



THE WAR IN THE NORTH

1778–1781



Steven E. Elliott

The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Revolutionary War

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The U.S. Army Campaigns of the Revolutionary War

THE WAR IN THE NORTH, 1778–1781

by
Steven E. Elliott



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INTRODUCTION



As America celebrates the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War, it is a perfect time to reflect on the revolutionary generation. In the two-and-a-half centuries since the war, the United States has grappled with the complexities and paradoxes of its revolution. How could a nation be born from the idea that all men are created equal, and yet deny much of that freedom to many of its citizens? How should a central federal government balance power with state governments? Could those thirteen fractious colonies merge into one nation? The seeds of what would become our country's future political and military conflicts lie in these complexities, as do some of our greatest national accomplishments.

This milestone anniversary is also an appropriate time to reflect on the history of the United States Army. The Army stands as our first truly national institution, having been established by the Continental Congress on 14 June 1775. General George Washington's ability to meld the soldiers of the various colonies together into one national force provided an example to the rest of the country that national unity was possible. If the Army failed to overcome the regional sectionalism prevalent at the time, it would fall to superior British resources and organization. If the Army failed, the nation would fail. Washington gave us the precedent of military subordination to the civil authority, one of the core tenets of our political tradition and way of life. At the end of the war, he resigned his commission and voluntarily gave up all his power to return to civil life. His example has inspired us as a model of military and political leadership for generations.

The Massachusetts militiamen who fired the first shots of the war on 19 April 1775 had no blueprint for creating a nation—nor did many think that the conflict would result in a drive for independence. Deep-seated colonial resentments over their rights as English citizens had been simmering since before the 1750s. As the British Parliament enacted even more restrictive laws, peaceful protests turned to military organization, and finally open violence. As New England formed its Army of Observation in the wake of the battles of Lexington and Concord, the Continental Congress saw the need for a national army.

For eight long years, the Continental Army maintained itself in the field, despite fighting superior odds, starvation, diminished resources, and divided leadership. Setbacks in the New York Campaign of 1776 nearly destroyed Washington's army as the British drove it into Pennsylvania. Yet as 1777 opened, Washington changed the operational situation by seizing the initiative in a series of tactical victories at Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey. That fall, a British invasion into northern New York met with failure and capture at the hands of the Northern Army and militia at Saratoga, ultimately bringing France into war on the side of the United States. At the same time, Washington kept a British army penned up in Philadelphia while he instituted a training regimen for his army at their encampment in Valley Forge that winter. Trained under the tutelage of German-born Frederick von Steuben, the Continentals harried the British out of Philadelphia and back to New York City, fighting like regulars at Monmouth in 1778.

General Washington faced the challenge of countering British victories at Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, when the British shifted the war south in 1778, while also containing powerful British forces in Canada and New York City. Relying on skilled subordinates such as Anthony Wayne, Nathanael Greene, and the Marquis de Lafayette—all of whom in turn worked closely with state militia—Washington was able to hold the delicate balance of power in both the northern and southern theaters. Seizing the opportunity presented by his French allies, Washington quickly shifted a large portion of his army from New York City to Yorktown,

Virginia. There, the allies laid siege to another British army, forcing it to capitulate in the fall of 1781. Although this victory sounded the death knell for British control of the American colonies, peace talks would last for two more years. During this time, Washington kept an army in the field, maintained the supremacy of civil authority over the military, and presented a credible threat to the remaining British garrisons. When the peace came, the true architects of the revolution's success were the Continental Army, state troops, and the militia.

The Revolutionary War created the model for our modern Army. It set the stage for what eventually would become a three-component force, with the Continentals and militia operating in complementary roles. Today, thirty-four National Guard units can trace their lineage to the Revolutionary War, which is a testament to their role in the formation of this country. Eight army branches also have their beginnings in the revolution. The U.S. Army's very motto, "This We'll Defend," is rooted in the "self-evident" truths enunciated in the Declaration of Independence and American interpretations of Enlightenment traditions, which came together in the seal for the Board of War and Ordnance and became the Department of the Army seal in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, it also would take until the twentieth century for the U.S. Army to be as racially integrated as its Continental Army forebears.

The traditions begun and precedents set by Washington and his soldiers continue to influence the U.S. Army and causes around the world. The seeds of hope shown at Trenton and Princeton have inspired leaders in other dark times, such as Bull Run, Shiloh, and Kasserine Pass. The revolutionary generation taught us that the true strength of our Army is our people; from the frontline soldiers to the camp followers who sustained the regiments. And it is to these individuals, who forged ahead through privation and misery to final victory and who rarely received any greater recognition in their own lifetimes than the simple epitaph "A Soldier of the Revolution," that these volumes are humbly dedicated.

CHARLES R. BOWERY JR.
Executive Director



THE WAR IN THE NORTH, 1778–1781

The Revolutionary War entered a new phase on 6 February 1778, when the kingdom of France signed a formal treaty of alliance with the United States. Previously, the thirteen states had waged their war for independence against Great Britain with only limited support from foreign powers. Yet the American military had managed to resist the forces of the British Crown for three years. In early 1778, British armies held two of North America's largest ports, New York and Philadelphia, but had failed to extend their occupation inland. Indeed, the British invasion of New York from the north had failed spectacularly in October 1777, resulting in the surrender of a Crown army at Saratoga, New York. France's entry into the war forced a significant change in British strategy. Possessions in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, and Mediterranean required naval and land reinforcements, relegating British operations in North America to secondary status. Facing an adversary with global reach, Britain could not hope to maintain garrisons in both New York and Philadelphia.

STRATEGIC SETTING

In March 1778, the civilian director of Great Britain's war effort, Lord George Germain, secretary of state for the colonies, sent instructions to Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Clinton, the new commander in chief in the thirteen colonies, outlining the new strategy that would guide British conduct. Germain ordered Clinton to evacuate Philadelphia and consolidate his forces in New York City, which offered a better harbor and more secure lines of communications. The new strategy would include raids on the New England coast, but no large-scale offensives in the North. Instead, Germain sought to expand the war in the southern colonies by invading Georgia and South Carolina. British leaders believed they would encounter greater civilian support in the South; southern garrisons also laid 1,000 miles closer to the Caribbean, facilitating cooperation with naval and land forces based in the West Indies. To carry the war to the French, Clinton was to send 5,000 soldiers to attack the Caribbean island of St. Lucia. A further 3,000 were to be dispatched to buttress defenses in Florida.

With what remained in New York, Clinton could not entertain undertaking a major offensive against the patriot Continental Army under General George Washington. British strength in New York fluctuated over the following years but never returned to the levels witnessed in the first years of the war. Clinton could continue to call upon a reliable cohort of veteran redcoats, German auxiliaries, and loyalist provincials, but the pressing needs of other theaters in this now global conflict deprived Clinton of high-quality reinforcements. War weariness and financial limitations led to recruitment shortfalls by 1780, alarming British leaders. Coupled with the improvements to the Continental Army, whatever

qualitative superiority Crown forces may have enjoyed earlier in the war diminished after 1778.

The American army in the summer of 1778 benefited from the reforms and improvements made over the previous years. Long-term enlistments meant that for the first time the patriot commander in chief would not need to rebuild his army at the outset of the new year. Soldiers had endured a winter of short supplies at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, followed in the spring by an outbreak of dysentery and other illness resulting from poor camp hygiene. Nevertheless, they emerged from the winter with improved training because of the reforms Maj. Gen. Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben had instituted. Washington's army proved itself on the battlefield at Monmouth, New Jersey, on 28 June, where both infantry and artillery performed well in one of the war's longest battles. A well-drilled, competently led Continental Army provided Washington with an effective instrument of war in the northern theater. However, this tool would not remain sharp indefinitely. Because enlistment terms lasted for three years, and many people had signed up in 1777 and early 1778, expiring contracts in 1780 and 1781 promised a reduction in numbers.

Washington's army represented a broad cross section of American society. Although the outpouring of patriotism that had driven many to enlist early in the conflict had faded by 1778, French entry into the war and the recent victory at Saratoga provided motivation for many. As the conflict continued, enlistment bounties and promises of postwar land grants encouraged recruitment. Even as patriotic enthusiasm ebbed, economic need, an obligation to fulfill one's duty to family and community, and a desire to prove one's mettle all served as incentives for young men from humble backgrounds to join the ranks. By 1780, soldiers from these settings outnumbered the middle-class farmers and artisans that had filled the ranks in 1775 and 1776. Some states also resorted to conscripting the unemployed to fulfill their recruitment quotas. Most soldiers were White and had been born in the colonies, but immigrants, particularly from Ireland and Germany, also served in

increasing numbers. Black soldiers, Native Americans, and people of other races all found their way into the army. Some formerly enslaved people enlisted in exchange for manumission, and some enslavers sent their bondsmen to serve in their place when called to militia service.

The protracted conflict in the north also saw many noncombatants accompanying the army. Several hundred women and children followed the Continental Army on campaign and resided in their camps. Many served as nurses or launderers. Additionally, civilians living adjacent to Continental Army camps, depots, and headquarters throughout the region worked mending equipment, transporting goods, or hosting soldiers and officers. Hundreds more sold food and other supplies to quartermasters that kept the Continental troops in the field. The army also used enslaved Black people as common laborers and domestic servants.

Washington himself enjoyed a solidified reputation as commander in chief. In late 1777 the general had faced criticisms for his failure to prevent the British from capturing Philadelphia. Although battlefield success had eluded the patriots in Pennsylvania, Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates in New York had overseen a decisive victory over Crown forces at Saratoga in October. During the winter of 1777–1778, Washington overcame attempts to subvert his authority and rallied a loyal group of officers to his support. In June, the army's good showing at Monmouth restored confidence in Washington's abilities and led to the humiliation of one of his main rivals, Maj. Gen. Charles Lee. After Monmouth, Washington stood as the unchallenged leader of the Continental Army. This status sustained faith in the commander in chief's leadership during the subsequent years, despite the often frustrating and indecisive nature of the fighting.

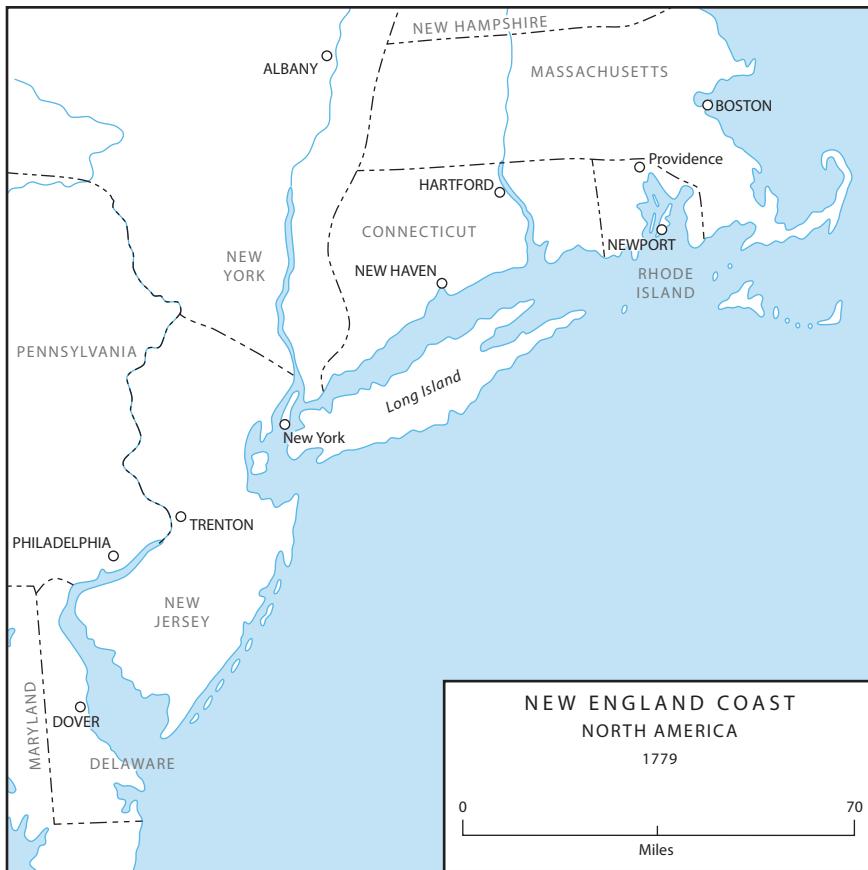
Both Washington and Clinton operated within the constraints of the northeastern United States's geography. New York City stood at the center of the theater. The city's deepwater port and extensive harbor facilities made it the primary base for the British forces in the region and a tempting target for their opponents. The Sandy Hook sand bar made navigating the entrance to New York Bay hazardous at low tide, which could deter an attacking enemy fleet but also

interrupt the movement of friendly troops and provisions. The bay also froze over during the winter, necessitating the stockpiling of supplies. For the most part though, the extensive waterways around New York rendered the British position secure as long as they maintained naval superiority (*Map 1*).

Naval power also made possible whatever limited offensives Clinton might seek to undertake. The Hudson River provided the British with their best avenue of advance into the interior, and it therefore represented the patriots' greatest vulnerability in the region. Oceangoing vessels could navigate the river's deep waters up to Albany, 140 miles north of New York City. A move up the Hudson could cut the lines of communications between New England and the other states and expose the important political and agricultural center of the Hudson Valley to British control.

The greatest impediment to travel came where the river traversed the Hudson Highlands, 40 miles upstream of New York City. There, the river meandered sharply as it passed through the tall, rocky hills. For 10 miles from Peekskill to West Point, ships were vulnerable to fortified artillery batteries placed on the high ground. Despite the strong natural position, however, a determined expedition could force its way through the mountain barrier. During the autumn of 1777, Sir Henry Clinton had achieved this, fighting his way past weak defenses at Forts Montgomery and Clinton and raiding Esopus, 90 miles upriver. Clinton's small force had withdrawn as New York militia gathered to resist the incursion, but his successful passage of the Highlands nevertheless highlighted the area as a potentially crucial vulnerability for the revolutionaries. Much of the fighting and maneuvers after 1778 centered on securing the Highlands for the patriots and denying them to the British.

The region's waterways also afforded the British limited offensive opportunities in New Jersey. The waterways separating Jersey from Staten Island—the Arthur Kill, Newark Bay, and Kill Van Kull—exposed 20 miles of northern New Jersey shoreline to British raids, including Elizabethtown and Newark, two of the state's largest settlements. To the south, the Raritan River enabled operations up to 10 miles upstream at New Brunswick. Most of New Jersey's



Map 1

terrain opposite New York consisted of flat coastal plains and rolling hills interspersed with swamps, farms, and villages. The generally flat ground, good roads, and proximity to waterways left this important agricultural and population center exposed to British attacks and necessitated a Continental Army presence as well as vigilant militia. Below the Raritan, New Jersey's long Atlantic coast offered further opportunities for British raids, but fewer rewards. Northern Monmouth County featured good farmland and an active loyalist population that led Washington to deploy Continentals there to reinforce the militia. Farther south, however, Jersey's coastal barrier islands and swamps sported few settlements. The numerous

coves and harbors did, however, provide a home for privateers, and therefore drew British attention as well.

The British maintained a second stronghold 150 miles up the coast from New York at Newport, Rhode Island. General Clinton had seized this town, the fifth largest in the thirteen colonies, in late 1776. Newport had been an important center of Atlantic commerce and possessed an excellent harbor and dock facilities. Unlike New York, the port remained ice-free throughout the winter. The surrounding waterways rendered Newport difficult to attack without naval support. British domination of the Long Island Sound enabled the mutual support of the two sites, as troops could move by sea rapidly between the two. The loss of naval superiority, however, could render Newport vulnerable. Beyond Rhode Island, the patriots controlled most of New England's extensive coastline, but much of it lay open to British raids. Connecticut faced frequent depredations at the hands of British and loyalist troops based on Long Island. Farther afield, the numerous small islands and inlets in the region's coastline offered ample hideaways for privateers and smugglers alike. Coastal operations thus ranged from the Maine district of Massachusetts in the north to the New Jersey shore in the south.

Although the Crown's naval and land forces threatened the northeastern littoral, the American patriots exercised firmer control over the region's interior. Aside from the Hudson, local rivers afforded only limited opportunities for inland penetration. In the Highlands of New York and New Jersey, as well as the hills of Connecticut, Washington's soldiers enjoyed relative security from enemy attack. In 1778, however, they operated with minimal infrastructure to support their operations. The Hudson Highlands fortifications remained limited. New Jersey and Connecticut featured a growing number of storehouses and magazines, but also lacked fortifications and barracks needed to successfully lodge the army in the region for a prolonged period.

The rugged Highlands themselves, although easily defensible, posed logistical and administrative problems. Good roads bracketed the mountains; one ran from Easton, Pennsylvania, to Newburgh,

New York, in a valley, whereas another ran east of the mountains in the Jersey piedmont stretching from Trenton up to Suffern. The Watchung Mountains, a series of parallel ridges running east of the Highlands for 30 miles between the Raritan and Passaic Rivers, provided another barrier against British attacks into the state. Nevertheless, the rugged terrain promised to inhibit the distribution of supplies, particularly during winter. Few large settlements dotted the region, diminishing the amount of civilian support the army could access nearby. Essentially, the Highlands carried the potential of serving as a formidable fortress that would remove the army from the threat of British waterborne operations. Washington's troops could only realize this potential by harnessing the region's resources, maintaining roads, and building fortifications and shelter.

Throughout the campaigns, the Continental Army enjoyed the support of stable and cooperative civilian governments. Governor William Livingston of New Jersey maintained cordial relations with the commander in chief, as did Governors George Clinton of New York and Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut. None of these states experienced a significant loyalist insurgency, although pockets of disaffection existed, particularly in eastern New Jersey and southern New York. The former loyalist governors William Franklin and William Tryon, residing in occupied New York City, held out hope that war-weariness might lead greater numbers of New Jerseyans and New Yorkers to change their allegiances to the Crown. Although civilian apathy and neutrality increased after 1778, expectations of resurgent loyalism in the region proved wildly optimistic.

From 1778 onward, Clinton's strategic imperative was to maintain the Crown's hold on New York while supporting operations in other theaters. The loss of New York necessarily would entail the loss of another British army, remove one of Great Britain's few territorial gains in the war, and free up Washington's army for service elsewhere. Defeating Washington's army in the field remained a secondary objective for Clinton. By seizing a key piece of terrain, or capitalizing on a poor maneuver by the Continentals, the general might still force a battle that he hoped his redcoats could win. With Britain committed to other theaters, however, General Clinton

would have few opportunities to press for a decisive engagement on favorable terms.

The Americans, by contrast, enjoyed sizeable numbers through 1778 and 1779. French intervention brought an influx of weapons, uniforms, and funds. Although the Continental Army still faced occasional supply shortages, it also enjoyed some of its best material conditions so far. Without French naval support, however, Washington could not assault New York City. Therefore, the Continental Army, state troops, and militia often remained on the defensive. Washington increasingly had to detach significant portions of his army to reinforce the South, as well as western and northern frontiers. Like Clinton, he maintained vigilance in what had become a secondary theater by 1780. Washington nevertheless harbored a strong desire to go on the offensive, and frequently sought to seize the initiative when the opportunity presented itself.

The revolutionaries faced their greatest threats from within. As the war dragged on, the fire of patriotism that had burned so fiercely in 1775 and 1776 began to cool. Civilians faced rampant inflation and frequent requisitions from Continental quartermasters, and militiamen endured numerous mobilizations. Soldiers served with little pay and suffered through sometimes severe supply shortages. This ebbing spirit did not mean the average American had shifted allegiances to the Crown. However, from 1778 onward, patriot leaders increasingly faced desertion and dissension in the ranks and reluctance from civilians. Even with increased commerce with the French and heightened privateer activity, the American states remained starved of luxury goods like sugar and fine fabrics, as well as bulk commodities like salt and dry goods. Illicit trade with British-occupied New York grew more brazen. Even a military stalemate might lead many Americans to seek to return to Britain's economic orbit. In this context, maintaining a strong Continental Army in the field and avoiding a major defeat remained as important as ever for the patriot cause.

The northern campaigns of 1778–1781 thus unfolded in a context in which neither side could bring to bear the force necessary to win a decisive victory. Clinton enjoyed general naval superiority, but

the possibility of the French fleet intervening meant that he could not expect completely unhindered movement by sea. On land, the British and their German allies maintained a well-equipped and well-trained force to garrison New York, but on the whole it was too weak to attempt more than local offensives, raids, and foraging expeditions. Furthermore, Clinton's army now served to augment commands in other theaters, further limiting its opportunities, even though previous campaigns already had demonstrated that much larger British armies could not subdue the colonies.

Consequently, the three years after Monmouth witnessed few direct engagements between the British and Americans, but much maneuvering and skirmishing. The British instead relied heavily on raids to secure supplies and deny them to the patriots. Such small-scale attacks might also diminish patriot morale. Washington, in turn, looked for opportunities to make the best use of his forces even given his limited options, and sought to assault exposed enemy posts while denying his enemy the chance to strike his main force.



