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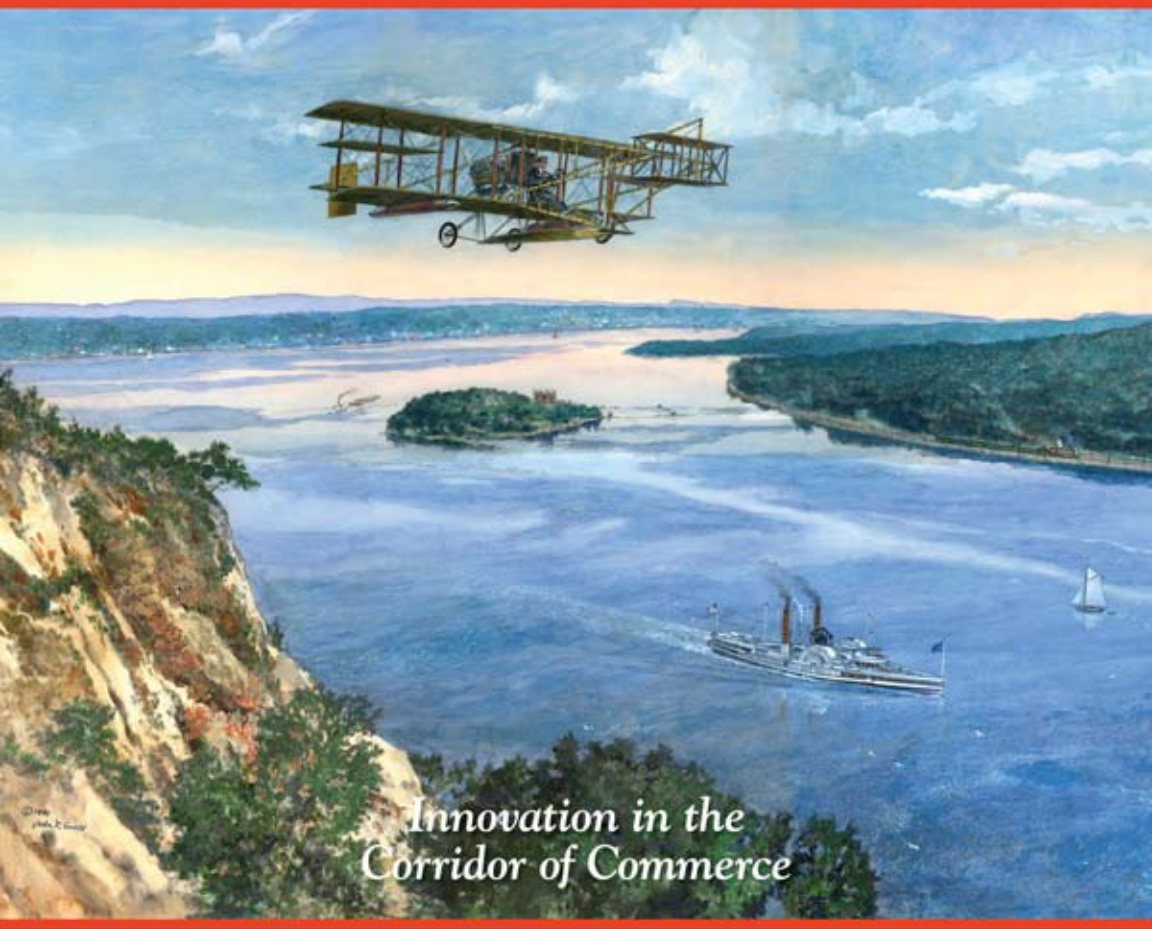
THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies



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MARIST

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Publisher's Intro

It is with great pleasure that I introduce two new members to the Editorial Board of our *Hudson River Valley Review*, as well as two new members to the Hudson River Valley Institute's Advisory Board. On the Editorial Board, Michael Groth joins us from Wells College where he is an Associate Professor in History and Kim Bridgford, Professor of English at Fairfield University, will act as our poetry editor for Regional Writing. Shirley Handel and Robert E. Tompkins, Sr. bring their experience and commitment to our region to the vision of the Institute.

—Thomas S. Wermuth

Editors' Intro

While the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area's "Corridor of Commerce" theme has not received the greatest amount of attention, it highlights an important aspect of the region's historic legacy. Time and again, commercial and industrial innovations developed in the Hudson Valley have placed the region firmly into the history books. Glenn Curtiss's 1910 flight from Albany to Manhattan established that air travel could be a practical means for moving people and goods, much as Robert Fulton's steamship proved the potential for that mode of transportation a century earlier. But the valley's commercial legacy really begins with Native Americans, such as Daniel Nimham, who traded goods and land with European settlers. While Nimham is most often remembered as a Patriot who fell at the battle of Kingsbridge, there is substantial evidence he also was one of the colonial era's great land barons. Over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the regional economy grew to include manufacturing—such as the bell foundries located in the upper valley—as well as substantial shipping and wholesale and retail operations. Finally, it was the valley's suitability for travel that made it a crucial point of defense by militia and regulars during the American Revolution, and later one of the ideal routes for establishing Post Roads enabling communication between the Northeast's major cities. The Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome, the Maybrook Historical Society, and the Danbury Rail Museum are each dedicated to preserving a different portion of this transportation legacy. We welcome you to another issue of the *Hudson River Valley Review*, which explores all of these fascinating topics.

—Christopher Pryslopski, Reed Sparling

Hudson River Valley Institute

This issue of The Hudson River Valley Review has been generously underwritten by the following:

The mission of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Program is to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the Nation.

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Call for Essays

The Hudson River Valley Review is anxious to consider essays on all aspects of the Hudson Valley—its intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural history, its prehistory, architecture, literature, art, and music—as well as essays on the ideas and ideologies of regionalism itself. All articles in *The Hudson River Valley Review* undergo peer analysis.

Submission of Essays and Other Materials

HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as two double-spaced typescripts, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, along with a computer disk with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk. Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Otherwise, the submission of visual materials should be cleared with the editors beforehand. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. Scanned photos or digital art must be 300 pixels per inch (or greater) at 8 in. x 10 in. (between 7 and 20 mb). No responsibility is assumed for the loss of materials. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

HRVR will accept materials submitted as an e-mail attachment (*hrvi@marist.edu*) once they have been announced and cleared beforehand.

