

Remembering the Revolution  
Hudson Valley Magazine  
August 2005

On August 3, 1780, Gen. George Washington appointed Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold, the hero of Saratoga, to the command of the Highlands Department. It was a posting Arnold had been trying to wangle for months. Soon, he would be in position to deliver Fortress West Point and the control of the lower Hudson River to the British commander in chief, Gen. Sir Henry Clinton.

Over the course of the previous year, Arnold had been actively developing his plan of treachery to the American cause. Smarting from the results of a court-martial and Washington's official reprimand, and in need of money, Arnold intensified his correspondence with the British high command, using Philadelphia Loyalist merchant Joseph Stansbury as his go-between. While on a trip to Connecticut in June 1780 to try to sell his house and receive money from the assembly, Arnold even made an inspection of West Point. In his report to Clinton, he described a post that seemed to be ripe for the picking. "I...was greatly disappointed both in the works and garrison...It is surprising a post of so much importance should be so totally neglected."

In his exchanges with Clinton, Arnold consistently demanded £10,000 for his services; in his letter of July 15, he wrote that "If I point out a plan of co-operation by which Sir Henry shall possess himself of West Point, the garrison, etc., etc., etc, £20,000 sterling I think will be a cheap purchase for an object of so much importance." Sir Henry accepted that demand in a letter drafted on July 24. On August 4 or 5, Arnold arrived at the Beverley Robinson house opposite West Point (near present-day Garrison) to assume command of the Highlands. From his new headquarters, Arnold continued to pass key intelligence to his new master and began his work to make the "neglected" fortifications even weaker.

Last May 22, Craig Purdy and Jonathan Pratt, owners of Peter Pratt's Inn in Yorktown (Westchester), hosted the 224th anniversary of the Battle of Pine's Bridge. Some 500 spectators braved intermittent showers to observe the afternoon's encampment, as well as craft-making, raptor demonstrations, and the re-enactment of the battle. Members of the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th New York, along with Pawling's Levies, defended the environs of the Davenport House near the Croton River when attacked by soldiers from Delancey's Loyalists, the 4th New York Regiment, and the mounted Queen's Rangers. Sponsors included the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College, and the Yorktown Historical Society.

The actual battle took place on May 14, 1781, between Col. James Delancey's Westchester Refugees and Col. Christopher Greene's 1st Rhode Island Regiment, which was comprised of many African-Americans, former slaves who were willing to fight to the death rather than lose their new-found freedom. Washington reported Greene's losses as 44 killed, wounded, and missing. The Peter Pratt Inn will host the 225th anniversary of the battle on May 20-21, 2006.

To learn more about the Revolution in the Hudson River Valley, log onto [www.hudsonrivervalley.net](http://www.hudsonrivervalley.net) and [www.hudsonrivervalley.com](http://www.hudsonrivervalley.com). You may also subscribe to

The Hudson River Valley Review by visiting <http://www.hudsonrivervalley.net/hrvr>; issue 20.1 is devoted to the American Revolution.

*Dr. Col. (Ret.) Jim Johnson is military historian of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and executive director of Marist College's Hudson River Valley Institute.*