OPERATIONS



Summer–Fall 1778

After Monmouth, Washington held the army in place in northern New Jersey for the first two weeks of July, while Clinton successfully evacuated his forces to Manhattan. The revolutionaries initially hoped that French intervention would lead to an assault on the British stronghold in New York. A French fleet of twelve ships of the line and transports carrying 4,000 soldiers under Adm.

Charles Henri, comte d'Estaing, arrived off New York on 11 July. Washington wanted to make an immediate assault on the city before British reinforcements arrived, but d'Estaing feared that his deep draft warships would be unable to navigate the difficult entry into New York Bay. The dangerous waters, British coastal defenses, and outnumbered but prepared fleet under V. Adm. Richard, 4th Viscount Howe, promised to inflict significant casualties on any attack. D'Estaing lingered off New York until 22 July before sailing northward. Washington brought the bulk of the army across the Hudson, where they combined with General Gates's command at White Plains. From there, Washington could continue to threaten New York, block any enemy move up the Hudson, and more easily send reinforcements eastward.

Rather than squander his naval advantage, the American commander in chief targeted the other major British coastal base in the region, Newport, Rhode Island. The redcoats had occupied Newport in late 1776 and maintained a garrison of 6,700 soldiers there in summer 1778. Newport offered one of the best harbors on the east coast, and from there the Crown continued to menace Massachusetts and eastern Connecticut. Newport itself lay on Aquidneck Island, where the garrison had enjoyed security from attack for the previous two years. British naval control of Long Island Sound permitted the easy transfer of troops between New York and Rhode Island. The arrival of the French fleet, however, threatened to shut Newport off from New York and allow for the passage of American soldiers onto the island.

Washington planned to use a combination of French forces, New England militia units and state troops, and a small contingent of Continentals to drive the British from Newport while the main Continental Army remained in New York, holding Clinton in place. Maj. Gen. John Sullivan commanded in Rhode Island, with 1,600 troops monitoring enemy activities from the mainland. To bolster Sullivan, Washington dispatched Continental brigades under Brig. Gens. John Glover and James Varnum, each with many Rhode Islanders serving in the ranks, including the 1st Rhode Island Regiment with its sizeable contingent of Black soldiers. He also

instructed Sullivan to work with the Massachusetts and Rhode Island governments to mobilize soldiers from both states. Enthusiasm for the cause surged with news of the approach of the French fleet and the expectation for operations against Newport. D'Estaing's ships arrived on 29 July.

By early August, the Americans and their allies had assembled a substantial force around Newport, but leadership and coordination posed significant problems. Sullivan commanded but faced suspicion from civilian leaders because of his lack of success in previous campaigns. He oversaw officers holding militia commissions from four states, and many of his rank and file had mobilized only recently. Washington sent his most trusted subordinate and native Rhode Islander, Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene, to assist Sullivan in the campaign and organize this mixed force. Maj. Gen. Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, accompanied Greene; Washington assumed the young French general could help coordinate efforts with d'Estaing. On the French side, d'Estaing held the rank of admiral and commanded the French fleet, but he had accrued his previous experience in the army rather than the navy and therefore had a contentious relationship with his captains.

These commanders worked out a complex plan in early August. D'Estaing would land his soldiers on Conanicut Island, west of Aquidneck, and Sullivan's troops would cross from Tiverton to the east. Sullivan would cut off British detachments holding the northern portion of the island, after which the combined armies would move south to besiege Newport itself. This plan relied on the allies' naval and numerical superiority to force a rapid conclusion. Because many of Sullivan's soldiers would serve for only a short term, and d'Estaing expected British reinforcements would arrive shortly, the patriots and French could not undertake a lengthy siege to capture Newport.

Sullivan and d'Estaing faced 6,700 British, German, and loyalist troops led by Maj. Gen. Sir Robert Pigot. As the allies massed their forces, Pigot withdrew his garrisons from the northern end of the island to avoid their encirclement and evacuated livestock, forage, and wagons into Newport. Doing so ensured he had more supplies

on hand to withstand a siege and denied them to his enemy. He also ordered the leveling of orchards outside the town to provide clear fields of fire for his defenders. Faced with a superior naval force, Pigot ordered his few ships to be scuttled in Newport Harbor to obstruct enemy navigation.

In New York, General Clinton dispatched a fleet under Admiral Howe to relieve Newport with a 4,000-strong contingent of redcoats. The British and French fleets prepared to engage off Newport on 10 August, but a storm passed through the area that scattered both squadrons and damaged several vessels, including d'Estaing's flagship. The French ships did not regroup off Newport until 20 August, and their captains pressured the admiral to withdraw to Boston to make repairs. Sullivan attempted to convince d'Estaing to stay for two days, in which he hoped to take Newport by assault, but the admiral believed that it would be impossible to capture the well-defended town so quickly. The fleet departed for Boston on 22 August, leaving Sullivan and the Americans to conduct the remainder of the campaign on their own.

The patriots rapidly lost the initiative. Sullivan had crossed his troops onto Aquidneck Island and begun digging siege lines on 15 August, but without d'Estaing's support he could not assault Pigot's lines effectively. As prospects of victory dimmed, militiamen returned home; many had mobilized for only a twenty-day term. With the enemy's reinforcement imminent, Sullivan lifted the siege on 28 August and began to withdraw northward. He aimed to cross to the mainland via Howland's and Bristol Ferries, on the northeastern edge of Aquidneck Island. Pigot pursued.

On 30 August, the two sides clashed in the campaign's only significant land battle. Sullivan arrayed his forces across the narrow northern section of the island to cover his evacuation. The 200-foot-high Butts Hill overlooked the ferries, and here Sullivan placed 3,200 Continentals and state troops from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. A half mile to the south, the 1st Rhode Island Regiment held a British-built redoubt on Durfee's Hill. Behind Butts Hill, a further 2,800 Massachusetts and Rhode Island militiamen guarded the actual crossing sites and provided a reserve.

For an outer defensive, Sullivan arrayed his troops along a line of high ground stretching across the island 2 miles south of Butts Hill. The 220-foot-high Quaker Hill to the east and 270-foot-high Turkey Hill to the west anchored either end of the position. Surrounding swamps, meadows, and woods promised to inhibit the enemy advance. Along the outer line, Sullivan put General Glover in charge of the left wing, and General Greene led the right. Glover's brigade of four Massachusetts regiments held position along a stone wall at Quaker Hill. To the west, Greene concentrated Varnum's Continental Brigade, Col. Samuel Blachley Webb's Connecticut Regiment, and Col. James Livingston's 1st Canadian Regiment at Turkey Hill. Three miles farther south, Sullivan posted light infantry battalions composed of 300 soldiers drawn from the other regiments. One battalion under Col. John Laurens guarded the West Road, and the other under Col. Henry Beekman Livingston guarded the East Road (*Map 2*).

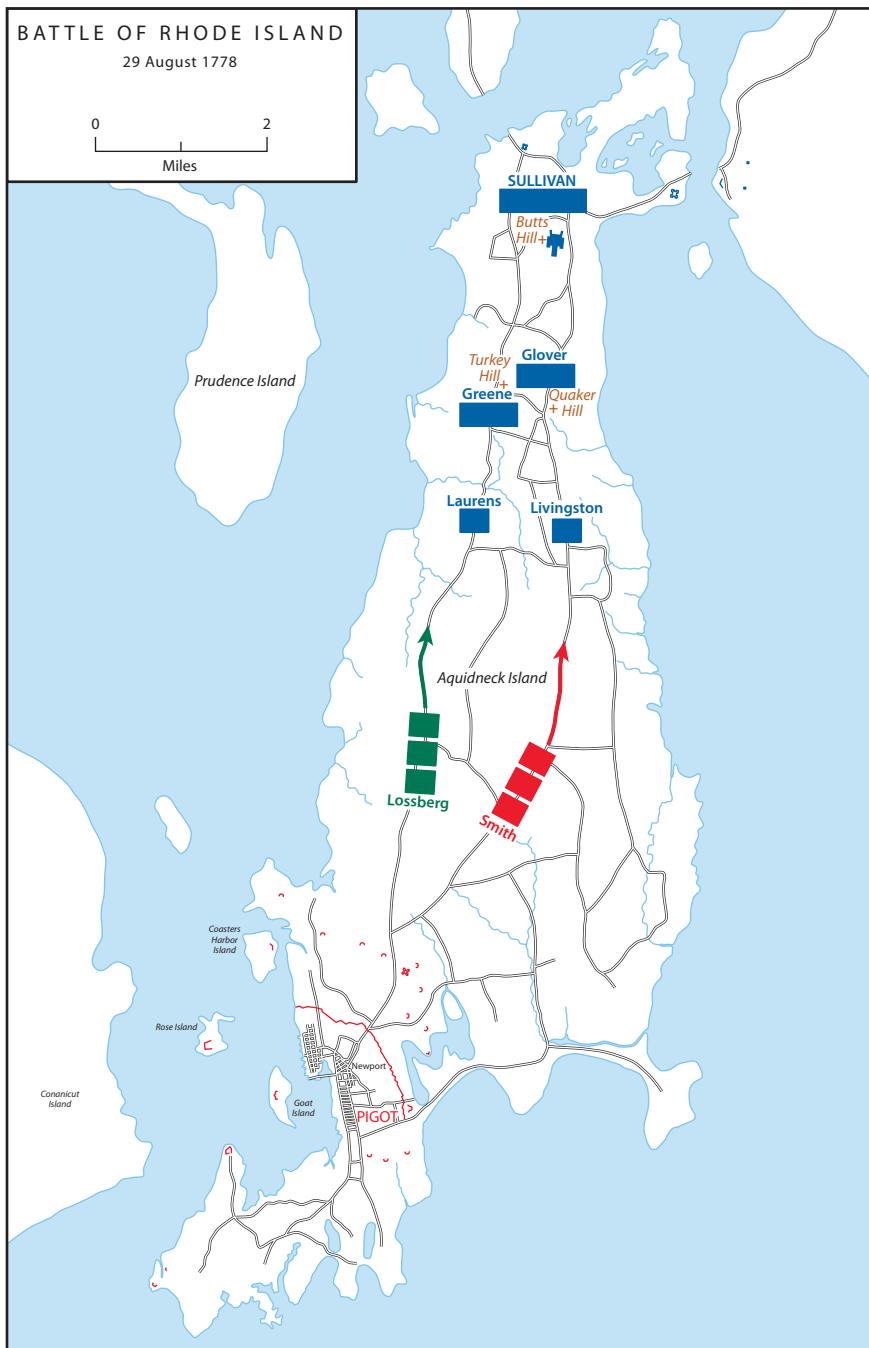
Sullivan thus had constructed a defense in depth on good ground that put his best units in sectors most likely to come under threat. Facing the patriot lines, General Pigot brought northward 5,570 soldiers, plus 160 marines as well as artillerists. Pigot aimed to catch Sullivan's army on the march or, failing that, disrupt its evacuation. He divided his command into three columns. On the left, he deployed 1,000 mostly German soldiers under Maj. Gen. Friedrich Wilhelm von Lossberg to move up the West Road against Turkey Hill. In the center, Brig. Gen. Francis Smith led 1,100 redcoats comprising the 22d Foot and 43d Foot, as well as the light and grenadier companies of the 38th Foot and 54th Foot. A detachment of two field pieces and 400 soldiers of the loyalist *King's American Regiment* supported Smith, who was to move up the East Road against Quaker Hill. The third column, consisting of the remainder of the 38th and 54th under Maj. Gen. Richard Prescott took up supporting positions on the far right of the line.

Fighting commenced at 0700 when Smith's column skirmished with Livingston's light infantry south of Quaker Hill. Sullivan dispatched the 13th Massachusetts Regiment under Col. Edward

BATTLE OF RHODE ISLAND

29 August 1778

0 2
Miles



Map 2

Wigglesworth to reinforce Livingston, but Smith's superior forces began to outflank the Continentals and induced them to retreat to Glover's main line at Quaker Hill. Pigot sent forward reinforcements, bringing Smith's contingent up to 3,700 soldiers. As the British vanguard approached Quaker Hill, a contingent of Col. Nathaniel Wade's Massachusetts state troops rose from the cover of a stone fence and unleashed two devastating volleys against the enemy. This action forced the redcoats to reorganize and provided time for the patriots to solidify their line on Quaker Hill. Sullivan sent forward a Continental regiment and company of Rhode Island state troops to buttress the defenses. Thus reinforced, the patriots halted the enemy vanguard and counterattacked. Smith then brought up his main body and continued to pressure the Americans. The defenders resisted for an hour before retiring toward Butts Hill. Fire from six 18-pounder cannons atop the hill deterred any further British advance. Smith instead moved back to Quaker Hill and brought up his own artillery, which dueled with the American cannons during the afternoon but inflicted little damage.

To the west, Lossberg's column encountered Continental light troops under Colonel Laurens at 0700. The light infantry took advantage of cover amid stone walls and tall stalks of corn to resist the numerically superior enemy. When Lossberg's troops began to threaten Laurens's flanks, he retreated. Sullivan moved a detachment of 255 soldiers under Maj. Ebenezer Huntington to support Laurens around Turkey Hill. These troops skirmished heavily with the enemy before retreating in the face of superior numbers. By 0830, Lossberg had seized Turkey Hill and probed toward Durfee's Hill. With the support of three British ships operating offshore, Lossberg then assaulted the patriot line three times. Artillery drove off the enemy vessels, however, and the Americans held firm. The 1st Rhode Island Regiment distinguished itself in this action. In the afternoon, General Greene seized the tactical initiative and deployed 1,500 troops to threaten Lossberg's flank, forcing his opponent to withdraw to Turkey Hill. Greene attempted another flanking maneuver in the late afternoon, but the arrival of enemy reinforcements foiled this move. By 1530, Pigot realized that he could gain nothing by

continuing to press his attacks against well-prepared defenders and marched back toward Newport. Sullivan contented himself with crossing to the mainland unimpeded.

The 30 August battle proved inconclusive. Pigot's forces suffered 260 casualties but did not upset Sullivan's retrograde substantially. The revolutionaries evacuated during the night in an orderly fashion, having suffered 30 killed and 137 wounded. Continental, state troops, and militiamen performed well tactically, and artillerists burnished their reputations. Nevertheless, tactical success did not produce a victory in the operation. The British relief force under Maj. Gen. Charles Grey arrived on 1 September to find Pigot's army already had secured Newport and its environs. On the mainland, Glover's and Varnum's brigades remained in place under Sullivan to deter any enemy movement toward Providence or Boston. Most of the militia and state troops returned home, and Greene resumed his post with the Main Army in New York. After briefly ascending to critical strategic importance, Rhode Island after August 1778 returned to its status as a secondary theater.

Outside New York, August 1778 opened with the principal armies cautiously observing one another. Washington marshalled his army at White Plains, while Clinton maintained his hold on New York. The patriots stood confident and eager to engage their opponents; "we have here a very powerful army, well supplied and very healthy, waiting with great impatience," wrote one Virginia Continental. Both sides deployed screening parties of light infantry into Westchester County to closely monitor their opponents. For the Continental Army, Washington appointed Brig. Gen. Charles Scott of Virginia to lead a task force of soldiers drawn from throughout the army as a skirmishing and harassing force in Westchester.

The Continental light infantry branch had grown in importance over the course of the conflict. On 27 May 1777, Congress approved the reorganization of Continental regiments to consist of eight line companies and one light. The line companies were to provide drafts of troops to ensure the light company remained at full strength. During the active campaign season, the Main Army's light companies detached from their parent regiments and assembled to

create a separate Corps of Light Infantry. Scott's command consisted of three regiments, and he also led detachments of light dragoons and elements of the New York militia. A party of Indigenous soldiers from the Stockbridge tribe of Mohicans added to the diversity of the force. Scott's troops had to carry out a variety of duties: gather intelligence, prevent desertion from the Main Army, contest their adversary's foraging parties, and, hopefully, ambush isolated enemy units. Organized in the middle of the campaign, the Corps of Light Infantry did not distinguish itself initially because it had not enjoyed the opportunity to train together as a unit. Its soldiery, separated from their state regiments and serving more closely with unfamiliar compatriots, took time to achieve cohesion and cooperation. Light infantryman Pvt. Joseph Plumb Martin of Connecticut served alongside Pennsylvanians and recalled "there was not much cordiality subsisting between us." Detached field service made it easy to desert, and General Scott reported losing 300 troops to desertion by early September. Although the American troops performed adequately in skirmishes with enemy parties, the Corps of Light Infantry would have to wait until the next year to earn its laurels.

In September, Clinton took the initiative in New England, using General Grey's relief force at Newport to mount a series of raids along the coast. Grey struck New Bedford, Massachusetts, on 4 September, where his soldiers burned shipping, warehouses, and wharves and left behind a devastated town. New London, Connecticut, an important base for privateers, avoided a similar fate because a shortage of transportation shipping prevented Clinton from leading a second contingent to join Grey. Nevertheless, Grey continued to press his coastal campaign, striking Fairhaven, Massachusetts, on 6 September and Martha's Vineyard five days later. After four days of foraging and requisitions, he departed for New York with hundreds of appropriated cattle and sheep aboard his vessels.

British success at Rhode Island and subsequent coastal operations led several of Washington's subordinates to fear that Clinton might next attack Boston. Washington took these concerns seriously and adjusted his dispositions to respond to a potential British incursion against Boston. He kept three brigades at West Point and two more

nearby at Fishkill to guard the Hudson Highlands. A contingent of five brigades and the bulk of the artillery moved northward to Fredericksburg, New York, and five went to Danbury, Connecticut. The large force at Fredericksburg could reach either Fishkill or Danbury in one day, should Clinton strike either the Highlands or coastal Connecticut. If the British should move against Boston, the brigades at Fredericksburg and Danbury could move quickly to reinforce Massachusetts. The dispositions also kept the Continentals away from the coast and secure from a surprise attack. Washington thus planned for several eventualities but refused to allow himself to be drawn into an engagement at a disadvantage.

Rather than an attack on Boston, however, Clinton planned on an operation closer to his base, taking advantage of the leeway Germain afforded him because of the communications lag between Britain and North America. Clinton sought to forage at his enemy's expense by sending his forces into New Jersey. The appearance of the French fleet earlier in the summer had highlighted the tenuousness of British lines of communications and the need to build up a reserve of supplies. Grey's return to New York on 17 September gave the British a temporary numerical increase before Clinton would have to send away several regiments in October to comply with Germain's directives. On 22 September, Clinton sent Maj. Gen. Charles, 2nd Earl Cornwallis, with 5,000 soldiers to conduct a foraging operation in northern New Jersey. Concurrently, Lt. Gen. Wilhelm von Knyphausen led 3,000 troops up the Hudson to Dobbs Ferry in New York. Clinton sought to use Knyphausen's column to hold Washington's army in place on the east side of the Hudson while Cornwallis obtained supplies in New Jersey.

Washington responded by judiciously apportioning his units between the two sides of the Hudson but refrained from committing to a general action. He ordered a fresh brigade to New Jersey and directed Brig. Gen. William Maxwell to bring his New Jersey Continentals northward from Elizabethtown to Hackensack. He also moved a brigade to Peekskill to cover the approaches to West Point and ordered Scott to maintain his vigilance in Westchester County. The majority of the Continentals remained in the Highlands, away

from either Cornwallis's or Knyphausen's contingents. Protecting New Jersey's farms from enemy requisitions was not a valuable enough objective to risk the army in a general engagement.

Despite the patriots' generally aloof posture, their light units shadowing the Crown foragers nevertheless engaged in several skirmishes. On 27 September, Col. George Baylor's 3d Continental Light Dragoon Regiment, part of the covering force in Bergen County, quartered for the night at Old Tappan, 5 miles north of Paramus. Early the next morning, Baylor's 129 troopers suffered a surprise attack at the hands of a mixed party of British light infantry, grenadiers, loyalists, and dragoons under General Grey. Local loyalists guided Grey's 1,500-strong column to Baylor's position through farms and fields, evading road-bound patriot patrols. Grey's soldiers planned to attack with cold steel and refrain from firing their muskets to avoid alerting their enemy, similar to the methods Grey had used to ambush a patriot division at Paoli, Pennsylvania, the previous year. At Old Tappan, British light infantry infiltrated into the village and bayoneted the Continental dragoons in their quarters. Dismounted, unprepared, and uncoordinated, the patriots offered ineffectual resistance with their pistols and sabers. Grey's assault killed up to twenty-two dragoons and left up to thirty-four wounded, including Baylor. Thirty-three privates returned with the British as prisoners of war, along with seventy-eight captured horses.

