340/41, Ford prints the entries in Washington's and Trumbull's diaries.

<sup>63</sup> Chastellux, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 367. Stillmann's Tavern is no longer standing. See also Sherman W. Adams and Henry R. Stiles, *The History of Ancient Wethersfield* 2 vols., (1904, repr. Wethersfield, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 475-480.

<sup>64</sup> Washington, *Diaries*, p. 217.

In the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup>, Washington and his staff, Governor Trumbull, Jeremiah Wadsworth, and probably also their French guests, attended a concert at the Wethersfield Congregational Church. The next day, Tuesday, the two delegations met at the Webb House. Washington's diary tells us:

"22<sup>d</sup> (Tuesday). Fixed with Count de Rochambeau upon plan of Campaign."<sup>65</sup>

In celebration of the event, Washington, Rochambeau, Trumbull and Wadsworth had dinner that night (May 22) at Stillman's in the only event worth mentioning, at least as far as Governor Trumbull was concerned, among all the important decisions of that day:<sup>66</sup>

"Fair - dined with General Washington, Rochambeau, &c at Stillman's."

The next day, "23<sup>d</sup> Count de Rochambeau set out on his return to Newport, while I prepared and forwarded dispatches to the Governors of the four New England States calling upon them in earnest and pointed terms, to compleat their Continental Battalions for the Campaign."<sup>67</sup> Rochambeau and Chastellux got no further that Hartford where a big reception was waiting for them at Collier's. Again Trumbull's diary:

"Wednesday, twenty-third. Fair-dined at Colyer's with the Generals-supra public expense. Guards. Artillery."<sup>68</sup>

Trumbull's note, if anything, seems to be an understatement of what went on that night at Collier's. As is often the case when festivities take place "supra public expense," money, and drink, flowed freely. The evening cost the Connecticut taxpayer £ 296; another £ 84 were spent to entertain the cadet and artillery companies.<sup>69</sup> Dinner was washed down, so the detailed break-down of Collier's bill,<sup>70</sup> with:

80 bowls of punch  
81 bottles of madeira wine  
26 bowls of toddy  
32 bottles of port wine  
50 bowls of grog

The Governor's Foot Guard, which had escorted the generals to Wethersfield on the 21<sup>st</sup> and received them back in Hartford on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, was also present for the festivities. Its men showed a distinct preference for brandy, viz. the entry in Collier's bill:

---

<sup>65</sup> The line: "This day Americans and French dined together at Collyer's Tavern, in Wethersfield" as quoted from Washington's diaries in Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England* vol. 2, p. 113, for May 22, 1781, is not in the Fitzpatrick edition (vol. 2, p. 217) of Washington's diary! Not only would it be incorrect in that Collier's was in Hartford, not Wethersfield, it also contradicts Trumbull's diary for the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> All quotes from the Trumbull Diary in the collections of the Connecticut Historical Society.

<sup>67</sup> Washington *Diaries*, p. 218. Washington's "Circular to the New England States of May 24, 1781, is printed in Washington, *Writings*, vol. 22, pp. 109/11.

<sup>68</sup> The "artillery" were the Matrosses. See Fowles, *Honor*, p. 23.

<sup>69</sup> Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 2, p. 232.

<sup>70</sup> These details are taken from Herbert J. Stoeckel, "Washington Visited here ... He sure did!" *The Courant Magazine*, February 20, 1966, p. 4. Stoeckel confuses the innkeepers when he writes that the event took place in Bull's Tavern kept by William Collier while reproducing a woodcut of Ripley's Coffee House.

2 mugs of brandy sling for the guards

The next day, May 24, the French continued their journey for Newport. Setting out early in the morning from Hartford on horseback, they could have reached Providence by nightfall. But considering the amount of liquor consumed the night before, the French may well have gotten off to a late start, and, following the pattern established on previous journeys, stopped once again at White's Tavern in Andover on the evening of May 24, 1781. **(SITE 1)** Though there is no documentary evidence for such a stop, it is also suggested by the fact that the two generals were back in Newport only on May 26.

The time for action had finally come. Throughout the spring of 1781, America's allies had been idly encamped in Newport while Cornwallis was marching almost at will across the southern colonies. Despairingly Washington had written to Lieutenant-Colonel John Laurens on April 9, 1781: "We are at the end of our tether, and ... now or never our deliverance must come."<sup>71</sup> The campaign of 1781 had to produce results, and chances were that it would. After a presence of almost one year, the French had finally been able to agree to a campaign plan with their American allies, and even if it was not quite to Rochambeau's liking there was always hope that it could be changed in time.<sup>72</sup>

Much has been said and written about how the decisive victory at Yorktown later that year had been planned at Wethersfield. But nothing could be further from the truth. There can be no doubt that at Wethersfield in May 1781, Washington, for political and military reasons, was pushing, as he had for the past year, for an attack on New York rather than a march to Virginia. In his diary, Washington summarized Wethersfield thus. "That the French Land force (except 200 Men) should March as soon as the Squadron could Sail for Boston -- to the North River -- and there, in conjunction with the American, to commence an operation against New York (which in the present reduced State of the Garrison it was thought would fall, unless relieved; the doing which wd. enfeeble their Southern operations, and in either case be productive of capital advantages) or to extend our views to the Southward as circumstances and a Naval superiority might render more necessary and eligible." Then follows a list of reasons such as "the waste of Men in long Marches ... objections to the climate &ca." that made an attack on New York preferable to any other objective for the campaign of 1781.<sup>73</sup>

All journals and letters of French officers, including Rochambeau's November 1781 *Mémoire*, agree that Washington considered New York as his prime objective: "General Washington throughout this conference urged an offensive with the capture of New York as the principal objective. He thought that this one blow would cripple the English position in America. He could recall the various detachments that had been sent South, and he believed, along with the American harbor pilots, that the bar of the port was not

---

<sup>71</sup> Washington, *Writings*, vol. 21, p. 439.

<sup>72</sup> The original minutes of the conference survive in the Rochambeau papers in the Paul Mellon Collection at the University of Virginia. They are attached to this report as printed in U. S. Congress, Joint Committee on the Library, *Rochambeau. A Commemoration by the Congress of the United States of the Services of the French Auxiliary Forces in the War of the American Independence* D.B.Randolph Keim, ed., (Washington, DC, 1907), pp. 381-384. An abbreviated version can be found in Washington, *Writings*, vol. 22, pp. 105/06.

<sup>73</sup> Washington, *Diaries*, vol. 2, pp. 217/18.

impossible even for the largest ships.<sup>74</sup> He considered an expedition to Chesapeake Bay as a secondary objective on which he did not want to waste resources when he was not sure that he had enough resources for his primary objective."<sup>75</sup>

The comte de Laubardière was even more emphatic in his *Journal*: "Le général n'avait d'autre object en vue, n'avait d'autre desir que le siège de New York -- the general (i.e., Washington) had no other object in view, no other desire but the siege of new York."<sup>76</sup> That was not what Rochambeau wanted, but in the spirit of Franco-American cooperation which he, more than anyone else, represented, he promised his full cooperation once the decision to prepare for an attack on New York had been made.

Washington in turn informed his friends in and out of Congress that New York had been selected as the target. Convinced that there were no more than 8,500 regulars and about 3,000 militias in the city after large deployments to the southward, he informed the chevalier de la Luzerne, French minister to the United States, on May 23, 1781, "of the intended march of the French army towards the North River. ... I should be wanting in respect and confidence were I not to add, that our object is New York. The Season, the difficulty and experience of Land transportation, and the continual waste of men in every attempt to reinforce the Southern states, are almost insuperable objections to marching another from the Army on the North River."<sup>77</sup>

On the 27<sup>th</sup> he informed Congress that "Upon full consideration of Affairs in every point of view, an operation against New York has been deemed preferable to making further detachments to the southward."<sup>78</sup> Similarly he informed Lafayette, his commanding officer in Virginia on May 31, that "an attempt upon New York with its present Garrison (which by estimation is reduced to 4500 Troops and about 3000 irregulars) was deemed preferable to a Southern operation."<sup>79</sup> Surely he would have let Lafayette know if a move southward had been planned! Concurrently on May 28, 1781,

---

<sup>74</sup> Rochambeau had pointed out to Washington at the conference that a French 64-gun-ship had a draught of 27 feet as opposed to 22 feet for a comparable British vessel.

<sup>75</sup> Rochambeau, *Memoire*, p. 51.

<sup>76</sup> Laubardière, *Journal*, p. 50.

