

THE HAITIAN CONNECTION

As we all know, the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti caused enormous devastation, both to the country and to its people. During my visit to the country last week, I observed the resilience and tenacity of its people to continue with life in the midst of hopelessness. The collapse of buildings, homes and businesses has set the country further behind in its effort to move ahead economically. Of its 8.7 million people, 1.3 million are now homeless, depending on relief to return to a "normal" lifestyle. This consists of the bare necessities of food, shelter and the purification of water. Countries around the world have come to their rescue pledging \$5.3 billion over two years. America is leading the relief effort, and now returning support for a people that came to our rescue during the Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War.

In 1778, the British easily captured Savannah, Georgia, from the Americans. Their occupation set up the second bloodiest battle of the Revolution. Major General Benjamin Lincoln realized that the loss of Savannah was a key and he set out to regain the coastal Georgian port.

On September 8, 1779, Admiral D'Estaing, commander of the French fleet, brought his 32 ships and 4,000 men into the harbor to align with Lincoln's forces to encircle the British. Battles continued for the next thirty days as both forces sought to strengthen their positions. The on October 9th, thousands of French and Americans attacked the British and were cut down. It was the bloodiest hour in the Revolutionary War. American hero Sgt. Jasper was killed trying to save the unit's flag. Haitian troops from the French Reserve came forward to cover the retreat of the shattered attackers. In an hour, one thousand casualties resulted. On October 16th, Lincoln began an orderly withdrawal to Charleston while the City of Savannah remained under British control until 1782.

The City of Savannah has honored the Haitian contribution to the War with a monument that reads "...following the battle with the British in 1779...Haitian soldiers were part of the allied forces...and many were diverted to other military duties, returning to their homes years later... several veterans of the campaign became leaders of the movement that made Haiti throw off the yoke of European capitalism..."

As we celebrate Memorial Day, we remember the sacrifices our men and women have made to preserve our freedom. From patriots who gave their lives during the Revolutionary War to those serving today around the world, words can never fully express our sincere appreciation for America and its dedicated citizens. This is also a time to remember our international patriots that have participated in campaigns to foster our freedoms, such as our Haitian comrades.

May God bless America. As compatriots of the George Washington Chapter, we can go out and support our Color Guard as they march in the Claysville Memorial Day parade.