

In August 1781, the American Revolution in New York revealed its dual nature as a civil war and as a conventional conflict. The civil war manifested itself on the western frontier on the 12th, when a raiding party of 300 Iroquois warriors and 90 Loyalists of Butler's Rangers (commanded by Capt. William Caldwell) attacked stockades protecting the Ulster County town of Wawarsing. The force withdrew after killing one man, burning 12 houses, and stealing 50 horned cattle and other livestock. That afternoon, Col. Albert Pawling's Levies — draftees from militia units — attacked the raiders' rear guard, recapturing most of the plunder. (This last significant battle of the Revolution in the Valley will be commemorated as a part of the town's bicentennial on Aug. 12 and 13.)

The conventional war was propelling the French and American armies to their destiny against British forces at Yorktown, Virginia. The allied strategy jelled on Aug. 14, when Gen. George Washington learned that French Adm. François Joseph Paul, Comte de Grasse, would sail with his fleet to the Chesapeake Bay. Washington recorded in his diary that "Matters having now come to a crisis and a decisive plan to be determined on, I was obliged, from the shortness of Count de Grasse's promised stay on this Coast, the apparent disinclination in their Naval Officers to force the harbour of New York and the feeble compliance of the States to my requisition for Men, hitherto, and little prospect of greater exertion in the future, to give up all idea of attacking New York; instead thereof to remove the French Troops

and a detachment from the American Army to the Head of Elk to be transported to Virginia for the purpose of co-operating with the force from the West Indies against the Troops in that State." Taking the forts and garrison of Manhattan would be difficult; the lack of a French naval force made it next to impossible.

Once Washington acquiesced to Rochambeau's plan to move against Lt. Gen. Charles Lord Cornwallis's army in Virginia, they quickly set their



armies in motion. The French began retracing their steps through North Castle (Mt. Kisco) on Aug. 18, crossing the Croton River at Pine's Bridge, camping at Hunt's Tavern (Yorktown) and then Verplanck's Point. The American army, some 2,700 strong, moved on a parallel course along the Hudson, crossing the New Jersey Line and Hazan's Regiment at Dobbs Ferry on Aug. 19 and the rest at King's Ferry on the 20th and 21st. Over the next six days, some 4,200 French soldiers crossed the river at King's Ferry to Stony Point. Washington's elaborate deception plan fooled Clinton, allowing the armies to march through and camp at Haverstraw and Suffern. By Aug. 27, they were in New Jersey and beyond Clinton's immediate reach.

Patriots' Weekend 2006 commemorates the operations of the French and American Armies in New York in the summer of 1781. The event reenacts the crossing by the American and French armies at King's Ferry from Verplanck to Stony Point on Aug. 25-27. Dr. Robert A. Selig lectures on "The Franco-American Encampment at Philipsburg and the Crossing of the Hudson" on Aug. 25 at the Verplanck Firehouse. The 18th-century soldiers' camp opens at Verplanck Point at 10 a.m. on Aug. 26, with military activities all day. Reenactors cross the Hudson to Stony Point in bateaus starting at 2 p.m.; fireworks are planned for 9 p.m. at Steamboat Dock and Stony Point. The military camp reopens Sunday morning, with tactical exercises starting at 1 p.m. followed by a memorial ceremony for soldiers killed at Fort Lafayette at 2 p.m. (Re-enactors are marching the entire route from Providence to Yorktown, Virginia, following the dates and original route of march as closely as possible; called "America's March To Yorktown," they will pass through New York from Aug. 17-25.)

To learn more about the Hudson River Valley and the French march through New York, log onto www.hudsonrivervalley.net and www.hudsonrivervalley.com. For the Spring 2006 issue of The Hudson River Valley Review, visit www.hudsonrivervalley.net/hrrv/subscribe/index.php.

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.