

Remembering the Revolution

By October 1778, the North American and New York seats of the war had stabilized. The commanders in chief of both the American and British armies looked at a figurative chessboard, with both kings in New York, the British queen in Newport, and the French queen (the fleet of Admiral d'Estaing) in Boston. There was a sense of anticipation as planning for the next campaign and winter quarters proceeded. With British forces firmly in control of New York City and its environs, Lord George Germain, the Secretary of State for the American Colonies, and Gen. Sir Henry Clinton began planning the first phase of a Southern campaign; forces bound for Savannah, Georgia, departed from New York in late October. At about the same time, Clinton ordered Lieut. Gen. Charles Lord Cornwallis and Lieut. Gen. Wilhelm Knyphausen to pull their forces back from their forward positions north of Manhattan since they had failed to entice Washington into "a general action." With the army now concentrated, Clinton prepared to launch a second major expedition of some 5,000 "choice troops" against the French island of St. Lucia in the West Indies.

Based at Loyalist John Kane's house near Fredericksburgh and Derick Brinckerhoff's house in Fishkill, General Washington responded to British moves by stockpiling supplies for winter quarters at Danbury, Connecticut; West Point; and Middlebrook, New Jersey. The number of brigades in each location would depend "upon the strength of the Enemy in New York this Winter." Washington himself planned no offensive for the winter and admitted on October 31 that he "could form no opinion of the intentions of the enemy." The outcome of the war was still very much in doubt as each commander awaited the other's final moves of the campaign season.

When not marching to counter possible British operations, Amer-

ican soldiers around Fredericksburgh settled into a camp routine. Washington enjoined his officers to "pay constant attention to the Cleanliness and Dress of the men and the fitting of their Cloaths." Washington also instructed the Provost Corps to apprehend "Deserters, Marauders, Drunkards, Rioters and Straglers." Despite these instructions, some soldiers could not resist the relative bounty of the Hudson Valley. Washington approved a number of sentences for soldiers who had committed robberies in the surrounding area, a situation that he found "truly alarming." One soldier, Hate-evil Colston, received "one hundred lashes on his bare back well laid on" for stealing \$300, a musket, and a pair of plated shoe buckles from the house of Reuben Crosby of Fredericksburgh. Three other soldiers received sentences of death by hanging for robbing Mr. Prince Howland of "several silver spoons, several silver dollars, some Continental dollars and sundry kinds of wearing Apparel." Washington wrote that he was "Shocked at the frequent horrible Villanies of this nature committed by the troops of late, He is determined to make Examples which will deter the Boldest and the most harden'd offenders."

On October 28, Pvt. John Yeomans got lucky. The Commander in Chief took another tack and pardoned him from the firing squad "on account of many criminals having been executed for breaches of military duty, which he hopes will not only deter him but every other soldier in the Army from violating his solemn obligations faithfully to serve the United States." The stresses of revolution continued to try men's souls. For events and information about Twin Forts Day on October 4 at Forts Montgomery and Clinton near Bear Mountain Bridge, see www.hudsonrivervalley.net. — JIM JOHNSON

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