Introduction

Within a decade of Henry Hudson’s voyage up the Hudson River in 1609, colonization began to occur. The Dutch constructed a trading post at Ft. Orange (Albany), and soon a little community existed around the small fort. The settlement at the southern tip of Manhattan Island, 140 miles downstream, became known as New Amsterdam (New York City). Little by little, both sides of the river in between the two communities were sprinkled with settlers and villages. Growth was slow during the Dutch colonial period, but after the English took over in 1664, the population of the valley expanded more rapidly. By the outbreak of the American Revolution, the Hudson Valley was the chief corridor of settlement in New York.

The onset of the Revolution served to emphasize a problem that had existed in the valley since the early 17th century, that of defense. Prior to the War for Independence, Hudson Valley residents sought
to protect themselves from marauding French and Indians. Between 1689 and 1763, the French and the English clashed in four wars in the colonies fought, to no small extent, to determine which nation would be the master of eastern North America. The New York frontier often was the target of French attack. But for that matter, the Hudson Valley settlers had to be on the alert for trouble even before the French wars. The Indians of the valley occasionally clashed with the European settlers because they resented their intrusion into Indian land. The threat of such raids caused settlers to take precautions. One manner of defense was the use of stone or brick houses as forts. Slits were built into the walls in order to allow the occupants to fire their muskets through them at the enemy. The building material of the houses made them relatively impervious to fire. In times of alarm, neighborhood settlers could seek refuge in one of these strongholds until the danger had passed.

When the Revolution broke out, the Americans worked to protect the new state of New York and its patriot population from British attack. When the British occupied New York City, the patriots built fortifications along the river in an attempt to prevent the Royal forces from sailing up the river and taking Albany. In 1777, the British did just that in an abortive campaign that was meant to divide New England from the southern states. However, the campaign's failure was due to other factors and not to the Hudson River's forts which proved totally ineffective. As a result, more fortresses were constructed along the Hudson, hopefully to prevent a reoccurrence of Britain's relative ease of passage up the river in 1777.

When the second war with Great Britain began in 1812, New York harbor and the entrance to the Hudson River were fortified once again. This time the bastions of defense in the upper harbor were never put to the test. Although the British occasionally attacked the forts of the lower harbor, they never broke through to the entrance of the Hudson.

After 1815 the residents of the Hudson Valley did not have to fear enemy attack, yet a fortress was built on the river as late as the end of the 19th century. This time its builder did not attempt to protect himself and his family against harm or prevent an enemy force from coming up the river. Instead, he wanted to keep his valuable possessions secure in the broadest meaning of the word. No matter what the reason, the Hudson Valley has been dotted with forts of many types and sizes. Today many remain, in various states of repair. Some continue to be residences, some serve the public in other ways, but they all stand as evidence of the manner in which the people of the

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Hudson Valley sought security. This short article will describe five of the fortresses. They are not the only five, but were chosen because of the fact that they are representative of the manner in which people living between New York City and Albany built protection.

**Castle Clinton**

Resolutely standing in Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan Island is a squat, round, stone and mortar structure, dwarfed by its newer, taller, and shinier neighbors. This sentinel of a bygone era still watches over New York harbor from its strategic post next to the Hudson River's junction with the harbor and within sight of the southern outlet of the East River.

At the beginning of the 19th century when trouble again was brewing with Great Britain, the United States government took steps to augment New York harbor's fortifications. In 1807, a battery was built on a rocky outcropping a few yards off the southern tip of Manhattan. At first called the West Battery, it was soon named Castle Clinton in honor of New York's illustrious governor, George Clinton. Together with Castle William across the Harbor on Governor's Island, it protected the entrance to the docks on the East River during the War of 1812. Of course, because of its location, its massive eight foot thick walls pierced by small openings for its heavy guns also watched over the entrance to the Hudson.

