

Someday, I intend to visit a site where George Washington led troops, British soldiers were held captive, and supplies, ammunition, and food of all kinds were stored for the Continental Army and its French Allies fighting in the field. Along with children and other visitors to the site, I will get down in a pit and assist real archaeologists with digging, sifting, locating, and preserving artifacts like musket balls, nails, shoe buckles, and bayonets. Perhaps I'll visit the re-created barracks where soldiers from as far south as North Carolina and as far north as New Hampshire ate, drank, and slept in service to their country; or, I'll mount a horse at the re-built stables and follow a trail southward, onto the Hudson Highlands. In the museum, I'll learn how the British Army mounted two naval attacks and an overland raid on the military base. Before I depart, I'll stand beside the Revolutionary War's largest cemetery and reflect on the hardships and sacrifice that gave birth to our nation.

Where is this place, you may ask? Fishkill, NY. But this vision can only become a reality if commercial development is prevented and community involvement succeeds. The Fishkill Supply Depot, as it was known during the American Revolution, has been described as the "military supply hub of the American Revolution." According to Hunter Research, the Trenton, NJ-based firm that studied the site for the National Park Service, Fishkill "supplied New York's militia and the Continental Army with livestock and food, cared for wounded soldiers, housed British and Tory prisoners, and crafted an amazing variety of materiel from tents to boats – all essential to the American quest for independence."

While much of the area of the original military base has already been lost to development, the core of the site remains intact and located on a 10.4 acre property in Fishkill that is proposed for commercial development. The .25 acre plot that would be preserved with the development plan accounts for only 2.4% of the property and was arbitrarily defined as a soldiers' cemetery by the developer. Found within the remaining 97.6% are ruins, building foundations, artifacts, and other unique features that will be lost forever and that exist only here. Can you imagine visiting Morristown and finding a parking lot where the soldiers' huts once stood? Or traveling to Valley Forge only to learn that a gasoline station now stands on the site where the fallen men of New York's 1st Regiment were buried?

A preserved Fishkill Supply Depot site has the potential to bring positive national attention to our town as well as a steady stream of tourism dollars. If you share this vision and prefer that our history and heritage be celebrated, I urge you to do one or more of the following: 1) Contact the Town of Fishkill Planning Board (at 807 Route 52, Fishkill, NY 12524) and voice your opposition to *Continental Commons*; 2) Volunteer with our group on projects furthering education and outreach; and, 3) Donate to our not-for-profit Preservation Fund that was established for the acquisition of historic property.

Sincerely,

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