<sup>77</sup> Washington, *Writings*, vol. 22, p. 103. Sir Henry Clinton in New York was equally convinced of being the target of an attack. On May 29, 1781, Washington had written General John Sullivan a letter that contained a full discussion of the decisions taken at Wethersfield. This letter was intercepted and handed to Clinton in New York. Shortly after their return to Wethersfield (?) Chastellux, an inveterate schemer, wrote a letter to de la Luzerne "that finally, despite M. de Rochambeau's ill humor with the help of M. du Portail, he had succeeded in persuading General Rochambeau to besiege New York." The letter too was intercepted by Clinton's patrols. Clinton in turn sent the original to Rochambeau with a note "that he ought to be on guard against his associates." Closen, *Journal*, p. 110. Here also the whole background of this sordid affair. Rochambeau confronted Chastellux with the evidence, accepted Chastellux' apology and then burned the evidence. See also Randolph G. Adams, *The Burned Letter of Chastellux* Franco-American Pamphlet Series 7 (New York, 1935). The important point, however, is that between these two letters Clinton was convinced well into August 1781 when the Franco-American troops were already on their way to Virginia that he was the real target of attack.

<sup>78</sup> Washington, *Writings*, vol. 22, p. 120.

<sup>79</sup> Washington, *Writings*, vol. 22, p. 143. A few days after the departure of the French forces from Newport, Washington reminded Rochambeau on June 13 of their decision at Wethersfield to join forces on the North River for an attack on New York "as the only practicable object under present circumstances; but should we be able to secure a *naval superiority*, we may perhaps find others more practicable and equally advisable." Washington, *Writings*, vol. 22, p. 208.

Rochambeau sent the *Concorde* to de Grasse in Santo Domingo urging him to sail north with all the troops he could collect and to pick up, if possible, a loan of some 1.2 million livres from Spanish authorities in Cuba as his own funds would once again run out by September at the latest.<sup>80</sup>

The 2 1/2 weeks between Rochambeau's return to Newport on the departure of the first elements of troops for Providence on June 11 were filled with activity. Preparations for the long-awaited march to New York had been going on for months before the French forces broke camp. In April, Quartermaster-General de Beville had used a visit to Washington's headquarters in New Windsor to inspect the roads from Newport to New York. Upon his return his assistants had begun drawing maps and picking campsites. Jeremiah Wadsworth began collecting the vast amounts of supplies needed to feed thousands of men, as many as 1,500 horses and close to 1,000 oxen! By mid-May, the French had hired in Hartford "a number of Laborers employed in building Ovens and making the necessary preparations for the accommodation of said Army on their march."<sup>81</sup> Rochambeau's force was quite small by European standards: no more than 450 officers and 2,900 enlisted men of some 4,800 officers and men present on March 1, 1781, departed from Newport for New York in mid-June 1781.<sup>82</sup>

REGIMENT	PRESENT OFFICERS AND MEN OF ALL ARMS	DETACHED HOSPITALS		TOTAL Renegades		
		Newport	Providence			
Bourbonnais	852	30	32	-	914	-
Soissonnais	971	8	16	-	995	2
Saintonge	882	2	26	1	911	1
Royal Deux-Ponts	912	-	21	-	933	-
Artillerie	404	-	9	-	413	-
Mineurs	21	-	2	-	23	-
Voltigeurs de Lauzun in Newport	330	12	13	-	355	-
Hussars de Lauzun in Lebanon	212	15	6	-	233	-
	<b>4,584</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4,777</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>80</sup> Rochambeau needed a minimum of 375,000 livres each month to keep his army going. On the Spanish role in making funds available to France see James A. Lewis, "Las Damas de la Havana, el precursor, and Francisco de Saavedra: A Note on Spanish Participation in the Battle of Yorktown" *The Americas* Vol. 37, (July 1980), pp. 83-99. Lewis estimates inter-governmental loans such as the one in August 1781 at about 2 million peso, loans arranged by private lenders at 3, possibly 4, million peso for a minimum of 30 million livres (at 6 livres per peso). These funds were vital for the French, and American war efforts.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 69. The location of these ovens is unknown; see *ibid.*, pp. 69/70. Crofut thinks the ovens "may not have been used," but we know that Wadsworth "operated a shuttle of wagons that carried bread baked in Hartford ovens westward to the French Army at successive camps as far as Newtown." Chestler Destler, "Newtown and the American Revolution" *Connecticut History* Vol. 20, No. 6, (1979), pp. 6-26, p. 16. A note in Rice and Brown, eds., *American Campaigns*, Vol. 2, p. 12, states that the troops were to "draw four days' rations" of bread in Hartford. "Each division, furthermore, will be followed by a sufficient number of wagons to carry bread for four more days."

<sup>82</sup> The table is based on information provided in Keim, ed., *Rochambeau*, p. 366. On June 1, 1781, the French forces numbered 4,756 officers and men fit for action. *Ibid.*, p. 389. For a discussion of these numbers see my 1999 report, pp. 58/59.

But the actual caravan was much larger: despite bad experiences earlier, Rochambeau had again hired American wagoners "for two dollars (sic) per day," so Lauberdère, and 15 mostly female cooks for the 250 wagons of four oxen each in his train.<sup>83</sup> As officers completed their equipment, they hired servants and purchased horses beginning with two servants for sub-lieutenants and more for higher ranks. But even if the ratio of just two domestics per officer was observed in Rochambeau's little army, the practice would have added as many as 1,000 *domestiques*, the equivalent of a whole infantry regiment, to the 3,400 or so officers and men ready to march from Voluntown to Bolton, Hartford, Farmington and Ridgefield.<sup>84</sup> But these men did not comprise all of the French forces in Connecticut that summer. To the south of them two more columns made their way across the state to Ridgefield. They were the lancers, hussars, and light infantry of the *Volontaires étrangers de Lauzun*, better known as Lauzun's Legion.

## 6. The *Volontaires Étrangers de Lauzun*

### 6.1 A brief history of the *Volontaires*

Lauzun's legion derived its name from its *colonel-propritaire* and commanding officer Armand Louis de Gontaut, duc de Lauzun. Born in Paris on 13 April 1747, into a family that traced its origins into the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Lauzun personified the values, faults, and ideals of the French nobility at the end of the *ancien régime*. He became an ensign in the elite French Guards, commanded by his uncle the duc de Biron, three months before his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday; six months after he turned 20, he was breveted a colonel in the same unit. Not quite 19 when he was married to Amélie de Boufflers, the 14-year-old daughter of Charles Joseph duc de Boufflers, in February 1766, he lived separate from his wife and had no legitimate children.<sup>85</sup> In 1769, he fought in recently annexed Corsica without waiting for the marquis de Chauvelin, to whom he was assigned as an aide-de-camp, to arrive on the island. His reckless courage brought him the colonelcy of the *Légion Royale* in February 1774. But the general peace in Europe left him yearning for opportunities to add the honors of war earned in Corsica. That moment arrived when the shots at Lexington and Concord in April 1775 were heard in Versailles, signaling an excuse for France to take revenge for the humiliating peace of 1763.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> The names of the drivers and cooks are listed in Kenneth Scott, "Rochambeau's American Wagoners, 1780-1783" *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* Vol. 143, (July 1989), pp. 256-262. According to Chester M. Destler, *Connecticut: The Provisions State* (Chester, CT: 1973), p. 54, drivers and cooks were all from Connecticut.

<sup>84</sup> French officers were not permitted to pull their servants from the ranks. The actual number of servants was probably closer to 500 men.

<sup>85</sup> On the possibility that Lagarde was Lauzun's son with the Polish Princess Czartoryska see Jacques LeBerger Carrière, "Augarde, dit Lagarde, fut-il le fils du duc de Lauzun?" *Miroir de l'Histoire* No. 99, (1958), p. 345-350. The last two children of the marquise de Coigny may also have been Lauzun's.

<sup>86</sup> Besides the brief entry in Lauzun's *Memoirs* see John Austin Stevens, "The Duke de Lauzun in France and America" *American Historical Magazine* vol. 2, No. 5 (September 1907), pp. 343-373, and the dual biographical essay on Lauzun and Chastellux by Arnold Whitridge, "Two Aristocrats in Rochambeau's Army" *Virginia Quarterly Review* vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter 1964), pp. 114-128.

