

Remembering the Revolution
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In March 1779, commanders of the British and American armies were planning in earnest for the next campaign. General George Washington reacted to the directives of the Continental Congress and the entreaties of New York's Governor, George Clinton, to address "the calamitous situation of the North Western frontier" by promising "to take the most effectual measures for the protection of the inhabitants and chastisement of the indians." This planning would lead to the so-called Sullivan-Clinton Campaign, named for the two commanders, Major General John Sullivan and Brigadier General James Clinton (elder brother of the governor) against the Six Nations of the Iroquois in the Five Fingers district of New York.

Washington planned to use 4,000 Continental soldiers and militia forces against an estimated 3,000 Iroquois warriors. From winter quarters at Middle Brook, New Jersey, he wrote Major General Horatio Gates on March 6, 1779, that he proposed "to carry the war into the Heart of the Country of the six nations; to cut off their settlements, destroy their next Years crops; and do them every other mischief of which time and circumstances will permit." He expected the expedition to march off on May 1.

Although British successes in Georgia now offered the possibility of a campaign into South Carolina against Charleston, Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the American Department, and British Commander in Chief General Sir Henry Clinton were hoping that they might draw Washington's Main Army into "a general and decisive action at the opening of the campaign" in New York. Clinton would play this plan out in May with his campaign against the King's Ferry area.

Washington had already picked up the scent of this operation. On March 6, he wrote Major General Alexander McDougall, commander of the Hudson Highlands, that "The bare suggestion of an attempt upon the Posts in the Highlands (whether true or false) makes me extremely solicitous to have the Works at West point pushed forward with all possible dispatch.... If there is no longer danger to be apprehended from the Frost, the chain I conceive should be fixed." Brigadier General John Paterson, the commander at West Point, reported to McDougall on March 28 that "The Chain will be put down (Col Kosciuszki [Kosciuszko] tells me) in about tin days it takes some time to pitch the Logs being very sap rotten." Colonel Thaddeus Kociuszko, West Point's chief engineer, was also directing his attention to building Redoubt Number 4, to protect the western approaches to Fortress West Point.

Commemoration of major events of the 225th Anniversary of the American Revolution in 2004 will draw attention to the frontier and the Hudson Highlands. The re-enactment of the battle of Minisink is planned for May 15 at the Orange County Farmers' Museum near Montgomery; the re-enactment of the battle of Stony Point will take place at the battle site July 16 to 18 and Twin Forts Day on October 9 at Fort Montgomery State Historic Site. To learn about details of these events, see the Hudson River Valley Institute's Digital Library at www.hudsonrivervalley.net. - Jim Johnson

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