

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.

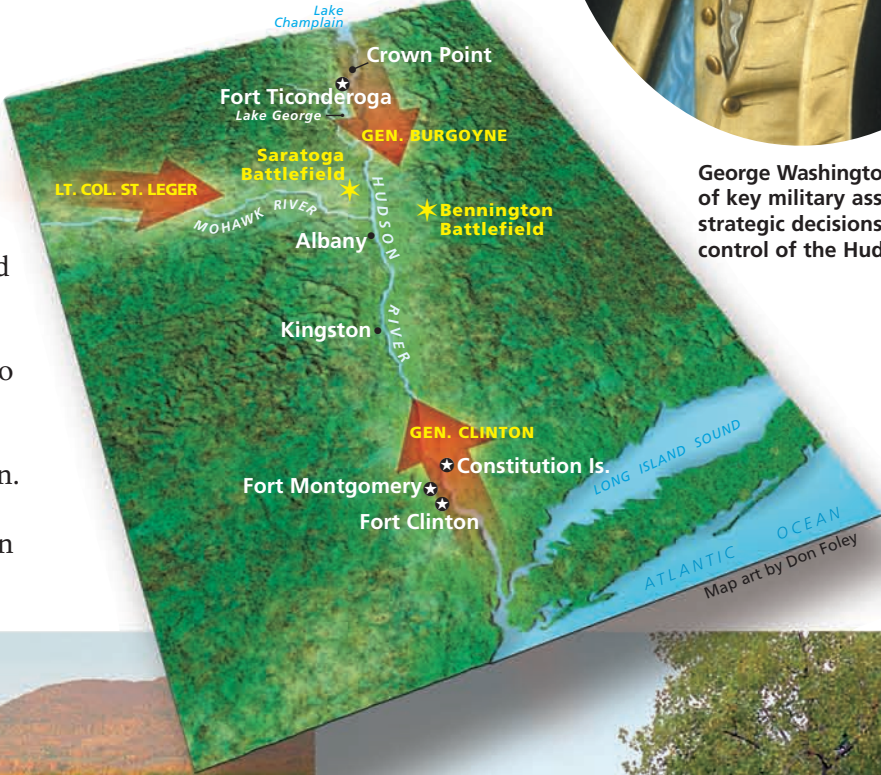
Photographs by Ted Spiegel, unless otherwise noted

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.



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.

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

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

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.



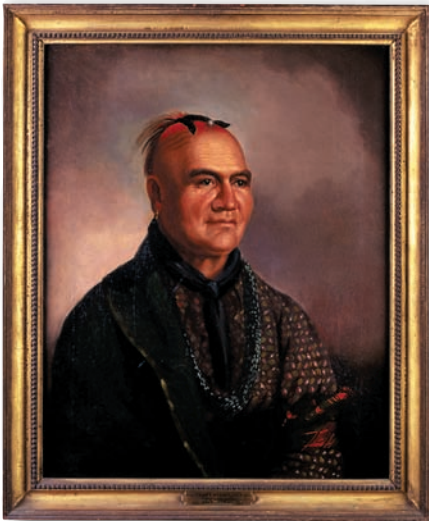
Like many other Loyalists, the Philipse family of Tarrytown lost their lands and Philipsburg Manor.



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.

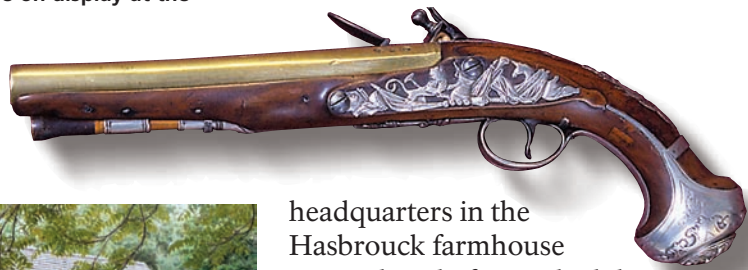


taken over Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler's command—defeated Burgoyne in the second battle of Saratoga near Bemis Heights. The British capitulation convinced the French to join the American cause and proved to be the turning point in the war.

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.