By 1815 the second war with England was over. Within a few years it became apparent that the fort no longer was needed to defend the upper harbor, so the national government turned it over to the City of New York. The former bastion was roofed over, remodeled inside, renamed Castle Garden, and turned into a public auditorium. During the next 35 years, the old fort's walls echoed the cheers and applause of New Yorkers as they thrilled to the sight of a succession of illuminates. The aging hero of the Revolution, the Marquis de Lafayette, highlighted his American tour there in 1824. In Castle Garden in 1851, Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, pleaded the case of his homeland's abortive revolt against the Austrian Empire. Ten years later the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII, gave New Yorker's a glimpse of English royalty with his visit to the Garden. But, undoubtedly the most captivating appearance in Castle Garden was the 1850 performance of Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale." Brought to America by the unparalleled promoter Phineas T. Bar-
num, the renowned singer packed 5,000 people at a time into the stone structure. Some members of her audiences bid hundreds of dollars per ticket at special pre-performance auctions just to hear her voice. Barnum typically played down the event by proclaiming that Jenny Lind's "first appearance, in point of enthusiasm, was probably never before equalled in the world." Although as an entertainment center Castle Garden hosted large audiences spellbound at the sight of New York's famous visitors, the numbers of spectators were overshadowed by the throng that entered the old fort during its third incarnation.

In 1855 Castle Garden was transformed from its role as an auditorium to become the nation's main immigrant reception center. During the next 36 years more than 7,690,000 newcomers to America passed through the building on their way to a new beginning. Irish, Germans, and other north Europeans made up the bulk of immigration during the early years of the Garden's new assignment, while Italians and eastern Europeans began to arrive in ever increasing numbers during the latter part of the old stone fort's use as an immigrant center. By 1891 the numbers of migrants became so large that the government moved the processing facility to its new, enlarged building on Ellis Island across the harbor. Now empty, Castle Garden awaited its forth assignment.

The interim for the former fortress was relatively short. By the turn of the 20th century, it was again welcoming visitors, but this time to view aquatic creatures. The building had been turned into the New York City Aquarium. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, people came to the circular stone structure to peer into its many fresh and salt water filled tanks and marvel at the wide variety of fish and sea mammals. By 1950, however, the aquarium was closed and the old building left dormant.

But within a few years new life was brought to the structure and it was prepared for its current role. The building was acquired by the U.S. National Park Service, its roof was removed, at it was restored to its original appearance as Castle Clinton. Today, Castle Clinton serves a dual function. As a fortress, it reminds visitors of its role in defending America's shores, while simultaneously it hosts people for another reason. Thousands upon thousands of visitors file through its massive, iron-studded gates each year to purchase tickets for the boat ride to the Statue of Liberty. No doubt many of them are descendants of immigrants who passed through the "Castle" on their way to the United States. In the late 1880's, during the last few years of the fortress's tour of immigrant reception duty, most of those newcomers probably
Castle Clinton and Lower Manhattan Skyline.

Castle Clinton with the Statue of Liberty in background.
The Old Stone Fort with new glass and steel building.
Main entrance to Castle Clinton.

Castle Clinton with Ellis Island in the background.
crowded the rails of their ships to catch sight of the statue, America’s new symbol of liberty. As the statue continues its symbolic role, so does Castle Clinton remain a bastion in Battery Park in its constant vigil over the entrance to New York’s water route to the interior.

**Ft. Putnam**

Perched on a rocky promitory overlooking the United States Military Academy at West Point, a bastion of the Revolution continues its watch over the Hudson. It was built to keep the British from advancing up this natural transportation route into the interior of New York from their base in New York City.

In 1777 Britain put into action a plan for ending rebellion in the American colonies. They focused on New York as the key to separating patriot New England from the southern colonies. Simply put, the strategy was to send one army under Lt. General John Burgoyne south from Montreal, along Lakes Champlain and George, towards Albany. General Howe would simultaneously send another force up the Hudson River from New York City. When the two armies met in Albany, the colonies would be cut in two. The Americans valiantly, but unsuccessfully, attempted to prevent the Royal army from moving north on the Hudson. The forts at Bear Mountain were taken and the British sailed up the river at will. In the end, however, the king’s forces halted short of Albany when word reached them of Burgoyne’s defeat and surrender at Saratoga. The Hudson River expedition returned to New York City.