Since HRVR is interdisciplinary in its approach to the region and to regionalism, it will honor the forms of citation appropriate to a particular discipline, provided these are applied consistently and supply full information. Endnotes rather than footnotes are preferred. In matters of style and form, HRVR follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

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Regional History Forum:

Regional Writing

Book Reviews

On the Cover: *Albany Flyer,* by John Gould, Photo courtesy of Bethlehem Art Gallery

Private Peter Reid and Colonel A. Hawkes Hay's Militia in the American Revolution

Reid Ross

The strategy for the initial British campaign in New York was to gain control of the Hudson River. To do so, General John Burgoyne's forces were to invade the Hudson Valley by marching south from Canada to Albany in the summer of 1777. General Sir Henry Clinton's army was to move simultaneously up the Hudson from New York City to connect with Burgoyne at Albany.

Albany was a major breadbasket and supply base that could well serve the British army. Additionally, by controlling the Hudson Valley, New England would be severed from the rest of the colonies. General George Washington was well aware that the Hudson Valley was as important to his army as it was to the British.

For these reasons, the Hudson Valley became one of the most hotly contested and highly crucial Revolutionary War battlegrounds, causing General Washington grave concern throughout the war. The experience of Colonel Ann Hawks Hay's Orange County Regiment and one of his militiamen, Private Peter Reid, illustrate how Washington conducted this campaign.

On July 4, 1774, residents of Orange County adopted the "Orangetown Resolutions," expressing their indignation at the injustice of the British Parliament. They stated that "…we are duty bound to use every just and lawful measure to obtain a repeal of [these] acts…" They further declared their "abhorrence of measures so unconstitutional and big with destruction." Some regard the Orangetown Resolutions, adopted at Mabie's Tavern in Tappan, as a precursor to the Declaration of Independence.

In February 1775, King George III declared the Massachusetts Bay Colony in a state of rebellion. In the early spring, about 1,550 Orange County residents signed a resolution in support of a defense association that pledged its members to execute necessary measures as determined by the Continental Congress to oppose arbitrary and oppressive acts of the British Parliament. In the Haverstraw precinct where Peter Reid lived, 180 residents signed the resolution.

A few days later, on Sunday evening, April 22, 1775, as hard-riding couriers arrived in Haverstraw, Peter Reid and his wife Maria, both forty-one years old, heard the chilling news that the Battle of Lexington had just been fought. Excitement and tension prevailed in their household as they contemplated the significance of the news to their lives. The couriers also announced a call to a Provincial Congress in New York City and a Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Haverstraw chose John Haring, John D. Coe, and David Pye—all Peter Reid's neighbors—to attend the Provincial Congress, whose meeting began on May 22. Two months later, George Washington was named Commander in Chief of the Continental Army; he assumed command on July 2.

Born in Scotland, Peter Reid was about three years old when he arrived in Haverstraw with his parents in 1739. A weaver by trade, he also served as constable, tax collector, and roadmaster in Haverstraw precinct. He was an "organizing" member of the New Hempstead Presbyterian (English) Church, also known as the English Meeting House, and was a trustee of the nearby Clarkstown School. On July 17, 1775, less than three months after hearing the news of the Battle of Lexington, Reid became one of the 373 Haverstraw signers of the Oath of Allegiance to the Cause of Liberty of the New York Provincial Convention. The 104 people who did not sign at that time were labeled "enemies of the people."

Reid's wife, Maria Krom, was a fourth-generation Dutch woman whose ancestors had arrived from Pynacker, Holland, and initially settled in Flatbush, N.Y., around 1670. From there, her family moved to Haverstraw about 1682 to become one of its first Dutch families. Their 740-acre land patent fronted on the Hudson River, bordering Minisceongo Creek.

Maria's family took the Oath of Allegiance to the English Crown in 1687, almost a century before the Revolution. Her grandfather and grandmother were married at the Dutch Reformed Church in Tappan, the first recorded marriage in what is now Rockland County. Several of her relatives also enlisted in her husband's regiment.

Peter Reid and Maria Krom were married in 1763, moved to Haverstraw, and by the outbreak of the Revolution had three daughters and a son. (Another son, Daniel, born during the Revolution, died in the War of 1812.)

Two days before the courier had arrived in Haverstraw on April 22, Ann Hawkes Hay also was selected as a delegate to the Provincial Congress. Then thirty-one years old, he was the son of a wealthy plantation owner in Jamaica (and named after the aunt who left him her inheritance). Hay moved his family to Haverstraw in 1773, after purchasing 200 acres of meadowland that fronted on the Hudson River and building a house there. He was appointed chairman of the

committee to apportion quotas of men to be raised in Orange County to serve in the four militia regiments organized there.

At its May 22 meeting, the Provincial Congress resolved to help control the Hudson River by placing fortifications and batteries on both of its banks to control the stretch through the Highlands. By doing so, they could prevent British ships from sailing 170 miles upriver to join Burgoyne's forces. In addition to dividing the colonies, these moves, if successful, would cut off the Continental Army's river supply route and communication line to troops in New York City and New England. Orange County became vital to securing the river throughout the entire war.

By August 1775, Orange County was divided into districts by its Committee of Safety. One militia company, consisting of eighty-three able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and fifty, was recruited from each district. On August 10, Colonel Hay, a confidant of General Washington, was appointed commissary (supply officer) for all of the militia north of Kingsbridge when they were in service on the west side of the Hudson. Hay was described by Brigadier General John Morin Scott, a member of the Continental Congress, as "a gentleman and uncommonly spirited in the public cause."