On February 6, 1778, King Louis XVI signed treaties of Amity and Friendship and of Military Alliance with the United States, thereby becoming the first foreign ruler to recognize the new nation. On March 13, Versailles officially informed the Court of St. James of the treaties. Both sides understood them as a declaration of war. France quickly realized that she was short of the marines, from 260 men and four officers for a 110-gun man of war to 15 soldiers for a corvette of 16 gun. Thousands of marines were needed to provide the infantry supplement for the navy. On September 1, 1778, Naval Minister the comte de Sartine ordered the creation of the *Volontaires étrangers de la Marine*: eight *légions* of about 70 officers and four companies of infantry, one of artillery, one of workmen plus two escadrons of hussars each. A *compagnie générale* of seven officers, thirteen non-commissioned officers, two trumpeters, a farrier, a *chirurgien-aide-major* and 88 hussars brought the strength of the *volontaires* to almost 600 officers and 4,500 men. Raised mostly from among German-speaking subjects of the French crown and from *étrangers*, i.e., foreigners, with often colorful service records, the *volontaires* were to double the number of French marines.<sup>87</sup>

Lauzun volunteered his services as soon as war was declared. On August 16, 1778, he received permission to raise two companies of lancers and two of hussars. On September 1, he became *colonel propriétaire des volontaires étrangers de la Marine*; his four companies were integrated into the new unit. Lauzun did not wait idly for his men to be recruited, equipped, and trained. In January 1779, he commanded the military force that conquered Senegal. Come April, Lauzun was back in France and spent the summer and fall of 1779 in Brittany with the Second *Légion* of his *volontaires* preparing for an attack on England. Commanded by Lauzun, the *légion's* 32 officers, 523 light infantry and 156 hussars (in June 1779) formed the vanguard of 200 officers and 3,300 men of the first wave of assault scheduled to cross the Channel under the command of Rochambeau.<sup>88</sup>

But the attack never came. In its place Louis XVI on 2 February 1780 approved plans for an *expédition particulière*, the ferrying of ground forces to America. In early February, Versailles placed the chevalier de Ternay, a *chef d'escadre* with 40 years of experience, in charge of naval forces. The land forces would be under the command of Rochambeau, a professional soldier with 37 years in the army, who was promoted to lieutenant general on March 1, 1780.

Both men had no time to lose to get ready for the *expédition*. Ternay was to find shipping for 6,000 men but could only find enough for some 5,300. Rochambeau lobbied in Versailles to have this force increased and succeeded in adding the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the Auxonne artillery, some 500 men, and a few dozen engineers. Since he wanted light infantry and cavalry as well, two regiments of infantry had to be cut from the roster. Lauzun, eager to participate in the American campaign, was, in his own words, "too much in fashion not to be employed in some brilliant manner." He later claimed that Rochambeau "asked for myself, and was refused; he insisted, and they agreed; but this was not decided until the day upon which he took leave of the King."<sup>89</sup> This may be true, but Lauzun too had lobbied hard: his promotion to brigadier and appointment to

---

<sup>87</sup> Gerard-Antoine Massoni, "Le Corps des <Volontaires-Etrangers de la Marine>" *Carnet de la Sabretache* No. 135, (1998), pp. 9-14.

<sup>88</sup> Background and origins of the Legion are presented in great detail in Massoni's thesis quoted in note 4.

<sup>89</sup> Lauzun, *Memoirs*, p. 190.

command the light troops on March 1, the same day Rochambeau received his orders from the King is hardly accidental.

Next Lauzun needed troops, but his *volontaires étrangers de la marine* were unavailable. The First Legion had been sent to the West Indies and participated in the capture of Grenada in July 1779. The Third Legion was by now stationed on the Île de France (Mauritius) in the Indian Ocean for deployment in India. But the Second Legion, conveniently quartered on the coast of Normandy, was available. On 5 March 1780, all recruitment for the remaining five legions of the *volontaires étrangers* was suspended. Surplus staff, the *compagnie générale*, its headquarters hussars, the Second Legion, and four infantry companies of the *Volontaires étrangers de Nassau*, attached to the Second *légion* since June 1, 1779, were all suppressed, i.e., dissolved.

Out of these men, the *ordonnance* of 5 March created a unit to be known as the *Volontaires étrangers de Lauzun*. Its infantry component consisted of five companies of infantry, i.e., two of fusiliers and one chasseurs of 6 officers, 18 non-commissioned officers, a frater, two tambours "ou autres Instrumens," and 144 men each, and a grenadier company of 6 officers and 102 NCOs and men. The cannonier company was to have 6 officers and 165 men for its four four-pounders, while the two escadrons of hussars were to be comprised of 6 officers and 168 men each. A staff of 5 officers, 14 NCOs, and a provost completed the unit, whose nominal strength stood at 1,196 officers and men.<sup>90</sup> Lauzun became its *colonel propriétaire* and *inspecteur*. Now that a regimental size unit of cavalry and light infantry within the department of the navy and with German as its language of command had been created for just him expressly for use across the ocean, Lauzun was set to go to America.

The ink was barely dry on the new appointments when Lauzun, his staff, and most of his men boarded the *Provence*, a 64-gun ship, on 5 April; the remainder embarked on the transport *Baron D'Arras*, and some 60 men made the crossing on the *Lyon*. Due to a lack of shipping space, only some 250 men of the hussars, and the grenadiers, chasseurs, and cannoniers, some 600 men in all, made the crossing; another 400 men had to be left behind. Also left behind were the hussar's horses. Each animal not only required the space of ten men; besides forage the 170 animals of just one escadron would have used some 55,000 gallons of water in the transatlantic journey! Almost left behind was *colonel-en-second* Robert Dillon, Lauzun's second in command. Dillon had disembarked on Sunday, April 16, to mail off some letters. Bleeding from two saber wounds received in a duel with a *gendarme*, he returned four days later. This was neither the first, nor the last, of this Franco-Irish hothead's duels, but Lauzun asked no questions about this *affaire d'honneur*, and neither did Rochambeau, who simply confined Dillon to his quarters.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> Uniform and equipment of these men is described in Vicomte Grouvel "Les Volontaires Etrangers de la Marine" *Le Passepoil* vol. 18, No. 1, (1938), pp. 5-8, Harry C. Larter, "The Lauzun Legion, French Navy, 1780-1783" *Military Collector and Historian* vol. 3, No. 1, (March 1951), pp. 40-42, Eugene Lelièbvre and René Chartrand, "Volontaires Etrangers de la Marine, 1778-1783. Volontaires Etrangers de Lauzun (Lauzun's Legion), 1780-1783" *ibid.* vol. 24, No. 4, (1974), pp. 226-228, Albert Rigondaud, "The Lauzun Legion in America 1780-1783" *Tradition* No. 68, (1992), pp. 2-7, and by Peter J. Blum, "Some Notes on the Lauzun Legion" *The Soldier Shop Quarterly* vol. 14, No. 4, (August 1970), pp. 1-3. The *légion* of course never reached its full strength.

<sup>91</sup> On Dillon see François William van Brock, "Le Lieutenant General Robert Dillon" *Revue historique des armées* (1985), pp. 14-29.

As Rochambeau boarded the *Duc de Bourgogne* on April 17, everything was ready. Next the fleet waited in the rain for the wind to change. The first attempt to clear the coast failed, but on 2 May, Ternay's convoy of 32 transports protected by seven ships of the line, two frigates, and two smaller warships finally left Brest with some 12,000 soldiers and sailors on board. On July 11, 1780, the convoy sailed into Narragansett Bay, where Lauzun's troopers were deployed around Brenton Point, southwest of Newport.<sup>92</sup> On July 16, American General William Heath informed Washington that "The French troops are landed and encamped in a fine situation South East of the Town and extend nearly across the Island. The Troops make a good appearance. The Legion under the command of the Duke de Lauzun, (the officer who took Senegal last year) is as fine a Corps as ever I saw; it is about 600 Strong."<sup>93</sup>

## 6.2 Winter Quarters in Lebanon

Following an uneventful fall, Lauzun's forces were to enter into winter quarters on November 1, 1780, just like the remainder of the French troops. But where? Rochambeau had planned to quarter Lauzun's legion at Providence. But since "the immoderate cupidity of the neighboring inhabitants" around Newport, Rochambeau wrote to Governor Trumbull on October 19, 1780, had "raised forage to an extravagant price in hard money, I have had a conference about it with Colonel Wadesforth whom you love, and he agreed that I would write to Your Excellency to ask that a winter quarter be assigned to the Cavalry of the Duke of Lauzun in Connecticut State."<sup>94</sup> The legislature, "being desirous to provide all proper accommodations for our Allies," responded with unwonted speed. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> it resolved "that the said Duke of Lawzun's cavalry may be quartered in the towns of Windham, Lebanon and Colchester, or any of them, and that Colo. Jeremiah Wadsworth, David Trumbull, Esqr, and Mr. Joshua Elderkin be impowered and directed ... to provide suitable quarters for the officers and barracks for the men for said legion in all or any of the towns aforesaid."<sup>95</sup> Rochambeau in turn charged his aide Dumas with "the establishment of the quarters of the legion."<sup>96</sup>

By November 4, Wadsworth could already inform his business partner John Carter that he "shall proceed to Lebanon on Monday Morning to make the arrangements for the Legion agreeable to the order of M. Tarlé."<sup>97</sup> On November 10, the Legion left Newport for Providence; two days later it took up camp in Windham, where it stayed for a week.<sup>98</sup> Next Lauzun and some 220 hussars, to their dismay, found themselves in Lebanon.

---

<sup>92</sup> For activities surrounding the landing of Rochambeau's troops see Samuel F. Scott, *From Yorktown to Valmy* (Niwt, 1998), pp. 17.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Washington, *Writings*, vol. 19, p. 211, footnote 66.

