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 American 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 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.

**The British Invasion**

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In December 1775 and January 1776 Colonel Henry Knox first highlighted the great resources of New York where 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.

The Americans effectively delayed the three British advances. Engineer Colonel Theodore Kosciuszko brought Burgoyne’s forces to a crawl by dropping trees across his route south of the Hudson Valley, the British invaded the valley four different directions.

**Turning Point in the War**

After winning the battle of Oriskany on August 6, the British under St. Leger lost valuable time capturing Fort St. Stanwix and retreated to Canada. The supporting British contingent from New York City to assist Burgoyne’s operation.

Washington's headquarters in the Newburgh.

The turning point in the war came in 1777. In 1779 the British tried to lure General George Washington into a decisive battle in New York at Brag. Gen. Anthony Wayne, in a daring midnight bayonet attack on July 9 and 10, captured their fortification at Stony Point. The British retreated briefly but never again threatened the Hudson Highlands. In August 1781, Washington’s and the French Comte de Rochambeau’s armies linked up at Philipsburg, 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 5,500 soldiers, some with their families, to New Windsor for their final winter encampment and set up his headquarters in the Hudson Highlands.

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Hudson River Valley Revolutionary War Sites

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.hudsonvalleyregion.com

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

Here, Washington made an encampment after his first successful victory against Delancy’s Loyalists and Washington’s and Rochambeau’s Grand French-American marches through Westchester and Rockland County on their way to Yorktown. The struggle continued after Cornwallis’ surrender, and the last engagement of the war occurred at Yorktown. 30 September to 19 October 1781.

Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R) commemorates the 1778-79 campaign that was the turning point of the American Revolution. The route was chosen for the rich mix of visually captivating landscapes and the sites associated with the Continental Army’s major campaigns of the war. The route continues into the Mid-Atlantic states.

Pamplin Historical Park and Fort Henry, Petersburg, Va., is a restored Civil War fort and a museum that offers dramatic presentations of Civil War history. Expected to open in 2009.

Berea College, Berea, Ky.

Mount Vernon, La., home of George Washington, in Mount Vernon, Va.

The Port of Mobile, Ala.

G because the site was a meeting place for the first Senate of the Continental Congress, was founded here. Artifacts pertaining to the Van Cortlandt family and the Continental Army, which used the house as a supply depot, are on display.

Owensboro, Ky.


Cantonment. With its 18th-century furnishings, the mansion is now a museum of American revolutionary history.

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