In order to halt any future British thrusts up the Hudson, the Americans began to build a system of fortresses at the strategic location of West Point, ten miles south of Newburgh. The river was less than 500 yards across between West Point and Constitution Island along the opposite shore. A decision also was made to stretch an immense wrought iron chain across the river. The chain would be similar to the one placed at Bear Mountain in 1777, but larger and stronger. The patriots hoped that the West Point forts combined with the huge chain would stop a British advance up the river. The chain was in place by the first of May 1778. Fortification took longer.

The man sent to West Point to supervise fortification was Thaddeus Kosciuszko. A captain in the Polish army, Kosciuszko resigned his commission and sailed for America in 1776. He was attracted by the War for Independence and its ideals of liberty. His engineering back-
ground soon won him a colonelcy in the Continental army. Kosciuszko had seen prior service at Ticonderoga and Saratoga before his arrival at West Point in 1778. During the next two years, he was in charge of planning and constructing the great bastion on the Hudson.

Kosciuszko lost little time in drawing plans to defend West Point. On the level ground opposite Constitution Island he situated the main fortress. He then selected Crown Hill rising 400 feet above the main fort, to the southwest, as the site for another strong bastion. Colonel Rufus Putnam and his 5th Massachusetts regiment were assigned to build the Crown Hill structure. The hill was particularly well situated for a fortress. In the words of Kosciuszko's commanding officer, Major General Alexander McDougall, "the hill which Colonel Putnam is fortifying is the most commanding and important of any that we can now attend to."

Fort Putnam mounted six guns, as originally constructed, and from its lofty position surveyed the plain and the river below. As one of five forts and eight smaller redoubts on both sides of the Hudson, it was part of the most impressive single fortress constructed by the Americans during the Revolution. But, fortress West Point never saw combat during the war. Except for the brief excitement in 1780 over General Arnold's treason in attempting to hand West Point over to the British, the great bastion remained relatively quiet. Yet General Washington continued to keep it well garrisoned for fear that the British in New York City would again campaign up the Hudson.

Throughout the rest of the war, Ft. Putnam and the rest of the protective network of forts and redoubts were continually rebuilt and strengthened. At Putnam, stone gradually began to replace the hastily erected wood and earth of its walls. When it became apparent that there was another, higher ridge one-half mile to the west, smaller redoubts were built on the higher ground in order to prevent the enemy from using it to fire down upon Ft. Putnam. Washington was so pleased with the strengthened fortress on the hudson that he proudly gave the French General Rochambeau a tour of the place in 1781, when the French army joined Washington's army for a combined attack against the British at Yorktown.

Two years later in November 1783, Washington waited at West Point for the final evacuation of the British from New York City. The war was over and the nearly abandoned great bastion stood like "a ghost town of stripped, skeletonlike stone forts and batteries." Within a month, the British were gone, Washington entered the city, and the peacetime American army nearly ceased to exist for want of funds.
The impregnable Fort Putnam and its sheer rock base.

Fort Putnam looking south, Hudson River in the background.
For Putnam looking east across the river.

An eastern view from Fort Putnam overlooking the military academy.
In 1794 when West Point was on its way to becoming the U.S. Military Academy, Ft. Putnam was refurbished. It was brought to the condition in which it now stands, a silent sentry on constant duty overlooking the Academy's parade grounds and academic buildings and echoing only the footsteps of visitors who are provided a magnificent view of the Hudson in return for their steep climb.

**Bannerman’s Castle**

About two miles south of the City of Beacon, a small island lies a few hundred yards off the east bank of the Hudson River. It used to be known as Pollopel Island named, according to local lore, for Mary “Polly” Pell. As the story goes, young Polly fell through the ice while sleigh riding on the river. An area farmer and suitor of “Polly” happened to witness the mishap, rescue the unlucky miss from her watery grave, and carry her to the safety of the solid ground of the island. Of course, the two lived happily thereafter. Today, “Polly” Pell’s adventure notwithstanding, the isle is more widely known as Bannerman’s Island after its turn of the century proprietor. Amtrak passengers riding the water level route along the Hudson can hardly fail to notice the large, castle-like structure that dominates the island.

