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Letter to the Connecticut Legislature Committee for Planning and Development  
March 9, 2011 Hans DePold, Bolton Town Historian, W3R-CT Chairman

When America declared independence Great Britain was the world superpower. King George III faced five colonial rebellions against his empire during his lifetime, but only the War of American Independence was successful. That was because the French sent an army and a navy to assist America at a time that General Washington considered our darkest hour. Washington pretended he had 16000 regular troops but when General Rochambeau arrived, Washington was down to a little more than 3000 ragtag regular soldiers, and he could muster about 7000 militia when needed. He was up against three British Admirals and their fleets, 21000 British Regulars under General Howe in NYC, and a roaming British army of upwards of 6000 regular troops under General Cornwallis in the South. We seldom even mention the two British Generals that could and did venture down to attack us from Canada.

In 1994 we created an Inter Community Historic Resources Committee (ICHRC) to identify historic resources in Connecticut towns so they could be protected. We discovered that the State DOT had the wrong location for the Revolutionary War Franco-American campsite in Bolton. We contacted the French Embassy and the French Consulate and provided them with copies of current maps and French maps of the site, drawn up in 1781, to show that the site was near the center of Bolton and would be destroyed by a proposed Rt. 6 Expressway. Both the French Ambassador and the Consul wrote to then Governor Rowland and asked him not to allow that heritage to be destroyed. And so that Revolutionary War Franco-American Campsite was saved.

At the time there was no national trail honoring General Washington. General Washington traveled and dined and was invited to stay just about everywhere... so how could we define a single trail to honor the most honorable of our Founding Fathers? The answer became clear; we could let his good friend and French ally, General Rochambeau, define it with him. So we in Connecticut began introducing legislation in 1996 to define the route and the campsites that the American Continental Army, the American militias, and the French army used throughout CT. At the time I was the ICHRC Chairman and Bolton Town Historian. In 1998 Representative Pamela Sawyer introduced the Connecticut bill again and it passed. Some of the same people here today spoke at that Legislature's public hearing.

We immediately started a newsletter for the route. All our newsletters were saved by the SAR on a website. At that time the Newsletter title was The Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Road (W3R). It was here in Connecticut that the idea and the name for the route to honor both Generals originated.  
<https://www.connecticutsar.org/about/rev-road/newsletters.htm>

The newsletter generated excitement in the nine states and DC that are on the route. So in December of 1999 citizens met at Washington's Headquarters in New York and created the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (still W3R) ad-hoc committee of members from most of the nine states and DC that lie on the route. Most of the members were subscribers to our Connecticut newsletter.

In early 2000 we invited our Congressman John Larson to a meeting in Bolton where we provided materials describing and proposing the W3R NHT. As a student of history, Congressman John Larson championed the legislation for a National Parks Service (NPS) study of the proposed National Historic Route. In 2009 the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail (W3R NHT) became the first National Historic Trail to honor General George Washington and his good friend and indispensable ally General Rochambeau. They traveled the route in CT, RI, and MA separately but they traveled the route from NY to Yorktown VA together. The route ends at Yorktown where together they defeated the Southern British Army under General Cornwallis and won American independence.

This National Historic Trail is a valuable tourism attraction for Connecticut. According to the NPS, they are prepared to match state, town and private investment in the W3R NHT. Of course they cannot do that unless there is requested state, town, or private investment to be matched, and the NPS has budgeted for it. It is a new era for Connecticut; one where the Connecticut congressional delegation will need to help the Connecticut legislature by making sure the NPS matches the Connecticut state, town and private investment in the historic sites along the route. The legislation before you, Bill 352, is intended to let the NPS and the Connecticut congressional delegation know that it has been three years since the W3R NHT was created and we are ready and waiting for the NPS to start investing in Connecticut heritage and to start matching Connecticut state, town, and private investment in the W3R NHT.