<sup>94</sup> Rochambeau's letter is quoted in Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 74.

<sup>95</sup> Charles J. Hoadley, ed., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut from May, 1780, to October, 1781, inclusive* (Hartford, 1922), p. 187.

<sup>96</sup> Dumas, *Memoirs*, p. 53.

<sup>97</sup> Connecticut Historical Society (CHS), Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Letterbooks Box 151.

<sup>98</sup> See the letters by Joshua Elderkin to David Trumbull of November 8, 1780, and of Dumas to David Trumbull, written at 8:00 p.m. on November 11, 1780, in Lebanon, in which Dumas informed Trumbull that he "found everything" in Windham. "I am obliged to go and receive the Duc and his cavalry in

Assuming that only the best would be good enough for the duke, David Trumbull offered Lauzun his home "Redwood," the only one with a carpet in it. (SITE 11). "Trumbull has resigned his house the genteelest in Lebanon to the Duke and has taken such effectual and decisive steps to Barrack and provide, as nobody else cou'd have done, it was absolutely necessary to have these horse their, or we could never have supported them."<sup>99</sup> Lauzun was not impressed. "I started for Lebanon on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November; we have not yet received any letters from France. Siberia alone can furnish any idea of Lebanon, which consists of a few huts scattered among vast forests," he wrote.<sup>100</sup>

Count Dillon, his second in command, was lodged in the home of William Williams, but only after Governor Trumbull had asked Williams, who was away on business, for his approval, since "Mrs Williams is concerned about taking Mons. Dillon ... into your house."<sup>101</sup> As it turned out, she had every reason to be concerned: among other things he did "all in his power to have" the Williams' servant Ward "for his servant to go along with him to the army."<sup>102</sup>

The legionnaires arrived none too soon, there was "no time to be lost for the barracks."<sup>103</sup> It rained during much of October, and the first snow fell on November 13. The men were cold and hungry in their barracks west of the Meeting House and on the southern end of the village street. (SITE 18)

The cold weather was bad news not just for the troops but for Wadsworth as well. "The present unseasonable Cold alarms the Farmers about Hay and they will not sell."<sup>104</sup> Prices went up; on November 20, Wadsworth informed Carter that "I am afraid we shall meet with trouble about the Legion, we have been trying to buy with Continental(s)," but the farmers either refused to sell for paper money or only sold bad quality hay.<sup>105</sup>

---

Windham." CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782. See also Ellen D. Learned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut* 2 vols., (Worcester, 1880), vol. 2, p. 199.

<sup>99</sup> Wadsworth to Carter, November 11, 1780. Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Letterbooks Box 151.

<sup>100</sup> Lauzun, *Memoirs*, p. 194. Lauzun took every opportunity to get out of Lebanon: on January 11, 1781, for example, he used the news of the mutiny of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey lines to return to Newport.

On winter quarters in Lebanon see Forbes and Cadman, "De Lauzun's cavalry at Lebanon, Connecticut" in: Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England* vol. 2, pp. 99-108, and Rowland Ricketts, Jr., *The French in Lebanon 1780-1781 Connecticut History* vol. 36, No. 1 (1971), pp. 23-31. On the town of Lebanon see Bruce P. Stark, *Lebanon, Connecticut: A Study of Society and Politics in the Eighteenth Century* unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Connecticut, 1970), George McLeane Milne, *Lebanon. Three centuries in a Connecticut hilltop town* (Lebanon, 1986), Christopher Weeks, "Revolutionary Village" *American Heritage* (April 1989), pp. 81-90, and the beautifully illustrated booklet by Alicia Wayland, *Around the Lebanon Green. An Architectural and Historical Review of Lebanon, Connecticut* (Lebanon, 1999).

<sup>101</sup> CHS, William Williams Papers, dated November 18, 1780.

<sup>102</sup> CHS, William Williams papers, dated June 10, 1781.

<sup>103</sup> Dumas to David Trumbull, November 11, 1780, CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782.

<sup>104</sup> Wadsworth to Carter, November 11, 1780. Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Letterbooks Box 151.

<sup>105</sup> Wadsworth to Carter, November 20, 1780. CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Letterbooks Box 151.

By that time the legion had been in Lebanon for all of two weeks, yet this was only the beginning. In January, Wadsworth informed Lauzun that some of his hussars "had permitted ... Cattle to be taken over to Windham and killed for the use of a private person."<sup>106</sup> It did not take long for the first complaints about property damage to emerge.

By March 13, William Williams had had enough. In an angry letter on behalf of his brother Dr. Thomas Williams he berated Lauzun how the people of Lebanon had been promised "that the French Troops were kept under the best government and discipline and that the Inhabitants of Newport had not lost a Pig nor a Fowl by them, which was a great Inducement to provide them Quarters here. ... but soon they began to pilfer and steal, which was, and is, in many instances borne." Lately, however, they had begun "to steal wood from Dr. Williams, ... thirty or more trees, ... much of his fence, four or five sheep, a number of Geese" and much more. Lately they had even threatened Williams' life for complaining to the duke. Williams demanded an immediate end be put to these practices, but it does not seem that he had much success: in his letter he even implied that some of these events took place with the tacit consent of the officers!<sup>107</sup> (SITE 12)

The same was true in Colchester, where, so Wadsworth to Carter on November 4, "their artillery horses can be kept."<sup>108</sup> On February 6, 1781, David Trumbull wrote to Wadsworth that "since the artillery horses have been in Colchester" there had been no end of trouble because of language difficulties.<sup>109</sup> From Canterbury, William Bingham sent David Trumbull a bill on April 27, 1781, and asked "Please to make Proper allowances for all miss understanding between those German Gentl. and me - for they understand nothing but what they have a mind to."<sup>110</sup>

But what was a poor hussar to do when, unlike the infantry in Newport, he had few opportunities to add to his income. Soldiers' salaries had been increased by 50% for the *expédition particulière*, so that a fusilier or *chasseur* now received 9 sous 6 deniers per day, 14 livres 5 sous per month, 171 livres a year. A sergeant-major of grenadiers or in the hussars, best-paid NCOs of the line, had 486 livres per year, a common grenadier 11 sous for a total of 16 1/2 livres per month or 198 livres per year; so did our hussar stationed in Lebanon. But he also had to pay stoppages from his pay. The *ordonnance* of March 20, 1780, set daily food costs at 2 sous for bread, 1 sous 6 deniers for beef. This meant a monthly food bill for every NCO and enlisted man of 3 livres for bread, 2 livres 2 sous for beef, and 1 sous 6 deniers for 1 pound of salt per month for a total of 5 livres 3 sous 6 deniers. Also increased were the deductions for the *masse de linge et chaussure*, the regimental fund to pay for a soldier's linen, i.e., his uniform, and his shoes. NCOs contributed 16 denier per day to this *masse*, corporals and enlisted men half as much. That meant additional monthly stoppages of 1 livre 12 sous per month for a sergeant and 16 sous for each hussar, fusilier, grenadier, or *chasseur*, leaving a fusilier or *chasseur* with 8 livres 5 sous 9 deniers, a grenadier or hussar with 10 livres 10 sous 9 deniers, a

---

<sup>106</sup> The letter from Hartford is dated January 22, 1781. Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> This may well have been the case: the *Details interessants* by Hugau contain numerous instances of misconduct even by officers of the Legion.

<sup>108</sup> CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Letterbooks Box 151.

<sup>109</sup> CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

sergeant with 23 livres 4 sous 9 deniers.<sup>111</sup> Fersen, on the other hand, estimated that it cost him 20 livres a month to keep his dog!

A loaf of bread, often heavily laced with corn-meal, much to the dislike of the men, sold for 1 livre 2 sous per pound in Newport, almost 3 daily wages for a fusilier, though it was probably cheaper in Lebanon where it was baked in ovens on the Town Green. (SITE 17) A pound of potatoes, a relatively new food for these men, sold for 4-6 sous a pound, again in Newport, and even if it cost only half that much in Lebanon, a pound of potatoes was still half a day's wage! On December 6, 1780, pork sold for 6 pence or 12 sous per pound, more than what a sergeant-major of hussar, the highest-paid NCO, received in a day.<sup>112</sup> A 100-pound pig would have cost around 1,200 sous or 60 livres, more than five months wages for our hussar. Add a gallon of rum or two which sold for 8 livres in April of 1782 in Coventry, a couple of pounds of potatoes, a few loafs of bread, some firewood and a few extra ingredients and two hussars could easily consume a month income in one meal. Or in a single weekend in one of Lebanon's taverns or inns. (SITE 15)