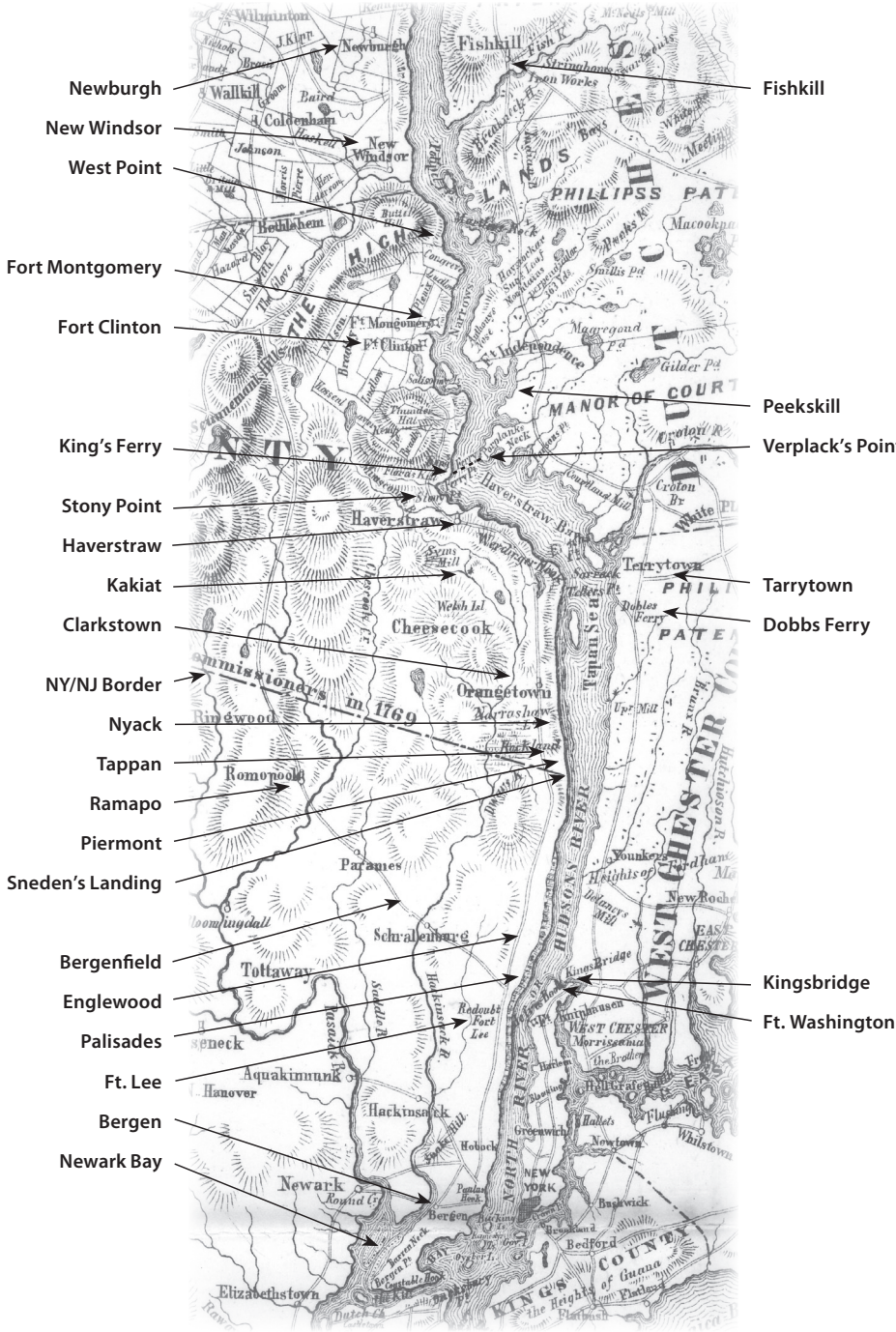
Safe routes for delivering materials and supplies from Kingsbridge were laid out. In October, the first batteries were put in place in the Highlands and colors raised over them. Signal posts and beacons were placed on mountaintops and ridges at sixteen-mile intervals to spread the alarm in case of attack.

On January 30, 1776, Peter Reid enlisted for six months as a private in the Kakiat Company of Colonel Hay's 2nd Orange County Regiment, comprised of militia from north of Kingsbridge in the Haverstraw precinct. Many of his friends and neighbors also enlisted about the same time, as did two of his brothers in a Charlotte (now Washington) County regiment, about seventy-five miles north of Albany. Reid enlisted despite the fact that weavers were exempted from militia service.

Likewise, Hay had two brothers in the service of their country. Udny Hay served as the Quartermaster General of General Horatio Gates' northern army and was headquartered in Albany. Later he became Deputy Quartermaster General for General Washington. Charles Hay was a Quebec merchant who refused to help defend that city and was arrested for spying on the British in Canada.

Copies of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* pamphlet must have stimulated the rush to shoulder muskets in Orange County at the beginning of the war. Knowledge also was widespread that Parliament had banished all trade with the thirteen colonies and all colonial vessels were declared lawful prizes of war. By

Scene of Operations around New York



then, the first official American flag with thirteen stars and stripes was beginning to displace the Union Jack. Then in May 1776, word arrived that King George III was sending 12,000 German mercenaries (Hessians) to put down the revolt. Virginia delegates to the Continental Congress were instructed to "declare the United Colonies free and independent states."

In February, the Kakiat Company was mustered in under Captain Reynard Quackenboss and First Lieutenant Garrett Eckerson. (Peter Reid's home was in Kakiat, now known as New Hempstead, a small settlement in the Haverstraw precinct.) By then, Hay was serving as chairman of a committee appointed by the Continental Congress to decide how many men should be raised from each of the New York counties. That March he was made commander of the Haverstraw Precinct (2nd Orange County) regiment of militia consisting of ten companies.

Each private in the regiment, including Reid, furnished his own musket or long fowling-piece, bayonet, sword or tomahawk, shot bag or cartridge box, gunpowder and powder horn, plus a flint, knapsack, and blanket. Since the variety of guns was significant, issuing standardized ammunition was impossible.

Every six men had to equip themselves with a camp kettle. Their rations consisted of beef, flour, rice, milk, peas, and spruce beer. Their meals were prepared over a campfire in the kettle they had furnished. The militiamen received a $20 bounty for enlisting. A private's pay was $6 2/3 monthly; a colonel received $75. Most did not collect their salaries until 1784 or later.

Each man was required to drill for four hours a month and to have one pound of powder and three pounds of bullets available at all times. They wore civilian clothing—there were no uniforms—and they could not be called to serve outside the colony for more than three months. Each company was divided into groups of four men. One man in each group did a week of guard duty, making it possible to keep a continuous guard while allowing the rest of the men to operate their farms. However, some alarms could keep them on duty for as many as ten days.

The 400-man 2nd Regiment helped to man three unfinished forts and guard the Orange County shore along the Hudson River against British attack from the river. In 1776, Washington had ordered the construction of these forts—Montgomery, Clinton, and Constitution—but by 1777 they were still unfinished and lightly garrisoned. (See Map, Scene of Operations around New York) The 2nd Regiment was one of nine Highland militia regiments in Brigadier General George Clinton's 4th Brigade, five from Orange County and four from Ulster. Clinton's brigade was relatively free to respond to reports of ship sightings and landings between Peekskill and Haverstraw.