A few days later, Clinton sent a mixed force of British regulars and American loyalist provincials under Capt. Patrick Ferguson to sail southward and raid a saltworks and privateer base at Egg Harbor, New Jersey, 80 miles from New York City. Ferguson's force arrived on 5 October and set about destroying the saltworks and supplies stored at nearby Chestnut Neck. Washington responded by dispatching a mixed group of infantry and mounted troops, known as a legion, under a Polish officer, Brig. Gen. Casimir Pulaski. Pulaski's Legion reached the vicinity of Egg Harbor only after a long and tiring march through sparsely inhabited territory. On 15 October, Ferguson launched a surprise nighttime attack on Pulaski's encampment reminiscent of Grey's assault two weeks earlier. Again, the Crown soldiers relied on local intelligence, this time provided by a deserter,

to approach their opponent's camp undetected, and then attacked with fixed bayonets while their enemy slept. Ferguson's troops killed fifty and took another five prisoners before withdrawing to their boats on the Mullica River.

Egg Harbor would be the last significant action of the fall campaign. On 10 October, Clinton began to pull his troops out of Westchester County, and Cornwallis ended the foraging operation in Bergen. Ferguson's command returned to New York on 24 October. At the end of the month, Clinton complied with his orders from Germain to dispatch reinforcements to Nova Scotia and the Caribbean. Although Clinton had failed to draw Washington into battle, the British general had nevertheless come off best in the autumn operations. He had discerned a limited window of opportunity in which to act before he suffered a significant reduction in manpower and used his limited forces judiciously to gather much-needed supplies. Relying on naval power, sound intelligence, and good discipline and leadership, Crown soldiers swept through littoral areas stretching from Massachusetts to New Jersey and inflicted several sharp defeats on isolated units.

Moreover, the British enjoyed success on the broader strategic level. The sizeable force under Maj. Gen. James Grant that departed New York in November 1778 arrived at Barbados on 10 December. From there, Grant landed on the French-held island of St. Lucia on 13 December, and secured control of it by the end of the month. A second British contingent under Lt. Col. Archibald Campbell reached the coast of Georgia on 23 December. A week later, Campbell's soldiers seized Savannah, the state's largest city, in a surprise attack.

Winter–Spring 1779

In the patriot camp, Washington and his subordinates monitored Clinton's withdrawal but concluded that the Continental Army would not be able to mount an offensive against New York that year. Their attention turned to the problem of winter quarters. In the early years of the war, Washington's army largely had dissolved during the winter months, as short-term enlistments expired and

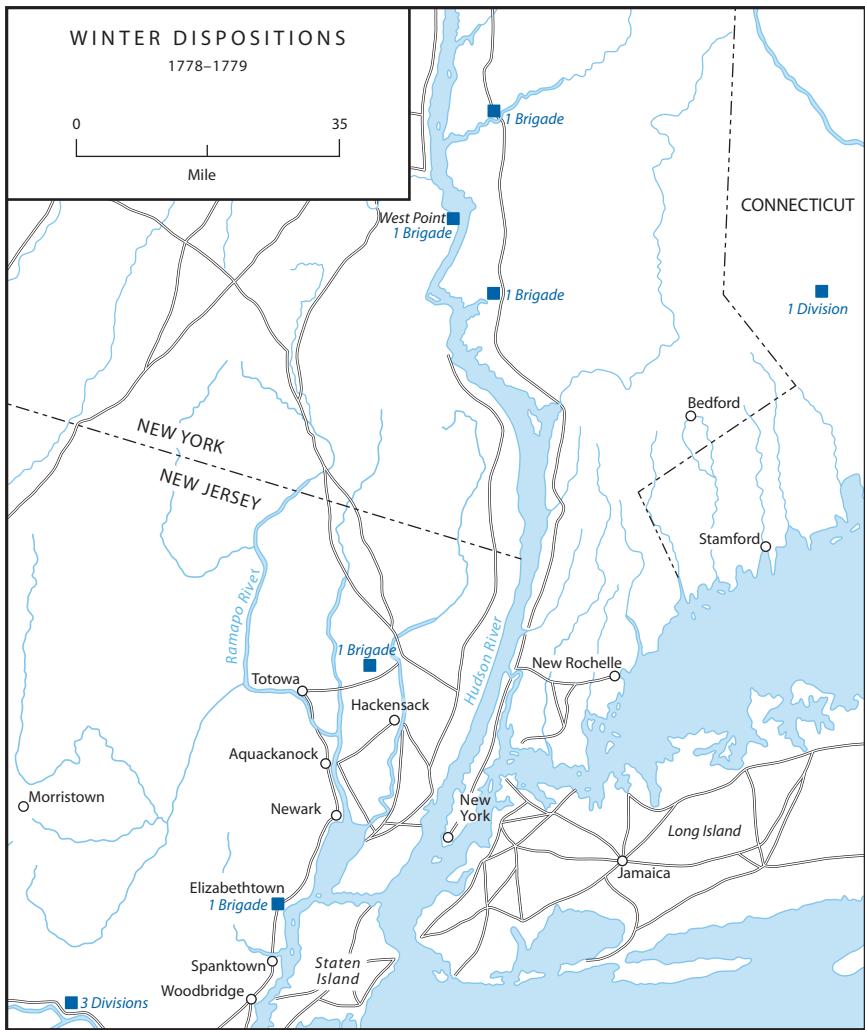
the small cadre that remained under arms throughout the winter typically billeted in civilian homes. During the 1777–1778 winter, however, the much larger army with long-term enlistees needed more substantial quarters. The Continentals had opted to build a cantonment at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, where the soldiers inhabited timber-built huts for six months. Keeping so large a force concentrated in a small area for such a long duration led to problems with camp hygiene and disease, and also exacerbated the already tenuous supply situation. Washington's army infamously endured periods of cold, starvation, and sickness, losing up to 2,500 troops before abandoning its campgrounds in early June. Both officers and enlisted soldiers thus viewed the coming winter with trepidation.

In mid-October, Washington solicited the opinions of his Main Army subordinates regarding where and how the army should winter. The ensuing debate revealed the differing outlooks American commanders held toward strategy, as well as the army's capabilities. General Gates, who had commanded the Northern Army in 1777 and had not been at Valley Forge, led a clique of officers opposed to building another cantonment. Gates instead believed that the army should move into billets distributed from Baltimore, Maryland, to Albany to ensure comfortable quarters and ease of supply. Many brigadier generals who had served at Valley Forge held the opposite viewpoint. They believed the army would be served best by erecting cantonments for quarters, which would facilitate training and ensure the defense of the region. They held confidence that officers and soldiers could improve camp construction and hygiene to avoid the worst problems encountered at Valley Forge. Washington ultimately opted for cantonments.

The question of where to place winter quarters was more vexing, as it intertwined directly with strategy. Most of Washington's officers saw the Hudson Highlands as the strategic lynchpin of the region, and therefore argued that the army should winter there. A West Point cantonment would present any British attack with immense difficulties, while also placing the army in a central location from which it could quickly reinforce New Jersey or Connecticut should either of those states come under threat.

Despite these strategic benefits, a cohort of officers led by quartermaster General Greene opposed a Highlands cantonment on logistical grounds. The campaign season had seen extensive operations occurring east of the Hudson, and the mid-Atlantic's food and forage stocks had been depleted to provision Washington's Main Army, Clinton's forces, Sullivan's contingent, and d'Estaing's force docked at Boston. Greene highlighted that much of the Americans' remaining supplies were stockpiled at the head of navigation of the Delaware River at Trenton. If the army spent the entire winter 80 miles away along the Hudson, Greene feared that the animal teams pulling supply wagons from Trenton would deplete entirely New Jersey's already low reserves of hay and grass, potentially leading to a more severe supply crisis than the one at Valley Forge. As an alternative, Greene proposed cantoning the army at Middlebrook, a locale near the southern terminus of the Watchung Mountains in New Jersey. A Middlebrook winter quarters would reduce the overland transportation of supplies from Trenton to only 20 miles, thus conserving forage. The area also boasted better sites for constructing huts than the more rugged Hudson Highlands.

Greene's logistical arguments ultimately convinced Washington, and in early December, the army left its camp at Fredericksburg, New York, and marched to winter quarters (*Map 3*). Washington brought the bulk of his forces, with two brigades each from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia overwintering at Middlebrook, as well as most of the artillery. To cover this force, he sent the New Jersey brigade to occupy a forward position at Elizabethtown and ordered the North Carolina brigade to Paramus and Smith's Clove, a long narrow valley along the New Jersey–New York border. Only three brigades, all from Massachusetts, remained in the Hudson Highlands, taking positions at West Point on that river's western shore and Fishkill and Peekskill on the eastern side. Maj. Gen. Alexander McDougall assumed responsibility for this division and the independent Highlands Department administering it. Washington also placed a strong force to guard coastal Connecticut, putting Maj. Gen. Israel Putnam in command of the New Hampshire brigade and two Connecticut brigades at a cantonment near Danbury. Overall,



Map 3

these dispositions balanced strategic and logistical considerations and left the army well placed to respond to any British threat in the region.

Continental soldiers demonstrated remarkable improvements in their arrangements for and conduct in winter quarters compared to the previous year. Owing to Greene's advance preparations,

soldiers found woodworking tools and boards cut at local sawmills awaiting them when they arrived at their cantonment sites, allowing them to build their quarters more rapidly and with better-quality construction. Under their officers' direction, the soldiers erected sturdier huts in a much more orderly fashion than the previous year, ensuring better living conditions. Officers also enforced strict discipline in the placement of latrines, removal of garbage, and personal hygiene throughout the winter. All these precautions held camp fevers at bay, and observers who visited the camp in the spring frequently commented on the army's good health. Greene's prescient selection of cantonment sites also ensured a consistent flow of supplies throughout the winter. Unlike at Valley Forge, the army never faced starvation conditions, and never had to resort to risky midwinter foraging expeditions.

The Continentals ultimately engaged in only limited combat. In December 1778, a British force moved up the Hudson while the Main Army marched for its winter cantonment sites. Concurrently, patriot authorities were transferring the large contingent of British and German soldiers captured at Saratoga, known as the Convention Army, from Massachusetts to Virginia. Washington feared that Clinton may have sought to liberate the Convention soldiers as they passed through New York. The commander in chief maintained his Pennsylvania brigades in the Highlands until late December to monitor British movements, but the redcoats withdrew without a fight. The sudden appearance of an enemy force on the Hudson nevertheless demonstrated the strategic importance of the river and the necessity of maintaining Continentals in the area. During subsequent months, however, the British and German soldiers in New York did not engage in significant activity. Maxwell's brigade at Elizabethtown faced only one enemy raid in February. In New York, detachments sent from the Highlands patrolled Westchester County but faced the Americans in only small skirmishes. The majority of the Main Army enjoyed a winter largely free from enemy harassment.

Most of the forward-deployed troops focused their efforts not on halting enemy foraging sweeps and raids but on deterring civilians from conducting illegal trade with the enemy. Throughout the war,

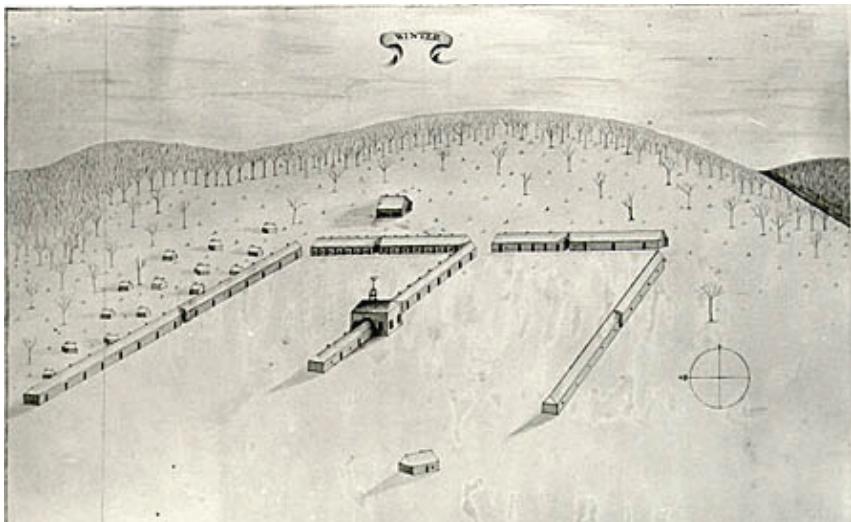
the populations of the lower Hudson Valley and northern New Jersey had continued to maintain their social, cultural, and economic ties to New York City despite the British occupation. Military and civilian authorities provided civilians passports to cross into New York under a flag of truce to visit family and attend to personal matters. Washington realized the value these crossings had for collecting intelligence, and frequently granted passports to individuals who offered to spy on the enemy while conducting business in New York. Many people abused the system, however, and others ignored it altogether and visited New York with no authorization.

Trade with that city had formed an integral part of the region's prewar economy, and local residents continued to follow this pattern despite the enemy occupation. The French entry into the war made locally acquired supplies more important to the British garrison, as shipments from home were now at greater risk of being intercepted by French vessels. By 1779, farmers consistently took draft animals, foodstuffs, and wood to New York, and brought home specie, tea, fine fabrics, and other luxuries otherwise unavailable because of the war. This "London Trade" caused great consternation to both Washington and civilian leaders, as resources the Continental Army desperately needed instead flowed into the enemy's hands. State governments threatened violators with fines, property confiscation, and even death, but to no avail, as Washington lacked the soldiers to stop most of the illegal trade.

Although some civilians traded and fraternized with the enemy, other communities descended into partisan violence. A series of localized civil wars developed throughout the arc of territory between the patriot and Crown armies stretching from New Jersey to Connecticut. In Monmouth County, New Jersey, for example, roughly one-third of the population actively supported the Crown at some point during the war. Troops served in loyalist provincial regiments or in irregular units with less oversight from British commanders. Enslaved New Jerseyans escaped to British lines and formed the *Black Brigade*, which operated out of Sandy Hook after 1779. Others became "pine robbers," raiding and pillaging indiscriminately in the sparsely settled Monmouth forests. To the

north, Orange and Westchester Counties in New York also witnessed internecine conflicts between neighbors. Outlaws terrorized Orange County, stealing horses and selling them to British authorities, prompting intervention from the New York militia that slowed this marauding by 1779. In Westchester, proximity to New York facilitated closer British involvement in partisan operations. Loyalist refugees on Manhattan organized under Brig. Gens. Oliver de Lancey and Cortlandt Skinner raided northward to capture livestock and other supplies. Militia patrols and local patriot irregulars contested these forays, but also requisitioned supplies and harassed suspected loyalist civilians. By late 1778, this “neutral ground” between the armies in Westchester had descended into lawlessness, with robbery, smuggling, and property destruction rampant. During the 1778–1779 winter, General McDougall attempted to restore order to the region and sent a detachment of Continentals under Lt. Col. Aaron Burr to arrest plunderers and return stolen property to its rightful owners. This intervention provided only a temporary respite, however, and when the Continentals withdrew, partisan violence returned to Westchester and continued intermittently until the end of the war.

In the interior, the population typically maintained a pro-patriot stance, due in part to the army’s growing awareness of the importance of maintaining good relations with the civilian population. The Continental Army’s previous winter in New Jersey during early 1777 witnessed widespread trampling of farms, damage to houses, and plundering of property as Washington’s troops quartered in private homes throughout the northern half of the state. Two years later, stronger discipline, an improved logistical apparatus, and the concentration of the army in cantonments minimized the disruptions to civilian life. Soldiers found that those who plundered faced swift punishments. Continental officers cultivated positive relations with local elites by holding balls, parades, and other ceremonies at Middlebrook. One event at the extensive artillery cantonment at nearby Pluckemin in March featured a banquet feast, illuminated arches depicting patriotic scenes, and a fireworks display. Overall, Washington and his officers made the best impression possible on the local population, helping to secure vital civilian support.



Drawing of the Pluckemin Cantonment by Capt. John Lillie, ca. 1770s (National Park Service)

The relative quiet the army enjoyed during the 1778–1779 winter enabled Continental leaders to institute significant reforms. Foremost among these was the codification of the improvements General Steuben had made to tactical drill and administration while at Valley Forge. Steuben spent most of early 1779 working with a small staff in Philadelphia to write the Continental Army's new manual of arms. By March, Steuben and his team completed the preliminary draft of *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*. The book consisted of three sections. The first provided a tactical manual that streamlined the marching and firing processes from earlier British and Prussian works. The second section contained regulations for military administration, covering how to conduct courts-martial and inspections, construct and maintain encampments, and establish guard posts. The final section clarified the duties of officers and enlisted troops. Between June and August, Philadelphia printers produced up to 1,500 copies of the manual—colloquially known as the “Blue Book” because of the color of its cover—for distribution throughout the army.

Summer–Fall 1779

Throughout early 1779, Washington faced pressure from the national government over how to best use the army. His Continentals had achieved higher levels of training, leadership, equipment, and health than at any previous point. It appeared to be an ideal time to take to the offensive. Without French naval support, however, an assault on New York remained impossible. Congress instead proposed mounting another invasion of Canada. The British surrender at Saratoga in 1777 had rendered the northern theater quiet, and it appeared to civilian leaders that a larger and more experienced Continental Army might find better success in Canada than their forebears had in 1775.

Washington opposed such a move as needlessly risky. Instead, he agreed to mount an offensive against the Haudenosaunee (also known as the Iroquois), the powerful Indigenous league in western New York that largely supported the British. Native American resistance to encroaching settlers had intensified in 1778, culminating in clashes at Wyoming, Pennsylvania, in July and Cherry Valley, New York, in November that left more than 300 dead. Washington recognized that a move against the Haudenosaunee groups aligned with the British would help secure the frontier and deny King George III the support of a valuable cobelligerent. Such an expedition would not face British sea power but would enable the revolutionaries to make good use of the powerful force they had built up during the winter. Under General Sullivan's command, the New Jersey and New Hampshire brigades from the Main Army joined mixed brigades under Brig. Gens. John Stark and Edward Hand and Brig. Gen. James Clinton's New Yorkers, along with a separate column marching from Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania, in a multipronged invasion of the Haudenosaunee homeland. Even with this significant detachment, Washington still could call upon a sizeable army to confront General Clinton's redcoats and Germans around New York City.

In the British camp, General Clinton planned for a summer campaign in the Hudson Highlands. Clinton had successfully penetrated that mountainous barrier in October 1777 against weak

resistance and recognized the continued strategic importance of the region. Loyalist spies and deserters confirmed that even in the spring of 1779 defensive works at Stony Point on the Hudson's western shore and Fort Lafayette at Verplanck's Point across the river lacked full garrisons and therefore lay vulnerable. These sites anchored the King's Ferry crossing over the Hudson, the primary route by which the Continentals transported soldiers and supplies from New England to New Jersey. Blocking this choke point would force a lengthy detour around the Highlands, severely inhibiting patriot logistics.

Based on this intelligence, Clinton worked out a complex plan to draw Washington out of his fortified camps. First, on 5 May 1779, Clinton dispatched Commodore George Collier and Maj. Gen. Edward Mathew to raid the privateer base at Portsmouth, Virginia. Clinton hoped this diversion would fix Washington's attention southward and draw some Continentals to Virginia, providing Clinton with the opportunity to move his army up the Hudson to Stony Point. The patriot intelligence network kept the commander in chief apprised of British activities, however, and revealed Clinton's intentions. Washington therefore readied his army in New Jersey, ordered Brig. Gen. Jedediah Huntington's Connecticut brigade at Danbury, Connecticut, to march to the Highlands, and refrained from sending any units southward. Collier and Mathew succeeded in eliminating more than 130 ships in Virginia, destroyed a shipyard, and seized several tons of naval stores. The British had revealed the state's weak defenses but failed to entice the Continentals away from New York City.

Instead, Washington's army stood ready to contain the British thrust up the Hudson. Throughout the spring, Washington repeatedly had attempted and failed to secure a French naval commitment to facilitate an attack on New York City, but to no avail. He would have to remain on the defensive and react to Clinton's moves. However, after a winter spent drilling, recuperating, and husbanding resources, the Americans stood well prepared. In the Highlands, General McDougall placed Brig. Gens. John Paterson's and John Nixon's Massachusetts brigades to cover landing sites on

both sides of the river, with Brig. Gens. Ebenezer Learned's and Jedediah Huntington's brigades in reserve. In Connecticut, General Putnam positioned Brig. Gen. Samuel Holden Parsons's Connecticut brigade a day's march away from the Highlands. In New Jersey, the North Carolina brigade at Paramus could reach West Point in a day, whereas the six brigades at Middlebrook could arrive in two.