No wonder the men deserted: many of Lauzun's men seem to have liked America well enough to want to stay for good, even without leave. It is here that the multi-national character of the Legion, the sometimes checkered service record of its personnel, and its non-French ethnic composition asserted itself. A full third of the hussars were Alsatians, another 30% from German-speaking Lorraine. 24% came from the various German states, the remainder came from various European countries.<sup>113</sup> Germans, however, were more likely to desert in America than French: of 316 deserters of Rochambeau's corps who avoided recapture, 104 were Germans or German-speaking soldiers of the German Royal Deux-Ponts. Another 186 were German-speaking soldiers mostly from Lorraine or Alsace in Rochambeau's other units. Of those, some 132 belonged to Lauzun's Legion, which gave the unit a desertion rate of about 20%, four times the overall rate of 5%. As early as December 1780, a complete patrol of hussars, horses and all, took off into the forests of Connecticut from winter quarters, and before the campaign of 1781 began in June, more than two dozen had granted themselves discharges. The first two Frenchmen to die for desertion were the corporals Christoph Hand and Joseph Frank, executed by firing squad in Lebanon in April 1781.<sup>114</sup> (SITE 19)

The visits by dignitaries such as Rochambeau in December 1780, by Chastellux on January 5, 1781, or George Washington on March 4-5, 1781, did little to break the monotony of life in Lebanon. It was Lauzun and Chastellux who went squirrel hunting,<sup>115</sup> it was Lauzun and Rochambeau who huddled in the War Office (SITE 16) before dinner with the Governor (SITE 13); for the enlisted men, such visits meant drill, polishing

---

<sup>111</sup> All pay rates are taken from *the Ordonnance du Roi pour régler le traitement des Troupes destinées a une expédition particulière*. Du 20 Mars 1780 (Paris, 1780). A soldier in the British army received 8 pence a day or £ 1 pound/month, almost exactly 23 livres before stoppages reduced a common soldier's wages to about 19 livres or 2 1/2 times the pay of a fusilier in the Bourbonnais. A common soldier in a Brunswick regiment in British service received 16 shillings 1 penny 1 farthing or 14 shillings after stoppages.

<sup>112</sup> CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Letterbooks, Box 151. The price is presumably for a live pig.

<sup>113</sup> Massoni, *Détails intéressants*, p. 18.

<sup>114</sup> Scott, Yorktown, p. 35. The only other deserter from Lauzun's Legion to be recaptured was sentenced to 16 years on the galleys. In the summer of 1782, another 37 men deserted in Virginia; just before departure for France, another wave of desertions hit the Legion. One deserter announced he "would rather stay with his girl-friend ("maitresse") in a country that offered him land and liberty" than continue in the Legion.

<sup>115</sup> For a description of the squirrel hunt and dinner with Trumbull see Chastellux *Travels*, vol. 1, p. 229/30.

equipment and parades. And so the hussars languished in "Siberia" until early summer, when Washington and Rochambeau decided at a conference in Wethersfield in May on New York as the target for the campaign of 1781. Replacements from the Regiment Barrois, which had arrived in Newport in early June, brought the strength of the legion back up to just over 600 men. They were ready and anxious for the campaign to begin.

So were the people of Lebanon. On June 10, less than two weeks before their departure, Mary Williams, second daughter of Governor Trumbull, wrote her husband "O how glad and how thankfull I shall be when they are gone for never was I so sick of any people in my life. ... joy go long with them and wish never to see another French man in my life the best of them are nothing but pride and vanity."<sup>116</sup>

Mrs. Williams may not have expressed the general feeling of the town, and not all was tension.<sup>117</sup> But hundreds of soldiers in a town such as Lebanon had to have caused friction. It would be understandable if the inhabitants of Lebanon had breathed a collective sigh of relief when the last hussars rode out of town in mid-June 1781.

### 6.3 Order and Organization of the March through Connecticut, June 21 to July 3, 1781

Establishing an itinerary for the march of Lauzun's troops posed a number of problems in identifying exact dates and locations, not least because of frequent name changes of localities during the past two centuries. As Rice and Brown pointed out in 1972, schedule and route were tentative, and "no detailed maps of its marches have been found. ... The conflicting evidence concerning the exact route can perhaps be explained by the fact that the Legion ... did not necessarily march in a single column. In carrying out the Legion's general assignment detachments of hussars presumably ranged over wide areas and would thus have appeared in scattered localities not on the principal route."<sup>118</sup> Research conducted for this report has shown this to have been the case.

The issue is compounded by the fact that, as mentioned earlier, no eyewitness account for the march has been found to date. Nevertheless, the Legion, marching never more than twelve or fifteen miles from the main army to its north, was undoubtedly in constant contact with headquarters. Rochambeau's *livre d'ordres*, his correspondence, and some of the existing journals kept by aides-de-camp with access to Rochambeau and cognizant of the planning for the march allow at least a partial, second-hand, reconstruction of where the legion was, or at least was supposed to be, at any given date.<sup>119</sup>

The journals are less helpful in this task as most mention the legion only cursorily. Baron Closen, for example, wrote simply: "Lauzun's legion was detached from our army

---

<sup>116</sup> CHS William Williams Papers.

<sup>117</sup> Unfortunately tensions, breaking of laws, negative incidents, find their way much more easily into writing where they live on than positive experiences. See e.g., the anecdote of John Trumbull travelling in Germany in 1794 and the hearty welcome by a former officer in the legion, now a tavern keeper, who had spent the winter of 1780/81 in Lebanon. Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 2, p. 108.

<sup>118</sup> Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 2, p. 17, note 12.

<sup>119</sup> The (incomplete) *Livre d'ordre contenant ceux donnes depuis le débarquement des troupes a Neuport en Amerique Tentrionale*, call number E 235 in the Archives Générales du Département de Meurthe-et-Moselle contains the daily orders for Rochambeau's army which allows the reconstruction of daily army life.

to cover our left flank and to act separately, according to circumstances, in concert with the American army."<sup>120</sup> Louis Alexandre Berthier is more helpful. "The Lauzun Legion, which had spent the winter at Lebanon, had been ordered to prepare to leave on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the day on which the First Division would arrive at Windham.<sup>121</sup> This corps was to march in a separate column 9 miles to the left of the army in order to cover its left flank on the march -- following the Sound by way of the Salmon River, Middletown, Wallingford, Oxford, New Stratford, and Ridgefield, where it was to await further orders."<sup>122</sup>

The most detailed itinerary was kept by the comte de Lauberdière, but, as research in the course of this study has shown, even his day-by-day account of Lauzun's march from his vantage point at Rochambeau's headquarters is not always reliable, especially in the latter part of the route from New Haven to Ridgefield. According to his *Journal de Guerre*, the Legion left Lebanon on June 21 and camped at East Hampton. The next day, June 22, it marched on to Middletown, where it camped until the morning of June 25, when it broke camp and proceeded to Wallingford. The following night, June 26, Lauberdière has Lauzun encamped in Oxford, and in the evening of June 27 in New Stratford, where it remained until the morning of July 1. The night of July 1/2 was spent in Ridgefield; the following day Lauzun's men arrived in Bedford around noon.<sup>123</sup>

On June 18, Carter informed Wadsworth from Waterman's Tavern, Rhode Island, based possibly on a French itinerary he had seen, of Lauzun's route. "I forgot to acquaint you that the Legion after leaving Lebanon take a different Rout from the rest of the Army: they consist of 300 Infantry + 300 Horse and it will be necessary to send some person Immediately to Provide forage wood and meat for them they leave Lebanon on the 21<sup>st</sup> + encamp at Salmon Bridge, 22<sup>nd</sup> at Middletown where they remain until the 1<sup>st</sup> Division of the Army leaves Farmington and then they encamp at Wallingford -- then at Oxford, New Stratford where they stay one day -- Ridgefield, Pinesbridge."<sup>124</sup>

The general marching order finally for Lauzun's legion specified that "Lauzun's entire Corps of Foreign Volunteers will leave Lebanon" the day the 1<sup>st</sup> Division of the French infantry, i.e., the regiment Bourbonnais, left its camp at Windham. That day was June 21, 1781, the day Lauberdière recorded Lauzun's departure in his journal.<sup>125</sup> But here already the next question arises. An entry in Governor Trumbull's diary has Lauzun depart two days later: "June 23, 1781. Duke de Lauzun marched early. Went to Pine swamp, near Col. Champion's." This entry can only mean that either Lauzun ignored Rochambeau's

---

<sup>120</sup> Closen, *Journal*, p. 87.

<sup>121</sup> This contradicts de Béville's itinerary and other sources quoted below.

<sup>122</sup> Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 1, p. 247.

<sup>123</sup> Even Lauberdière was apparently not aware of Lauzun's sojourn to New Haven on June 26, which is why his calendar is off by one day: Lauzun did not arrive in New Stratford until June 28.

<sup>124</sup> CHS, Wadsworth Papers Box 153, Letter Book D, p. 33. Carter wrote a similar letter to Wadsworth on the same day. CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence, July 1781 to February 1782. According to Lauberdière, Lauzun broke camp at Middletown in the morning of June 25, the First Division of Rochambeau's army, however, did not leave Farmington until the morning of June 26. On the other hand, the itinerary would have had the Legion leave Middletown on the day the First Division left East Hartford rather than Farmington, which was on June 25.

