



Two hundred twenty-five years ago, in 1777 — the “Year of the Hangman” — New York remained the chief seat of the American Revolution. After the Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776, General William Howe had pushed General George Washington’s dwindling forces up Manhattan Island, to White Plains, and finally across New Jersey into Pennsylvania. Washington countered with victories in New Jersey at Trenton and Princeton. In June 1777, Howe withdrew from the Jerseys and returned to New York, setting the stage for that year’s campaign.

In early March, Britain’s King George III had approved General John Burgoyne’s plan to invade New York from Canada along the line of Lake Champlain and the Hudson River to link up with Howe’s forces in Albany. Even as Howe altered his plans and decided to capture Philadelphia instead, Burgoyne moved his forces southward, capturing Fort Ticonderoga on July 6 and Fort Edward in late July. After General John Stark destroyed a foraging party of Brunswickers and Loyalists en route to Bennington, Vermont, on the Walloomsac River on August 15, Burgoyne moved to the west side of the Hudson and encamped near Bemis Heights. On September 19, he launched a reconnaissance in force against the left flank of General Horatio Gates’ Northern Army, precipitating the Battle of Freeman’s Farm. Courageous fighting led by General Benedict Arnold and Colonel Daniel Morgan blunted the attack. By day’s end, the British controlled the field of battle but would face an ever-growing American Army. Commemorative festivities begin

this month with a mustering of the 14th Albany Militia at the Knickerbocker Mansion in Schaghticoke, Rensselaer County (518-677-3807), on September 21 and 22. Among the festivities will be an ox roast and pancake breakfast. The following weekend, September 28 and 29, plan to visit the Saratoga National Historical Park for the 225th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga. Re-enactors representing British and American forces will recreate camp life, and on Sunday will conduct a mass demonstration of 18th-century tactics. For more information, log onto www.nps.gov/sara/updates.htm. For other activities in late September and early October in the Northern Campaign, visit www.thenortherncampaign.org/event.htm.

General Henry Clinton’s diversionary campaign into the Hudson Highlands and the resulting Battles at Forts Montgomery and Clinton will be commemorated at West Point on October 5 and Bear Mountain State Park and the new Fort Montgomery State Historic Site on October 6. For details on those events, visit www.hudsonrivervalley.net/calendar.html.

In honor of New York’s role as the Turning Point State, members of the state’s Congressional delegation have introduced the 225th Anniversary of the American Revolution Commemoration Act, HR 4786 in the House of Representatives and S 2734 in the Senate, to make the 225th a national observance. Let them hear about your support.

— JIM JOHNSON

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