

# The American Revolution in the Hudson River Valley

Hudson River Valley  
National Heritage Area, New York  
hudsonrivervalley.com

The Hudson River Valley played a pivotal role in determining the outcome of the Revolutionary War. Here, Americans stymied British attempts in 1776-1783 to control the riverway and sever New England from the rest of the colonies. Here, Patriots boycotted British teas and other goods, accepted the Declaration of Independence, created the State of New York, and kept a sharp eye—or a heavy hand—on their Loyalist neighbors. Here along the Hudson, Americans stood fast and, after the turning point battles at Saratoga, set the stage for their ultimate victory at Yorktown and the British evacuation of North America south of Canada.

Hudson River and Constitution Island, looking east from West Point



Portrait of General Washington at Yorktown by Charles Wilson Peale, 1782. This painting was purchased by General Rochambeau, the commander of the French forces, after the victory at Yorktown and was owned by his descendants until 2002.

Collection of Hirschl & Adler Galleries, New York City.

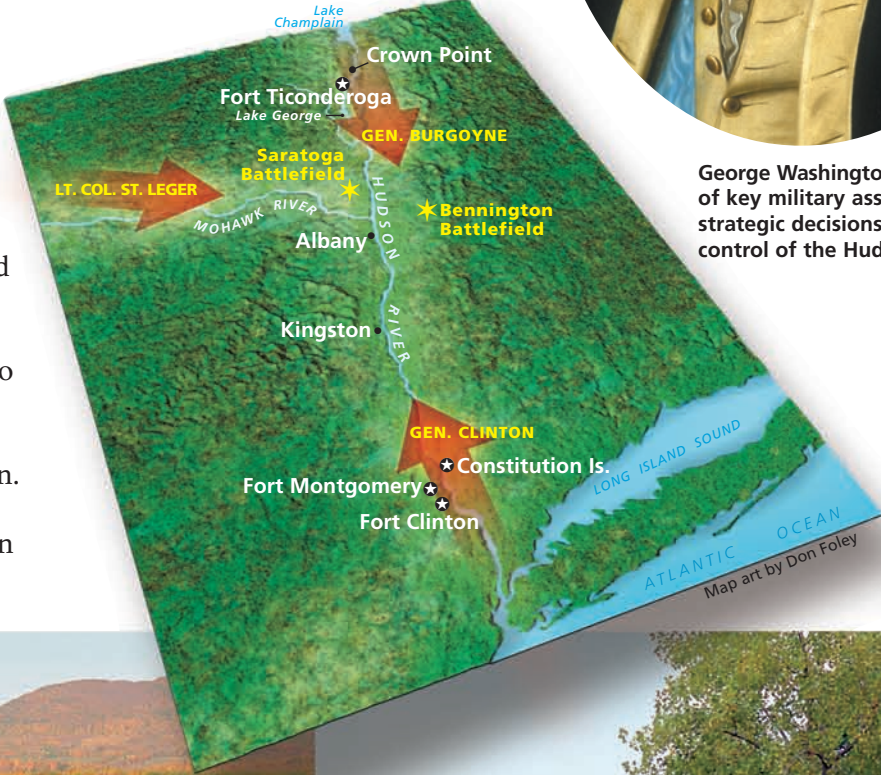
Photographs by Ted Spiegel, unless otherwise noted

## The British Invasion

From the beginning of the war, both the British high command and General George Washington realized the strategic importance of controlling the Hudson River Valley.

In December 1775 and January 1776 Colonel Henry Knox first highlighted the great resources of New York when he dragged 59 cannons from Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga to Dorchester Heights overlooking Boston Harbor. That effort helped force the British evacuation of Boston. After driving the Continental Army out of New York City into the Hudson

The British invaded the valley from three directions.



George Washington made a series of key military assignments and strategic decisions to maintain control of the Hudson River.



His troops exhausted and outnumbered, John Burgoyne finally surrendered at Saratoga.

Portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds © The Frick Collection, New York

River Valley, the British tangled with the Americans in October 1776 at Pell's Point and White Plains. Then, in 1777, the British devised a three-pronged invasion of the valley. The main force, under Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne, would head south from Canada via Lakes Champlain and George. Lt. Col. Barry St. Leger would push east along the Mohawk Valley to Albany. Sir William Howe would head north from New York City to assist Burgoyne's operation.

The Americans effectively delayed the three British advances. Engineer Colonel Tadeusz Kosciuszko brought Burgoyne's forces to a crawl by dropping trees across his route south of



British ships make their way up the Hudson in this painting by William Joy.

© Collection of The New-York Historical Society



George Clinton served as the first governor of New York and was reelected five times.

Portrait by John Trumbull, Courtesy of the Art Commission of the City of New York.