Clinton initiated the second phase of his campaign after Collier and Mathew returned from Virginia on 28 May 1779. Maj. Gen. James Vaughn led a mixed contingent of line and light infantry, grenadiers, Germans, American loyalists, and mounted troops into Westchester County, where they camped near Philipsburg Manor on the Hudson's eastern shore. Mathew's troops and Collier's ships, with Clinton embarked, joined Vaughn on 30 May. The next day, Clinton's troops seized the American post at Stony Point; the small garrison there burned their blockhouse and retreated upon the enemy's arrival. During the night, the British brought ashore artillery and emplaced it on the heights above Stony Point. On 1 June, General Vaughn's column surrounded Fort Lafayette at Verplanck's Point, while British batteries at Stony Point and ships in the river bombarded the post. The defenders consisting of seventy Continentals of the 5th North Carolina Regiment surrendered. After these rapid victories, the British left behind detachments at both sites and began strengthening their defenses.

Although the move up the Hudson had induced Washington to leave Middlebrook, the patriots continued to enjoy strong natural defenses at Smith's Clove and the Highlands. Clinton held his main body at Philipsburg to await Washington's reaction, but the patriot commander responded cautiously. While the New York militia mobilized and McDougall strengthened the defenses around West Point, Washington kept most of his army at the Clove. He feared that the British intended their move up the Hudson as a feint, and that the main blow might yet land in New Jersey. Indeed, the British commander entertained the possibility of raiding into New Jersey and disrupting the flow of supplies to the Highlands. Such a move, however, threatened to reduce the British garrison in New York further, a chance Clinton was unwilling to take. The strategic

assumptions under which Clinton had initiated the campaign proved faulty. London had promised 6,000 reinforcements, which the general had expected would arrive by early summer. Poor weather in the English Channel, followed by a French attack on Jersey in the Channel Islands, delayed their departure until early June. Without these additional soldiers, Clinton lacked the strength to besiege West Point, assault Smith's Clove, or strike into New Jersey. The King's Ferry crossing site was of too little importance for Washington to risk a general engagement. Consequently, through the end of June, the opponents remained largely stationary.

While at Philipsburg Manor, Clinton attempted to solicit greater support from loyalists and other groups disaffected from the revolutionary cause. In particular, he sought to gain the allegiance of the region's Black population. From Philipsburg, he issued a proclamation offering freedom and security to "every Negro who shall desert the Rebel Standard." This marked the first time that a British commander in chief had made the freedom of formerly enslaved Americans official policy. The proclamation applied only to persons enslaved by revolutionaries; loyalists retained the authority to hold Black people in bondage.

The Philipsburg Manor proclamation highlighted the vulnerabilities in the patriot cause, and the creative strategies available to British leaders to exploit them. Enslaved persons made up more than 10 percent of New York and New Jersey's populations, with concentrations in nearby Bergen County and the middle Hudson Valley. Cultivating active support from Black Americans could have provided the Crown with valuable manpower and denied an important economic asset to the revolutionaries. Foregrounding slavery in British strategy, however, would alienate White loyalists, especially in the vital southern theater. The redcoats did little to support the proclamation militarily in New York and New Jersey. Ultimately, only those Black Americans who ran the great risk of embarking on their own to escape slavery and make their ways to British lines achieved freedom.

In an attempt to move the campaign forward, Clinton resorted to the coastal raiding that had featured prominently in his strategy

the previous year. On 4 July, 5,000 troops drawn from New York and Rhode Island under Maj. Gen. William Tryon attacked the privateer base at New Haven, Connecticut. Clinton hoped that by shifting his offensive eastward, he could induce Washington to move out of Smith's Clove and across the Hudson. With King's Ferry blocked, the Continentals would face logistical difficulties if they stayed in Connecticut for an extended period—a vulnerability which Clinton might then exploit to win a major victory. Tryon's command encountered spirited resistance from the Connecticut militia at New Haven but succeeded in burning seven ships docked at the town as well as twenty-seven houses and twenty other buildings. The British suffered around 100 casualties in the operation. Tryon proceeded to strike Fairfield on 7–8 July and Norwalk on the twelfth. Although the coastal attacks caused extensive damage to the Connecticut towns and privateer shipping anchored there, they failed to draw the Continental Army out of its secure position.

In the Highlands, Washington prepared to launch a counterblow against the garrisons Clinton had left behind at Stony Point and Verplanck's Point. The primary force carrying out this task was to be the Corps of Light Infantry, established for the campaign season on 12 June with Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne commanding. The twenty-nine regiments from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware under Washington's immediate command furnished around 700 officers and enlisted troops. By the summer of 1779, every Continental infantryman was trained in line and light infantry tactics, easing the task of selecting soldiers for the Corps. On 15 June, Washington organized the Corps into two regiments, each consisting of two four-company battalions. Col. Richard Butler of Pennsylvania commanded one of the regiments, with Maj. John Steward of Maryland and Lt. Col. Samuel Hay of Pennsylvania leading the battalions. Danish-born Col. Christian Febiger led the other regiment, with French volunteer Lt. Col. François-Louis Teissèdre de Fleury and Virginian Maj. Thomas Posey leading the battalions. Each of these officers had combat experience, and all except Fleury had previously led light infantrymen. Fleury had trained as an engineer and brought knowledge of assaulting fortified

positions; he also had garnered combat experience at Fort Mifflin the previous year.

In early July, Washington added two additional two-battalion regiments to the corps. One of these consisted entirely of Connecticut troops. Lt. Col. Return Jonathan Meigs commanded, with Lt. Cols. Isaac Sherman and Henry Champion leading the battalions. The fourth and final regiment, with six Massachusetts and two North Carolina companies, operated under Connecticut Lt. Col. William Hull's command. Hull also led the Massachusetts battalion, with North Carolinian Maj. Hardy Murfree leading his two state's companies. All these officers held extensive combat experience.

Throughout the first two weeks of July, Wayne prepared his soldiers while the patriots reconnoitered the British positions at the King's Ferry crossings. The combined intelligence gleaned from extensive reconnaissance revealed a strong enemy defensive position. Stony Point lay on a peninsula, bordered on three sides by the Hudson River's Haverstraw Bay. The terrain of the narrow neck of land connecting Stony Point to the mainland consisted of a swamp that often flooded at high tide. A causeway provided the only reliable link between the rocky peninsula and the mainland. The main defensive post consisted of a triangular fort on the site's highest point, about 150 feet above the water. Around this "upper works," the British cut down all the trees to obtain clear fields of fire for infantry. They then used the logs to build wooden spiked barriers known as abatis and bolstered these with breastworks and three artillery emplacements. Additional abatis and breastworks and three further artillery emplacements comprised the outer defenses known as the "lower works." The garrison could call upon an impressive array of ordnance that included seven 24-pounder guns, two medium 12-pounder guns, two long 12-pounder guns, and two brass 3-pounder field guns, as well as one howitzer and two mortars, plus an additional six iron 6-pound guns not yet mounted. Lt. Col. Henry Johnson, a 31-year-old officer with eighteen years of experience, commanded the post and its 600-strong detail, consisting primarily of his *17th Foot*. The grenadier company of the *71st Foot*, a company from the *Loyal American Regiment*,

and a detachment of *Royal Artillery* rounded out the Stony Point garrison.

Against this “Little Gibraltar,” Wayne argued that a conventional assault would likely fail, and that the patriots would either need to draw their opponents out and ambush them or mount a surprise night attack. Wayne and Washington worked out the details for the latter option between 12 and 14 July. The plan represented a further refinement of Continental doctrine for assaulting enemy fortified posts. Earlier in the war at Trenton, Princeton, and Germantown, the patriots had used multiple columns comprising a blocking force and a main attack force, and often supporting or diversionary thrusts as well. At Stony Point, the light infantry corps was to proceed along three separate routes and assault the fortifications from the north, south, and west. The northern and southern columns were to move down the Hudson’s western shore and clear any obstacles. Leading each column, a group of 20 soldiers, known as the “forlorn hope” because of the perilous nature of their mission, would breach the defenses and await the 200 troops of the vanguard following close behind. These soldiers would secure the breach and open the way for the rest of the assault force. Both northern and southern columns would attack with bayonets fixed and muskets unloaded to avoid any accidental discharges that would spoil the surprise. Officers were not to inform the soldiers of their destination until the operation was underway, to preserve secrecy. Only the troops of the center column, which was to act as diversion, were permitted to load their muskets.

Wayne’s corps assembled at midday on 15 July and then embarked on a 10-mile approach march through the Highlands. They waited at Springsteel Farm until night fell, still unaware of their objective. Only at 2300 did Wayne and his officers address the rank and file and reveal the plan to assault Stony Point. Soldiers then fixed bayonets and placed white paper in their hats to provide a means of discerning one another in the moonless night. The corps split into three columns and began their final approach at 2315. All three columns reached their assembly points without incident and paused for twenty minutes to allow the Hudson’s tides to recede.

Fighting began shortly thereafter. The diversionary force in the center under Maj. Hardy Murfree, with two companies of North Carolina light infantry, initiated contact with British pickets along the causeway, their heavy fire convincing the redcoats that the patriots were indeed attacking from that direction. Colonel Johnson led six companies out of the fort against Murfree, just as the main weight of the patriot attack struck elsewhere. The southern column, composed of the regiments of Febiger and Meigs and the Massachusetts battalion under Hull, approached Stony Point along the Hudson shore, wading through water that even at low tide stood around 2 feet deep. The splashing sounds of 700 soldiers' footsteps alerted the British pickets that they faced a large American contingent, leading the redcoats to retire quickly to the fort and open fire on Wayne's troops with a 12-pounder cannon. They had not positioned this piece to fire toward the riverbank, however, and it failed to inflict significant casualties. The southern assault therefore unfolded largely as planned. Lt. George Knox led the "forlorn hope" into the fort and began clearing obstacles. The soldiers suffered several casualties from heavy but generally inaccurate British fire. They cleared the lower works and moved on to the abatis and the upper works. Fleury sent forward elements of his vanguard to assist Knox's troops. To the north, Butler's column enjoyed a dry approach march to the fort and moved quickly through the lower works (*Map 4*).

The size of the American assault and the difficulty of coordinating a defense during the night undermined any chance of turning back Wayne's infantry, despite the bravery of British soldiers and the competent leadership of their line officers. Most of the heavy British artillery never fired, although given the darkness and intermingling of troops it would have been difficult to find appropriate targets. In these circumstances, the light infantry of the southern column overcame the abatis of the upper works and penetrated the heart of the British position. Colonel Fleury led the first party over the parapet, followed rapidly by the rest of the column. During this phase of the attack, a musket ball grazed Wayne's head. Despite the wound, he continued to urge his soldiers forward. Faced with the



Map 4

onrushing Americans, British forces in the upper works surrendered first, followed shortly thereafter by those manning the lower works and outer defenses.

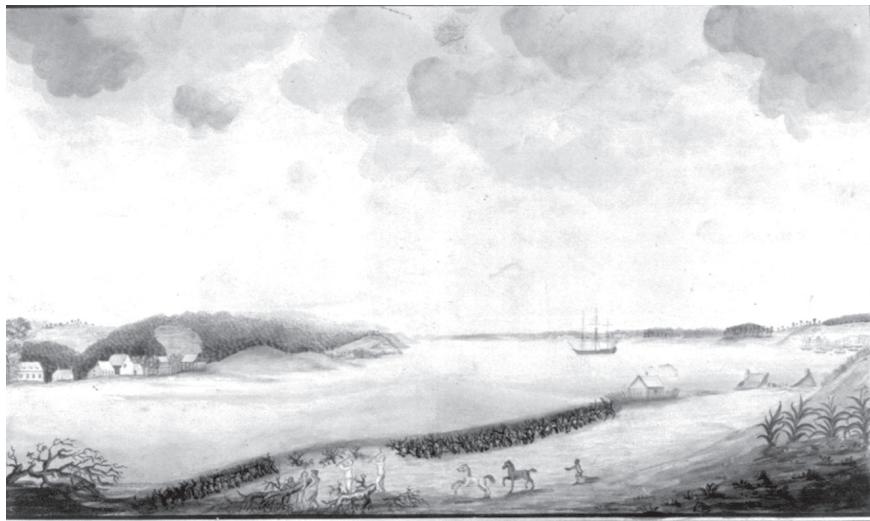
Wayne's assault resulted in an overwhelming tactical success. In an action that lasted roughly half an hour, the patriots suffered thirteen dead and sixty-four wounded. The British lost approximately 60 dead and around the same number wounded. The Continentals took 543 prisoners, 2 standards from the *17th Foot* and 2 more from the *Loyal Americans*. Seized weapons and supplies amounted to 15 pieces of artillery, 334 muskets, more than 30,000 cartridges and artillery rounds, and 140 tents. The Continentals also captured additional material such as musical instruments, which they auctioned, and then distributed the proceeds among the officers and soldiers of the Corps of Light Infantry.

Washington planned to follow up the success at Stony Point with an offensive against Verplanck's Point across the river. Upon receiving word of Wayne's victory on 16 July, the commander in chief ordered Maj. Gen. Robert Howe to lead an attack on the British position using Nixon's and Paterson's brigades. Washington's plan called for a conventional and deliberate siege of the enemy works using entrenchments and heavy artillery. He specifically instructed Howe to make his preparations obvious, hoping that the British would evacuate the post rather than fight. However, Howe encountered supply shortages and delays in moving his artillery and did not get his forces into place until late on 17 July. The following morning, he received intelligence reports that General Clinton had sent soldiers northward, threatening the Americans' flank and rear. After a council of war with his brigadiers, Howe decided to withdraw back to Peekskill. With the east side of King's Ferry unsecured, Washington saw that he could not hold Stony Point, and ordered the fortifications destroyed. The Continentals abandoned the site and marched back to West Point. Clinton's troops reoccupied Stony Point by the end of July and proceeded to strengthen the garrison to more than 1,500 redcoats to deter the patriots from making another attempt.

Stony Point stood as a dramatic tactical success for the Continentals that boosted the army's morale and raised Wayne's reputation as a

commander, which had suffered in the wake of earlier defeats during the fighting around Philadelphia in 1777. It also demonstrated to the public that the Continental Army was not dormant, even if it fought no great pitched battles that summer. Nevertheless, operations in the Hudson Highlands remained deadlocked for the rest of the season. Washington thus turned his attention to the neighboring states. He sent General Howe to Ridgefield, Connecticut, to assume command of the militia there, along with Glover's brigade, to deter further British incursions. Connecticut militiamen raided across Long Island Sound into Suffolk County, New York, leading General Clinton to reinforce his eastern outposts. Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. William Alexander, Lord Stirling, received orders to hold his division of Virginia troops at Suffern, on the New York–New Jersey border, to respond to either a British move into Jersey or reinforce West Point if needed. Washington kept the Corps of Light Infantry close to Stony Point to monitor enemy activity there, whereas the remainder of the army remained in place deeper in the Highlands.

In New Jersey, the Americans planned an operation similar to the Stony Point assault. Maj. Henry Lee proposed a surprise attack on the British post at Paulus Hook, site of a ferry terminus opposite New York City on the Jersey side of the Hudson, today a neighborhood of Jersey City. Like Stony Point, Paulus Hook lay isolated from the main body of the Crown army and relied on geography for its defense. River and marshland surrounded the post on three sides, with only a single causeway crossing the meadows to the west. The garrison used a drawbridge to control access to the site, and flooded ditches nearby to impede potential attackers. Beyond the ditches, an abatis blocked the way to higher ground, and it extended into the tidal flats on either side of the peninsula to prevent soldiers from wading along the shoreline as Wayne's troops had at Stony Point. The blockhouses, artillery batteries, and earthworks of the inner defenses promised immense difficulties for any attacker. The garrison under Maj. William Sutherland's command consisted of 200 soldiers from the British *Invalid Regiment* and 150 soldiers of the loyalist *4th Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers*, led by Lt. Col. Abraham Van Buskirk.

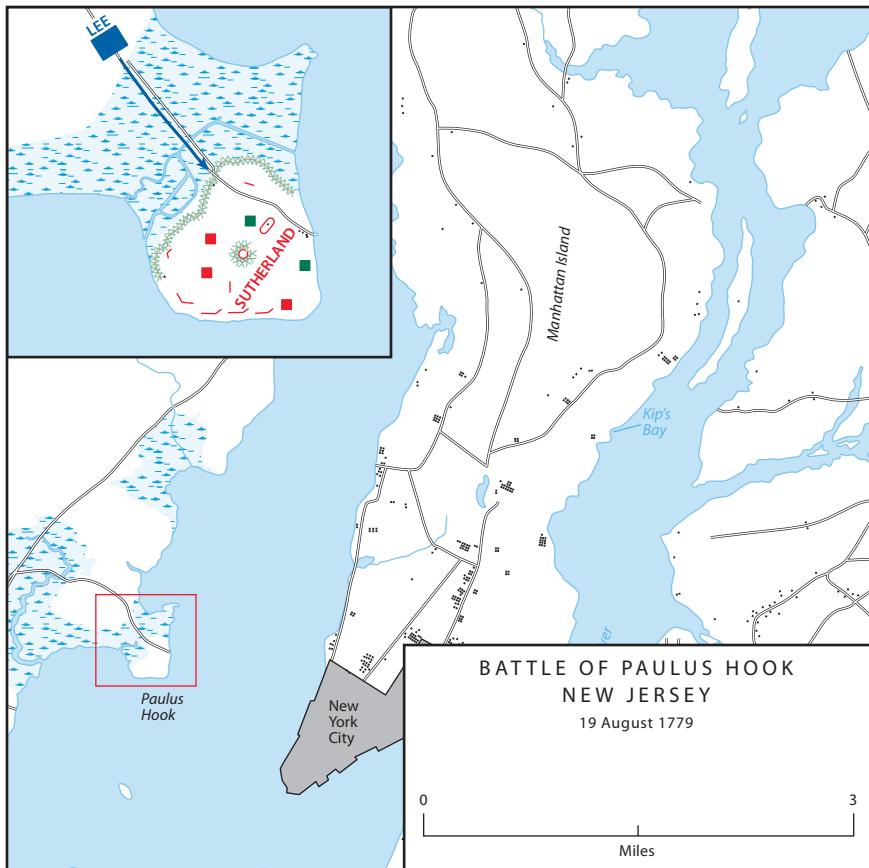


A View from Paulushook of Horsimus on the Jersey Shore and Part of York Island, I. N. Phelps Stokes and John Montrésor, 1777 (Library of Congress)

Lee's plan called for secrecy and surprise. He employed a much smaller contingent than had Wayne at Stony Point, with roughly 400 infantry and dismounted dragoons drawn from the 8th and 10th Virginia and 5th Maryland Regiments as well as Lee's Corps of Partisan Light Dragoons. The latter was a mounted formation intended to raid enemy rear areas. His force began the operation camped at New Bridge Landing, 14 miles from their objective, at 1600 on 18 August. They set out on a southward march; they split into three columns that each used different roads for their approach. Small detachments broke off to protect lines of retreat and cover likely landing sites along the Hudson waterfront in case British troops in New York should come to their comrades' aid. Problems mounted during the night. Lee's guide lost his way, prolonging the march and leading to straggling. The delay meant that Lee's main column did not reach the vicinity of Paulus Hook at 0300 on 19 August. The major had hoped to use three columns to storm the position, similar to Stony Point, but the night's delays meant that now the tide was rising, blocking one of the intended lines of attack. Lee decided to press ahead with a two-column assault instead.

Good fortune did not completely forsake the young major. That same night, the loyalist *4th Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers*, had marched out of Paulus Hook intent on reconnoitering the vicinity of New Bridge Landing. Forty German soldiers arrived from New York to strengthen the garrison while the Jersey loyalists were away. Lee's column did not encounter Buskirk's troops during the night and arrived at Paulus Hook to find the gates open, awaiting the loyalists' return. Given such circumstances, Lee's troops successfully forced their way through the outer barriers and into the heart of the post with minimal resistance. Nevertheless, Sutherland and twenty-five Germans secured themselves inside a blockhouse, and the patriots could not dislodge them. Nor could Lee's soldiers locate a key to unlock the fort's magazine, preventing them from seizing enemy ammunition. The presence of sick soldiers, women, and children inside the fort's barracks led Lee to countermand orders to burn the structure. With dawn approaching and fearing Buskirk's return, Lee withdrew, having inflicted some 50 casualties and taken more than 150 prisoners (*Map 5*).

The retrograde resulted in further fighting. The New York garrison quickly dispatched reinforcements, and Sutherland pursued as Lee fell back. Lee had planned to use flatboats to cross the Hackensack River during the withdrawal to avoid using the same path that he had taken for the approach march. On the morning of 19 August, however, he discovered that a subordinate had assumed Lee had called off the attack, and therefore had removed the boats to Newark. The patriots had to march home the way they had come, which exposed Lee's command to dangers from several directions. Sutherland continued to follow from Paulus Hook. Buskirk's command remained at large in the vicinity. Farther away, Lee moved northward with the Hudson River only 2 miles away for the entire duration of the march. British units in New York City could move up the river rapidly, land on the Jersey shore, and cut off the patriots' escape. Fortunately for the Americans, General Stirling sent forward elements of his division to facilitate Lee's return march. A company from the 2d Virginia Regiment arrived at Weehawken to block any British landing along the Hudson from intercepting Lee. To the



Map 5

north, the patriots encountered Buskirk's loyalists near Liberty Pole. The Crown soldiers, like Lee's troops, had been marching throughout the night and were exhausted; Buskirk's advance parties skirmished with Lee's rearguard, but did not pursue them closely. The American soldiers reached the safety of New Bridge Landing by 1300 on 19 August. They lost four killed, three wounded, and seven captured in the initial raid, as well as three captured at Liberty Pole.