Beginning in June, Quackenboss's company was stationed at different places

and times along the Hudson, guarding and scouting in what is now Rockland and Bergen (N.J.) counties. His brigade responded to reports of ship sightings at Tarrytown and landings near Peekskill and Haverstraw, among others.

On July 9, 1776, when news of the signing of the Declaration of Independence reached Haverstraw, bonfires were lit, toasts were drunk, and prayers said. On July 15, the popular and patriotic George Clinton was appointed commander of the Highlands with headquarters at Fort Montgomery. Militia were the only protecting forces in this area, since regulars were seldom stationed along the New Jersey-New York border in the Tappan-Haverstraw-Nyack vicinity.

As a result, foraging raids by British regulars as well as pillaging, harassing, and spying by British irregulars (in and out of uniform) were commonplace in these villages. Consequently, the shore guard stationed there protected them to the extent possible. Likewise, those who lived along the Hudson were subject to raids from the river.[2] To defend the passes and the Highland forts from these raids, the militia marched when two cannon were fired at Fort Montgomery and two more at Fort Lee (initially known as Fort Constitution). These were answered quickly by two additional reports from a twenty-four-pounder at New Windsor, six miles north of Fort Montgomery. This action was coordinated with flags by day and signal fires by night atop hills and mountains sixteen miles apart. When these signals were seen or heard, militia detachments were dispatched to the river forts as quickly as they could be mobilized

On April 20 and again on July 14, 1776, General Washington ordered that these alarms also be conveyed to his headquarters. He also acknowledged his pleasure that "on all occasions … people … fly to the protection of any part of the country where there is any danger from the enemy." No records exist as to whether Peter Reid responded to these signals beyond his original term of enlistment, which ended in August 1776. However, a review of the regiment's record indicates the nature of the action in which he participated. It is also clear that many of his fellow militiamen reenlisted two and often more times for periods up to six months in Hay's and other regiments. Reid enlisted three times. Some also enlisted in regiments in the Continental Army.

The regiment remained under Colonel Hay until his resignation in January 1783. The earliest regimental record was made in March 1776, when sixty-five privates in two companies from the 2nd Regiment were drafted to serve in the Continental line to invade Canada in the successful effort to take Montreal. That month another 100 men were sent to aid the defense of New York City.

By November, the remainder of the troops in Colonel Hay's regiment had grown mutinous, refusing to do their duty. General Nathanael Greene wrote

General Washington on November 5, 1776, threatening to place the troops under guard and send them to Fort Lee for duty. Greene told Washington that their morale had been adversely affected by the fact that "many of them had left their families without wood, without meal, and without fodder at home for their cattle; many of their families without shoes and some of them little better here." Morale in the entire Continental Army also was at a low point in late 1776, but it was revived somewhat by Washington's rout of the Hessians at year's end in Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey.

The chief duty of the 2nd Regiment throughout 1776 was to guard the western shoreline of the Hudson River from the vicinity of present day Piermont north to Stony Point, where the mountains meet the river. This stretch was fully exposed to enemy foraging from ships, and noncombatants were prohibited from walking along the shore after dark. By patrolling it, the militia protected the residents from marauding parties that would land anywhere. These parties were often guided by local Tories in their efforts to plunder, burn, or otherwise destroy property, steal cattle and provisions, and murder farmers.

At about 3 p.m. on July 12, two British frigates and three tenders set sail from New York Harbor, under orders from Admiral Richard Howe, who had arrived two weeks earlier with a fleet of 150 ships. Aided by a flowing tide and favorable breezes—ideal sailing conditions—the ships passed upriver virtually unscathed. American batteries positioned on both banks of the river (one of which was manned by Captain Alexander Hamilton) fired nearly 200 cannon shots with little effect. The men onboard the ships, protected by sandbags placed on the decks, returned fire.

The ships' destination was the Tappan Zee, one of the widest parts of the Hudson River, offshore Nyack. By sailing close to the New Jersey shore, the frigates *Phoenix* (856 tons, forty-four guns) and *Rose* (448 tons, twenty-four guns) were charged with disrupting the river supply line to General Washington's troops in Manhattan. As a secondary mission, they were to provide protection to British Loyalists behind rebel lines who were being disarmed by the local Committee of Safety. The ships arrived off Nyack, thirty miles above New York City, by evening.

That night, on orders from Colonel Hay, couriers rode from Haverstraw, and his 400 troops were mobilized to line the Nyack shore at daybreak to guard public and private stores along the river by preventing an enemy landing. Women and children were sent inland. Cartridges and gunpowder were distributed to the troops upon their arrival. From their concealed locations, the militia repulsed two attempted landings on July 13.

Colonel Hay described this action in a letter he wrote to General Clinton

that night. John Coe, deputy chairman of the Committee for Orange County, also wrote Washington on July 13, asking for instructions. Washington replied the next day "…Every precaution ought to be taken to prevent the men-of-war from getting any supplies of fresh provisions or keeping up any intercourse or correspondence with the disaffected [Tory] inhabitants." Private Reid and the other exhausted militiamen remained on duty night and day despite their worry about their inability to harvest their ripening grain.

On Sunday, July 14, Hay again wrote Clinton: "My regiment … of 400 men, has now been upon duty, night and day, since Friday evening, and we are greatly fatigued with the service. The men express great uneasiness that they lose their harvest ... if they are obliged to guard the shore..." To relieve his men, he asked Clinton for "… a detachment of one hundred and fifty or two hundred men from your brigade." He also asked for two or three armed boats to move men and provisions and help prevent an enemy landing.

On July 16, another British attempt to raid American army stores, including herds of sheep and cattle, was made further upstream in the lower reaches of Haverstraw Bay, but the livestock and other supplies had been moved inland for protection. By then, Hay had received about eighty reinforcements from Clinton instead of the 150 to 200 men requested.

The raid was repulsed by well-directed shots from the muskets and long fowling pieces of the militia, which had followed the ships northward, marching up roads on both sides of the Hudson. The men were then posted in Highlands forts and defiles. One of the British cutters was grounded for six hours in the middle of the river off Stony Point; it could have been destroyed had the regiment been equipped with artillery. An attempted troop landing was repulsed by musketry fire from Hay's militia. Another landing craft, a barge, also approached the west shore of the river, but militiamen kept it from landing. During these episodes, the British ships would occasionally respond to the roving militiamen with cannon fire, to little effect.