Lake Champlain. With the help of the Green Mountain Boys, General John Stark whipped Lt. Col. Frederick Baum's raiders in the battle of Bennington on the Walloomsac River in New York. Still, Burgoyne pressed on toward Albany but was stopped at the battle of Freeman's Farm on September 19. After the battle he fortified and awaited reinforcements. They never arrived.



A ten-stop auto tour interprets the battles between the Americans and British at Saratoga.



Reenactments are staged periodically at Rondout Creek and Kingston (above) and other sites along the Hudson.



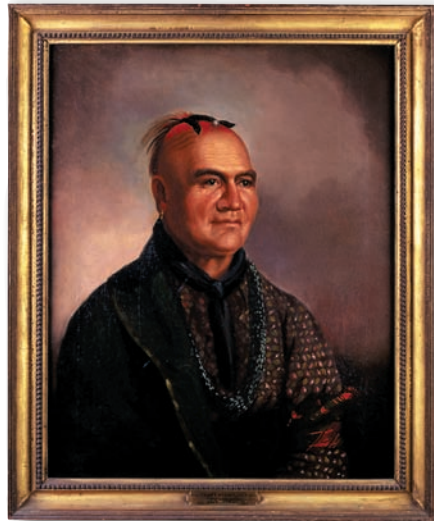
Like many other Loyalists, the Philipse family of Tarrytown lost their lands and Philipsburg Manor.



At his mansion in Albany, Maj. Gen. Philip J. Schuyler entertained the captured British general, "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne.

## Turning Point in the War

After winning at the battle of Oriskany on August 6, the British under St. Leger lost valuable time besieging Fort Stanwix and retreated to Canada. The supporting British contingent from New York City, commanded by Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Clinton, got a late start but succeeded in capturing Forts Montgomery and Clinton in a fierce day of fighting on October 6 near West Point. They cut through a massive iron chain the Americans had installed across the Hudson, moved upriver to the capital at Kingston, and set fire to the town. But they were too late to help Burgoyne. On October 7, American Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates—who had



Chief Joseph Brant and the Mohawk Indians joined Loyalists in several raids and battles against the patriots.

Portrait by Ezra Ames, 1806. Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y. Photo by Richard Walker

Comte de Rochambeau and 5,500 French troops passed through the state on their way to help the Americans at Yorktown.

Portrait of General Rochambeau, artist unknown. Musée de Vendôme, France.

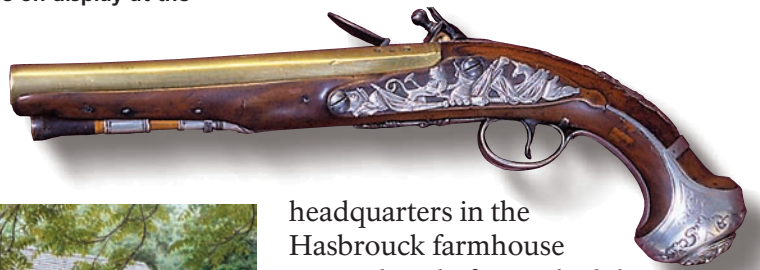


taken over Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler's command—defeated Burgoyne in the second battle of Saratoga near Bemis Heights. The British capitulation convinced the French to join the American cause and proved to be the turning point in the war.

In 1779 the British tried to lure General Washington into a decisive battle in

New York, but Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne, in a daring midnight bayonet attack on July 15 and 16, captured their fortification at Stony Point. The British returned briefly but never again threatened the Hudson Highlands. In August 1781, Washington's and the French Comte de Rochambeau's armies linked up at Philipsburgh, New York, before proceeding to Virginia for the decisive battle of Yorktown. After their victory there, Washington returned to the Hudson River Valley, and General Rochambeau marched his army to Boston for service in the Caribbean. Washington brought over 7,000 soldiers, some with their families, to New Windsor for their final winter encampment and set up his

Washington's pistols are on display at the West Point Museum.



Washington's troops built nearly 600 wooden huts at their encampment in New Windsor.

Clinton Adams

headquarters in the Hasbrouck farmhouse in Newburgh, from which he issued his order on April 19, 1783, for a "cessation of hostilities." The troops stayed until June. Washington oversaw the British evacuation of New York City on November 25, 1783. The entire Hudson River was now in U.S. hands, and New York was on its way to becoming the Empire State in the new nation.



Continental soldiers attack British fieldworks during the 225th anniversary reenactment of the battles of Saratoga. HRV Institute/Marist College



Washington's fortifications at Redoubt 7 on Constitution Island helped him hold the Hudson Highlands.



Revolutionary War equipment is displayed at Knox's Headquarters, Vails Gate. New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



Period furnishings and exhibits interpret life at the Jonathan Hasbrouck House, Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh.