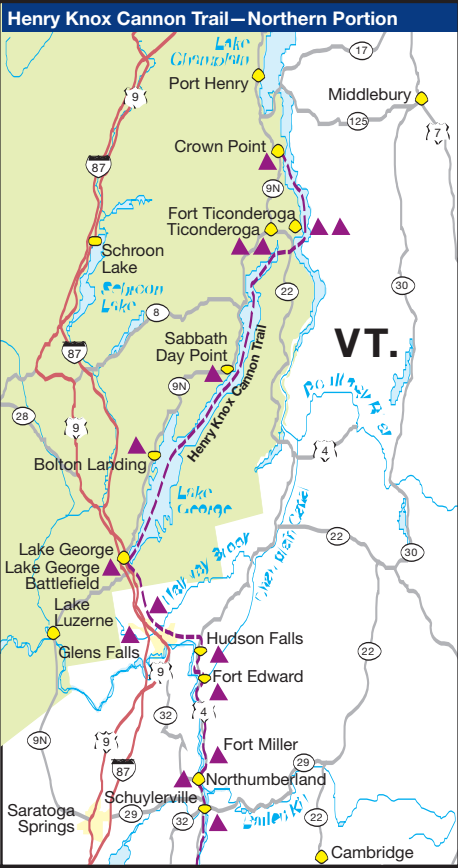
Period furnishings and exhibits interpret life at the Jonathan Hasbrouck House, Washington's Headquarters in Newburgh.

Hudson River Valley Revolutionary War Sites

Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, New York

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, use 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 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.



Henry Knox Cannon Trail traces the route followed by Knox and his 59 cannon from Lake Champlain to Dorchester Heights, Massachusetts. <http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/themes/Amrev/KnoxTrail/ktour.php>

Sybil Ludington's Ride recreates the ride of a 16-year-old girl on April 26, 1777, to rally her father's militia regiment. <http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org/amerRevLesson/sybillessonplan.php>

Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (W3R) commemorates French-American marches through Westchester and Rockland counties to Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781 and the return of the French army to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1782. The route markings south from Dobbs Ferry and Hartsdale show the initial failed attack against Delancy's Loyalists and Washington's and Rochambeau's Grand Reconnaissance to inspect British fortifications July 21-23, 1781. <http://www.hudsonrivervalley.net/images/largedetailed2.1.jpg>

Upper Hudson

Bennington Battlefield commemorates the battle on August 16, 1777, in which General John Stark and Colonel Seth Warner and their troops defeated Lt. Col. Fredrich Baum's Brunswickers and allies preventing them from gaining supplies and horses. Hessian Hill offers picturesque views and exhibits about the battle. Route 67, Hoosick Falls

The fighting that took place at **Saratoga Battlefield** in the fall of 1777 turned the tide of the war for independence and helped to secure international support for the American cause. Highlights include visitor center exhibits and an interpretive nine-mile battlefield auto tour. Route 32, Stillwater

Schuyler Mansion, home of Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler, served as a base of operations during the war. George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benedict Arnold, and Benjamin Franklin passed through its halls. British Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne

Mid-Hudson

Robert R. Livingston, Jr. of Belvedere served on the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The British burned his and his father's house, **Clermont**, next door in 1777, but his mother, Margaret Beekman Livingston, rebuilt Clermont during the war. The 485-acre estate is preserved as it appeared in the early 20th century. 1 Clermont Avenue, Germantown



The Senate House, Kingston

The **Senate House**, one of 21 colonial houses in Kingston's Stockade Area, served as the meeting place for the first Senate of New York State in 1777. The stone building is furnished as an early Revolutionary period home and contains several portraits of local residents. 296 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 1783. The Society of Cincinnati, the first U.S. veterans' organization, was founded here. Artifacts pertaining to the Verplanck family and the Society of the Cincinnati are on display. 145 Sterling Street, Beacon

Washington's Headquarters, in the Jonathan Hasbrouck House, the first publicly operated historic site in the nation, is the house where George Washington stayed for 16 months at the end of the Revolutionary War and where he created the Badge of Military Merit, predecessor of the Purple Heart. 84 Liberty Street, Newburgh

Maj. Gen. Henry Knox occupied the Ellisons' fieldstone house at Vails Gate four different times during the war, and Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates stayed here when he was commandant of the New Windsor Cantonment. With its 18th-century furnishings, **Knox's Headquarters** retains much of its wartime appearance. Forge Hill Road, Vails Gate