For nine days, the British ships remained at anchor off Haverstraw, landing only once to burn the house, plunder the garden, and steal a calf and the pigs of a farmer named Jacob Halstead. (A sister of Peter Reid's wife married a David Halstead, and Peter's son, Daniel, named a daughter Margaret Halstead Reid. Several other Halsteads were members of Peter's church.) As the ships headed downstream, militiamen fired muskets at them but did no damage.

On July 19, 1776, the British ships anchored in Haverstraw Bay, nearly abreast both Colonel Hay's 102-acre home, which had a river landing, and the farm on which Peter Reid's wife was born, which also had river frontage. In Minisceongo

Creek, which separated the Krom and Hay farms, Hay kept all small boats concealed to prevent them from being used to make contact with the enemy. Here he learned from his first trustworthy source that the British were "highly mortified" as to the results of their expedition.

By this time the regiment was so short of powder and shot that Colonel Hay appealed for replenishment from General Clinton when he arrived on July 17. The regiment was given twenty pounds of powder and instructed to move additional government goods, sheep, and cattle back from the river to a place of safety. The undisciplined men were firing their muskets indiscriminately at the ships, even though they were more than a mile away. Clinton took command of the situation and deployed the militia.

General Washington was concerned that the British men-of-war would succeed in capturing provisions or in making contact with "disaffected inhabitants." He wrote to the Committee of Orange County urging it to keep the militia ready "at a moment's warning, to assemble at any place they may be called to." He also feared a naval attack on Albany and Poughkeepsie, where two frigates were under construction for the American fleet. There also was a possibility that the British would attempt to destroy Kingsbridge, a critical river crossing for the supply line into New York City. Colonel Hay wrote back to General Washington on July 19, indicating that General Clinton had sent him the eighty-man detachment from Fort Montgomery but that the militia was again short of "powder and ball." At this time and probably later, ammunition was in such short supply that the lead weights from fishing nets were melted and molded into bullets. Hay also stated that he was keeping "the greatest part of my regiment on duty" to prevent the enemy from attempting another landing should they return. The reinforcement allowed Hay to permit some of his men to return home.

On July 25, the British ships sailed down the Hudson from Haverstraw to raid Westchester, on the river's eastern shore, and obtain supplies at Croton Point. The militiamen fired musket balls through their sails, doing little harm. That same day, Hay wrote General Washington suggesting that if he were furnished with cannon and light whaleboats he could take the offensive more quickly. Thus equipped, he could pursue the enemy and cut off its efforts to obtain supplies, thereby reducing the number of militia needed to guard the shore. He also could prevent the "disaffected" from joining the enemy.

On August 2, Hay again wrote Washington that, while the enemy had received some supplies at Westchester, the Haverstraw militia had successfully prevented foraging on the river's west bank by driving back a barge attempting to make a landing. He volunteered to serve as deputy commissary on the west

bank, noting that he had "extensive acquaintance…for facilitating the necessary supplies."

Hay also suggested that since river traffic had been so hindered by obstructions, a rider should be hired to carry intelligence from the Highlands forts to Washington's headquarters once or twice a week. On August 10, Hay was appointed commissary for the west bank by Washington. Commissary officers were established throughout the Hudson Valley to provision troops. In the meantime, General Clinton was still concerned that enemy ships attempting to land would be successful. Therefore he issued orders to hide all small boats that the enemy might capture in the creek beside Colonel Hay's property and place a guard over them. However, five small boats under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Tupper were used to attack the British ships still in the Tappan Zee.

Washington was concerned that the enemy could launch an amphibious operation and turn his right flank. In mid-August, on his orders, a large number of chevaux-de-frise (sunken hulls and stakes pointed with iron) were sunk in the Hudson between Forts Washington and Lee. Washington wrote his brother John, "…that a vessel with a brisk wind and strong tide, cannot, unless by chance shot, be stop't by a battery, unless you can place some obstruction in the water to impede her motion within reach of your guns."

Aided by favorable winds, the *Phoenix* and *Rose* sailed briskly downstream on August 18, nearly unscathed from these obstructions (whose iron-tipped stakes pointed the wrong way) and also avoiding significant damage from fire rafts. The rafts, however, sank one of the three British tenders. Fortunately, Colonel Hay captured a large drove of cattle from the Tories, who had put them ashore for pasture. Back in New York, the two warships provided covering fire for the British landing that began the Battle of Brooklyn, the first major engagement of the Revolution and a disaster for Washington's Army.

On October 10, 1776, Hay wrote Peter Livingston, president of the Provincial Congress, that three enemy warships (including the *Phoenix)* with tenders had again sailed the day before past the guns at Forts Lee and Washington. The ships successfully smashed through a reconstructed barricade of hulks, a chain, and timber cribs in the river and reached the Tappan Zee. Fortunately, Fort Washington and Fort Lee were so high above the water that the ships' guns could not be elevated sufficiently to fire at them. The Fort Lee batteries were able to substantially damage all of the ships as they sailed closest to the eastern shore, where the river was deepest.

By this time, Hay had to write Washington that his regiment at Haverstraw "consists of only three hundred men (down from 400), and very near one half of

them (were) without arms… (and) I must apply for [reinforcements] in case [the enemy] should attempt a landing on the west side of [the river]. We are destitute for provisions." He also asked for money to purchase food. It was feared that British troops were aboard the warships. His men were without arms because they had been given to the Continentals. On October 12, 100 levies (draftees) were assigned to Hay; they were to be raised in the northern part of Orange County.

General Clinton was warned to man the forts, move his supplies inland, and guard against those cooperating with the enemy. He was then ordered by the New York Committee of Safety to guard the shore. A landing was attempted at Nyack but was repulsed by Hay's militia. (A shot from one of the British tenders tore off part of Colonel Hay's hat.) Two days later, Hay received $500 to purchase food and notification that 100 reinforcements would be sent as soon as they could be conscripted.