<sup>125</sup> The itinerary quoted here and subsequently is taken from Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 2, pp. 16 and 17. It is based on a document prepared in preparation of the march for French Quarter-Master General de Béville. It is the only itinerary Rice and Brown could locate.

orders for his legion and set out two days late, or that the legion did indeed depart on time and only their commanding officer tarried a little longer in "Siberia."<sup>126</sup> Trumbull was the one who knew, his is the only eyewitness account of the event, which makes this cryptic entry even more perplexing. For the next few days we are dependent upon secondary sources for the whereabouts of the legion. The next time we hear from an eyewitness about the Legion is on June 26, five days later, when the 600 men camped in New Haven -- where they were not supposed to be at all!<sup>127</sup>

Unlike with Rochambeau's main army, we have no source at all for the order and procedure of the march. When did they get up? What was the order of the march? Who marched first? Who was last? Where was the artillery? Where was the baggage? What we know about these issues is all second, if not third-hand information. The official itinerary is of little help: "If the heavy baggage could not follow this route, or if the Duc de Lauzun wished to avoid being encumbered by it, it could be added to the baggage train of one of the divisions of the right column; however, Lauzun's infantry and hussars must follow this route to protect the march of the army from any threat from Tories or [enemy] troops making a sortie from New York." It is unknown where Lauzun's baggage was placed, though the claim in Charles Burr Todd's *History of Redding* of a supply train of "810 wagons" can hardly be believed.<sup>128</sup>

Similar piece-meal evidence emerges concerning the artillery. Lauzun's Legion did have an artillery company of six officers and 165 NCOs and enlisted men and (probably 4) four-pound light artillery pieces that accompanied the troops. Derby historian Albert F. Sherwood does not mention Lauzun's Legion; he does however note the discovery of "the remains of the military road made for the transportation of the French artillery" by railroad engineers without mentioning who these French might have been.<sup>129</sup>

From Lebanon, so de Béville's itinerary, the legion was to "proceed to camp along the Middletown road 7 miles beyond Colchester on the west bank of Salmon Brook opposite the landslide caused by flood waters. This brook can easily be forded. The bed is good but stony. Major Sheldon<sup>130</sup> will be assigned to lead this column."<sup>131</sup> The march was to be 15 miles, a leisurely pace for cavalry and light infantry in a screening pattern.

But here another discrepancy arises. Only a few miles outside Lebanon, Lauzun's men apparently deviated from the prescribed course. Historical evidence suggests that as the 600 troops reached the inter-section of today's Routes 207 and 16 in the Exeter section of Lebanon, the Legion separated into two detachments.<sup>132</sup> One took the right-hand, north-

---

<sup>126</sup> Based on this itinerary, Rochambeau's order book, and Lauberdrière's journal, I am inclined to argue that Lauzun's troops left on the 21<sup>st</sup> and their colonel followed two days later.

<sup>127</sup> The evidence was gather by Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 2, pp. 151/53.

<sup>128</sup> As quoted in Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 152.

<sup>129</sup> Albert F. Sherwood, *Memories of Old Derby* (Derby, 1924), p. 12.

<sup>130</sup> The Major Sheldon mentioned here is Dominique Sheldon (1760-1802), an Englishman attached to Lauzun's Legion as *mestre de camp* on April 5, 1780, not Colonel Elisha Sheldon, who was a commander of Dragoons in the Continental Army.

<sup>131</sup> Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 2, p. 16. John Carter, Wadsworth's partner in supplying the French, had asked David Trumbull to provide "for the needs of the French encampment at Salmon Bridge."

<sup>132</sup> Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 151. Town histories quoted below confirm this split into two groups. It is unknown which group Lauzun was in.

westerly road (Route 207) to Hebron,<sup>133</sup> while the other continued on the left-hand, southerly road (Route 16) to Colchester, past John Taintor's Tavern on Buckley Hill Road<sup>134</sup> (SITE 20) and the home of Colonel Henry Champion at the intersection of Routes 16 and 149.<sup>135</sup> (SITE 21) Though it contradicts Governor Trumbull's diary, historical evidence suggests that the legionnaires camped most likely on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> in the vicinity of (or in?) the modern-day Salmon River State Forest near Old Comstock Covered Bridge rather than near Pine Swamp as stated by the Governor.<sup>136</sup> Tradition has it that two of Taintor's sons, John, (born 1760), and Charles, (born 1762), joined Lauzun's men and accompanied them all the way to Yorktown.<sup>137</sup> The northern group encamped just north of Amston on Amston Lake (on the west side of Route 207 just before it becomes Route 85) where the men would have found water for cooking and for their horses.<sup>138</sup>

The second day's march on June 22, was to go "From the camp on the west bank of the Salmon Brook ... to camp [at Middletown] on the west bank of the Connecticut River, taking care to ferry its infantry across first. If the entire corps should not be able to make the crossing in one day, the rest could cross the next day."<sup>139</sup> Such a route would have meant that while the northern detachment had to march from its camp at Amston Lake through Marlborough and East Hampton toward Middletown, the southern group would have turned southwest away from the coast toward East Hampton to meet up with the northern detachment in Middletown. Only the northern group, however, seems to have marched for Middletown where, if Lauberdière is correct, it remained for three days from June 22 through Sunday, June 24, 1781, and on the 24<sup>th</sup> "had a dance on Capt. Philip Mortimer's beautiful grounds that bordered on the River."<sup>140</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> See *Hebron's Historic Heritage. A selection of historic sites compiled by the Hebron Tricentennial Commission* (Hebron, 1992), as well as John Sibun, *Our Town's Heritage 1708-1958. Hebron, Connecticut* (Hebron, 1975), p. 43.

<sup>134</sup> Barbara W. Brown, *Flintlocks and Barrels of Beef. Colchester, Connecticut, and the American Revolution* (Colchester, 1976), pp. 49/50. Brown says that Lauzun's men camped in Colchester on June 23, confirming (or based on?) Governor Trumbull's date.

<sup>135</sup> On Champion's important role in supplying livestock to the French army see Chester Destler, "Colonel Henry Champion, Revolutionary Commissary" *Connecticut History* vol. 36, No. 2 (1971), pp. 52-64.

<sup>136</sup> The covered bridge, built in 1791, replaced an older bridge that had burnt down. There does not have to have been one there in 1781 since the itinerary talks about the need to ford the river. It is, however, located in the town of East Hampton, which confirms Lauberdière's diary entry.

A marker to commemorate this camp placed by the DoT at the intersection of River and Hill Roads 1/2 mile west of Route 149 in North Westchester could not be located.

Forbes and Cadman *France and New England* vol. 1, p. 151, locate the camp "on Sand Hill, at the foot of Taintor Hill, near Cabin Brook, about half a mile west of Colchester Village." There is indeed a swamp between Cabin Road and Buckley Hill Road, i.e., at the foot of Taintor Hill toward Colchester, but it is not Pine Swamp. From there it is close to four miles to Champion's home. Salmon Creek is almost 2 miles west of Col. Champion. This confirms de Béville's itinerary, which places the camp "7 miles beyond Colchester."

<sup>137</sup> On Taintor see James Oliver Robertson and Janet C. Robertson, *All our Yesterdays. A Century of Family Life in an American Small Town* (New York, 1993), pp. 11-31

<sup>138</sup> Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 151.

<sup>139</sup> Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 2, p. 16. The French could have either used the Middletown Ferry, established in 1726, or the Upper House Ferry north of Middletown, established in 1759.

<sup>140</sup> Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 151. Albert E. van Dusen, *Middletown and the American Revolution* (Middletown, 1950), does not mention the French in Middletown at all!

A marker erected by the DoT and the Middlesex County Historical Society in the medium of Route 9 in the vicinity of Washington Street could not be located.

The instructions for the third day of the march read: "As the First Division of the right column (i.e., Rochambeau's main army) is not scheduled to leave East Hartford for its camp at Farmington until the seventh day of its march," which would have been June 25, a date confirmed in Lauberdière's journal, "Lauzun's Foreign Volunteers will not leave their camp at Middletown until this day, marching through Wallingford, Oxford, North Stratford, Ridgefield, Bedford, and Pines Bridge, to cover the left flank of the army. This road has not yet been reconnoitered. All that is known is that it is passable."<sup>141</sup>

If these instructions were indeed followed, the Legion left Middletown on June 25, after three days of rest, since that was the day Rochambeau's troops left East Hartford for Farmington. The northern detachment covered but a few miles and set up camp in Wallingford along East Center Street, Scard and Northford roads.<sup>142</sup> On July 6, 1781, Captain George Starr informed Wadsworth that he had "been to Wallingford to Col. McClean find his bill for supplies for the Legion is about 45 -- besides the hay which was old hay purchased before. Also for five teams that were leading from there to N. Stratford which they expected would be two Shillings hard money per mile."<sup>143</sup> The following day, June 26, this group marched south along the Quinnipiac River through North Haven to New Haven, where it united with the southern detachment.

