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Paper Assignment # 2- Hall of Fame Military Figures
Final Draft
5/4/09

The United States of America has a long and proud history of military conflict. As part of this history, the Hudson River Valley has sent men into all of the various American conflicts both at home and abroad. In each of these wars the men and women of the Hudson River Valley have served with distinction. In looking at The French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, and the Civil War, we can example this military tradition with the heroic deeds of individuals.

French and Indian War

French and Indian War (part of the Seven Years War) raged from 1754 to 1763. The conflict was between the French and the British over Northern territory in North America. British had already established colonies in the East and were steadily expanding, while the French tried bypassing British colonies to establish their own farther west. Escalating conflict between the two arose over the ownership of the land. The French allied with extensive Indian tribes, while the British relied on colonial support. While the main area of conflict was farther north in Canada, the upper and some of the middle Hudson Valley did saw some action.¹ In particular the Lake George region saw fighting between 1755-1757 highlighted by the Battle of Lake George and surrendering of Fort William Henry. The events were made famous when James

¹ Robert A. Rosenbaum, *The Penguin Encyclopedia of American History*, (New York: Penguin Reference, 2003), 133-134; Arthur G. Adams, *The Hudson Through the Years* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 21-22.

Fenimore Cooper wrote *Last of the Mohicans*. In the novel he described the surrender of Fort William Henry and gruesome slaughter that resulted. Additionally, the Town of Kingston served, for a short time, during the war “as a base for frontier military operations.”² While the French Indian barely touched the Hudson River Valley, its residents fought in the war. Goose Van Schaick, Phillip John Shuyler, and Nathaniel Woodhull are just a few examples of men from the area that went to defend Britain, their homes and their families; the three of them returned to service years later during the Revolution.³

Goose Van Schaick had a distinguished career in both the French Indian War and the Revolution. As a young adult, he entered the military, serving first as lieutenant in 1756, then as captain in 1758, and later as a lieutenant colonel. While he left the military life for a short period after the French and Indian War, he returned to active duty during the American Revolution. As discontent rose during the inter war period, Van Schaick joined both the Albany Committee of Correspondence and the Committee of Safety, once the war began he returned to a military life. In 1775, Van was made colonel of the second New York regiment, which moved to Lake Champlain in preparation for the invasion of Canada, but saw no action. This changed the following year when Van Schaick was made the colonel of the first New York regiment, which removed enemy Indians out of Tryon County. After which Van Schaick became involved in the defense of Fort Ticonderoga. In 1778, Van Schaick marched his troops around the Northern theatre of war from Valley Forge to the Hudson Highlands, Fort Schuyler, and Fort

² *Ibid*; James Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans* (New York: Bantam Classic, 1981).

³ *Ibid*; Arthur Adams, *The Hudson: A Guidebook to the River* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 239, 291.

Plank. During his moves in 1778, Van Schaick saw action as he fought in the battle of Monmouth.⁴ After his success with a raid on the Onondaga Indian Villages, Van Schaick was made the commander of the Northern department of the army, where he mainly supplied army posts. Goose Van Schaick's major accomplishment during his long military career was his 1779 raid on the Onondaga Indian Village. The Continentals saw the Onondaga as supporters of the British, as such they became targets within the greater war. In a well planned attack "Van Schaick destroyed forty houses, livestock, and crops, killed fifteen Indians, and captured thirty-four." In the process, Van Schiack managed keep all of his men alive.⁵ In 1783, Van Schaick was promoted brevetted brigadier general and soon after retired. A few years later Van Schaick died in his Albany home on July 4, 1736.