By October 15, Hay reported that after repeated alarms he could only muster thirty-eight of his regiment at one time, and he was short of weapons as well as money to pay the militiamen. He had only eleven men to guard the shore between Verdudigo Hook and Stony Point; the rest refused to do duty. By this time, militiamen had been called from their farms to their military posts innumerable times, leaving them no time to harvest their corn and buckwheat, or to sow winter grain. They responded to the alarms despite an almost total lack of military training and much less experience, but they were angry. Washington recognized that the men were not entirely to blame. He wrote, "Men who have been free and subject to no control, cannot be reduced to order in an instant." Nevertheless, Washington was asked by the Committee of Safety to send "a Body of Men to the Highlands...to secure the passes, prevent insurrection and oversaw the disaffected."

On October 16, Colonel Hay issued orders for his guards to mount daily in the late afternoon, but not to fire unless a sentry had hailed a vessel in the Hudson three times, or an alarm had been sounded. The British made an attempt to land at Upper Nyack later in October for water and forage. Hay reported that they "were prevented by a party of my command. Some damage was done to the house and barn of Phillip Sarvent as several cutters fired shots through them, but none of my men were hurt."

Meanwhile, Hay was busy supplying Clinton's brigade with provisions and needed help in protecting the military stores at Haverstraw and Nyack, which had to be moved by boat past a British man-of-war. These were the only two places in the vicinity where British troops could land. To prevent the enemy from capturing provisions there, under General Greene's order the cattle, carriages, hay, grain, and flour were moved to Clarkstown and Tappan. Greene also instructed Hay to

"alter" the Kings Ferry Road. Kings Ferry was guarded by two forts at Stony Point. It was the key crossing of the Hudson from New England to the middle colonies. Whoever held Stony Point controlled this essential communications link.

Shortly after, Washington ordered most of his Continental troops to cross the river from Haverstraw and defend Fort Washington, which was perched atop a 230-foot hill on Manhattan overlooking the Hudson. This left a small force of Continentals plus the militia to guard the Highlands passes. On November 16, despite all efforts, Fort Washington, under Greene's command, was captured by the British. Washington and Greene stood on the Palisades along the river's western shore and watched the white flag go up as 2,000 troops surrendered. Washington and the remnants of his army fled across the Hackensack River toward Newark. In August, he had commanded an army of 20,000; now he had only 3,500.

Two days after the capture of Fort Washington, 6,000 redcoats led by General Charles Cornwallis crossed the Hudson at Dobbs Ferry. Without opposition, they posted their seventeen pieces of artillery on the Palisades near Englewood, New Jersey, a few miles from Fort Lee. By 1 p.m. that afternoon, they captured the fort without a fight. A few months previously, Private Reid and the Orange County militia had been patrolling that stretch of the Palisades riverbank.

On November 24, more redcoats also landed at Nyack. The next day, General Cornwallis, with an army of 10,000, started his pursuit of Washington. As a result, the morale of the militia was so low that it unnerved General Greene. On November 15, he had written to Washington that Colonel Hay's entire regiment had mutinied.

Hay reported to Greene that his men told him that British "General [William] Howe had promised them peace, liberty and safety and that is all they want." Greene sent Hay about fifty men and threatened to order his regiment to the trenches at Fort Lee. Later, Greene observed, "The enemy will never relinquish their plan, nor the people be firm in our favor, until they behold a better barrier in the field than a voluntary militia who are one day out, and the next at home." The men were dispirited, intractable, and impatient to be home. Many deserted. Hay wrote on November 26 that "many of the disaffected had gone to the enemy, some of whom had hinted they would [guide] the enemy [so as] to cut off our troops." Triggered by this letter, a Council of War held at Peekskill agreed immediately to assign General Scott's entire brigade to Haverstraw to stop the enemy advance and guard the stores there.

In December, the enemy made a raid, looted a house, and stole some cattle from a neighbor of Peter Reid's. General Clinton issued an order to the militia of

both Orange and Ulster counties to hold themselves in readiness to march at a moment's notice to repel an enemy invasion. Clinton asked Colonel Hay to transmit those orders to the other regiments.

In response to a message from Hay that there were twenty British ships in Tappan Bay, General Scott's brigade (whose terms of enlistment were about to expire) was sent across the Hudson to Haverstraw to support Hay's effort to guard against further landings, protect the military stores, and prevent any enemy advance into the Highlands passes; 500 Pennsylvanians at Peekskill also were sent to assist. As far upstream as Dobbs Ferry, the Hudson was now a British river. As commissary officer, Hay was having extreme difficulty supplying meat, flour, and salt, and finding wagons and teams to deliver these provisions to the militiamen who were quartered in the huts, barns, and homes of inhabitants from Tappan to Paramus. He also was using his personal funds without any reimbursement. On November 28, he sent General William Heath an itemized list of expenses totaling £618 that he had incurred to feed his men.

Later in December, Hay's militia was ordered into New Jersey to cooperate with the forces under Generals Charles Lee and Horatio Gates. The British and their Hessians were plundering households and farms, but the New Jersey Loyalists were the most villainous, according to General Greene. By then Daniel Coe, chairman of the local Committee of Safety, estimated the regimental strength at "280 men, most unarmed, one third of whom were disloyal." Washington's victory at Trenton and Princeton at year's end made it possible for them to return to their families, who by this time were destitute. By then, the British had clearly demonstrated to Washington that they could send any portions of their fleet of 150 ships up the Hudson almost all the way to Albany if they chose. (Albany had a population of 42,000, nearly twice as large as New York City and significantly more important.) The redcoats could also cut off the escape routes of Washington's New York troops into New Jersey if that became necessary.

Another British attempt to land two boats was made at Piermont in early 1777. By that time, another chain had been successfully strung across the Hudson and no British warships challenged it. Then stationed at Fort Montgomery, Hay had less than 100 men to protect the shore and supplies from being plundered by the British. He was being denied reinforcements by Clinton. On March 23, Hay wrote Washington from Haverstraw that the enemy was burning Peekskill. Clinton had the stores removed, but the British destroyed the ammunition magazines, storehouses, and barracks. However, because their contents had been removed or set afire beforehand by General Alexander McDougall, the British came away empty-handed.

On March 26, 1777, General Washington wrote the President of the Continental Congress that he could not provide Colonel Hay with reinforcements. Washington noted that "…The Militia [of New Jersey] are not to be depended upon … they come, you can scarce tell how, they go, you hardly know when. In the same predicament are those of Pennsylvania." He also stated that many of the Continental regiments were seriously shorthanded, often fewer than 100 men in the ranks.