Although both armies focused on New York and New Jersey during the summer of 1779, the revolutionaries also embarked on an ultimately costly coastal operation to the northeast. On 12 June, a 700-strong British contingent under Brig. Gen. Francis McLean

had landed at Bagaduce on Penobscot Bay in the Maine district of Massachusetts. A British presence at Penobscot threatened Massachusetts's control over its northeastern territories and secured for the British the approaches to the vital naval base at Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Crown could use the base to support the Penobscot nation who inhabited the region's interior and to undermine the neutrality of other Indian nations in the area. Loyalists meanwhile hoped to establish a colony in the Maine district known as "New Ireland." With Continental soldiers unavailable for such a peripheral area, the Massachusetts state government took charge of planning and executing an operation to drive the enemy from Penobscot Bay. Wealth obtained from a brisk trade with the French and successful privateering afforded the Boston government with resources that would have been unavailable to most other states. Massachusetts mobilized more than 1,000 militiamen from York and Cumberland Counties under the command of Brig. Gen. Solomon Lovell to conduct the land campaign. Lovell had experience in the Seven Years' War and had commanded a militia brigade during the Rhode Island campaign. The Massachusetts State Navy and civilians provided more than forty vessels, and the Continental Congress assigned three Continental Navy ships to the engagement. Commodore Dudley Saltonstall led the naval forces. Massachusetts artillerists under Lt. Col. Paul Revere and the Continental Marines brought the land contingent up to a total of 1,150 soldiers. Against this force, General McLean had 750 redcoats available, mostly troops from the *74th Foot* and *82d Foot*, as well as an artillery detachment and engineers. At the tip of a peninsula guarding the entrance to the harbor, the newly built Fort George anchored the defense.

The American fleet arrived off Penobscot on 25 July and exchanged fire with the three British ships under Capt. Henry Mowat guarding the harbor. Continental Marines succeeded in storming isolated batteries on Nautilus Island the next day, forcing the British naval force to withdraw up the Bagaduce River. Heavy fire from Fort George, however, turned back any naval pursuit. In response, Lovell landed 750 militiamen and began to dig siege lines. On 28 July, 400 militia and Continental Marines under Brig. Gen.

Peleg Wadsworth landed on the western tip of the peninsula with the objective of storming Fort George. Advancing with the support of three ships, Wadsworth's force pushed back the redcoats' outer defenses, but it suffered up to 100 casualties. Lovell maintained an aggressive siege for the following two weeks but failed to dislodge the defenders. Saltonstall meanwhile attempted to attack the enemy naval force anchored up the Bagaduce but came under heavy fire from both the British ships and the guns of Fort George, which forced the flotilla to turn back. To clear the way for Saltonstall's fleet, the militia and marines launched a night attack on 1 August and seized an outlying British battery, but heavy fire from the fort and a British counterattack at dawn compelled the Americans to withdraw.

Solomon and Saltonstall maintained the siege of Fort George for the next two weeks. The patriots planned to mount another assault on 13 August but cancelled the attack when a British relief expedition under Commodore Collier arrived, forcing a hasty end to the siege. Collier pursued the American ships up the river, and by 16 August drove the patriots to burn or scuttle their entire fleet. The remaining soldiers, sailors, and marines made their way back to Massachusetts over land through the Maine wilderness. The Americans lost at least 150 soldiers during the siege, and 474 more during the retreat.

The campaign demonstrated the divergence between the increasingly regularized Continental Army and state forces. Whereas the Continentals maintained a large, well-equipped presence in the Hudson Highlands, Massachusetts struggled to support or reinforce the expedition to a distant zone of combat. Continental officers proved adept at planning and executing bold operations that made good use of their well-drilled rank and file, contrasting with the Massachusetts militia's unsuccessful assaults on British positions. The rapid collapse of the siege after Collier's arrival also highlighted the imperative of proper naval support for any littoral operation. Moreover, the expedition was financially ruinous for the Massachusetts state government, and the Crown retained control of Penobscot and held sway over central and northern Maine until the war's end.

The success at Penobscot represented a bright spot for the British, compared to their tactical defeats at Stony Point and Paulus Hook. By late August, the strategic situation put Clinton wholly on the defensive. Intelligence arrived that a French fleet under d'Estaing was heading northward from the Caribbean. Clinton's superiors feared Canada might be d'Estaing's target, forcing Clinton to send 2,000 soldiers to bolster Halifax's garrison. He also prepared to dispatch troops to the Caribbean, as he had the previous year. Conversely, reinforcements from Britain were a hinderance rather than a help. The 3,800 troops that arrived on 25 August carried disease, which quickly spread to the rest of the army. Sickness left 6,000 of Clinton's soldiers bedridden in September. When the British learned that month that d'Estaing's fleet was sailing not toward Canada but farther south, they grew concerned that New York City might soon come under threat.

Winter–Spring 1780

The initiative passed back to the Americans. Washington received word at the end of September that the French fleet had appeared off the coast of Savannah, Georgia, and he hoped that his allies would soon sail north to help him execute his long-awaited assault on New York City. He held the main body of his army in the safety of the Hudson Highlands while Sullivan's command completed its operation in western New York against the Haudenosaunee and marched back for the eastern theater. With those Continentals on the way, the commander in chief hoped to have both sufficient land and naval forces on hand to strike directly at Clinton during late autumn. Optimistically, he ordered his quartermasters to stockpile supplies and his artificers to ready small boats needed to cross the Hudson, and asked local governors to prepare to mobilize their states' militia. Throughout October, Washington planned for how to best carry the war to the enemy when the French arrived, envisioning bold moves to cut off Crown garrisons at the King's Ferry crossing, blockade Newport, and possibly land on Long Island or Staten Island. Although the summer campaign season had gone relatively well for the patriots,

currency inflation, supply shortages, and impending expiring enlistments could reverse the momentum the Americans had gained. Washington realized that a prolonged conflict was not necessarily in his favor, and clearly sought to win a decisive victory in the autumn of 1779.

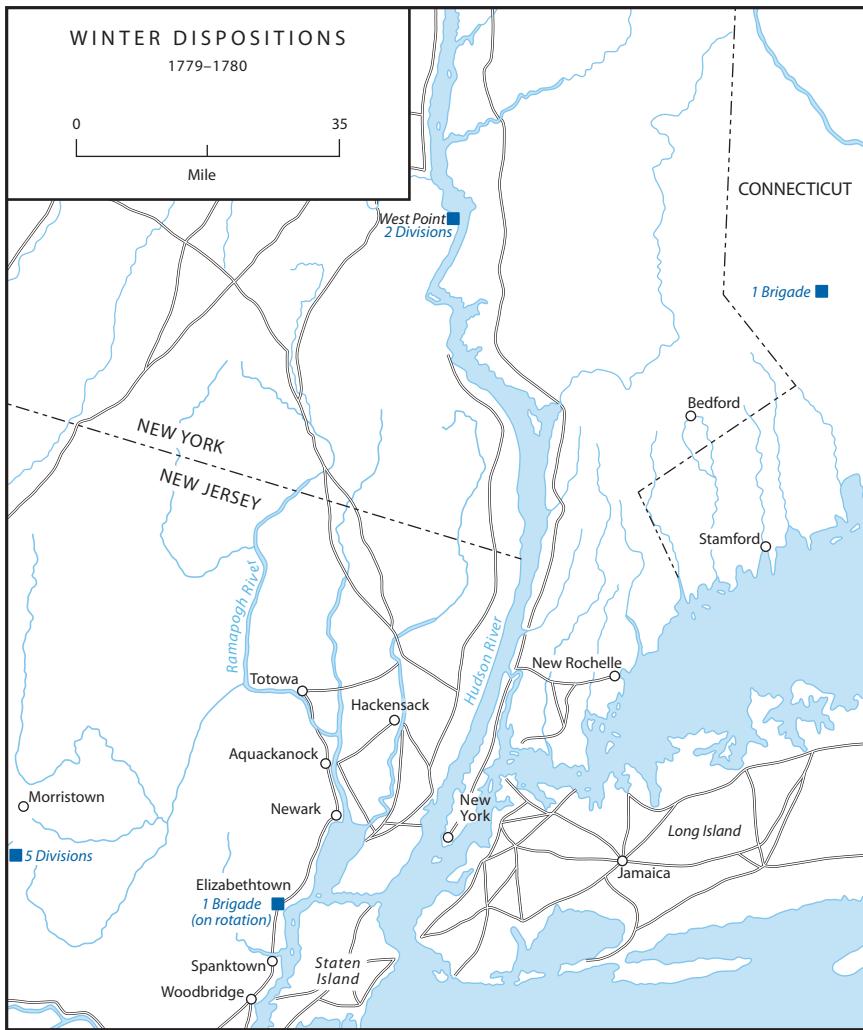
Events during October quickly dashed Washington's hopes for taking New York City and put the Continental Army back on a defensive footing for the winter. In late October, a force of loyalist light infantry and mounted hussars under Lt. Col. John Graves Simcoe conducted a bold raid into the New Jersey interior. Landing near New Brunswick, they marched inland to the old Continental cantonment at Middlebrook, where they burned artificers' huts, hay, and forty boats that had been prepared for the New York offensive. New Jersey militiamen harried Simcoe's command during its withdrawal and captured the British officer. Simcoe later was exchanged during the winter. The raid disrupted preparations for the New York offensive, which Washington continued to hope might be enacted still if the French arrived, but he had received no news from his allies since September. In fact, Admiral d'Estaing had stayed in the waters off Savannah, where a French-American army initiated a siege on 19 September. The British repelled an allied assault on the Savannah defenses on 9 October, and the French and Americans lifted the siege eight days later. Washington did not learn of the failure, and that the French ships would not be coming north, until 15 November.

The commander in chief thus had to reconsider his plans at short notice. In September, the general had proposed building a cantonment at Quibbletown, a crossroads village on the eastern slope of the Watchungs that promised ease of supply and would leave the army well placed to support offensive operations against New York City or spend the cold season in comfortable winter quarters. However, the recent raid had demonstrated the region's vulnerability, and the failure at Savannah made it likely that the Southern Department would need reinforcements at the Main Army's expense. Additionally, the turn of the year would bring a wave of enlistment expirations that would further diminish the army's numbers. By contrast, Clinton

had strengthened his garrison in New York by abandoning his posts along the Hudson as well as at Newport in October, leaving the Continentals outnumbered as winter approached.

Consequently, in early November, Washington ordered Greene to seek out a new cantonment site in a more secure locale. Greene and his staff faced a difficult task. For defensibility, the cantonment would need to be sited west of the Watchungs in the mountainous New Jersey Highlands. Such a placement, however, would put winter quarters farther from the patriots' supply sources along the Delaware and Hudson Rivers. Roads would also face weather-induced blockages in the hilly terrain. Finally, the rough grounds of the highlands afforded few locales suitable for erecting a large cantonment. Greene's subordinates surveyed a large swath of northern New Jersey in search of a site that would be good grounds for building huts, could be defended easily, and could be supplied adequately. Only in late November did Col. James Abeel report to Greene that an area known as Jockey Hollow, 5 miles southwest of Morristown, offered an expanse of dry ground suitable for a cantonment with ample timber standing nearby for construction material and fuel. It lay 10 miles farther from New York than Quibbletown, and the Watchungs and a large swamp provided natural barriers against attack.

Because of the delay the search had imposed, Washington's soldiers did not begin to march to New Jersey and start work on their winter quarters until the first weeks of December. The quartermaster's department once again had stockpiled tools and boards, but soldiers still had to labor for two weeks amid falling snow and dropping temperatures to erect their huts. The commander in chief concentrated a larger proportion of his force in New Jersey than the previous year, with two brigades each from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Connecticut, as well as the New York and New Jersey brigades and mixed brigades under Generals Stark and Hand (Map 6). To reinforce the southern theater, Washington dispatched the Virginia brigades in early December, leaving him with ten brigades total in New Jersey. Along the Hudson, construction on the fortifications at West Point and its environs during the summer provided accommodations



Map 6

for a larger and more concentrated contingent. Washington placed two Massachusetts brigades at West Point itself, with two more in a cantonment across the river. Maj. Gen. William Heath assumed command of the Highlands Department overseeing these troops. In Connecticut, Washington left only the New Hampshire Brigade to winter near Danbury.

While the patriots retired to winter quarters, Clinton prepared to escalate the war in the south. With the French and American assault on Savannah defeated, the British sought to take the initiative in that theater. Facing little threat from Washington's Main Army, Clinton enjoyed the freedom to enact a bold strategy. After abandoning Newport, he also possessed for the first time since mid-1778 an army strong enough to undertake a significant offensive. On 26 December, Clinton sailed from New York with 8,500 troops. His target was Charleston, South Carolina. General Knyphausen remained behind with a contingent of British, Germans, and American loyalists to guard Manhattan and its environs.

Clinton's departure removed the threat of a major British offensive during the winter. In late December and early January, the Continental Army faced a greater danger from supply shortages. This logistical crisis had several causes. A drought during autumn had slowed New Jersey's water-powered mills, diminishing their ability to grind grain. The army arrived in the state in December to find only a small reserve of flour, which it depleted by the end of the month. Spiraling inflation exacerbated the crisis, leaving many Jersey farmers unwilling to sell their produce to the government for near-worthless paper currency. Congress further worsened matters by turning over responsibility for gathering supplies to the individual states, each of which was to procure a quota and forward it to the army. Weather and terrain contributed as well. The decision to quarter the Main Army in a more remote locale than the previous year left it vulnerable to disruptions to its supply routes. Unfortunately for the Americans, the 1779–1780 winter would be one of the worst of the war. The last week of December and first week of January witnessed particularly severe blizzards that blanketed northern New Jersey and New York with up to 6 feet of snow. The precipitation blocked the mountain roads leading to Jockey Hollow and West Point, reducing most of the Main Army to starvation conditions in early January.

In a demonstration of the Continentals' growing experience and competence, Washington and his subordinates rapidly responded to the crisis, implementing effective measures that rescued the army from starvation. The commander in chief ordered idle

Continents and local militia units to clear the roads. Greene and the quartermaster's department substituted sleighs for wagons to carry supplies over the snow. Most importantly, Washington requisitioned food directly from New Jersey farms. The army set a quota for each Jersey county and offered civilians certificates for their foodstuffs that they could redeem for cash later. Continental foraging parties also reminded New Jerseyans that they could confiscate food at bayonet point from those unwilling to exchange their goods for certificates. These measures succeeded in bringing food into camp, and soldiers enjoyed regular rations by the end of January. Nevertheless, the poor roads to the camps continued to fall victim to changing climatic conditions for the following months. Melting snows obstructed the roads with mud, leading to another period of short provisions in late February. Drier weather in March and April alleviated supply shortages, but the army again experienced a meat scarcity in May.

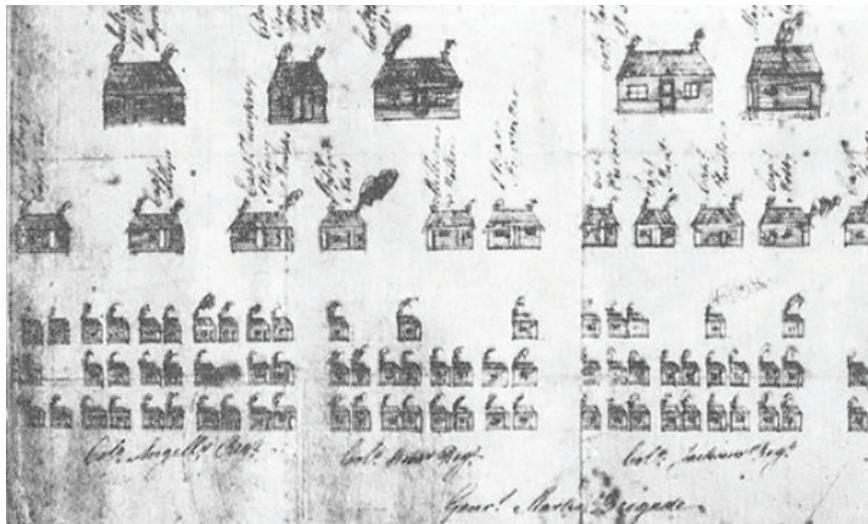
Despite the logistical problems and severe weather, discipline and order in the ranks held through most of the winter. Marauding and desertion occurred during the worst of the crisis in December in January, but otherwise the Continental soldiers passed the winter in their huts with few problems. The improvements to construction, hygiene, and administration begun at Middlebrook carried through to the following winter. Patriot troops at Jockey Hollow and West Point maintained salubrious quarters and avoided any serious disease outbreaks.

Throughout early 1780, Washington maintained an active presence in the New Jersey communities abutting British-occupied territory. The general prioritized securing the Newark Bay littoral with detachments stretching from Newark to the mouth of the Raritan River at Perth Amboy. These units were to defend magazines and forage, gather intelligence, and prevent illicit trade with the enemy. Unlike the previous winter, Washington decided to rotate the brigades on outpost duty, limiting the amount of time units spent exposed on the front lines and enabling them to have more opportunities for rest and drill in camp. The brigades on outpost duty faced a difficult task, as they often had too few soldiers to cover

the extensive coastline. Continental patrols thus concentrated their efforts on seizing packages and correspondence to obtain intelligence. Establishing human intelligence networks was a more challenging assignment, with many purported spies simply using this status as an excuse to conduct illegal trade with the enemy. Washington nevertheless encouraged his subordinates to procure information as best they could.

During January, with the region's waterways covered with ice, Washington saw an opportunity to attack British positions without naval support. He announced his intention to land a blow against Staten Island on 10 January and called upon General Stirling to organize and lead the operation. The plan reflected the army's experience in conducting complex, limited surprise attacks. It called for Col. Moses Hazen's 2d Canadian Regiment to march from Morristown to the waterfront, presenting the appearance of relieving Brig. Gen. William Irvine's Pennsylvania Brigade, then on outpost duty. Once in position, however, the combined force of 2,600 soldiers would cross the Arthur Kill in five separate columns and strike enemy positions on the island. Washington suggested the British-derived watch words "Clinton—Cornwallis—Skinner" to deceive the enemy during the passage to Staten Island. White cockades were to serve as nighttime identifying marks. Officers were to enforce silence on the march and threaten deserters with death. Soldiers were to avoid firing their muskets in the attack, and instead rely upon their bayonets.

To initiate the assault, two advance groups of 100 soldiers each were to seize a pair of enemy forts through a surprise attack, then await the arrival of the main force of 1,200 troops. Colonel Webb's regiment, clothed in red coats as a deceptive measure, was to scout ahead and use their uniforms to attain surprise over British patrols. An 800-troop detachment would attack British quarters from the rear and prevent any escape north toward Bergen Point. Finally, a party of 300 soldiers served as a reserve. Four pieces of artillery would provide support. Given the icy conditions, the Continentals expected no British reinforcements would arrive from Manhattan. Intelligence reports on 11 January indicated fewer than 1,000 soldiers



Contemporary sketch of the Stark's Brigade camp in Jockey Hollow during the winter of 1779–1780 (*Morristown National Historical Park*)

remained on Staten Island, and they had not communicated with Manhattan for six days.

The Continentals' careful preparations notwithstanding, Stirling's attack on the night of 14–15 January was unsuccessful. Vigilant British patrols guarded the likely approach routes, and snow drifts hindered the army's march. Numerous New Jersey civilians joined the troops marching from Morristown to Elizabethtown, expecting a chance to plunder the enemy. Word of the attack thus reached the Staten Island garrison despite the emphasis on operational security. Stirling's troops encountered well-prepared defenses, and the general feared that even though the weather conditions were poor, reinforcements might soon arrive from Manhattan. With no time available to starve the garrison into surrender, Stirling carried off whatever useful supplies could be found and withdrew to New Jersey as his rear guard skirmished with British pursuers. The accompanying civilians, as expected, focused on plundering private property. Overall, Stirling felt the Continentals had "in general showed a good disposition," but regretted more had not been achieved in the attack. Washington perceived that "no bad consequences could possibly result" from the

operation. Irvine's brigade returned to Jockey Hollow, and Hazen's troops assumed responsibility for the outposts.

