

The Denison's Go Marching On...

The warm, sunny sky was no rival for the affectionate turnout Stonington Borough received on the weekend of August 9-10. The grounds of the Lighthouse Museum were full of activities with fellow re-enactors who had come to mark the day. I arrived on Sunday morning, clad in my replica 1814 attire. As a distant relative of the Denison's, it was an honor to be invited to represent them.

The occasion was the Bicentenary of the Battle of Stonington, which occurred during the War of 1812, a time rarely presented in history classes. Though many visitors I spoke with were a little unsure of what exactly was being commemorated, once they were informed they thought it a grand idea, indeed.

This interaction allowed me to share the story of the Battle of Stonington's only casualty, Frederick Denison. During the battle, a British shell struck a rock – a shard of which penetrated Frederick's knee. After months of undoubted agony, he died on November 1, 1814, aged only 19. He lies in Mystic's Elm Grove Cemetery.

Later in the afternoon, I was joined by three intrepid Denison descendants: Anne Collier, Roger Ryley (complete with antique cannonball on a silver platter) and Civil War Re-enactor and Russ Burkett. Photographs from the 1914 parade show the Denison's marching the very same route we were about to walk. We took up our places on Alpha Avenue, and the excitement reached its full height! When the parade began, we joined hands and exclaimed, "For Frederick!" Then, the Denison's stepped out in style.

All who marched were greeted by enthusiastic crowds. At certain locations, the cheering was so loud it made conversation impossible! Along the route, a little girl in a pink sundress waved at me and asked (with perfect manners) if she could have my American flag (which I had been given at the start of the parade) because she had not received one. Her mother's eyes misted as I placed the tiny flag into her daughter's hand. The girl smiled and waved Old Glory high. Perhaps, in that moment, a future historian was born? Will she be the next Anna Coit and live to see this parade a century from now?

The parade concluded at Wanawaduck Square. There, the crowd gathered to hear speeches from various dignitaries, including Governor Malloy. Geoff Kauffman sang songs of the 1812 era and led us in our National Anthem.

I would like to think that those who fought on that very spot two hundred years took an interest in the events and perhaps felt touched that they have not been forgotten. It was an opportunity to teach and have fun doing it. Therein lies the importance of such events as the one held in Stonington on that hot August Sunday.

Let us never forget.

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