Nathaniel Woodhull is another heroic figure from the Hudson Valley that emerged in the French Indian War. Rejecting the family farm and life in agriculture, Woodhull joined the New York Militia at a young age. He rapidly rose in rank and was promoted to the rank of major when the French and Indian War began in 1754. As such, he was part of the attack against Fort Ticonderoga and during the capture of Fort Frontenac, he led the Third Regiment. In 1760 Woodhull was promoted to colonel and saw action in the assault against Montreal.⁶ Upon the wars conclusion he sought a more peaceful life by getting married to Ruth Floyd and having a child. From 1761 until 1776, Woodhull worked hard and became one of the most prosperous farmers in Suffolk

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ <http://www.anb.org.online.library.marist.edu/articles/01/01-01008.html?a=1&n=nathaniel%20woodhull&d=10&ss=0&q=1>

County. When the Revolutionary War broke out, Woodhull joined the Whigs and was elected to the Suffolk County Colonial Assembly and the New York State Provincial Congress. Returning to active duty he took the rank of brigadier general and became the commander of Suffolk and Queens Counties. However like so many families of the time, the issues of the day threatened their unity; he and his brother were Whigs while his brother-in-law was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.⁷ In August/September of 1776, Woodhull took part in the battle of Long Island where he was wounded and captured by Light Dragoons. His injuries became gangrenous and he died from them on September 20, 1776.

Philip John Schuyler was another Hudson Valley military man who served in both the French Indian War and the Revolution. He grew up in wealthy and well educated surroundings with many opportunities yet chose a military life when the French and Indian War began. He raised his own militia and later served as a quartermaster. Between wars he entered public life serving on the Albany City Council then served in the New York Assembly.⁸ As such, when the Revolutionary War began, Schuyler was a leading figure. He was an important Major-General under George Washington taking command of the Northern Dept. In 1775, he planned the fail invasion of Canada which led to the advance of British forces of John J. Burgoyne. Following by the loss of Fort Ticonderoga he was replaced by Horatio Gates representing a loss of faith in his abilities. He demanded a court martial in 1778, which cleared his name. From 1778 to his death

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ <http://www.anb.org.online.library.marist.edu/articles/01/01-00812.html?a=1&n=Philip%20John%20Schuyler%20&d=10&ss=0&q=1;>
[http://search.eb.com.online.library.marist.edu/eb/article-9066247.](http://search.eb.com.online.library.marist.edu/eb/article-9066247)

on November 19, 1804, Schuyler was a member of the Continental Congress, the New York State Senate, and a New York State Senator.⁹

American Revolution

Out of the French and Indian War came the seeds of resentment and a questioning of loyalty. The American colonies sacrificed money, supplies, and lives to defeat the French and Indians for the British. In return they received nothing, but more taxation. What was worse is that they received taxation without representation. In the 1760s, the British enforced the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, and the various Townshend Acts.¹⁰ During this time up and down the Hudson River Valley, like other areas in the colonies, people were beginning to talk and gather about the injustices they suffered under British rule. In the 1770s, the unrest in the colonies erupted with the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party. By April 1775, the colonies were at war with the British.¹¹

The Hudson River Valley presented an opportunity for the British and vulnerability for the Americans. If the British were able to take control of the Hudson River Valley, they could effectively cut the North and the South colonies off from one another, which might end the Revolution as the "... rebellion would be cut in two."¹² To prevent this, the Hudson River Valley was well stocked and fortified: Fort Montgomery, Fort Clinton and Fort Constitution were all built to achieve this. One of the measures that helped protect the Hudson River Valley from falling into British hands was the Great Chain across the Hudson. Created in the Hudson River Valley it only took six weeks for

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Arthur Adams, 21, 23-32; Encyclopedia, 13-16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid*; Carl Carmer, *The Hudson* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 77.

Peter Townsend of the Stirling Iron Works to complete the Great Chain.¹³ In 1778, the Great Chain was stretched across the Hudson, each link weighting 140-180 pounds, from West Point to Constitution Island. The efforts to fortify the Hudson River Valley worked as:

“Continental soldiers built forts, batteries and redoubts and extended a 150-ton iron chain across the Hudson to control river traffic. Fortress West Point was never captured by the British, despite Benedict Arnold’s treason. West Point is the oldest continuously occupied military post in America.”¹⁴