The Staten Island raid was the most dramatic operation of the winter, but the subsequent months witnessed continued fighting. For the most part, the British and German soldiers in New York held the initiative and carried the fight into New Jersey. Crown forces strengthened the garrisons at Paulus Hook and Staten Island at the end of January, prompting Washington to reinforce Hazen's regiment with detachments from Hand's brigade. British and loyalist units struck on the night of 25–26 January, with columns attacking Elizabethtown and Newark simultaneously. The patriots lost eight killed and sixty-seven captured compared to just five British prisoners taken. In both towns, the Crown soldiers destroyed buildings used for quarters and supply storage.

Washington dispatched Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair to command the outpost line in early February, with instructions to investigate the causes of the embarrassment suffered at Elizabethtown and Newark. St. Clair brought additional reinforcements with him and held Hazen's regiment in place rather than relieving it, building up patriot strength along the waterfront to 2,000 soldiers. St. Clair assessed that the terrain and small size of his command made it impossible to cover the entire coast without rendering sparsely distributed positions open to surprise attack. Instead, he pulled the Continentals back to Westfield and Springfield, with forward detachments at Connecticut Farms and Crane's Mills. St. Clair garrisoned Newark only during the day, though he kept a permanent contingent in Elizabethtown. Detachments of mounted Essex County militiamen provided mobile patrols at night and ensured that the Continentals farther west would receive adequate warning of any enemy move. This adjustment reduced the army's ability to curtail illicit trade and left the waterfront towns more vulnerable to raids. At this juncture, however, Washington emphasized preserving his soldiers over protecting civilian property.

St. Clair's adjustments managed to limit American casualties. A British raid on 11 February seized cattle and other provisions near Elizabethtown, Rahway, and Woodbridge, but the Continental

outposts successfully withdrew without loss. On February 19, British forces made another attack on Newark. Again, the mounted patrols provided sufficient warning of the attack, and the town's garrison quickly retired to the high ground to the west. After discerning that the attacking force comprised only 100 soldiers, the Continentals and militia counterattacked the raiding column, pursuing them back to the Passaic River. Warming temperatures at the end of February melted the ice covering the local waterways and turned the region's roads into quagmires, impeding further operations. St. Clair planned a surprise attack on Paulus Hook but canceled it because of the weather. Subsequently, neither side pursued significant operations in Essex. Knyphausen raided into Bergen County in late March and again in mid-April, but both sides remained stationary during May, waiting for the ground to dry out before launching the year's active campaigns.

Summer–Fall 1780

The expected arrival of French naval and ground reinforcements dominated both sides' strategic planning as summer 1780 approached. General Lafayette visited Morristown in April bringing news from his home country that the "Expédition Particulière," consisting of 5,500 soldiers, was on its way under the command of Marshal Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau. A naval squadron of seven ships of the line and three frigates escorted the convoy of thirty-six transports carrying the Expédition Particulière across the Atlantic. Such a concentration of naval and land forces seemed to provide Washington with the power to realize finally his long-held plan to assault New York City.

Discord and exhaustion within the Continental Army's ranks tempered the enthusiasm Lafayette's news generated. In late May, soldiers of Huntington's Connecticut brigade returned from a rotation on outpost duty to find food shortages in their camp. On 25 May, these soldiers responded by demanding provisions and back pay, otherwise they would march out of camp. This mutinous spirit began to spread throughout the Connecticut brigades, and only subsided

when the well-respected Col. Walter Stewart of Pennsylvania directly intervened, appealing to the soldiers to return to their huts and promising that they would soon receive better supplies.

Beyond provision shortages and eroding discipline, Washington also faced declining numbers. He had dispatched the Maryland brigades to the southern theater and the New York brigade to the northern frontier, leaving him with only seven brigades in New Jersey. Springtime recruitment lagged behind the wave of expiring enlistments that began in early 1780. By June, Washington had fewer than 5,000 effectives in the state. Morale suffered another blow at the end of May, when news arrived that Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln had surrendered Charleston to General Clinton. The revolutionaries lost 5,000 Continental and militia soldiers to captivity, as well as large quantities of supplies. Clinton left behind General Cornwallis and a substantial army to subdue the south, then sailed for New York, bringing with him significant reinforcements. The American position therefore appeared to have weakened considerably from the previous autumn.

In New York, General Knyphausen received in quick succession news of the French fleet's departure from Brest, France; Clinton's victory at Charleston; and reports of the mutiny in the Continental camp. Throughout the spring, New Jersey loyalists had arrived in New York describing a population tired of years of war and depreciating currency. A steady trickle of deserters testified to sagging spirits in the enemy camp, and scouts informed Knyphausen that the New Jersey brigade then manning the waterfront outposts in Essex County suffered from poor morale. In Manhattan, General Tryon, a former royal governor of New York, pressed Knyphausen to take advantage of the enemy's apparent weakness. William Franklin, the former royal governor of New Jersey and an illegitimate son of Benjamin Franklin, joined Tryon in advocating for an offensive. They saw Clinton as an overcautious commander and believed that the Crown should strike a blow in New Jersey before Clinton returned to reign in their operations.

Consequently, Knyphausen resolved to launch an attack into New Jersey in early June. He gathered more than 6,000 British, German,

and American loyalist troops organized into five divisions to invade New Jersey, with initial landings planned at De Hart's Point, across from Staten Island. Their ostensible target was the Continental cantonment at Morristown, 20 miles away. The American camp made for a much better prize than the assorted villages that the British had raided over the winter. Shortages in forage and wagons meant the Americans lacked the ability to transport quickly all of the artillery, supplies, and equipment stored in and around Morristown, meaning they likely would forfeit them if the enemy reached the town. "It is impossible to put the army in motion. We have neither the means of transportation nor provisions to subsist upon only from hand to mouth," noted General Greene in April. Even if the Crown soldiers could not maintain their presence so deeply in enemy territory, a brief occupation and destruction of the Continentals' infrastructure would disrupt Washington's plans for the summer campaign. To reach this valuable objective, Knyphausen's forces would have to overcome marshy terrain around Elizabethtown before advancing over generally flat ground until they reached the Watchungs, 10 miles distant. There, they would have to move through a gap in the hills near Springfield, pass the village of Chatham, and then onto Morristown. Overall, the operation promised potentially significant returns for relatively little risk; if opposition proved stronger than expected, the redcoats and their allies could easily withdraw back to New York.

Knyphausen's operation encountered difficulties from the start. He had handbills announcing the fall of Charleston distributed into New Jersey before the attack to further weaken his opponents' morale, but Continental pickets seized many of these before they reached the population at large, and ones that did apparently had little impact. During the night of 6–7 June, General Clinton's adjutant Maj. William Crosbie arrived in New York harbor to inform Knyphausen that the general was about to arrive with significant reinforcements. Clinton had hoped to land in New Jersey immediately upon his return and lead a column up the Raritan Valley and through a southern gap in the Watchungs to Morristown, while Knyphausen advanced through Springfield toward Chatham with the same objective. Crosbie had instructions to keep this plan

in strict secrecy, and therefore did not reveal details that may have led Knyphausen to postpone his operation. With some units already in motion, the German officer decided to press on. Unfavorable winds prevented much of Knyphausen's army from transiting the Kill Van Kull passage leading toward Elizabethtown. Most of the Crown troops therefore had to sail back to their starting position at Decker's Point and conduct a forced march to reach the eastern shore of the island. The *Royal Navy* managed to bring forty flatboats into the Arthur Kill to ferry the troops across the water, but could do so only in piecemeal fashion. Swampy terrain at the crossing site further impeded the operation, and it took until 1500 on 7 June to get the whole of the army to New Jersey.

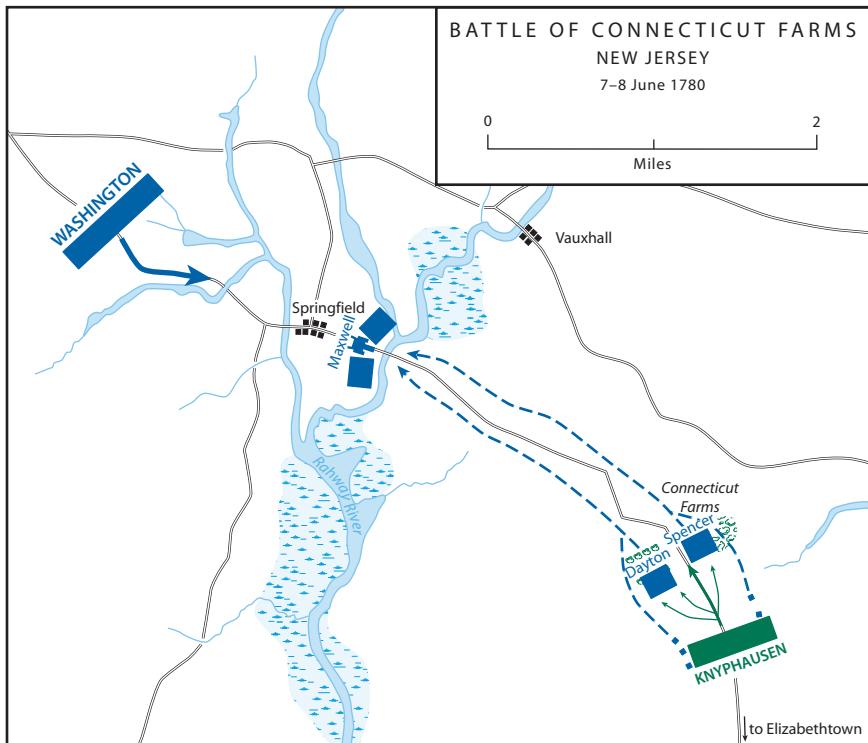
Consequently, Brig. Gen. Thomas Stirling's division, which had already landed at De Hart's Point late on 6 June, before the winds shifted, led the attack with little support. The Crown division initially encountered minimal resistance, because the Americans had abandoned the exposed waterfront at the start of the month. Patriot defenses consisted primarily of Col. Elias Dayton's 3d New Jersey Regiment and Col. Oliver Spencer's Additional Continental Regiment, temporarily under the command of Lt. Col. William Stephens Smith of New York. Dayton, who hailed from the area, was in overall command. Detachments of the New Jersey Brigade were posted to Rahway and Woodbridge, whereas militia units held Newark and Perth Amboy. Elizabethtown and De Hart's Points themselves were uncovered, facilitating Stirling's landing, but Dayton's force rapidly moved to contest the enemy's drive inland. At a crossroads outside of Elizabethtown, an American advance party opened fire on their opponents early on 7 June. General Stirling, who led at the head of the column, suffered a wound from a musket ball during this initial clash. Command passed to German officer Col. Friedrich Wilhelm von Wurmb, who halted the advance and awaited further instructions from Knyphausen.

Meanwhile, the patriots sprung to action. Dayton quickly sent word to Washington of the enemy's movements, and by 0700, the commander in chief had ordered six brigades totaling 4,200 troops to Chatham, just west of the gap in the Watchungs. To provide these

troops with additional time to prepare defenses, Washington ordered Maxwell's brigade to fight a delaying action along the Galloping Hill Road leading from Elizabethtown toward Morristown. For additional support, the general also called forth 2,000 militiamen of Essex, Middlesex, Morris, and Somerset Counties.

Wurmb's column resumed its advance after dawn and found that the revolutionaries had evacuated the vicinity of Elizabethtown and pulled back westward 5 miles to Connecticut Farms, a settlement of houses and farms stretching for 2 miles along the road, today part of Union Township. Small militia parties fired on the Crown troops and tore up local bridges, impeding their advance. At Connecticut Farms, Maxwell deployed Dayton's and Spencer's regiments to defend a narrow defile on the eastern edge of the village, while the rest of the brigade remained to the west. Wurmb proceeded cautiously, and only probed the strong Continental position. Lead elements of the British divisions under General Mathew and General Knyphausen's direct control arrived around 0800. Faced with a much larger enemy force that could threaten his flanks, Dayton conducted a fighting withdrawal through Connecticut Farms, his soldiers using the fences, hedges, and houses in the settlement as cover. Later in the morning, Maxwell sent forward a contingent under Colonel Smith in a spoiling attack that further delayed the Crown advance before retiring over the eastern Rahway River (*Map 7*).

Across the stream, the Americans occupied a strong defensive position. Maxwell had 1,200 Continental and militia soldiers, supported by two militia artillery pieces, drawn up along a ravine adjacent to a tanyard overlooking the river. The road approaching the river from the east ran straight for three quarters of a mile and lacked any natural cover. German jaegers sent forward to disorder the enemy found themselves coming under fire with little refuge. "We had fair play at them the whole way until they came to the bridge," recalled one New Jersey militia gunner. Knyphausen initially considered waiting for the last of his troops to come up before resuming his advance toward Springfield, but ultimately decided against it. Although he demurred, Crown soldiers and loyalist civilians who had followed the expedition from Staten Island spent



Map 7

the afternoon plundering civilian property in Connecticut Farms. Clinton's adjutant also arrived during the afternoon clarifying the British commander in chief's intentions to take the offensive in the New York region upon his return. After a midafternoon conference with his subordinates, Knyphausen decided to withdraw back to Elizabethtown Point after burning Connecticut Farms.

Washington maintained an aggressive posture and on 8 June sent forward a three-battalion unit of picked soldiers drawn from his six fresh brigades, with General Hand in command. They engaged Knyphausen's troops and informed Washington that the enemy had withdrawn much of their baggage and personnel back to Staten Island. Nevertheless, Continental officers judged the enemy position too strong to risk a direct assault. Overall, the actions on 7 and 8 June cost the revolutionaries thirty-six casualties from Maxwell's

brigade, and roughly a dozen from the militia. Knyphausen lost 11 dead, 145 wounded, and 37 missing. The two sides maintained their positions for the following two weeks, engaging in occasional light skirmishing, seemingly at an impasse.

The arrival of Clinton's army from the Carolinas promised to tip the strategic balance in the Crown's favor. The abortive operation on 7 June had upset Clinton's goal of a surprise attack, however, and he returned to New York to find his opponents well prepared and alert. Nevertheless, the British general assembled his forces on Staten Island in mid-June intent on launching a second offensive. Washington, meanwhile, arranged his forces with an eye to the wider operational situation. He continued to view West Point, rather than Morristown, as the most important objective in the region. Consequently, he ordered the New York brigade to march from Albany to the Highlands and instructed Maj. Gen. Robert Howe, commander of the Highlands Department, to prepare for a siege. The Continentals also managed to gather sufficient wagons and forage by mid-June to facilitate the evacuation of their stores from Morristown and bring forward supplies to the Highlands. To provide additional support in New Jersey, he ordered Henry Lee's Legionary Corps, then on its way to the south, to instead march northward to bolster the troops in Essex County. On 20 June, he disposed Starks's and Maxwell's brigades, Lee's Legionary Corps, and the New Jersey militia, about 3,000 soldiers total, to defend the approaches to the cantonment site, while the Connecticut and Pennsylvania brigades, 2,500 strong, would begin marching northward to reinforce the Highlands. Washington would oversee the northern force, and Greene led the troops near Morristown.

New intelligence spurred Clinton to action. Unbeknownst to the Americans, the British commander had opened correspondence with the Continental Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold the previous year. Arnold had distinguished himself as one of the Continental Army's bravest and most proficient commanders, but he resented being passed over for promotion, desired greater financial compensation to support his young wife Peggy, and overall had grown disillusioned with the revolutionary cause by 1780. The disgruntled Arnold,

appointed to command the West Point garrison in March, had passed on reports of that post's vulnerability to Clinton. On 12 June, he informed Clinton that French reinforcements were to land in Rhode Island in a few weeks, and that the West Point fortress had weak defenses. Another letter dated 16 June, after Arnold had had a chance to inspect the West Point defenses himself, revealed that the fortress was even more vulnerable than he had believed previously, and that Washington had divided his army, with one wing set to reinforce the Highlands and the other remaining in New Jersey. Clinton therefore decided to use his numerical superiority to force the enemy into an engagement on unfavorable terms in the Highlands. He called for Knyphausen to lead 6,000 troops into New Jersey to fix the Continental forces there in place, while Clinton personally took 4,000 more up the Hudson. This second force would land in the vicinity of Smith's Clove, where Clinton optimistically hoped it could seize West Point and block Washington's army from retaking it, thereby forcing the Continentals into a decisive battle.

Although the revolutionaries did not know of Arnold's treason, their intelligence networks also provided useful information. On 22 June, General Greene learned that Clinton knew of the divided state of the Continental Army and planned to move against West Point. Greene could not verify this information, however, and feared that it might be part of an elaborate ruse. Given such uncertain conditions, Washington halted his four brigades at Rockaway Bridge, 11 miles north of Morristown, where they could still return to defend that town should Clinton move in strength against New Jersey. Greene, meanwhile, prepared his troops in Essex.

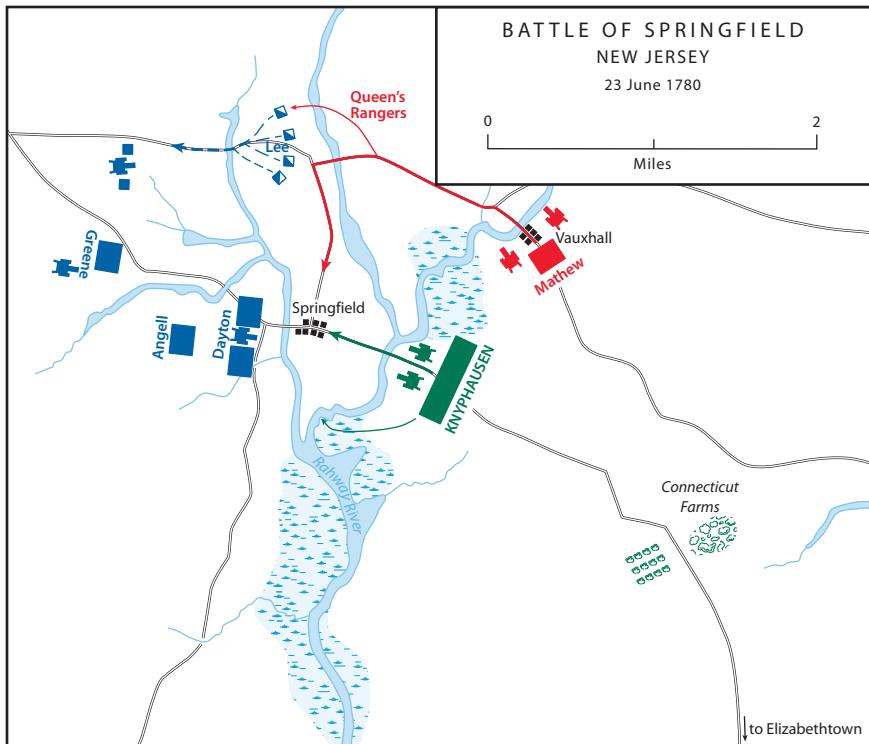
On 23 June, Knyphausen led a second advance into New Jersey as part of Clinton's broader plan. The German general once again commanded a 6,000-strong force, this time divided into three divisions. General Mathew's division led the attack, with a vanguard composed of the loyalist *Queen's Rangers*, recently returned from the South, as well as the *1st and 4th Battalions, New Jersey Volunteers*. Unlike the 7 June battle, the Crown forces had little difficulty moving soldiers and supplies from Staten Island; they had constructed a pontoon bridge over the Arthur Kill to facilitate a rapid crossing.

Knyphausen also planned a nimbler advance; once his forces reached Connecticut Farms, they would divide into two columns. One would move along Galloping Hill Road, while a second would travel the parallel Vauxhall Road to the north. The two-pronged attack would maximize numerical superiority and stretch enemy defenses thin.

General Greene planned to fight a delaying action while limiting his commitment. He instructed Colonel Dayton to conduct a fighting withdrawal up Galloping Hill Road to Springfield, to the west of Connecticut Farms. There, Greene posted Col. Israel Angell's 2d Rhode Island Regiment of Stark's brigade and one field piece to defend the crossing over the Rahway River. West of Springfield, Col. Israel Shreve's 2d New Jersey Regiment and additional artillery covered a second crossing over the Rahway's western branch. To guard their left flank, Greene placed Lee's dismounted dragoons, Col. Matthias Ogden's 1st New Jersey Regiment, and small parties of militiamen.

The initial engagement on 23 June developed around the same defile at Connecticut Farms that had witnessed such heavy fighting two weeks earlier. Again, Dayton's New Jerseyans held a strong position, with additional troops posted in a nearby orchard to cover their left flank. The Crown vanguard under Simcoe advanced quickly into the orchard and drove the defenders out, forcing Dayton to pull his troops back from the defile and then withdrew behind the eastern Rahway River by 0630, joining with the Rhode Islanders. For the next ninety minutes, Angell's troops and a single cannon harassed the enemy in Connecticut Farms while they awaited the British main body. At 0800, Knyphausen arrived and deployed his artillery to fire on Angell's soldiers, and also dispatched Mathew's division to conduct the flanking maneuver down the Vauxhall Road.