Francis Bannerman was born in Scotland and in 1854, at age three, migrated to America with his parents. He spent his youth in Brooklyn and, as a teenager, went to work in his father’s marine supply store near the Navy Yard. Although too young to fight in the Civil War, he eventually fell under the war’s indirect influence.

Within a few years after the end of the Civil War in 1865, the United States government began auctioning off its huge stocks of largely obsolete surplus military supplies. Among these goods were hundreds of thousands of muzzle-loading percussion muskets, the principal infantry weapons of the war. Thousands of breech-loading percussion rifles and carbines, as well as large quantities of percussion revolvers, also were sold by the government. The end of the Civil War marked the end of the era of muzzle-loaders and percussion, or cap-and-ball weapons. The United States military converted to new cartridge arms and began to dump its Civil War surplus at a fraction of the original price. In 1870 and 1871, large sales were made to agents of France who needed weapons of all sorts in their desperate and unsuccessful attempt to halt the Prussian onslaught. However, many of the surplus arms and military supplies also were
purchased by dealers for disposal on other markets, foreign and domestic alike. Francis Bannerman and his father attended some of the auctions in New York City, perhaps with the idea of picking up some bargains that might remain after the major surplus dealers of the period had obtained what they wanted. In this manner, Bannerman learned the trade that he became so skillful at by the end of the century, when he led the list of dealers in military surplus.

By the mid-1890s, Bannerman was in charge of the family business and moved its headquarters to a lower Broadway location in Manhattan. The move marked the beginning of his emergence into large-scale sales of surplus military goods. Although it was Civil War arms that gave him his start as a used arms dealer, it was the Spanish-American War that catapulted him to international fame. The war that Secretary of State John Hay called the "Splendid Little War" lasted only a few months in 1898, but resulted in America's temporary acquisition of Cuba and the longer term gain of Puerto Rico and the Philippines. For Francis Bannerman, it meant a golden opportunity to acquire war surplus on the scale that he had not been in a position to do so at the end of the Civil War. Bannerman's post-1898 purchases made him a dealer in military surplus of the first rank.

Bannerman bought nearly all of the Spanish military goods captured by the United States. The cache included thousands of modern bolt-action Mauser rifles and more than 20 million rounds of ammunition. When Bannerman began shipping his newly acquired arms and combustible ammunition to New York City, civil authorities there became worried as to the safety of lower Manhattan. It was then that he decided to purchase Pollopel Island and erect a storehouse for his goods a safe distance from the surrounding populace. The great "castle" was built on the island in 1900; its garish towers and turrets soon were packed with every manner of firearms, ammunition, edged weapons, and accoutrements. An ambitious general's shopping list could be filled from any of his catalogs published early in this century. The prospective buyer could acquire everything from Gatling guns to gunboats, swords to saddles, artillery shells to arquebuses, and pikes to puttees. A New York Herald article of September 1906 called Bannerman the outfitter of revolutions "with a storage island up the Hudson."

By the time of his death in 1918, Francis Bannerman was the largest dealer in surplus military material in the United States. His sons then took over and continued the business until after World War II. By that time, the firm of Francis Bannerman sold mainly collectors...
Bannerman’s Island from Storm King—showing the east shore of the Hudson River with Amtrak Line and Newburgh-Beacon Bridge in the background.

The mysterious relic Bannerman’s Castle.
firearms, which caused it to become a legend among the collectors of antique weapons and accoutrements. Now, however, Bannerman's is only a legend. The outlet store on Broadway has been closed for two decades. The castle on the Hudson with its 20-inch thick walls and its breakwaters created by thousands of rifle barrels embedded in concrete is crumbling from years of neglect. It stands empty and deserted, a mysterious appearing monument to its enterprising builder.

Ft. DuBois

Even though Louis DuBois found it difficult to think of anything but the fate of his wife, he could not help notice the fertility of the land over which he traveled. It was early September 1663 and he was with a band of Huguenot settlers and Dutch soldiers making their way southeast through the Wallkill Valley. The previous June, Indians had attacked the small community of Hurley, near Wiltwyck (Kingston) on the Hudson, and had carried off women and children. Happily, the rescue force was able to recover the prisoners, unharmed, by means of a surprise attack upon the Indian village. DuBois returned to Hurley with his wife, but could no forget the lush country through which he had passed.

