

In October 1779, the Loyalists in the Hudson Valley (and in the rest of New York outside of British control) felt the heavy hand of war tighten around them. The British garrison at Newport, Rhode Island, abandoned that important harbor (which it had held since December 1775) and arrived in New York on October 27. Gen. Sir Henry Clinton justified this move, citing the superiority of French Adm. Count Charles-Hector Théodat d'Estaing's fleet and his "thinking that the troops in the garrison there might be more usefully employed defensively at this instant and offensively in the future." The American alliance with the French — cemented by their victory at Saratoga in October 1777 — had forced the British to give up their last hold in New England.

Washington had not lost hope that d'Estaing's fleet could help him recapture New York, with its 14,000 British and Hessian troops. He continued to believe that "New York is the first and capital object, upon which every other is dependant. The loss of the Army and Fleet there, would be one of the severest Blows the English Nation could experience." Washington estimated that such an operation would take at least 30,000 men. Unfortunately, on October 9 d'Estaing expended his resources in an unsuccessful bid to take Savannah, Georgia, leaving the siege of New York to another French commander.

Less than a week after Gen. Anthony Wayne's victorious assault against the British fortification at Stony Point in July, the British reoccupied and refortified it. On October 23, they abandoned it. In an October 26 letter, Clinton reminded Lord George Germaine, the Secretary of State for the American Department, that he had planned "to quit Stony Point the moment I lost all prospect of acting against the rebels in Jersey or New York governments." Hessian Capt. Johann Ewald

wrote in his diary that "Perhaps we shall not take these important posts from Washington again so cheaply." As it turned out, the British never again got the opportunity to try.

Another blow to the Loyalists was an economic one: on October 22, the New York legislature passed a law of forfeiture of estates. In July 1776, the New York Convention had defined as treason actions taken against the state. A committee was formed "for detecting and defeating all conspiracies" against the state or nation, and it had deliberated on hundreds of cases. Under the new law, the legislature appointed commissioners to sell confiscated and forfeited lands at public sales. The October law "attained" (without trial) 59 prominent Loyalists and "declared their possessions forfeited." The law also provided that any future Loyalist (designated "on the oath of one credible witness") who failed to appear before the proper court would forfeit his property. By one account, New York

raised \$3.6 million from the sale of confiscated estates by the end of 1782.

Twin Forts Day on October 9 at Fort Montgomery State Historic Site will remember the building of Putnam's Battery by Massachusetts Col. Rufus Putnam. On August 9, 1779, he reported to Washington that "I have nearly Completed a Circular Flash with two Embrasures at Fort Montgomery which Rake the River Quite from Antonys Nose to Fort Clinton — and one Embrasure that looks up the River." For more events celebrating the 225th anniversary of the American Revolution in the Hudson Valley, log onto [www.hudsonrivervalley.net](http://www.hudsonrivervalley.net).

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Remembering the  
**Revolution**  
by Jim Johnson