George Washington's army made its final encampment at the **New Windsor Cantonment**. Here, Washington made an emotional speech in the Temple of Virtue convincing army officers not to rebel over pay. The meeting hall and a soldiers' hut have been reconstructed. Artifacts, dioramas, and artillery pieces are displayed. The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is located here. Temple Hill Road (N.Y. Route 300), Vails Gate



Historic Chain, West Point

Fort Arnold/Clinton and Fort Putnam helped secure the Hudson River and prevent the British from cutting New England off from the rest of the states. The forts, major elements in three rings of fortifications known as Fortress West Point, are located on the U.S. Military Academy grounds. Thirteen links of the Great Chain are displayed at Trophy Point. A statue of Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who directed the construction of the fortifications, stands on the remains of Fort Arnold/Clinton. Fort Putnam is currently not open to the public. Several Revolutionary War items are on display in the visitor center and museum. West Point

British Lt. Gen. Henry Clinton gained control of King's Ferry on May 31, 1779, and built fortifications at **Stony Point** to prepare for a possible battle in the Hudson Highlands. But the Americans, led by Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne, retook the fort in a surprise attack. U.S. 9W, Stony Point

Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area

The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area is a federally funded program created by Congress in 1996. The mission of the Heritage Area is to recognize, preserve, protect and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the nation.

stopped here after his defeat at Saratoga. 32 Catherine Street, Albany



Bronck Museum, Coxsackie

New Yorkers signed the Coxsackie Declaration of Independence in 1775 in what is now called the **Bronck Museum**. During the early years of the war, the Coxsackie Committee of Correspondence met here, one of the oldest standing houses in upstate New York. County Road 42, Coxsackie

Rondout Battlefield (Rotary Park) encompasses the area on the Kingston waterfront where the British landed in October 1777 after the Provincial Convention moved from Fishkill to Kingston. Confronted by an armed galley and militiamen, the British proceeded to burn the town. Lower Delaware Avenue, Kingston



Gomez Mill House, Marlboro

Wolvert Ackert, owner of the **Gomez Mill House** during the war, served as commissioner of Newburgh's Committee of Safety and Observation, a group that identified suspected loyalists. The six-room house, mill, icehouse, and other buildings sit on 28 acres. 11 Mill House Road, Marlboro



Fort Montgomery, Bear Mountain

Fort Montgomery and Fort Clinton (Trailside Museum) fell to overwhelming British forces on October 6, 1777. Nonetheless, the battles disrupted Sir Henry Clinton's attempts to relieve Burgoyne's army that was trapped at Saratoga. A self-guiding trail takes visitors through the remains of Fort Montgomery after a stop at the visitor center. Bear Mountain State Park

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, a principal negotiator of the Treaty of Paris ending the Revolution, first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and second governor of New York. Route 22, Katonah

During the Revolutionary War, both the loyalists and patriots pillaged **Van Cortlandt Manor**, which was located in the middle of the Neutral Ground. After the war, the Van Cortlandt family returned to the property after service to the patriot cause and reestablished it as a productive estate. Today, the site includes an 18th-century manor house and tavern and reconstructed tenant farmhouse. Interpreters demonstrate blacksmithing, brickmaking, and hearth-cooking skills. South Riverside Avenue, Croton-on-Hudson

A committed loyalist, Frederick Philipse III lost **Philipsburg Manor** after signing the Declaration of Dependence in 1776 and being arrested on orders from General Washington. Today, Philipsburg Manor represents a mid-18th century milling, farming, and trading complex populated by diverse Europeans and enslaved Africans. Route 9, Sleepy Hollow

The Philipse family fled to New York City and then to England. New York State confiscated the 52,000-acre estate, including their Yonkers residence, **Philipse Manor Hall**. The mansion is now a museum of history, architecture, and art, including selections from Alexander Smith Cochran Collection of American Portraiture. 29 Warburton Avenue, Yonkers

Saint Paul's Church served as a hospital for Hessians after the 1776 battle of Pell's Point, which helped prevent the British from attacking George Washington's army as it moved north from New York City. A number of the Hessians who died there are buried in a mass grave. The restored church and nearby museum interpret the battle and other local events. South Columbus Avenue, Mt. Vernon

The Heritage Area funded this map-brochure, and the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College in Poughkeepsie selected the sites. Send your comments by e-mail to hrvgh@hudsongreenway.ny.gov