By the mid-1670s, DuBois and other Huguenots decided to leave Hurley. They wanted to form their own settlement apart from the Kingston-Hurley area which was predominantly Dutch. They were drawn to the land about a dozen miles south of Hurley, through which DuBois had passed in 1663. New York had been in the hands of the English since 1664. This made it necessary for DuBois and his companions to first ask permission of the English governor in order to purchase the land from the Indians who occupied it. The royal governor's consent was given and the required purchase documents were executed in 1677. In addition to Louis DuBois, his sons Abraham and Isaac were among the 12 original patentees. The following year, the Huguenot patent holders moved their families from Hurley to the banks of the Wallkill.

These Protestant settlers left their native France mainly to avoid persecution at the hands of the Roman Catholic majority. Many first sought refuge in the Paltz region of Germany's Rhine Valley before they came to America during the second half of the 17th century. Not surprisingly when they settled in the Wallkill Valley, they named their new community Die Paltz, or New Paltz.
The earliest settlers of New Paltz owned the farmland in common and pooled their produce. Community government was handled by a Duzine, or 12-member council. At first, the heads of the 12 founding families formed the governing body, but in 1728 the Duzine became an elected council. By then, all property owners in the town of New Paltz were allowed to vote for the council members. In this manner, newcomers to the community, many of whom were not French Huguenot, could participate in government. The Duzine remained the legislative and executive body of New Paltz until 1826 when it was superseded by the more common form of town government.

When the original 12 families founded New Paltz, their first dwellings were simple wooden structures. By the early 1690s, however, the settlers began to replace their crude homes with sturdy stone houses. Some of these buildings still stand on Huguenot Street in New Paltz. One of them is Ft. DuBois, built in 1705.

Daniel DuBois was born in 1684, one of the three sons of Isaac DuBois, youngest of the 12 Huguenots who founded New Paltz. Daniel’s mother was Mary Hasbrouck, a daughter of one of the original settlers. At age 21, Daniel built the present fort on the site of the first bastion or redoubt. When Governor Andros approved of the original patent, he did so on the condition that a fortified retreat be built for the safety of the settlers. Daniel’s fort was more elaborate than the first with its musket holes in the walls and its date of construction in large wrought iron numerals spiked into the east wall. Although looked upon mainly as the settlement’s refuge against Indians, at the time it was built the Huguenot of New Paltz worried about another menace. The second of four wars in the colonies fought between England and France broke out in 1702. Even though New Paltz was seven miles west of the Hudson River, its residents feared that the Catholic French might use the waterway to swoop down upon them from Canada. This threat undoubtedly was augmented by the memories the older settlers had of the persecution they suffered in their homeland. As it was, the fort on Huguenot Street never came under attack.

Daniel DuBois died in 1755. Twenty years later when the stone structure performed another service at the outbreak of another war, it was still in the hands of the builder’s family. On April 29, 1775, a few days after the first shots of the Revolution at Lexington and Concord, 218 residents of New Paltz gathered at Ft. DuBois. They were there to sign the “Articles of Association,” a statement backing the goals of the Continental Congress and New York’s patriot sup-
Gun loophole at Fort Dubois.

South facade of Fort Dubois showing additions of porches.
Fort DuBois showing gun slits or loopholes and 1705 date in wrought iron along the corners of the east end.
ported Provincial Congress. A member of the DuBois family chaired the historic meeting.

Today, Ft. DuBois continues to serve the public as a small, but excellent eating place. Although a two story porch has been added to its south side and a wooden portion attached to its west end, the gun slits in the wall facing Huguenot Street still serve as evidence of the fort's original purpose.