Mathew's force crossed the Vauxhall Bridge over the Rahway River's eastern branch with little opposition. Upon reaching Little's Bridge over a smaller tributary, however, they encountered Lee's and Ogden's troops arrayed in the hills to the west. Simcoe's rangers again led the Crown advance and fought an open-order skirmish with the revolutionaries. Lee moved his troops back as Mathew's column approached, suffering one killed and four wounded in the



Map 8

action. He then fell back toward the high ground near Chatham, where Greene had sent reinforcements from Stark's brigade.

Faced with fresh Continentals in a strong position, Mathew declined to pursue, and instead turned his column southward to outflank Angell's troops. At Springfield, Knyphausen had initiated a frontal attack at 1100 upon hearing Mathew's skirmish with Lee. Angell's force resisted for forty minutes, despite their numerical inferiority, before withdrawing in good order across the western Rahway. Knyphausen's superior artillery silenced the Continental gun and killed its commander, Capt. Thomas Thompson, but failed to impede the Rhode Islanders' retreat (*Map 8*).

Behind the river, Dayton's New Jerseyans waited alongside the 2d New Jersey, temporarily under the command of Colonel Smith. Greene sent forward artillery under Lt. Col. Thomas Forrest to

provide support. Knyphausen continued to press his advance and deployed parties of jaegers to skirmish with the revolutionaries. He then brought up his artillery to fire on the American positions. The New Jerseyans engaged the enemy until Angell's soldiers safely reached the main position in the hills to the northwest, and then retired.

The Continental Army's leaders managed the battle cautiously. Greene sent forth only a few regiments and ceded territory slowly but continuously. He kept the bulk of his command in a strong position and directed a New Jersey militia brigade under Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Herd to threaten Knyphausen from the south. Washington determined that the menace to Morristown necessitated reinforcements for Greene, and dispatched Wayne's 1st Pennsylvania Brigade. He held the remainder of the army at Rockaway Bridge, awaiting any indication if Clinton intended to either pursue further operations in New Jersey or move up the Hudson.

Stout patriot resistance convinced Clinton and his subordinates that neither Morristown nor West Point would succumb to their offensive and they suspended further operations. After driving back Angell's soldiers and skirmishing with the New Jerseyans, Knyphausen's troops stayed at Springfield, where soldiers plundered and burned the village, then withdrew on the afternoon of 23 June. By nightfall, the Crown soldiers had returned to Elizabethtown Point, where they began evacuating to Staten Island and removing the pontoon bridge. The fighting at Springfield had cost the revolutionaries fifteen killed, forty-nine wounded, and eleven missing. Knyphausen lost fourteen killed, eighty-nine wounded, and eleven missing.

Following Springfield, the two armies returned to the pattern that had characterized the previous two years' campaign seasons. Washington lacked the strength to evict Clinton from New York, and Clinton commanded insufficient forces to drive the patriots from their strongholds. The British anxiously awaited reinforcements from home, as the Americans anticipated the arrival of a French fleet and expeditionary force. Washington concentrated the bulk of the Main Army at Preakness, today's Totowa, New Jersey, 15 miles

northeast of Morristown. From there, the army could reach West Point in two days if the enemy did indeed move up the Hudson. It could also cover the approaches to Morristown and the New Jersey interior if necessary. The northern Watchungs and the Passaic River afforded protection for the camp.

Advanced elements of the French expedition and fleet arrived at Newport, Rhode Island, on 11 July. Despite the high hopes Washington had held that this force might facilitate an offensive against New York, the French contingent initially contributed little. Rochambeau had only 4,000 soldiers fit for duty, supported by six ships of the line. Newport offered a fine anchorage for the warships but lacked adequate defenses. With more than 150 miles separating Rochambeau from Washington, the French lay vulnerable to rapid British descent from New York.

Washington thus sought to fix Clinton's attention in New Jersey while the French established themselves. To do so, the Continentals planned another surprise attack on an isolated enemy riverside post, which they hoped might lure the British into a wider engagement. For a target they selected Bull's Ferry, 7 miles upstream from Paulus Hook near present-day Edgewater, New Jersey, where a party of loyalists had established a woodcutting post and blockhouse in April 1780. A 100-strong irregular force known as the *Loyalist Refugees* under Capt. Thomas Ward, a former Continental Army sergeant who had deserted to the British, raided patriot communities in Bergen County throughout the spring of 1780, and committed murder, robbery, and kidnapping. In July, with the Main Army encamped 15 miles away at Preakness, Ward's loyalist post made for a logical target.

General Wayne undertook an operation on 20 July that resembled the previous year's attack on Paulus Hook, though with more ambitious objectives. During the afternoon, he assembled his troops at New Bridge Landing, 8 miles east of Preakness and 6 miles northwest of Bull's Ferry. His main force consisted of the 1st and 2d Pennsylvania Brigades; Wayne led the 1st along a western route behind the Palisades, while General Irvine directed the 2d along the crest of the hills. As they proceeded southward, elements of the 6th

and 7th Pennsylvania Regiments headed eastward to monitor enemy movements in Upper Manhattan, while Col. Stephen Moylan's 4th Continental Light Dragoon Regiment rode south to sweep Bergen Neck for enemy foragers. Wayne planned for detachments to seal off Bull's Ferry from the north, south, and west, while the two brigades conducted a simultaneous assault on the blockhouse. The combined force totaled nearly 1,700 infantry and dragoons with the support of four artillery pieces. They faced roughly seventy loyalists at Bull's Ferry, plus an undetermined number of soldiers foraging in the region.

Taking the blockhouse was only part of Wayne's plan. He hoped the attack would entice part of the Crown army in New York to cross the Hudson to come to the loyalists' aid. Wayne instructed the 6th and 7th Pennsylvania Regiments monitoring likely landing sites near Fort Lee to let the enemy come ashore unmolested. The regiments were instead to contest the enemy's march through the narrow defiles of the Palisades, providing time for Wayne to bring his main body northward and deliver a decisive attack. The plan promised to yield a significant victory that would provide further time for Rochambeau to establish his army in Rhode Island.

Despite careful preparations, however, the assault on 21 July failed. Wayne's columns apparently encountered significant delays during the night's march and did not reach their destination until 0900. Loyalist spies alerted the garrison, and the Pennsylvanians discovered the small enemy force ensconced in their blockhouse, well-covered by abatis and other obstructions. Fire from the artillery failed to dislodge the enemy because it was too small in caliber to penetrate the sturdy log walls of the fortification. Under persistent enemy fire, soldiers of the 1st and 2d Pennsylvania Regiments defied their officers' calls for restraint and attempted to force their way through the blockhouse's entrance. The infantry proved no more successful than the artillerists and suffered significant losses. Wayne's casualties for the attack totaled fifteen killed and forty-nine wounded.

Although the Pennsylvania brigades had failed in their immediate objective, the wider goals of the operation appeared within reach.

When word arrived from the northern detachments that numerous enemy ships and up to 2,000 troops appeared to be preparing to cross the Hudson, Wayne pulled back and prepared to enact his plan to ambush the redcoats near Fort Lee. “There ought [to] be no difficulty in giving up a small object for one that was capital,” wrote Wayne in justification of his decision to leave the loyalists in control of the blockhouse. The British, however, stayed on their transports, possibly assuming Bull’s Ferry already had fallen. Wayne would not get his climactic clash in the Palisades. The lone success from the operation came from Moylan’s dragoons who captured 290 head of cattle from British foragers, although the enemy succeeded in recovering some of these during Wayne’s withdrawal. Overall, the Continentals were unable to draw the British into an engagement, and loyalist spirits lifted on account of their comrades’ defense of the blockhouse.

The two sides remained deadlocked for the rest of the summer. The needs of other theaters starved Clinton of reinforcements, and the British commander had only 5,000 soldiers with which to undertake operations in the field. Clinton planned an immediate offensive against Newport upon learning of the French arrival, but supply shortages and contrary winds delayed the operation until 27 July. By then, intelligence indicated that the French had strengthened their position, and the British returned to New York. The French arrival also set the Continentals in motion. The army departed Preakness on 27 July and marched for the Hudson Highlands, where Washington set up his new headquarters at Peekskill by 1 August. That same date, he reestablished the Corps of Light Infantry. Once Rochambeau appeared to have secured his base, Washington shifted his army back to the west side of the Hudson, where it might be provisioned more easily. Meat remained scarce throughout the summer, forcing the Continentals out of the security of the Highlands to obtain supplies in New Jersey’s farmlands. In late August, Washington attempted to use his foraging sweeps in Jersey to entice the British out of New York, but to no avail. During these operations, soldiers of the Pennsylvania brigades plundered civilians and others deserted, indicating the army’s declining morale amid the strategic impasse, supply shortages, and bad news from other theaters.

Another blow befell the revolutionaries' morale in September, when the British attempted to seize West Point through subterfuge. The Highlands fortress had resisted all Crown offensives for three years, but now Benedict Arnold appeared to offer the British a chance to seize that locale at a vital moment. On 27 September, Arnold met in secret with Clinton's adjutant general, Maj. John André, and provided the British officer with the plans for the fortifications at West Point. André attempted to return to British lines, but New York militiamen captured him near Tarrytown. Arnold learned that the plot had been exposed and fled to the British warship HMS *Vulture* anchored in the Hudson. Because André had been wearing civilian clothing when captured, the Americans hanged him as a spy. Arnold reached New York City, where the British promptly commissioned him a brigadier general. With the plot's failure, Clinton called off any further efforts to take West Point.

1781

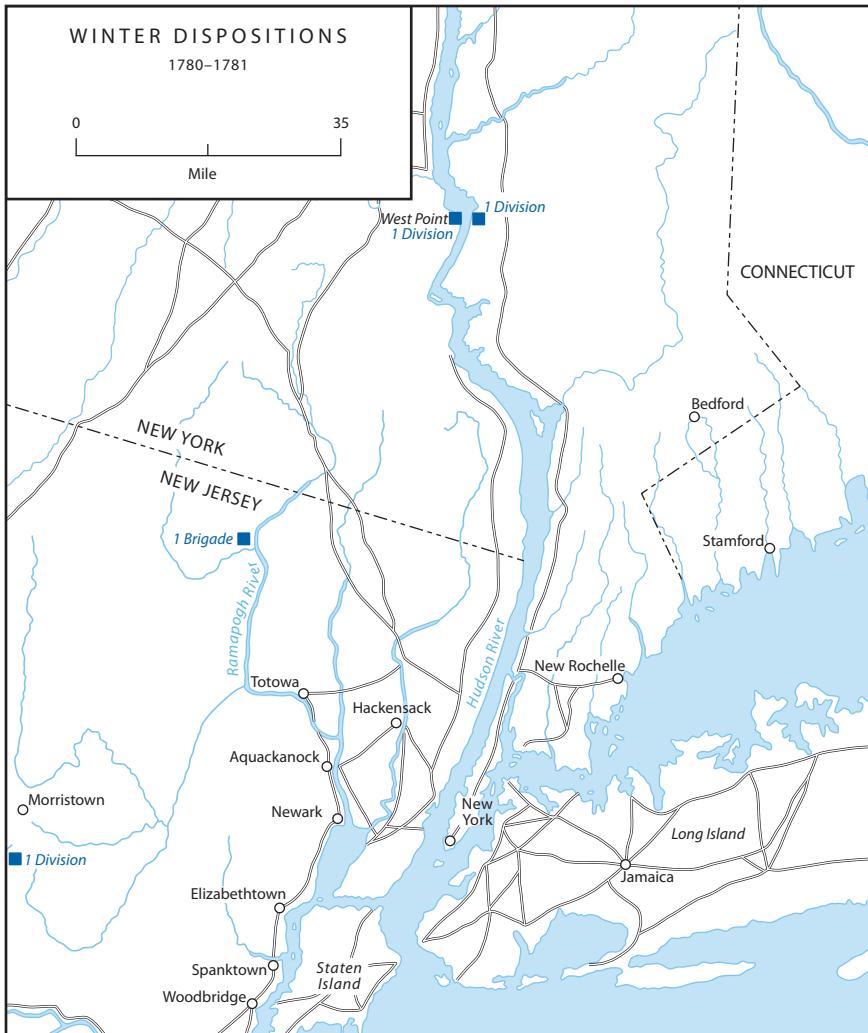
Arnold's defection added more misery to an already disappointing campaign season for the Continentals. Word arrived in August that the *Royal Navy* had blockaded a second division of French soldiers, as well as naval ships, at Brest. Without these reinforcements, the British held an advantage at sea and on the ground in the New York region, ruling out any offensive against Manhattan. Supply shortages continued, and a manpower crisis loomed. During the summer, the Americans had made good much of their expired enlistments by raising short-term state forces. These three-, six-, and nine-month enlistees were set to return home at the end of December. Without a windfall of new Continental recruits, the Main Army was to shrink to 6,000 soldiers in 1781.

Accordingly, Washington and his generals decided that the army should retire to secure winter quarters at an early date, so that they might make the most comfortable accommodations and best arrange their provisions. The army's declining size and the completion of new fortifications and barracks in the Highlands enabled Washington to keep the bulk of his forces concentrated near West Point for winter

quarters (*Map 9*). The Massachusetts brigades wintered at the fortress itself; the Connecticut brigades were in a cantonment across the river. The New Hampshire Brigade and Rhode Island troops took up outposts south of the Highlands. To cover the lines of communications in New Jersey, Washington placed the Jersey brigade at Pompton and sent the two Pennsylvania brigades under Wayne to the old log huts at Morristown. Soldiers reached their cantonment sites by the beginning of December and largely retired to their shelters within a week.

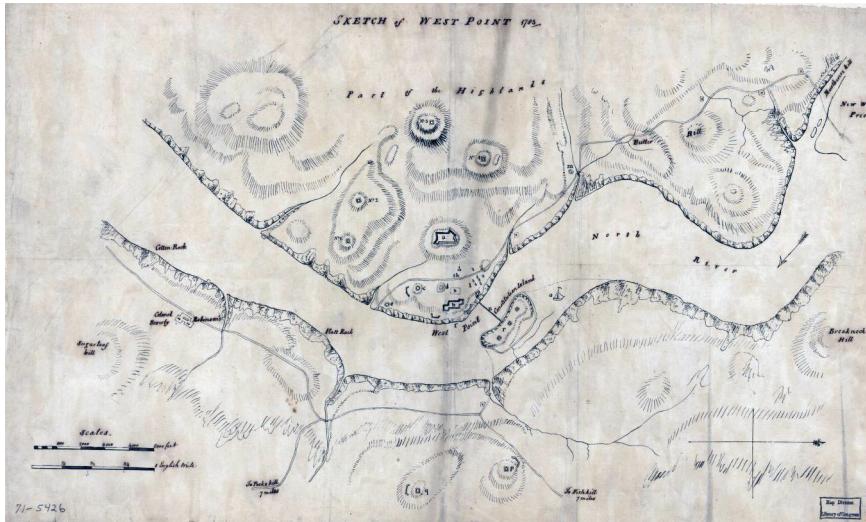
Continental officers also worked to ensure adequate supplies for their soldiers as winter approached. Washington dismissed his short-service state troops before their terms expired to remove the need to feed soldiers who would remain in camp for only a few weeks. He also conserved his transportation assets, using the same wagons that carried the Pennsylvania brigades' equipment to Morristown to bring foodstuffs on their return trip to the Highlands. Deputy quartermasters in New York established magazines and shipping routes on the Hudson to bring supplies to West Point before ice shut the river. Washington also pressured that state's civilian government to grant the authority to impress supplies directly from civilians, abrogating the need to negotiate prices. The commander in chief threatened that without provisions, the army might disperse or turn to plundering. New York's governor, George Clinton, succumbed to Washington's pressure and granted an impress warrant. By late January, these various measures yielded a stockpile of adequate supplies in the Highlands, and the army passed the winter with minimal shortages.

Although material conditions improved compared to previous years, discontent in the ranks nevertheless grew into open mutiny on 1 January 1781. Pennsylvania soldiers mustered drunk and insubordinate at Morristown, complaining about back pay and disagreements over enlistment terms. Pennsylvania paid its soldiers poorly, and many had received no money beyond their twenty-dollar enlistment bonus, nor had the government provided them with promised new uniforms. Many believed that their three-year enlistment terms had expired at the start of the year. During the



Map 9

evening, soldiers assembled without orders and decided to march out of camp, demanding that the Pennsylvania government redress their grievances. General Wayne promised the soldiers he would see to their concerns and followed the mutineers as they marched south toward Philadelphia.



Sketch of West Point, John Hinncks, 1783 (Library of Congress)

Throughout the episode, the soldiers demonstrated remarkable restraint. They refused offers from British agents to switch sides, and instead halted their march at Princeton where they met with Joseph Reed, head of Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council and former Continental Army adjutant general. The mutineers appointed a board of sergeants to represent them in the negotiations with Reed. After a series of discussions, Reed acquiesced to most of the soldiers' demands, and on 12 January they moved to nearby Trenton where most of the troops with three years' service were discharged. A total of 1,250 infantry and 67 artillerists departed, and the remaining 1,500 rank and file received furloughs until 15 March. Officers dispersed to Pennsylvania's towns to drum up recruits for the state's reorganized force of six regiments.

Although authorities had dealt with the Pennsylvania mutiny peacefully, Continental officers feared that the disorderly spirit might spread to other units, and Washington believed that the intercession of a civilian authority into an army problem had set a bad precedent. Confirming the general's fears, on 20 January, enlisted soldiers of the New Jersey brigade at Pompton marched out of camp to demand redress from their state's government. Washington acted quickly to

quell this mutiny before civilian leaders could involve themselves. He previously had assembled a contingent of dependable New England soldiers cantoned at West Point to put down the Pennsylvanians' uprising. After the Pompton mutiny, Washington dispatched this task force under General Howe's command to suppress the Jerseyans. After moving quickly through the mountains and surrounding the mutineers' camp, Howe ordered the New Jersey soldiers to execute by firing squad two of their sergeants who had led the mutiny. This ended the disorder, and the New Jersey regiments returned to their posts for the remainder of the winter.

January 1781 also witnessed a significant reorganization of the army. This plan, worked out in October and implemented after 1 January, reflected a realistic assessment of the national government's ability to fund and supply its troops. The plan called for a widespread consolidation of the states' Continental regiments—a response to the inability to maintain most units at their authorized strength. The new establishment called for forty-nine infantry regiments from the states, a separate Canadian regiment, four artillery regiments, four legionary corps, two partisan corps, and an artificers' regiment, as well as the engineers, sappers and miners, a corps of invalids, and a mounted unit that carried out military police duties known as the Marechaussee Corps.

Under the new establishment, each regiment was to consist of one light and eight line companies, each with sixty-four privates, nine noncommissioned officers, three officers, and two musicians. The new regimental structure provided more soldiers in each company, as well as additional officers and noncommissioned officers to give better direction and control. The Legionary Corps comprised six troops of seventy-four soldiers each, four mounted and two dismounted. Similarly, the Partisan Corps featured three mounted and three dismounted troops of sixty-four soldiers each. The disbandment of numerous regiments also led to a reduction in the number of brigades. From February onward, the Main Army fielded three brigades from Massachusetts, two from Connecticut, one each from New Hampshire, New York, and New Jersey. The brigades nominally held three regiments each, but the New York

and New Jersey brigades remained a regiment short, and the Rhode Island regiment rounded out one of the Connecticut brigades.

The Continentals faced minimal interference in the region because of changes in British strategy. After the failure of the Arnold plot, Clinton turned his attention again to the southern theater. While Cornwallis's army campaigned in the Carolinas, Clinton sought to commence operations against the Americans' largest and wealthiest state, Virginia. The Old Dominion's tobacco exports were the only remaining cash crop available to the revolutionaries to help finance their war. In mid-October 1780, Clinton dispatched 2,500 soldiers under Maj. Gen. Alexander Leslie, who ultimately reinforced Cornwallis in the Carolinas. In December, Arnold led a further 1,600 troops to Portsmouth, Virginia.

The pressing need to reinforce the imperiled southern theater also forced Washington to detach significant forces during the winter. Henry Lee's 2d Partisan Corps headed south in December. In February, Washington again organized the Corps of Light Infantry, with companies of picked men drawn from the regiments in the Highlands. General Lafayette assumed command of this corps and led it to bolster defenses in Virginia. Washington also instructed General Wayne to bring the Pennsylvania brigades to the Old Dominion once they completed their reorganization at York, Pennsylvania. Detachments from the 4th Continental Artillery and 4th Legionary Corps would accompany.

Throughout the winter, Clinton remained inactive in New York. Aside from a brief landing at Elizabethtown during the Pennsylvania mutiny, the British did not launch any incursions into New Jersey. Instead, fighting concentrated in Westchester County. There, the Continentals kept a forward element of up to brigade in size to cover the countryside and monitor the approaches to the Highlands. On 25 January, the outpost commander, General Parsons, sent one battalion under Lt. Col. William Hull to advance down the eastern banks of the Hudson and Harlem Rivers to attack the quarters of a loyalist regiment in Westchester County. Hull sent detachments to block British reinforcements from crossing the Harlem and East Rivers, while his main body assaulted enemy quarters at Morrisania.

