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West Point

1778- Present

West Point possessed a significant amount of strategic importance during the American Revolution.¹ It's location on the hills of the Hudson allowed for the protection of the waterway, and troops in the surrounding areas. The Continental Army gained possession of West Point in early 1778 and controlled it for the remainder of the war. In preparation for moving the headquarters of the Continental Army to West Point, General Washington sought Tadeusz Kosciuszko to design defenses for it.² Kosciuszko oversaw the building of "forts, batteries and redoubts and extended a 150-ton iron chain across the Hudson to control traffic."³

West Point eventually became the subject of Benedict Arnold's defection to the British. As part of his defection, Arnold offered "to deliver West Point and its 3,000 defenders for 20,000 sterling (about \$1 million today), a momentous act that he hoped would spark the collapse of the American cause."⁴ He assumed command of the fort in 1780, almost ensuring that he would be able to turn it over to the British upon his treason. The plan however was never executed as Major John Andre, Arnold's contact in the British Military, was captured.^{5,6}

¹ "A Brief History of West Point," *USMA.edu*, accessed March 31, 2010, <http://www.usma.edu/history.asp>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ James Henretta, "The Enigma of Benedict Arnold," *EarlyAmerica.com*, accessed April 1, 2010, <http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/fall97/arnold.html>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Benedict Arnold," *USHistory.org*, accessed March 31, 2010, www.ushistory.org/ValleyForge/served/arnold.html.

It wasn't until 1802 that West Point became the United States Military Academy after President Jefferson signed legislation.⁷ Since then the Academy has produced many of the military's finest officers including General (and 34th President) Dwight D. Eisenhower, General Douglas MacArthur, General Omar Bradley, General Mark Clark, and General George Patton, to name a few.⁸ The Academy is still in existence today with roughly 4,500 undergraduates currently enrolled.

⁷ "A Brief History of West Point."

⁸ Ibid.