In July, a British galley made an unsuccessful attempt to land at Upper Nyack to destroy a sloop moored there. The next morning, the bodies of nine British sailors killed in the attempt washed ashore.[4] Hay was still having difficulty keeping his men on duty because they wanted to take care of their homes and farms. Some—perhaps as many as a third—even "disaffected" to the Loyalist cause. Nevertheless, he continued to guard the west shore along Kakiat (Nyack) and Clarkstown as best he could. Captain Garret Anderson's company, in which Private Reid served, was kept busy from May to September performing guard duty from Bergen on the south to Fort Montgomery to the north. One of his majors declared publicly that if the militia were harassed as much as last year, "he would give up the cause." On August 21, Hay reported that he had taken a large drove of cattle from Tories who had fled.

On October 3, British Admiral Richard Howe dispatched 4,700 troops upriver under General Henry Clinton. Three days later, they landed on the western shore near Stony Point, marched over the mountains, and captured Forts Clinton and Montgomery, which were poorly defended by Generals George Clinton and Israel Putnam, whose troops were on the east side of the river. In addition, the British burned two American frigates guarding the chain across the Hudson below Fort Montgomery. (The chain also was dismantled.)

On October 5, Colonel Hay wrote to General Washington that a British flotilla including four ships of war, a number of other armed vessels, eight transports, and forty flat-bottomed boats had appeared in Haverstraw Bay. An estimated 1,500 to 2,000 British troops were landed a few miles below West Point and Fort Montgomery, at Verplank's Point in Westchester County

General Washington, who wrote General Putnam on October 7 that the enemy's strength "cannot possibly be [as] great…" as Hay indicated (in fact it was greater), ordered 3,000 New Jersey Militia to the defense of the forts. But it was harvest time and only 300 reached the fort. In any event, they arrived too late to help. General Clinton wrote Washington that he had the cattle and sheep herded to places of safety, but he criticized Hay for not being able to control the shore guard of militiamen. Meanwhile, the British spent several days laying waste to the

countryside near the river, burning Newtown as well as burning and or capturing American vessels while apparently awaiting orders to move north.

This British effort to establish a foothold on the Hudson's west bank was made to prevent Washington from sending troops north to Albany to help oppose General Burgoyne. Few American troops were available because most had been shifted to Philadelphia to prevent its capture. Burgoyne, however, was defeated decisively on October 7 at the Battle of Saratoga, before Henry Clinton could have arrived. Albany and the Hudson River remained in colonial hands, thanks in part to militiamen like Peter Reid and his two brothers, Alexander and Daniel, Albany County militiamen who fought at Saratoga.

Fearing the worst, on September 22, 1777, Hay had written the Albany Committee of Correspondence suggesting that it order the Albany militia to help oppose Burgoyne. They immediately did so by ordering the militia north to harass the British and destroy their supplies. Concluding that he could neither "buy nor conquer these Dutchmen," General Henry Clinton withdrew all his troops to New York City by October 17, after destroying Forts Clinton and Montgomery. That same day, Burgoyne's surrender was accepted and his army began its 200-mile march to Boston, where it would be paroled and sent back to England. In January 1778, Hay was offered British cannon from Fort Ticonderoga after its abandonment following Burgoyne's defeat. He provided an estimate of the sleighs and horses needed to haul the cannon where he needed them, as well as to provide flour for his troops. The Albany Committee of Correspondence agreed to pay the sleigh men and to provide other assistance.

Altogether, as militiamen guarding the Hudson shore between December 1776 and April 1778, Hay's regiment was called out twelve times and spent 292 days in the field. During this time, they also were almost constantly engaged in building forts in the Highlands or navigational obstructions in the Hudson, and were under arms as Minute Men patrolling the river or guarding animals, forage, and other stores at Haverstraw.

Having difficulty calling out his militiamen, Hay wrote Washington on February 28, 1778, that the large amount of forage at Haverstraw had to be protected immediately from the enemy by "very speedily moving it or [having] a proper guard sent over from Peekskill" by General Putnam. "He reported that all the young men (in the area) have either enlisted in the [Continental] Army or are ferry men; therefore there are now families with but one male in the household to harvest their grain, feed the cattle and [to] provide firewood for their home." He added "the [Militiamen] think it rather cruel to be asked to turn out, as both their Families and Farms must suffer…"

Peter Reid (now forty-four), had a wife, four young daughters, and two sons at home. His youngest son was only a year old. Hay must have had Reid and a number of other militiamen in mind when he wrote this letter. The regiment was subsequently mustered out and new recruits enlisted to respond to "Different alarms from the 4th of April 1778 to the 9th of August 1780," when Captain Garrett Ackerson was mustered in as company commander. Recruiting efforts, however, were not very successful. Undoubtedly because of this, on May 28, 1778, the regiment was consolidated with the Orange Town Regiment under Colonel Abraham Lent, with Colonel Hay commanding the consolidated regiment.[5]

The year 1778 was the most disheartening one of the war for Orange County, as well as for Hay. His house, bam, stables, and animals were destroyed and he was destitute. New York City and Brooklyn were occupied by the British, and their warships sailed unopposed into the lower Hudson. Orange and adjacent Bergen County were brutally raided by the British. On April 5, Hay wrote Clinton that an enemy ship had gone up the river as far as Teller's Point, and although he had ordered out part of his militia, he had no provisions for them and needed money to feed them. Ackerson's Kakiat Company, in which Peter Reid was serving, was part of this contingent.

Hay's request for money and or provisions was denied by Clinton. The militia was starving and nearly naked. Washington, who visited Haverstraw on July 15 with General Greene, feared "a general mutiny and dispersion." Washington stayed at Hay's home, making it the headquarters of the Continental Army for five days while they crossed the Hudson at King's Ferry.[6] Before leaving, Washington authorized additional powder for Hay's cannons, some of which were enemy cannon hauled down from Ticonderoga.

From August 12 to 14, twenty-seven privates and two lieutenants under Captain Ackerson were paid a total of £21 to pursue Claudius Smith and his party of Tories and robbers through the mountains at Smith's Clove. They were unsuccessful in capturing them.

In the fall of 1778, Colonel Hay marched his regiment, now reduced to 250 men, to a position two miles below Tappan on the road leading to Schralenbburgh Church at Bergenfeld, New Jersey. They guarded and scouted Paramus and Hackensack from their camp to New Bridge. Hay immediately sought reinforcements from Washington's headquarters. (At that time, the Continental Army was occupying the Highlands around West Point.) On September 28, Colonel Gilbert Cooper wrote Hay, who was at Fishkill, that "a large body of men from about 100 flatboats" had just landed about two miles from Tappan. Captain Ackerson was ordered to form a scouting party and skirmish with them.

