The American Revolution in the Hudson River Valley

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 tea 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, 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.

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. From December 1775 to January 1776, Colonel Henry Knox first highlighted the great resources of New York when he dragged 93 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 Valley, the British tangled with the Americans in October 1777 at Pell’s Point and White Plains. Then, in 1778, 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.

Turning Point in the War

After winning the battle of Oriskany on August 6, 1777, the British under St. Leger lost valuable time bogging 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 Fort Montgomery and Clinton in a flanking move. They cut through a massive iron chain among the Americans that had installed across the Hudson, moved upstream 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 taken over from Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler’s command—defeated Burgoyne in the second battle of Saratoga near Bemus Heights. The British capitulation convinced the French to join the American cause and proved to be the turning point in the war.

The Americans effectively delayed the three British advances. Engineer Colonels Tadeusz Kosciusko brought Burgoyne’s forces to a crawl by dropping trees across his route south of the River Valley, the British tangled with the Americans in October 1777 at Pell’s Point and White Plains. Then, in 1778, 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 Battle of Saratoga

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The Battle of Saratoga

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 5000 soldiers, some with their families, to New Windsor for their final winter encampment and set up his headquarters in the Hasbrouck farmhouse in Newburgh, from which he issued his order on April 19, 1783, for “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.
Major Hudson River Valley sites associated with the American Revolution are shown on this map of the National Heritage Area. Brief descriptions of the sites are listed to the right from north to south. For more information about these American Revolutionary sites, itineraries to visit them, other heritage sites, and facilities in the valley, see this web site: www.hudsonrivervalley.com

The heritage sites shown on this map are operated by federal, state, local, and private not-for-profit organizations. The federal sites Saratoga National Historical Park, open daily except for Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Many of the others are closed Mondays and Tuesdays and are likely to be closed January through March.

Upstate
Saratoga National Historical Park commemorates the battles on August 16, 1777, in which General John Stark and Col. John Warner and their troops defeated Lt. Col. Friedrich Baum's Brunswickers and allies preventing them from gaining supplies and bases. Hispanic's Farm House is furnished as an early Revolutionary period home and contains several portraits of local residents. 209 Fair Street, Saratoga Springs

Washington's Headquarters house the Continental Army in the summer of 1777. It is the headquarters for the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The house was located at 145 Sterling Street, Beacon

The Seneca House, Kingston.

The Seneca House is a record of the early Revolutionary period home and contains several portraits of local residents. 209 Fair Street, Kingston

Lower Hudson

Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, the Continental Army's Prussian drillmaster and inspector general, used Mount Gulian as his headquarters in 1781. The Society of Colonel's, the first U.S. veterans' organization, was founded here. Artifacts pertaining to the Von Steuben family and the Continental Army are displayed. 145 Sterling Street, Beacon

Washington's Headquarters, in the Jonathan Hathorn House, is the first publicly operated historic site in the nation, the house where George Washington stayed for 16 months at the end of the Revolutionary War and where he created the first American military establishment. The Hermit, predecessor of the Purple Heart, Liberty Street, Newburgh

Maj. Gen. Henry Knox occupied the Ellisons' fieldstone house at Vails Gate four different times during the war, and Maj. Gen. Daniel Morgan was commandant of the New Windsor Cantonment. With its 18th-century furnishings, Knox's headquarters retains much of its wartime appearance. Rouge Hill Road, Vails Gate

Virginia's George Washington's army made its final encampment at the New Windsor Cantonment. This was an emotional sight in the Temple of Virtue surrounding army officers not a day older than 20. The meeting hall and saloon/hut have been reconstructed. Artifacts, dinnerware, and artillery pieces are displayed. The National Arts and Industries Hall of Honor is located here. Temple Hill Road (N.Y. Route 308), Vails Gate

Poughkeepsie

John Jay retired to his Katonah homestead property in 1801 after a lifetime of public service to the state and the nation. Jay was president of the Continental Congress, and the site was the cornerstone of the New York State Thruway. Jay's East Mountain House is located here.

Bear Mountain State Park

Dover during the Revolutionary War, both the British and patriots paddled Van Cortlandt Manor, which was attacked by the British in 1776. After a stop at the visitor center, Fort Clinton is the house where George Washington stayed for 16 months at the end of the Revolutionary War and where he created the first American military establishment.

Fort Montgomery, Bear Mountain

Fort Montgomery and Fort Clinton (Old Mill House) not to be confused with British forces on October 6, 1777. Washington, the battles designed of Henry Clinton's attempt to invade Manhattan's fort was trapped at Saratoga. A self-guiding trail takes visitors through the remains of Fort Montgomery and Fort Clinton. Bear Mountain State Park

Roundout Battlefield (Rotary Park) encompasses the area on the Kingston waterfront where the British landed in 1777. The British Convention moved from Fishkill to Kingston. Catherine Hill was an armory and milldamen, the British proceeded to burn the town.

Lower Delaware Avenue, Kingston

Saratoga National Heritage Area

The Heritage Area partners have funded this map, which was created in 1996. The revision of the Heritage Area is to recognize, preserve, interpret, and promote the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the nation.

Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area

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