

## **Notes from file on Camp Security at York County Historical Center**

### **America's 11 Most Endangered**

- Housed over 1500 British prisoners
- Camp was opened from summer of 1781 to spring of 1783
- It was the last camp to be established houses convention prisoners of captured at Battle of Saratoga, New York 1777
- The camp had stockade prison, village area, and crude log huts
- Children and wives accompanied prisoners
- The camp held mostly men prisoners of both armies
- The camp was run by York County Militia
- The farmhouse on the property was used as headquarters
- The continental congress had no money to feed or clothe prisoners
- A parole system allowed prisoners to work for local residents
- The camp also housed american citizens
- The convention prisoners married colonist during 7 years of captivity
- A fever killed many prisoners and families that were then buried in a graveyard near the camp
- The graveyard was never located
- Many former prisoners were given land in Canada in exchange for their service
- Several diaries from former prisoners and york area pastons were found that detailed the living conditions and impact of the community written in 1834, 1886, and 1907 (these were never found but were mentioned in the book)
- Local citizens became aware and concerned for its preservation
- Camp security was the last known established camp for the Revolutionary War
- February 2001 : 2.5 acres were preserved
- The final plan was to build 100 homes around camp security to help preserve about 5 acres of the camp
- April 2001 : developer was offered \$1 million and \$700,000 in tax credits for property by local residents but the developer refused the offer
- February 2002 : executed sales and purchases the property for \$525,500
- Sales prices for land to preservation group would be \$4.5 million
- FOCS has about 200 members that come from all over the country
- Listing the camp as America's 11 Most Endangered will help generate political support for site preservation

### **Surveys: Locations of Camp Security**

- Southeastern most area of the land had high magnetic readings
- A small area of land along Locus Grove Rd marked as urban land that wasn't surveyed because it was a roadside ditch
- 250 years : land was/is being used for agriculture so not 100% of things/items were ever found

- Magnetometry = used to search for metallic items
- When they were searching they were considered because the machine can pick up the smallest amounts of metal
- The field was only searched 3 field days
- 8 different unknown spots the metal magnetometry picked up other than the iron pipe

A map was shown (no pictures were allowed to be taken)

- Block A: not anything out of ordinary
- Block K: North West corner contains multiple metallic items. Had heavy spikes of metallic objects
- Block L & B: Had the most discovery from the prison war camp
- Blocks C, D, and P: Had no evidence in any metallic spike readings
- Blocks J, M, and O: Had some metallic spikes / features

### **Site History**

- Initial camp built/opened in July 1781.
- Was used to house nearly 5,000 British/German troops (Convention Army)
- John Stewart (guard in 1781) said "They kept single men in a stockade and the married men who stayed there for awhile, had to remain outside of stockade. Sickness overtook the prisoners and the married had to build huts."
- The camp security complex had 2 residential camps, huts for guards, activity areas, and a cemetery. It was enclosed by a closely guarded stockade
- The detention facility built in July 1781 only lasted 22 months. Prisoners released and returned to England in May of 1783.
- Many investigations were held to help me find more land of Camp Security artifacts
- 17 artifacts were found such as coins, brass buckles, and wrought nails, bricks, and glass.
- If no artifact clusters or patterns were found at the land they were investigating they came to the conclusion that the remnants of Camp Security are most likely not present
- Places like Rowe Farm and Schultz house/farm were spots that were investigated

### **Prisoners Of War**

- Some prisoners escaped
- York "jail" was used as the holding until prisoners could be moved to other camps
- British prisoners at Lancaster (spring 1776) refused to be moved to York because of smallpox
- At night prisoners would scale the fence and escape
- The prison camp had a reputation for prisoner escapes so bad that Congress had to have troops to stand guard

- Prisoners that were moving often stopped and ended up living in barracks in York
- A Lancaster escape had gotten some prisoners transferred to Camp Security
- York and Lancaster had very close relationships because they shared prisoners
- Officers and prisoners had to sign a letter/contract saying they knew their jobs and responsibilities
- Some people that were there were Germans, even though most were British
- Germans were mostly held in Lancaster and Frederick, making it likely they passed through York
- Burgoyne's troops were the largest captured taken to Camp Security
- Camp Security was York Counties involvement in the solution of the Prisoners-of-war predicament
- Camp Security was established to house Prisoners from Virginia
- The camp had more people than the York jail and was guarded better too
- York was the main stopping point where Prisoners traveled because the land was rich in resources
- August 1781 Camp Security was finally established and guarantees from the British that were captured had gotten to sent to Main on parole
- Prisoner guards were expected to watch 600-900 people, their wives, and their children
- By the time the supplies arrived, lack of food, supplies, and clothes created sickness and spread of disease. It killed Prisoners and not the guards
- 150 men guarded the camp in 1781 till the end of war. Men served 2-3 months, working every other day

## **Fundraising**

In 2005 Camp Security was listed as one of the most endangered historic sites in the United States. It is the highest ranking priority for preservation by the National Parks Service. Springettsbury Township agreed to fund \$750,000 to purchase one tract if Camp Security could match \$750,000 or more.

- Springettsbury Township is home to Camp Security, a Revolutionary War prisoner-of-war camp
- Housedevelopments are being built and could possibly destroy the remains of Camp Security (45 acres)
- Residents formed a group called Camp Security who are working with other buildings/groups (historic York, PA Historical Commission) to buy the property and transfer it to the public or non-profit ownership
- The site has been untouched for 200+ years
- The only known intact prisoner-of-war camp