West Point never fell during the Revolution. It became America’s first Military academy in 1802 going on to become a center for military theory and philosophy. Over its history it has educated many of the United States top generals and even a number of Presidents.¹⁵

Like the French-Indian war before it, the Revolutionary War saw the men of the Hudson Valley answer the call to arms. A small sampling of the Valley’s patriotic men include, Goose Van Schaick, Phillip John Shuyler, and Nathaniel Woodhull, who fought in the French and Indian Wars, and others like Peter Gansevoort, Sybil Ludington, Abraham Ten Broeck, and James and George Clinton.¹⁶

Peter Gansevoort served with great distinction throughout the Revolution. His career follows many of the important events as they relate to the Hudson Valley. Soon after finishing school, in New Jersey, Gansevoort gained a commission as a major in the Second New York Regiment of the Continental army as the American Revolution was beginning, in 1775. As part of the invasion of Canada Gansevoort saw action as far north

¹³ *Ibid.*; <http://www.hudsonriver.com/halfmoonpress/stories/0298link.htm>, 4/30/09.

¹⁴ <http://www.usma.edu/history.asp>, 4/28/09.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; <http://www.hudsonriver.com/history.htm>.

as Quebec. However like so many in the patriot ranks he became seriously ill and had to fall back to Montreal to recover. Later in the war Gansevoort was promoted to lieutenant and placed in command of an area of northern New York that included the Hudson River Valley, Mohawk River Valley and territory as far north as Ft. Oswego. Achieving success in this, Gansevoort was again promoted to the rank colonel of the Third Regiment of the Continental army.¹⁷ In the early spring of 1777, Gansevoort was given the command of Fort Stanwix (located in what is now Rome, New York). Gansevoort, with the many men under his command, went to work on the vitally strategic fort in order to make it a symbol of American vitality. The strength of the newly constructed fort and the strength of Gansevoort's command would be put to the test on August 3, 1777, when the British attacked. Both held against the British. Despite being out-manned and out-gunned, Gansevoort was able to outlast the British attempt until Continental reinforcements arrived. Because of his efforts, the Congress promoted Gansevoort to colonel commandant of Fort Stanwix.¹⁸ In 1778, Gansevoort became the colonel commandant of Fort Schuyler. The next few years Gansevoort served in Schenectady, Saratoga, the Finger Lakes, Albany, West Point, and Fort Saratoga. Finally ending up back in Albany in 1781 where he retired with the rank of brigadier general of the militia. He remaining years were spent building a family, business interests and serving in various public offices.¹⁹

¹⁷ <http://www.anb.org.online.library.marist.edu/articles/02/02-00138.html?a=1&n=Peter%20Gansevoort&d=10&ss=0&q=1>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The women of the Hudson Valley also participated in the success of the Patriot cause. Sybil Ludington was born to Henry and Abigail Knowles Ludington in Dutchess County, New York on April 5, 1761. The Ludington family had two heroes in the war. Henry Ludington served as a militia colonel while his daughter played an influential role in the Revolution's beginning. As large quantities of supplies were being kept in Danbury, Connecticut, it was a prime target for attack. On the night of April 26, 1777, a message was brought to the Ludington's home, informing them of an attack on Danbury. With no one to ride out and warn the militiamen, who had gone back to their homes, the then 16 years old Sybil Ludington rode 40 miles to tell her father's militia to gather at the Ludington's home in order to muster a force to defend Danbury.²⁰ Despite her efforts, her father and his men arrived too late. Unfortunately by the time the militia arrived Danbury had already fallen. Her achievement has led many to refer to her as the female Paul Revere.²¹

Arguably the most distinguished resident of the Hudson Valley to serve in the Revolution was George Clinton. Clinton's military career began in 1757 where he served as a steward's mate for three years. Returning to New York, he enlisted in his brother's militia company. This did not last long for in 1760, he left to study the law. However in 1775 he returned to military life and a brigadier General of Militia. It was his duty to fortify the Hudson River against the British. In 1777, he was elected New York State Governor where he served six terms. After a brief stint of retirement, Clinton was elected

