

Remembering the Revolution
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On New Year's Day 1779, British forces savored the first taste of victory resulting from their southern strategy after the fall of Savannah, Georgia, on December 29. Although Gen. Sir Henry Clinton had sent soldiers to the south and Rhode Island, he maintained at least 12,000 men in New York City. George Washington's Main Army remained in winter quarters in New Jersey, while around West Point, 2,349 soldiers of the Massachusetts Line protected the vital Hudson River. Winter weather limited operations, relegating the commanders and their armies to preparing for the spring campaign.

One member of the British garrison, Lt. Heinrich Carl Philipp von Feilitzsch, greeted the New Year in his diary: "Praise heaven another [year] has begun and the last one survived, despite many crises." Since "the provisions fleet" had not yet arrived from England, he also reported that "There is no longer any bread or flour. Therefore the troops receive oatmeal which does not thrill them."

At West Point, the garrison grappled both with salted pork frozen in its barrels and the Great Chain, which had to be removed from the river. Brig. Gen. John Paterson reported that "We continue working at the Chain & take up about Seventy or eighty links a day but it is a heavy piece of Business in Time we shall conquer." With the chain gradually being secured and the military works above it well underway, West Point would serve, in the words of Chief of Engineers Brig. Gen. Louis Duportail, as "the Key of the North River" in the coming campaign.

The 225th anniversary celebration of the Fredericksburgh Encampment held at Pawling on September 20-21 was a great success. Hundreds of people came to observe activities typical of those followed by Washington's army in 1778. The highlight of Twin Forts' Day on October 4 at Forts Montgomery and Clinton was the firing of the replica 32-pounder cannon (made possible by grants from Heritage New York and the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation). Great things continue to happen in the Valley thanks to the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.

To keep track of events related to the 225th Anniversary of the American Revolution, check out www.hudsonrivervalley.net. - Jim Johnson

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