In order to remain closer to the coastline, the southern detachment took the road to East Haddam<sup>144</sup> (Route 149) where it crossed the Connecticut River and continued toward the coast along the route through Chester to Pettipaug, where it entered the Boston Turnpike. At this stage of research it is unknown where these men camped on the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, or, for that matter, the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>145</sup> The next time we encounter them is on Monday, June 26, when Ezra Stiles reported the presence of the complete legion, all 600 men, in New Haven, where no journal or diary on the French side places them at all! **(SITE 22)** "This Afternoon arrived and encamped here the Duke de Lazun with his Legion consist<sup>g</sup> of 300 Horse & 300 foot Light Infantry. They pitched their Tents in the new Town half a mile East of the College. I paid my Respects to the Duke and was received very politely at the House of the late Gen. Wooster. He does not expect much from the Congress at Vienna, nor does he expect peace this year or next. He is marching to joyn G. Washington on N<sup>o</sup> River."<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup> The segment "leave their camp ...until this day" which seems to assume that the Legion would have to wait in Middletown seems to support the argument that the Legion left Lebanon on the 21st.

<sup>142</sup> A marker erected by the DoT and the Wallingford Historical Society had already disappeared in 1971 when Clarence E. Hall wrote her *Tales of Old Wallingford* (Chester, Connecticut, 1971), p. 60. Almost 30 years later it still has not been replaced. Charles Henry Stanley Davis in his *History of Wallingford, Conn.*, (Meriden, 1870), which includes Cheshire and Meriden, does not mention Lauzun's Legion.

<sup>143</sup> CHS, Jeremiah Wadsworth Papers, Correspondence July 1781 to February 1782.

<sup>144</sup> This route is supported by Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 75. I do not agree with Forbes and Cadman that the southern department marched from Haddam to Wallingford. All roads on eighteenth-century maps from Haddam run either north to Middletown or south to the coast; there is no east-west road to Wallingford.

<sup>145</sup> See e.g., *Kate Silliman's Chester Scrapbook* (Chester Historical Society, 1986), *The Houses and History of Chester* (Chester Historical Society, 1976), or the volumes of the Killingly Historical Journal.

<sup>146</sup> *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* Franklin B. Dexter, ed., vol. 2 (of 3), (New York, 1901) p. 544. General David Wooster's house in Wooster Street is no longer standing. On June 28, 1781, the *New Haven Connecticut Journal* reported "Yesterday passed thro' this town on their way to join the American Army, the Duke de Lacuzon with his Legion, consisting of about 600." None of the town histories of New Haven from Edward E. Atwater, *History of the City of New Haven* (New York, 1887) to Harold Hornstein, ed., *New Haven Celebrates the Bicentennial* (New Haven, 1976) mention this visit by Lauzun.

There is, however, a letter by comte de Rochambeau to Washington of June 23, 1781, in which he informed his American counterpart that Lauzun was marching "ahead of my first division via Middletown, Wallingford, North Haven, Ripton (today's Huntington) and North Stratford (became Trumbull in 1797), where he will be on the 28<sup>th</sup>."<sup>147</sup> The French, as well as some modern writers, constantly confused "North" and "New" or simply wrote "N" as in "N. Stratford", that Rochambeau could very well have meant New Haven rather than North Haven a few miles up the Quinnipiac River.

The following day, June 27, Stiles informs us that "The French Troops marched at six o'clock this morn<sup>g</sup> in their way thro' Darby." (**SITE 23**) It is here that the so far reliable Lauberdière begins to waiver. On the evening of the 26<sup>th</sup>, when Stiles reports the Legion in New Haven, he has it encamped at Derby/Oxford on their way to New Stratford/Monroe, where they arrive already on the 27<sup>th</sup> in Lauberdière's account. That night they were still in Derby: the earliest possible date they could have arrived in New Stratford would have been in the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup>.

The exact site of the camp in Derby/Oxford is unknown, but there is a local tradition that the troops spent the night on Sentinel Hill and that Lauzun and some of his officers stayed with a Mr. Beard in his home "Brownie Castle."<sup>148</sup> Depending on who marched where from Derby on the 28<sup>th</sup>, Lauzun's men crossed the Naugatuck and/or Housatonic Rivers and marched either southwest to North Stratford, i.e., Trumbull, as Rochambeau thought they would and as de Béville's itinerary indicates. Or they marched northwest to New Stratford/Monroe, as John Carter and Alexandre Berthier thought they would and where Lauberdière located them from the evening of June 27 for the next three days until June 30. That day, Lieutenant-Colonel David Cobb, Washington's aide, also wrote his commander-in-chief from Newtown: "the duke's legion .. is now at New Stratford."<sup>149</sup>

There is of course the possibility that the Legion divided once again, possibly even into a number of smaller parties. One detachment may have marched from Derby to Ripton/Huntington on to North Stratford/Trumbull and North Fairfield to Ridgefield. To the north, the other detachment would have crossed the Housatonic about 2 1/2 miles north of its confluence with the Naugatuck and then continued due west to New Stratford and Redding<sup>150</sup> to Ridgefield. Local lore has troops along both routes: until recently there was a sign on Mountain Hill in Trumbull in Abraham Nichols Park, home of the Trumbull Historical Society, commemorating the camp of a party of some 15 troops of

---

<sup>147</sup> Quoted in French in Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 76. These changes in the names of towns caused much confusion, e.g., Crofut writes that the Legion's fifth camp was "south of New or North Stratford (Monroe)."

<sup>148</sup> Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 534, and Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 152. Once again town histories from Samuel Orcutt, *The History of Derby, Connecticut, 1642-1880* (Springfield, 1880) to Sherwood's, *Memories of Old Derby* do not mention Lauzun's Legion, nor do Norman Litchfield and Sabina Conolly Hoyt, *History of the Town of Oxford, Connecticut* (Oxford, 1930).

<sup>149</sup> Quoted in Crofut, *Guide*, vol. 1, p. 77. Lewis G. Knapp, *In Pursuit of Paradise. History of the Town of Stratford, Connecticut* 2 vols., (Stratford, 1989), vol. 1, p. 96, writes that Lauzun's troops "crossed through Ripton and camped in North Stratford (Trumbull) and on the green at New Stratford (Monroe) on June 30, 1781." Older histories such as William Howard Wilcoxson, *History of Stratford, Connecticut, 1639-1939* (Stratford, 1939), do not mention Lauzun at all.

<sup>150</sup> Charles Burr Todd, *A History of Redding, Conn.* (Newburgh, 1906), p. 45, writes that the French "passed through Redding on the march, and encamped over night, it is said, on the old parade ground."

Lauzun's Legion. In 1781, they would have been able to see the Sound from that hill. As the army neared the New York State line, such scouting parties became increasingly frequent and important as the French entered "Connecticut's Tory Towns."<sup>151</sup> The sign has since disappeared.<sup>152</sup>

The larger part of Lauzun's Legion does seem to have marched northwest to New Stratford/Monroe to a camp just south of the city center. **(SITE 24)** Monroe welcomed the French as best it could. A dance was held in the evening in the 11x24 foot second-floor ballroom of the Daniel Bassett homestead on June 30.<sup>153</sup> **(SITE 25)** Later that night, Lauzun and his officers went to sleep in the tavern kept by Nehemiah de Forest on the west side of the Green. When a son was born to de Forest, Dillon gave the boy his sword for a memento; in gratitude the proud father named his boy "de Lauzun."<sup>154</sup>

The ball in Monroe on June 30 would be the last entertainment that summer: the campaign had opened. Rochambeau ordered his troops reorganized into brigades with the Bourbonnais and Royal Deux-Ponts forming the first brigade, the Soissonais and Saintonge forming the second brigade. That same June 30, Washington asked comte Rochambeau "to put your first Brigade under march tomorrow Morning, the remaining Troops to follow as quick as possible, and endeavor to reach Bedford by the evening of the 2d. of July."<sup>155</sup> Concurrently (on June 30) while enjoying his last dance in New Stratford, Lauzun received orders from Washington via Cobb to march as quickly as possible via Ridgefield to Bedford, where Washington expected him in the evening of July 2, for a surprise attack near Morrisania.<sup>156</sup> Early in the morning of July 1, Lauzun broke camp in New Stratford and headed for Ridgefield.