²⁰ <http://www.anb.org.online.library.marist.edu/articles/20/20-01901.html?a=1&n=Sybil%20Ludington&d=10&ss=0&q=1>;
<http://search.eb.com.online.library.marist.edu/eb/article-9125841>.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Governor again in 1800, which then lead him to win the vice presidency in 1804.²² In 1808, he ran, but ultimately failed to win the presidency. Clinton became the first Vice President to die in office on April 20, 1812.²³

The other Clinton brother, James, also deserves consideration when discussing distinguished military men of the Hudson Valley. Clinton began his distinguished military career by enlisting in the Ulster County militia company in 1756. During this time he met and married his first wife Mary De Witt in 1765. They went on to have seven children (one of them De Witt Clinton).²⁴ In 1774, he return to the militia, fought in the assault on Quebec, and rose in the ranks becoming brigadier general in 1776, when he was given the responsibility of fortifying the Hudson River. In 1779, he and Major General John Sullivan led several campaigns to drive the Indians out of New York, although these campaigns were highly unsuccessful, Clinton continued his attempts until 1783, when he left the military. From 1788 to 1801, Clinton served on the New York State Assembly, was a state senator, and represented New York at the constitutional convention. He also remarried in 1797, after the death of his first wife, to Mary Little Grey, which whom he had six more children. In 1776, Clinton was responsibly for the construction of the forts along the Hudson River, which were there to defend the Highlands. After his retirement from the military, he was awarded brevet Major General in 1783. After a long full life, Clinton died in Little Britain, New York, on December 22,

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ <http://www.anb.org.online.library.marist.edu/articles/02/02-00078.html?a=1&f=%22James%20Clinton%20%22&d=10&ss=0&q=1>.

1812. Politically and militarily James Clinton is an essential historic figure in the shaping of New York History.²⁵

Civil War

During America's Civil War the Hudson River Valley served. While the war was fought far away from the valley, its men served and its industrial base proved the Union army with the means of victory. Like so many other regions of America people watched as their husbands, sons, and brothers went off to meet their death on some battlefield. The Hudson River Valley was not different. The men of the area left in droves to go fight for what they believed in, for their families, and for their country. Men like Samuel Cooper, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and John Lorimer Worden serve as examples of Hudson River Valley men who fought in the Civil War.²⁶

Samuel Cooper from New Hackensack, New York came from a family with a proud military tradition. Cooper's father was a major in the Continental army, and in 1815, Cooper started down a similar path when he graduated from the U.S. Military Academy 36th out of 40. Cooper's first assignment would be as a second lieutenant in the Regiment. Over the next few years, Cooper's duties brought him in Washington, D.C., Florida, and Virginia.²⁷ By 1827, Cooper married Sarah Maria Mason, having three children together. From 1828 to 1836, Cooper gained important experience working as the personal assistant for a Major General Alexander Macomb. Cooper learned so much working for Macomb that he published a manual called, *A Concise System of Instructions*

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Encyclopedia, 72-76.

²⁷ <http://www.generalcooper.com/eyrs.htm>,
http://www.leeslieutenants.com/General_Samuel_Cooper.html;
<http://www.anb.org.online.library.marist.edu/articles/04/04-00266.html?a=1&n=samuel%20cooper&d=10&ss=2&q=3>.

and Regulations for the Militia and Volunteers of the United States. In 1836, Cooper served as Captain of the army's Clothing Bureau and then as a chief clerk in the War Department. After the Whigs took over the government in 1842, Cooper served in Florida as Colonel William Worth's chief of staff where he participated in 1843 second Seminole War.²⁸

Building on his service record, Cooper returned to Washington to serve as secretary of war, and in 1847 was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Over the next few years, Cooper would continue to serve as secretary of war, but also as the military assistant to George Crawford and an assistant inspector general until 1852, when he was promoted to colonel. Although Cooper had enjoyed a successful career in military administration, he left his commission in 1861 to join the southern cause during the Civil War. Also in 1861, President Davis, a friend of Cooper's, promoted him to the rank of general. Throughout the war only 7 held held that rank in the C.S.A. As the war was drawing a close and the Confederacy was near its end, Cooper along with others fled.²⁹ Eventually surrendering to the Union forces, Cooper spent the rest of his life on his farm in Alexandria, until his death on December 3, 1876.³⁰