**Ft. Crailo**

The oldest of the five “fortresses” chosen for this essay is Ft. Crailo. The original part of this building situated on the Hudson opposite south Albany dates to the period of Dutch colonization of New York or, as the Dutch called it, New Netherlands. In the 1630s, the Dutch West India Company introduced a new policy in its New Netherlands holding that was meant to promote increased colonization. The champion of this policy was Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, a wealthy diamond merchant of Amsterdam and a leading director of the West India Company. Under Van Rensselaer’s plan, members of the Company could claim large estates in New Netherlands, known as patroonships. A patroon could acquire 24 miles of land along one side or 12 miles along each side of the Hudson River. The eastern and western boundaries of the grant were more or less taken as the respective limits of the colony. In return for this generous grant, the patroon was required to provide a minimum of 50 settlers on the land within a period of four years. Since the patroon had to finance the migration of people to his new domain, the settlers would become tenant farmers of the patroon. It was not surprising that Kiliaen Van Rensselaer was among the first to receive a patroonship, or that Rensselaerswyck, as his holdings were called, eventually encompassed about one million acres. Rensselaer’s vast estate took in much of what is today Albany and Rensselaer Counties.

Although the “Great Patroon” never came to America, his successors did and built Ft. Crailo about 1650. The original structure was made of sturdy brick. Musket slits pierced the walls for defense, mainly against expected attacks by Indians. For a variety of reasons, the Dutch of the Hudson Valley lacked harmony with the Algonquian Mahicans who also lived in the Valley. By comparison, Dutch-Iroquois Mohawk relations tended to be amicable. Actually, Dutch settlement never ventured too far west of Ft. Orange (Albany) into the land of the Mohawks.
Sources indicate that the fort was named after Crailo, or Crow's Woods, Kilian Van Rensselaer's home in the Netherlands. It is not clear who occupied Ft. Crailo during its first half century. Dominie Megapolensis, a prominent pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in the colony may have lived there for a time. Perhaps Arendt Van Corlaer may also have leased the building after the good dominie left. Towards the end of the 17th century, Nicholas Van Rensselaer apparently made his home in the fort until his death. Later, when Nicholas' widow married Robert Livingston, the new owner may have leased it to tenant farmers. In any case, historians agree that in 1704, Ft. Crailo once again was occupied by Rensselaers when Hendrick moved into the building.

Beginning in 1740, extensive addition and remodeling of Ft. Crailo was undertaken by Hendrick's son, Johannes Van Rensselaer. Johannes enlarged it to its present size and appearance. He and his wife raised their family, including their daughter Katrina, in the more spacious dwelling. She married Philip Schuyler, a noted patriot general of the Revolution. Katrina Schuyler and her husband lived directly across the river from Ft. Crailo in the general's grand mansion called "The Pastures." It was there in 1780 that Katrina and Philip's daughter Elizabeth married Alexander Hamilton.

Although known today as the residence of the Van Rensselaers and the childhood home of the wife of General Schuyler, Ft. Crailo is more famous for another role it allegedly played in contributing to the patriot cause in the War for Independence. In 1758 during the French and Indian War, the British were preparing to attack the French at Ft. Ticonderoga. The British commander, General Abercrombie and his staff stayed at Ft. Crailo while the troops were assembling for the assault on Ticonderoga. A British army surgeon named Shuckburgh spent his leisure time sitting behind the house and watching colonial recruits straggle in from the countryside. He was so amused by these motley would-be soldiers and their distinctly unmilitary bearing that he composed derisive verses to poke fun at them. As the story goes, this was the origin of the patriot marching song of the Revolution, "Yankee Doodle."

During the War of the Revolution, Ft. Crailo never came under British attack, but it did serve a stint as General Schuyler's headquarters and was the scene of American encampments during the war. Many American and French officers, including George Washington were entertained there by the Van Rensselaers. After the war, the "fort" remained the home of the Van Rensselaers until 1871. Thereafter, it fell into a state of decay until it was taken over by the state in

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Fort Crailo window and brick detail.

West front of Fort Crailo (facing river) showing loopholes between the windows.
Fort Crailo entrance (Dutch door), west front.
this century. As a New York State Historic Site it has been restored to its 18th century warmth and charm and is open to the public.

Notes


References

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