Concurrently early in the morning of July 1, 1781, Rochambeau's 56<sup>th</sup> birthday, the first brigade of the French army set out for Ridgebury via Danbury, a community of maybe 80 houses. There the main body of his troops camped close to the Congregational Church along the road to Danbury. Its advance guard was placed about one mile south at the intersection of Old Stagecoach Road and Ridgebury Road.<sup>157</sup> The officers stayed at

---

<sup>151</sup> Stephen P. McGrath, "Connecticut's Tory Towns. The Loyalty Struggle in Newtown, Redding, and Ridgefield 1774-1783." *Connecticut History* vol. 44, No. 3 (1979), pp. 88-96. French artillery lieutenant the comte de Clermont-Crèvecoeur wrote from Newton "This is the capital of the Tory country, and as you may well imagine, we took great precautions to protect ourselves from their acts of cruelty. They usually strike by night, when they go out in bands, attack a post, then retire to the woods where they bury their arms. ... These people are very difficult to identify, since an honest man and a scoundrel can look alike."

<sup>152</sup> Personal communication to the author from Mr. Robert Berthelson of Trumbull.

<sup>153</sup> Edward Nichols Coffey, *A Glimpse of Old Monroe* (Monroe, 1974), p. 16. Under the wallpaper in the Bassett homestead, home to Mr. Edward Coffey, are "paintings" put there by French officers on the occasion of the ball. I have not seen these paintings and am grateful to Mr. Berthelson for this information.

<sup>154</sup> Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 153. The same story is told, however, about the son of John Norris in Ridgefield. Forbes and Cadman, *France and New England*, vol. 1, p. 147.

The Green was formally established in April 1784 when Nehemiah de Forest and Joseph Moss gave part of their home lots to the parish of New Stratford. See Coffey, *Old Monroe*, p. 14.

<sup>155</sup> Quoted in Rice and Brown, eds., *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, p. 31, note 31.

<sup>156</sup> The correspondence can be found in Washington, *Writings*, vol. 22, pp. 291-331. This enterprise does no longer belong into this report but rather should be covered in a report on Rochambeau in New York.

<sup>157</sup> See Silvio A. Bedini, *Ridgefield in Review* (Ridgefield, 1958), pp. 133-139, and George L. Rockwell, *The History of Ridgefield, Connecticut* (Ridgefield, 1927) p. 135. His claim that the legion "numbered at various times from two hundred twenty to eight hundred hussars and lancers" is obviously wrong. (p. 133)

Samuel Keeler's tavern on Main Street.<sup>158</sup> Lauzun and his men, who arrived in Ridgefield after Rochambeau and his troops had set up their camp, encamped in the Scotland district of Ridgefield "along the ridge east of the North Salem Road" some 9 miles south of the main army in Ridgebury.<sup>159</sup>

In the evening of the 1<sup>st</sup>, Rochambeau received Washington's letter of June 30; the following day, July 2, he redirected his troops to North Castle (i.e., Mount Kisco, New York) via Bedford.<sup>160</sup> The order to form brigades reached the 4<sup>th</sup> division around 10:00 p.m. on July 1, 1781, as it was resting in camp in Newtown. "Without stopping here to rest, my (the 4<sup>th</sup>) division joined that of the comte de Vioménil (the 3<sup>rd</sup>) to form a brigade commanded by the latter and led by M. Collot. Our dances ceased and our camps became more military," wrote Berthier. The next day, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, "the Second Brigade left Newtown and marched 15 miles to Ridgebury, where it arrived at eleven o'clock. It was preceded on its march to the camp by an advance detachment of grenadiers and chasseurs. I was ordered to lead them and to choose a good position for them a mile ahead of the brigade on the road to New York, where they camped after stationing sentries at all points leading in from enemy territory."<sup>161</sup>

On July 2, Lauzun and his men joined Rochambeau and his first brigade on the march toward Bedford across the New York State line. The second brigade marched on Ridgebury. In Bedford, Lauzun's troops rested briefly near the intersection of Seminary and Court Roads before setting out on a night march to meet up with American General Benjamin Lincoln. Lauzun arrived late for the surprise attack on the British posts, which failed when the enemy became aware of Lincoln's movements. After a brief encounter with Delancey's Loyalists, Lauzun withdrew and re-joined Rochambeau's main army.

At midnight July 2/3, the second brigade received orders to proceed to North Castle, 22 miles away. Three hours later it broke camp and set out for North Castle, where it joined the first brigade, just arrived from Bedford, around 1:00 p.m. on July 3. Three days later Rochambeau's army joined the Continental Army at White Plains. On July 8, two days after his arrival at White Plains, Rochambeau wrote to the marquis de Ségur, minister of war: "We have covered 220 miles in eleven days of marching. There are not four provinces in France where we could have traveled with more order and economy and without lacking anything. ... there was not a single regimental officer, more than half of whom marched on foot, who wasn't fed by the general or superior officers, with rough food, without their being obliged to procure their own mess."<sup>162</sup> Lauzun expressed similar

---

<sup>158</sup> "The building is no longer in existence, having been destroyed or removed at some time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century." Bedini, *Ridgefield*, p. 202. Local lore has identified a house as the Samuel Keeler tavern but there is no documentary evidence for that nor that any of Rochambeau's officers staid at Nehemiah or Timothy Keeler's tavern, which is today operated as the Keeler Tavern Museum. Nehemiah was a brother of Samuel. Almost 75 years ago, local historian George Rockwell wrote that "There are no signs of the French Camps in Ridgebury at the present time. The land has been plowed and cultivated for over a century and all traces have disappeared." Rockwell, *Ridgefield*, p. 136.

<sup>159</sup> Bedini, *Ridgefield*, p. 136. A marker erected by the DoT and the Everett Ray Seymour Post American Legion # 78 on the east side of Routes 33 and 35, 0.2 miles south of the west junction of Route 102, has since disappeared.

<sup>160</sup> For a short overview of the events of July 1-3, see Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 1, p. 30.

<sup>161</sup> Berthier's journal as published in Rice and Brown, *American Campaigns*, vol. 1, p. 248.

<sup>162</sup> Quoted in Rice and Brown, eds., *American Campaigns*, Vol. 1, p. 33, n. 34.

sentiments: "The French army marched through America in perfect order and with perfect discipline, setting an example which neither the English nor the American army had ever furnished."<sup>163</sup> Even if we admit for a dose of self-serving praise, there can be no doubt that the march to White Plains had been a major logistical achievement.

## 7. Conclusion

New York was too much even for the combined Franco-American army. News of the departure of Admiral de Grasse's fleet for the Chesapeake caused a change in plans. On August 18, the armies began their march for Virginia. By August 30, the legionnaires rested at Somerset Court House, New Jersey, by September 8, they had reached Head of Elk in Maryland. Here Lauzun and his infantry, some 270 men, embarked on boats for the journey to the Chesapeake. The hussars under Colonel vicomte René Marie de D'Arrot, some 250 men strong, forded the Susquehanna at Bald Friar's Ferry, Maryland, and rode south via Baltimore and Georgetown, Maryland, to Fredericksburg, Virginia, and Williamsburg. There they received orders to re-enforce some 1,200 militia under Brigadier George Weedon encamped at Gloucester Court House on the other side of the York River. They arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup> and were joined by two companies of hussars from the First Legion of the *volontaires étrangers de la marine* which had sailed with the troops under the marquis de St. Simon from the Caribbean on the fleet of de Grasse.<sup>164</sup>

Barely a month later, on October 21, 1781, the combined Franco-America army forced Lord Cornwallis' surrender. Just as Cornwallis was about to be defeated, the two fusilier companies of the legion that had been left behind in 1780, some 332 men, embarked for the New World. They formed part of an expeditionary force under the comte de Kersaint. In February 1782, this force captured the fortifications at Demerary, Essequibo in French Guyana, and Berbice. In March 1784, these two companies were suppressed as well. Of the 332 men who had left France in October 1781, 177 had died, 24 had deserted. The remainder was incorporated into the regiments Martinique and Guadeloupe.<sup>165</sup>

Lauzun, whose legion had fought bravely at Gloucester Point, was selected to bring the news of the victory to Versailles, leaving Count Dillon in command.<sup>166</sup> Washington and his army did not tarry at Yorktown and returned north, but the French spent the winter of 1781/82 in and around Williamsburg. Ten months after their arrival, on July 1, 1782, Rochambeau's forces broke camp and headed back to New England.

Dillon marched his men to Delaware in the summer of 1782, where Lauzun, back from France, once again assumed command. On Christmas Eve 1782, the bulk of the French army sailed out of Boston Harbor for the Caribbean. Since no cavalry was needed in the Caribbean, the Legion wintered in Wilmington, Delaware. A final review on

---

<sup>163</sup> Lauzun, *Memoirs*, p. 200.

<sup>164</sup> Massoni, *Détails intéressants*, p. 16. When St. Simon returned to Santo Domingo a number of these hussars were incorporated into Lauzun's legion.

<sup>165</sup> Massoni in *Sabretache*, p. 12.

<sup>166</sup> On the legion's role in the siege of Yorktown see my "The duc de Lauzun and his *Légion*, Rochambeau's most troublesome, colorful soldiers" *Colonial Williamsburg. The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* vol. 21, No. 6 (December/ January 2000), pp. 56-63.