One of America's most important military philosophers, Alfred Thayer Mahan, came out of the Hudson River Valley. Born to Dennis Hart Mahan and Mary Helena Okill on September 27, 1840 in West Point, New York, Mahan had an unhappy childhood, education, and career. Upon graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy he went on to serve in the U.S. Navy where he continuously tried to get out of sea duty,

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

because he feared the ocean. Despite this ironic turn, Mahan served his country for the next 40 years in the Navy, including blockade duty during the Civil War. After which he taught and eventually became President of the Naval War College in Rhode Island where he taught on naval history and tactics.³¹ After he left the college, he published books on Naval theory up until his death on December 1, 1914. Mahan's major achievement is his contribution to Naval intelligence. The books that Mahan published were widely used by the allied forces during the First World War. Mahan's insistence that the U.S. should build up its navy and be a dominating force in the sea continues to be a powerful influence on foreign policy ever since.³² Mahan published these books: *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*; *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812*; *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*; *The Life of Nelson*; and *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*.³³

John Lorimer Worden of Westchester County, New York also served in the Naval side of the Civil War. At a young age, Worden entered the Navy at the rank of midshipman. After graduating from Naval School and gaining more experience, Worden became a lieutenant in 1846; spending the Mexican War years off the Californian Coast. When the Civil War began, Worden remained loyal to the Union cause. The war did not start well for him because in 1861 he spent several months in an Alabama prison when he

³¹ <http://search.eb.com.online.library.marist.edu/eb/article-9050098>;
<http://www.anb.org.online.library.marist.edu/articles/05/05-00466.html?a=1&n=Alfred%20Thayer%20Mahan%20&d=10&ss=0&q=1>.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

was caught traveling with secret instructions that were important to the Civil War.³⁴ After Worden's release and recovery he returned to duty. In 1862, he was put in command of the armored steam ship, the U.S.S. Monitor. In this new ship, Worden engaged in battle of Hampton Roads against the similarly armored C.S.S. Virginia. Although, he did not win, he did not lose either, his efforts held off the Virginia's and kept intact the Norfolk blockade. Also in 1862, Worden was promoted to the rank of Commander. Worden's continued efforts and successes in battle promoted him to the rank of captain in 1863.³⁵ After the war, Worden became a rear admiral and was involved with the U.S. Naval Academy, the European Squadron and served as the president of the retiring board at the academy until 1886. Worden died on October 18, 1897.³⁶

Through the great conflicts of this country the Hudson River Valley has produced military figures, which have made a difference in the history of the United States. Whether the conflict was on foreign soil or home turf, in court or on the street, the Hudson River Valley has been an intricate part of the United State's development and history. The efforts, hardships, and lives of Goose Van Schaick, Phillip John Schuyler, Nathaniel Woodhull, Peter Gansevoort, Sybil Ludington, Abraham Ten Broeck, James and George Clinton, Samuel Cooper, Alfred Thayer Mahan, and John Lorimer, all from the Hudson River Valley, made sacrifices for this country when it was in need. These men and woman have made contributions to this country in its time of need and have represented the Hudson River Valley in their accomplishments. The endeavors they

³⁴ <http://www.anb.org.online.library.marist.edu/articles/05/05-00856.html?a=1&n=John%20Lorimer%20Worden%20&d=10&ss=0&q=1;>
[http://search.eb.com.online.library.marist.edu/eb/article-9077468.](http://search.eb.com.online.library.marist.edu/eb/article-9077468)

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

participated in even after the war, whether they stayed in the military, wrote books, became a teacher, went into politics, or started a family, are terrific examples of the importance the Hudson River Valley has played in this country.

For More Information

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