BATTLE OF MONMOUTH DAYS JUNE-JULY 2019

June 9 (Satuday)

Friends of Monmouth battlefield will lead a driving tour of American army camp sites in Monroe Township on which the army stayed on June 27, 1778, the day before the battle of Monmouth Courthouse. The tour will leave the Visitor Center at Monmouth Battlefield State Park in Manalapan Township at 1:30 PM and generally follow the route taken by commanding general George Washington and the Continental army in their move from Cranbury to the battlefield.

The route will include stops at the main army campground on the Hoffman Station Road between Gravel Hill Road and Manalapan Brook. The house in which Washington stayed the night of June 27-28 (still standing) is across the road from this campsite.

The tour will then move to the campground site of the advance corps led by Major Generals Charles Lee and Lafayette, including Story farm, the new Middlesex County park acquisitions on federal Road, near Tracy Station Road on the east side of Monroe Township close to the Manalapan Township line.

Eagle Scout Dominic Lepri mapped the road trail generally used by Washington and his main army as they moved through Monroe Township.

June 13 (Thursday)

Friends of Monmouth Battlefield president David Martin lectures on Major General Charles Lee, second-in-command of the American army, 7 PM at Monmouth County Library headquarters, 125 Symmes Road, Manalapan Township. Martin holds a doctorate in history from Princeton University and teaches Latin at Peddie School in Hightstown.

Lee, a thirty-year-old veteran of the British and American armies, and considered an accomplished (if somewhat erratic) soldier., had sought the command of a large advance force initially led by the much younger and less experienced Marquis de Lafayette. He and Lafayette commanded the opening of the thirteen hour battle of Monmouth at 6 AM on June 28th.

Lee’s initial retreat from the front after assault by a superior British force brought him battlefield reprimands from General Washington and subsequently a court martial conviction for making a disorderly retreat. The conviction, in turn, brought him suspension from American military service.

Historians differ on the verdict, some holding that Lee was unfairly treated. Dr. Martin will offer his own assessment.

June 22-23 (Sat-Sun)

Battle of Monmouth reenactments at Monmouth Battlefield State Park in Manalapan, on the fourth weekend in June close to the 241st anniversary of the actual battle. Three hundred troops will engage, 200 American and 100 British, with musket, rifle and cannon black powder explosions.

Park gates and troop encampments open at 9 AM on both days. Friends of Monmouth Battlefield will seek contributions of $10 per vehicle, to offset management and reenactor costs.

Battle reenactments begin at 2:30 PM on Saturday and 1:30 PM on Sunday. Park historian Michael Timpanaro will narrate the event through the Park sound system.

Skirmish reenactments, artillery drills, cavalry demonstrations and childrens’ musket and cannon drills will preceded the battles.

Veteran trouper Stacy Roth will present her “Over Here Molly Pitcher” program in the Visitor Center auditorium, also on both days. The programs are based on a long held belief that a woman brought water to the troops and cannon operations during the torchingly hot day of the battle. A Molly Pitcher character will also appear in the battle reenactments.

Based on historical analysis, the Molly Pitcher character in this story should actually be called Mary Bucket. Revolutionary War memorist Joseph Plum Martin (in his book “Private Yankee Doodle”) wrote of a woman working with artillery men on Perrine Hill during the afternoon of the battle, carrying water form a spring or well to provide drink for the soldiers and cool down the that Mary Hays McCauley is the likely suspect, and cannons after firing. A study of pension records supports belief that a woman named Mary Hays (later Mary Hays McCauley), wife of cannoneer William Hays, was the woman whom Plumb martin had seen.

The Friends of Monmouth Battlefield gift shop, as well as shops in the outside sutler tent village are open on both days, offering Revolutionary War wares of various forms. Gift shop wares include wooden muskets for childrens’ drills, toy soldiers, Battle of Monmouth shirts and caps, and books on the battle, including the recently published “Fatal Sunday,” by retired Park historian Garry Wheeler Stone, and retired Kean University history professor Mark Lender. Other books at the Friends’ gift shop include David Martin’s “A Molly Pitcher Source Book,” analyzing the Molly Pitcher story to conclude that Mary Hays McCauley is the likely suspect, and also “Private Yankee Doodle” by Joseph Plumb Martin.

June 28 (Friday)

New Jersey Park Service reenactors Jesse Campana and W. Peter Michel serve as foot soldiers on the Park grounds on the actual battle anniversary date.

June 29-30 (Sat-Sun)

Friends of Monmouth Battlefield present special programming at Monmouth battlefield State Park, on the weekend closest to the battle anniversary (June 28, 1778).

Stacy Roth offers afternoon Molly Pitcher programs on both days. She will also provide an outdoor fife music program in front of the Visitor Center on both days, accompanied by a drummer.

Craig House, the colonial farmhouse at the eastern end of the park will be open 1-4 PM for tours on both days. The Visitor Center is open 9 AM to 4 PM as it is throughout the year, except on certain holidays.

(Craig House is open 1-4 PM for guided tours by Friends’ docents, April through November. The Friends’ gift shop at the Visitor Center is open 1-4 PM on Sundays and sometime son Saturdays throughout the year.)

July 4 (Thursday)

George Washington’s feu de joie (“fire of joy”) salute to the American Army for its performance at the battle of Monmouth Courthouse is re-enacted at Buccleuch City Park in New Brunswick at 3 PM near the recently reopened Buccleuch House colonial mansion at the Raritan River end of the park.

Washington brought the army to New Brunswick in early July 1778, following the June 28 battle of Monmouth, for a short rest and relaxation period. On July 4, 1778, he ordered the troops to form along the two-mile river-front there for a feu de joie celebration. The maneuver entails army troops in a long line firing their muskets in succession, as well as cannon fire from an artillery park.

Washington is presumed to have meant the celebration as a military Declaration of Independence, two years after the American Continental Congress voted to approve an emended text of Thomas Jefferson’s written Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. Washington’s declaration asserts that the American army, with the recently obtained French alliance and its performance at Monmouth Court House, was now on its way to winning American independence on the battlefield.

Washington observed at this event that cannon fire in New Brunswick should be loud enough to be heard by the British twenty miles down river and down bay) at Sandy Hook. Some British troops there did report later that they had heard cannon fire at that time.