Hull took fifty-four prisoners and burned a barracks and forage, then marched eastward across the Bronx's (present-day Bronx) River and began to withdraw northward, releasing thirty-two prisoners from a nearby jail along the way. Parsons, with three battalions, covered Hull's retreat. The party reached the Highlands on 28 January having earned praise from Generals Heath and Washington, who commended Hull's actions in his General Orders two days later.

Throughout spring 1781, recruits replaced the veteran soldiers who departed when their enlistments expired. The army's largely stationary disposition in the Highlands enabled many of these new soldiers to bring with them a greater number of dependents than they had in previous years. This influx of new arrivals, military and civilian, gave rise to a smallpox outbreak at West Point. This disease had struck the army during the war's early years, but in 1777, Washington had mandated widespread inoculations for his soldiers that largely checked the virus for three years. The new recruits of 1781, however, had not undergone this process. Consequently, by March, the disease had spread through the ranks and to civilians in nearby New Windsor and Newburgh. Washington responded by ordering inoculations for vulnerable soldiers and their families, but limited hospital space and a shortage of blankets and other medical supplies hindered the implementation of this immunization program. On 19 April, Washington suspended inoculations and instead ordered the strict quarantining of infected soldiers. These measures halted the further spread of the virus, and the army approached the campaign season on a mostly healthy footing.

By late spring, Washington faced a growing crisis in Virginia. Clinton had dispatched 2,000 more soldiers under Maj. Gen. William Phillips, who arrived in the Chesapeake at the end of March. On 19 May, General Cornwallis brought 1,400 soldiers north from the Carolinas and assumed command of the British troops operating in Virginia. Clinton then sent additional soldiers, raising Cornwallis's strength to 7,000 by the start of June. Against this force, Lafayette's light infantry, state troops under General Steuben, and the newly arrived Pennsylvania Line under Wayne proved unable to halt the enemy.

The commander in chief faced the dilemma of sending further reinforcements to Virginia or attempting to strike the British base at New York. Washington met with Rochambeau on 23 and 24 May to plan summer operations. They agreed that the French would move their army from Newport to White Plains, where they would join with the Continentals. Washington hoped to proceed with an offensive against New York with the support of the French fleet, but Rochambeau advocated for a move against Cornwallis in Virginia. Ultimately, they decided to wait to receive word of the French Caribbean fleet's movements before choosing a destination.

Consequently, the early summer of 1781 witnessed only limited activity in the New York area as both sides awaited developments in Virginia. The Main Army broke camp on 18 June and marched for Dobb's Ferry, where it united with Rochambeau's soldiers. Throughout July, Washington undertook a series of reconnaissance operations intended to develop a clearer picture of British defenses on Manhattan. On 22 July, a combined force of Continentals and French troops pushed southward to Kingsbridge, compelling the evacuation of British posts in southern Westchester. Nonetheless, the two sides engaged in minimal combat. Without a strong French naval squadron, the commander in chief could not sustain a move onto Manhattan or Long Island. Washington also lacked the numerical strength to besiege New York City; his calls for additional troops from the states yielded only half the number of soldiers requested. The allied armies continued to maintain themselves in Westchester, where they held Clinton's attention, and led the British general to order Cornwallis to send him reinforcements from Virginia. Cornwallis consequently suspended offensive operations and relocated his army to a coastal base at Yorktown.

Finally, Washington broke the stalemate in the north by marching south. On 14 August, he learned that French Admiral François Joseph Paul, comte de Grasse, planned to sail his Caribbean squadron for the Chesapeake rather than New York. Washington and Rochambeau consequently settled on a campaign in Virginia. On 19 August, the entire 4,000-strong French corps as well as the Main Army's New York and New Jersey Brigades and Rhode Island

Regiment, 3,000 troops in total, began marching southward. To maintain a vigilant watch in the north, General Heath remained behind in the Highlands with the Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire brigades.

As the drama in Virginia played out at Yorktown, the northern campaign fittingly ended following the same pattern that had characterized operations in that theater since 1778. On 6 September, 1,700 British, German, and loyalist troops under Benedict Arnold raided a privateer base at New London, Connecticut. Overcoming strong resistance from the Connecticut militia detachments defending the town, Arnold succeeded in burning the ships and supplies there, as well as most of the public and private buildings at New London and nearby Groton. The revolutionaries lost eighty-three killed and thirty-six wounded. Arnold returned to New York unmolested, and Heath held in place in the Highlands and did not allow his army to venture into a potentially vulnerable position. Six weeks later, news of Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown arrived, bringing with it an end to this phase of the war.



ANALYSIS



Throughout the 1778–1781 period, both armies in the northern theater faced frustrations because of a lack of resources, commitments to other theaters, and an inability to coordinate land and sea power. As French intervention turned the Revolutionary War into a global conflict, the New York region lost the strategic importance it had held during 1775–1777. British authorities redirected their efforts toward pacifying the southern states and safeguarding their possessions in the West Indies and Europe. George Washington and the American

revolutionaries likewise endured the stretching of their limited resources to buttress the threatened southern theater. The French proved unwilling to commit wholly to a campaign on the North American mainland and also dispersed their considerable strength to the Caribbean and Europe.

Sir Henry Clinton assumed responsibility for British conduct in the northern theater for the entirety of the period covered here. He faced criticism during and after the war for his failure to achieve victory, whether through force or stratagem. Although he did win a significant victory at Charleston in 1780, he failed to convert this into a lasting strategic success. In 1781, his unwillingness to aid Cornwallis in Virginia more fully, his contradictory orders to his subordinate, and his paralysis while Washington marched to Yorktown all made Clinton the scapegoat for the Crown's defeat.

A closer review of the northern campaigns reveals that although Clinton ultimately may have failed, he did pursue limited operations effectively within the strategic constraints he faced. Clinton consistently drew on his local naval strength to deploy forces rapidly throughout the mid-Atlantic littoral. Coastal communities from New Jersey to Massachusetts faced the prospect of sudden raids that typically overwhelmed whatever militia and small Continental detachments mustered to offer resistance. The *Royal Navy* also facilitated defensive efforts, rapidly reinforcing threatened posts at Newport and Penobscot, as well as pulling extended garrisons back to Manhattan when New York came under threat. Lastly, naval power enabled British operations farther afield, including the reinforcement of the West Indies, coastal raids in the Chesapeake, and the siege of Charleston. Clinton demonstrated his strongest generalship in 1778, when, faced with the impending loss of his offensive power to bolster the West Indies and the south, he embarked on a successful grand foraging operation in New Jersey while simultaneously damaging several privateer bases. Clinton thereby secured his position in New York for the winter, then sent off his forces that contributed to British victories elsewhere.

Clinton failed, however, to repeat this success afterward, and his complex plans in 1779 and 1780 never enticed Washington

into a decisive engagement. Throughout the campaigns, the British commander failed to act with the boldness necessary to win strategically important victories in the region. In 1779, he recognized the vulnerability of Continental supply lines in New Jersey and considered sweeping into that state's rolling hills south of the Raritan River. Given the frequent complaints Washington's quartermasters lodged over a dearth of forage and other provisions, such a strategy may have held better prospects for drawing the Continental Army into an unfavorable engagement than any of Clinton's raids into coastal Connecticut. The Crown commander feared his army was too weak to undertake such an effort, however, and the New Jersey interior remained largely free from enemy interference. In 1780, Clinton also entertained bold proposals for a rapid thrust up the Hudson and an immediate descent on Rochambeau's corps but called off both operations. Overall, Clinton pursued a cautious strategy for three years that maintained his hold on New York, but otherwise failed to advance Britain's position.

Other Crown officers had more uneven records. Knyphausen performed poorly in the June 1780 campaign, first bungling the transportation of his army to New Jersey, then failing to maintain the momentum of the attack on 7 June. Despite numerical superiority, his soldiers achieved little beyond burning a few villages. Conversely, General Pigot did well at Rhode Island. Field grade officers typically demonstrated competence, such as Colonel Johnson during his vigilant, but ultimately doomed, defense of Stony Point. Light infantry commanders such as Colonel Simcoe and General Grey achieved the best tactical results and showed the greatest initiative. Ultimately, though, the series of successful raids and ambushes the British commanders accrued proved of minimal value to the overall war effort.

Like Clinton, General Washington operated under constraints that limited his ability to seek a decision in the region. Without French naval support, he could not assault New York City, the most strategically significant objective remaining in the north. In 1778 and 1779, Washington enjoyed a relative abundance of well-trained and adequately equipped Continentals, and therefore employed them

in limited offensives against Newport and in western New York. Otherwise, he remained on the defensive and primarily sought to limit British penetrations into the Hudson Highlands and adjacent sectors of New Jersey and Connecticut. Most of Washington's efforts focused not on operations, but on political, diplomatic, and administrative problems. He worked to maintain good relations with civilian governors and the leaders of the communities that hosted his soldiers. He coordinated with his allies, particularly Rochambeau after the latter's arrival in 1780, laying the groundwork for allied cooperation that led to success in 1781.

Most importantly, he oversaw the administrative maturation of the Continental Army. Beginning in late 1778, he committed the Main Army to wintering in secure cantonments in the rugged terrain of the Highlands and nearby hill ranges. This arrangement afforded the army greater protection from the enemy and facilitated training and administration, but posed significant challenges in providing shelter, distributing supplies, and maintaining health and hygiene. Washington and his subordinates worked throughout the winters to establish new guidelines and disciplinary measures for camp sanitation, contracted with civilian provisioners, and planned and maintained supply routes to the cantonments. For three years, the Continentals built up the infrastructure that undergirded camp operations, including magazines, fortifications, and dwellings. By 1781, the army enjoyed a relatively comfortable existence secure in a mountain home that stood well prepared to withstand an enemy attack. Clinton despaired that Washington frequently occupied an unassailable position, but the American general and his subordinates deserved credit for making the occupation of these positions possible.

Alongside Washington, Nathanael Greene distinguished himself from 1778 to 1780. He interceded during the 1778 winter quarters debate to ensure the army cantoned in an easily supplied locale. The following year, he selected a remote, defensible cantonment site on Washington's orders, and grappled with the difficulties of supplying troops in such a place. During both winters, Greene helped craft the refinements to camp construction and hygiene that avoided the health problems encountered at Valley Forge. He also overcame

deficient finances, civilian apathy, and environmental obstacles to keep the army consistently provisioned, albeit sometimes by the slimmest of margins. At the same time, he continued to burnish his reputation as a skilled combat leader. He supervised an effective tactical stand at Rhode Island, and at Springfield directed a limited but successful fighting withdrawal against a superior force. Greene departed to command the Southern Army in late 1780, having gained experience in nearly every aspect of generalship during his time in the north.

Anthony Wayne likewise stands out as one of the Continentals' most distinguished generals in the northern campaign. Wayne planned and executed the assault on Stony Point, overcoming a stout enemy in a strong natural position with minimal casualties. He was fallible as a field commander, however, as his defeats at Paoli and Bull's Ferry demonstrated. Wayne exhibited personal bravery, suffering a wound while leading from the front at Stony Point; he also was an able administrator who saw to it that his soldiers had adequate supplies and enjoyed good health in camp. He balanced a reputation as a strict disciplinarian with a strong understanding of the hardships his soldiers faced. In 1781, he deftly handled the mutiny of his rank and file and ensured the Pennsylvania brigades were prepared to rejoin the campaign by summer.

Beyond Greene and Wayne, Washington benefited from the competent leadership of numerous subordinates. Henry Lee conducted a well-planned operation at Paulus Hook, and ably covered the left flank at Springfield. William Maxwell and Elias Dayton likewise rendered good service during that campaign. John Sullivan failed to take Newport but fought a well-managed defensive battle in Rhode Island and competently executed the campaign against the Haudenosaunee the following year. The unheralded Robert Howe, Alexander McDougal, and William Heath all capably administered Continental posts in the Hudson Highlands. Heath in particular earned Washington's trust to command the forces remaining behind in New York during the Yorktown campaign.

Outright patriot victory in the northern campaigns would have necessitated a direct assault on New York City. The experiences of

1778–1781 demonstrated just how much peril such an operation carried. Even with French naval support, the attempts to capture Newport and Savannah failed because of difficulties in coordinating land and sea forces and a strong enemy resistance. The Penobscot expedition likewise revealed that coastal operations could not succeed without the support of a major naval power. Washington's caution until the summer of 1781 proved appropriate to the strategic conditions. Conversely, even the threat of an attack on New York provided strategic gains, including Clinton's abandonment of Newport in 1779 and his orders to Cornwallis to halt offensive operations in Virginia in 1781.

Ultimately, the northern campaigns from 1778 to 1781 produced no great battles or famous victories. Instead, the theater witnessed a war of raids, ambushes, and surprise assaults. The soldiers of the Continental Army demonstrated themselves equal to their British counterparts in a series of small actions ranging across New Jersey, New York, and coastal New England. Behind these troops stood militiamen, camp followers, quartermasters, waggoners, and civilian hosts that sustained the army through three years of stalemate. Despite supply shortages, poor finances, and declining morale, the army survived, enabling Washington to husband his resources and commit them only at the most opportune moment. Thus, although the Americans won the Revolutionary War at Yorktown, the road to victory in the Chesapeake had been paved in the northern states.



APPENDIX



“Order, Regularity, & Discipline”: Waging War in the Eighteenth Century

by Joseph A. Seymour

By 1775, armies in Europe and North America had developed into complex forces organized around the infantry regiment. Artillery provided fire support. Mounted units performed reconnaissance, screened attacks and retreats, and added shock. Engineers and pioneers built and demolished fortifications and other works. Artificers repaired and maintained weapons and ordnance. Surgeons treated the sick and wounded. Civilian commissaries made, procured, and transported supplies and rations. All of them supported the foot soldiers, who usually dominated the battlefield.

Composition

The Continental Army and state militia generally organized their infantry regiments using the British model, with a colonel in command, aided by a lieutenant colonel, major, and regimental staff. A regiment had ten companies, including one light and one grenadier company. The light company consisted of the best shots, the cleverest, and the most agile in the regiment. These soldiers specialized in screening, skirmishing, patrolling, and scouting. Congress dispensed early on with the grenadier company, with its brawny shock troops who often formed the vanguard of assaults, and usually authorized

nine companies. Each company carried equipment and additional ammunition in one or two wagons. When the situation called for the infantry to operate away from its baggage train, soldiers placed extra ammunition and essential items in their knapsacks. Most companies had a few women on their rolls. Although not officially in the army, they could draw rations, and sometimes pay, by performing various essential duties, including nursing the sick and wounded and laundering the soldiers' clothing. Captains and lieutenants directed the maneuver and fire of the platoons in their companies. Sergeants and corporals maintained unit cohesion in battle, assisted officers, and enforced discipline in the sections under their charge. Drummers, who ranked between corporals and sergeants, communicated orders in camp and battle.

Equipment

A soldier's basic fighting equipment was known as a stand of arms, which commonly consisted of a musket; a bayonet; a cartridge box of wood, leather, or tin containing between twenty-three and twenty-nine paper cartridges; and cleaning tools. A standard firearm of the period was the British Land Pattern musket. It fired a powerful load consisting of a 1-ounce lead ball propelled by nearly a half ounce of gunpowder. Its oversized barrel of about 0.76- to 0.80-inch diameter made it easier to load. A ball fired from a musket of this type could reach massed troops out to 300 yards. At 100 yards, it was accurate enough to hit an individual and powerful enough to penetrate a two-inch elm plank. Continental, state, and militia forces augmented existing musket stores with locally made copies of the Land Pattern and imported French, German, Dutch, and Spanish arms of similar bore sizes and ballistics. Soldiers also shouldered sporting (nonmilitary issue) arms of different calibers, sometimes retrofitted to mount bayonets. The lack of serviceable arms slowed augmentation and the integration of reinforcements. Furthermore, companies equipped with a mix of arms could not easily sustain fire, let alone mount effective bayonet assaults.

Both armies also issued rifles to light troops or recruited experienced riflemen who brought their own. The rifles usually followed two patterns: the short-barreled, large-bore Germanic or *Jäger* (hunter) rifle, and the long-barreled, small-bore Pennsylvania rifle. Less powerful than muskets, both were accurate to about 300 yards and took about one minute to load. Neither could mount a bayonet. In 1777, British Maj. Patrick Ferguson fielded an innovative breech-loading rifle that mounted a bayonet, but it saw limited service.

Tactics

The musket's capabilities shaped tactics. A trained soldier could fire three rounds per minute. After twenty-five shots, the piece became too hot to handle, and the accumulation of residual gunpowder (known as powder-fouling) required cleaning and slowed reloading. Regiments formed in line at close order, presenting a continuous front of muskets and bayonets to concentrate their fire and mass to maximum effect. Close ranks also enabled company commanders to keep their troops together and thus better control them. The soldiers easily could hear orders communicated by drumbeat and could support each other using linear tactics described in tactical publications such as the *Manual Exercise, As Ordered by His Majesty in 1764*. In 1778, the Continental Army introduced a system spelled out in the *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, nicknamed the Blue Book. Well-drilled companies could execute a variety of maneuvers to bring their firepower or bayonets to bear, unleashing simultaneous volleys with devastating effect, or firing alternately by platoon to sustain a running fire. Infantry usually closed to the optimal range of 40 yards for a killing volley before a bayonet assault. While battalions also could extend their intervals to optimize individual fire, volume rather than accuracy usually decided a battle's outcome.

Artillery on both sides organized as separate regiments and battalions but fought as detachments as needed. With a range of several hundred yards, 3-, 4-, and 6-pounder guns supported

battalions in battle. With their slightly longer range, 8- and 12-pounders supported brigades, while larger guns with greater range operated from fortifications. Mortars fired exploding shells in a high arc to get over walls or other obstacles. Howitzers fired shells either directly at troops or in an arc. Artillerists and wagon teams were valuable assets. Commanders therefore often ordered crews that were about to be overrun by the enemy to disable their guns with spikes and mallets and abandon the weapons to save themselves and their teams.

Both forces also employed light dragoons, a type of mounted infantry. The scarcity of large horse breeds in America, the cost of transporting such mounts, and the uneven topography challenged the use of cavalry. Organized as regiments or separate troops, dragoons fought both mounted and dismounted and were armed with sabers, carbines, and, occasionally, pistols. Depending on time and terrain, both armies frequently detached light infantry, riflemen, artillery, and dragoons into separate battalions or combined them into corps or legions.

Fortifications

European and colonial governments constructed dozens of forts before and during the war to defend important cities, towns, and key points. Field fortifications included fort-like redoubts, arrow-shaped flèches, and crescent-shaped lunettes. These structures were built of large wicker cylinders, called gabions, which were filled with soil or rubble, and then reinforced by bundles of sticks called fascines, covered with soil and sod, and surrounded by moats. As time permitted, soldiers erected palisades (walls of vertical wooden stakes), placed fraises (sharpened stakes) at a slant on the inner surface of the moat, and laid an abatis (a network of felled trees with sharpened branches) to slow infantry assaults. For a portable obstacle, artificers would use a cheval-de-frise, which typically consisted of sharpened stakes projecting from a log or beam. To fortify harbor defenses and block rivers, engineers employed log booms connected

with heavy chains and created the naval version of a cheval-de-frise by constructing rock-filled timber boxes bearing sharpened logs.



Technology dictated tactics, which in turn influenced formations. The contending forces frequently deviated from the standards prescribed by regulations or government allocations as they dealt with issues of personnel, materiel, and authority. Necessity and mission spurred the evolution of regulations, tactics, and equipment during the war. That was particularly the case for the new army of the United States. As the war progressed, American soldiers attained a high level of proficiency that earned the confidence of those they served and the respect of both allies and enemies.

“The Course of human Affairs forbids an Expectation, that Troops formed under such Circumstances, should at once posses the Order, Regularity & Discipline of Veterans— Whatever Deficiencies there may be, will I doubt not, soon be made up by the Activity & Zeal of the Officers, and the Docility & Obedience of the Men. These Quali[ties,] united with their native Bravery, & Spirit will afford a happy Presage of Success, & put a final Period to those Distresses which now overwhelm this once happy Country.”

—George Washington, in an address to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, 4 July 1775



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MAP SYMBOLS



Route of march/attack



Retreat



Fortifications/Redoubts



Boat Bridge



Battle/Engagement



Abatis

MILITARY UNITS

American	French	British	German	
				Main Body
				Mounted Wing
				Division
				Division Cavalry
				Brigade
				Brigade Cavalry
				Regiment
				Regimental Cavalry
				Battalion
				Battalion Cavalry
				Company
				Company Cavalry
				Sharpshooter
				Artillery
				Warships



THE AUTHOR



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