In October 1778, the citizens of Orange County petitioned Governor Clinton to send assistance to Colonel Hay's militia, then stationed at Clarkstown. The petition stated that his troops "were worn out by the hard duty … and many of them had not put any winter grain in the ground … the enemy [was] within a quarter of a mile of Clarkstown [and] no aid will be afforded from the Continental Army." The governor dispatched temporary reinforcements.[7]

In early June 1779, Colonel Hay wrote the governor that the enemy had just crossed the river at Stony Point without opposition and advanced to Haverstraw village (two miles north of Hay's home), and that he was being overwhelmed. By then, the British had seized Stony Point, which had been defended by a small force that had withdrawn, and the villagers had fled. Clinton dispatched at least one militia regiment to assist Hay, but the British would hold Stony Point until November.

The next morning, Hay's militia opened fire from the fort at Verplank's Point under Lieutenant Colonel Cooper. The British then began to skirmish with Hay's troops for the rest of that day and all the next. They penetrated six miles inland to the mountains, capturing some of his men, plundering houses, and driving off the cattle. Efforts by Hay to save his own property were unsuccessful. His house, barn, and stables had previously been plundered and burned in October 1777. He wrote General Clinton that in this second British raid, the British "stripped my wife, my children and myself of everything we possessed but the apparel that covered us in our flight." They also carried off two horses, while his slave ran off. He pleaded with Governor Clinton to send him troops from West Point.

The raid had been carried out on the vindictive order of British Governor William Tryon in New York City. Afterward, Hay moved his family to Fishkill, before returning to Haverstraw in 1780. He also petitioned the New York Legislature for compensation, reporting that "My farm is now almost a wilderness, having no hands to work it." Likewise, he wrote Washington, who replied from West Point on August 2, that "… it gives me real pain that I have it not in my power to comply with your request respecting an order for clothing."[8]

In late November, troops from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, North Carolina, and New York moved from the vicinity of West Point to winter camp at Morristown, New Jersey. Some of these Continentals slept on the lawn of Peter Reid's church the night they passed through. Hay begged the Governor for immediate assistance.

Without reinforcements for his small regiment guarding twenty miles of shoreline, on June 4 Hay wrote Governor Clinton that he might be forced to surrender to the enemy's superior force. Several of his regiment were missing, pre-

sumably captured. In the meantime, the Haverstraw militia harassed the British rear, keeping them within narrow limits. Nevertheless, a British battery opened up against the fort at Verplank's Point and silenced it. Washington, who must have received a copy of Hay's letter to Clinton, wrote Hay on June 4, "Your exertions and those of the Militia in opposing the Enemy claim my thanks…"

The next day, Washington also ordered the colonel in command of a New Jersey militia regiment to collect at least 500 head of cattle and other supplies and deliver them to Orange County. He was concerned that the British were going to attack other Highland posts in "a vigorous operation." Therefore, his army would need subsistence for the duration of the crisis if it were to be depended upon. Washington also wrote Hay and two other militia colonels of the anticipated enemy attack upon Highland posts in Orange County and its vicinity. Washington wanted to know how many of their militia would join his Continental troops.[9]

In 1780, the New York Legislature passed legislation to provide levies to reinforce the Continental Army's 1st, 3rd, and 5th Regiments. This law required the militia to furnish soldiers for three months of service in the Army of the United States. Colonel Hay's regiment raised twenty-eight men on the first call; 100 men were called out on August 1, and twenty-two more in December 1780. During his third enlistment, Peter Reid was one of these Levies.[10] All served under Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert Cooper to strengthen the New York levies guarding Tappan. In August, Colonel Hay supplied some of his own oxen to these troops. When the Continental Army arrived on August 8, the militia was dismissed. In September, the British landed at Upper Nyack and burned the home and barn of Major John L. Smith of Hay's regiment before being driven off.

On February 25, 1781, Colonel Hay was ordered by Washington to assemble his regiment and send detachments to guard the passes through the mountains near Suffern and elsewhere that provided the route for a surprise attack on West Point. They were to wait there in good positions until further orders. Others in the regiment were assigned to guard the blockhouse at Sneden's Landing against attack by 200 British troops from Jersey City. One of Hay's men was wounded in that encounter.[12]

After Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, the war was fought mostly in the South, although the British still held New York City and Long Island when Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown in October 1783. To supply the troops garrisoned there, they continue making devastating raids to steal food, forage, and animals in the Hudson River Valley. Hay remained the Continental Army's Deputy Commissary General, to which he was appointed in June 1779. In April 1782, Hay

asked Washington for a cannon and artillerymen to be positioned at Haverstraw that could fire on British ships that occasionally sailed upriver. Shore guards, probably from Hay's regiment, were placed from Haverstraw south to Nyack. In May, the reinforcements arrived and were positioned at Stony Point.

Hay resigned his commission on January 1, 1783.[13] The following year, he served as justice of the peace. Once wealthy, Colonel Hay spent his entire fortune on the revolutionary cause. He had been offered a commission twice in the British army but refused it because of his avid patriotism. In his seven years of service between 1776 and 1783, he guaranteed large payments—for which he was never reimbursed—to farmers for animals and crops. He lost his home and all of his possessions. A father of twelve, he died penniless in 1785 at age forty in New York City, just a month after the last of his children was born. During the course of the war, Generals Washington, Lafayette, Greene, and Anthony Wayne visited Hay's house, evidence of the esteem in which he was held. [14]

Describing the behavior of Revolutionary War soldiers, including militiamen, historian Charles Royster wrote: "But the many derelictions of wartime behavior seemed to pale beside the one essential achievement—the ideals would survive." In 1781, the *Annual Register*, published in London, characterized these soldiers as having "an unconquerable resolution and perseverance, inspired and supported by the enthusiasm of liberty." Four faiths motivated these soldiers—God, country, family, and liberty.[15] The intensity of these feelings were an outgrowth of their determination to leave behind the class system of the Old World.

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❑ **$250 Minute Man** (includes 1-Year Subscription to *The HRVR* and choice of Thomas Wermuth's *Rip Van Winkle's Neighbors* or James Johnson's *Militiamen, Rangers, and Redcoats*) Please circle choice.

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❑ Enclosed is my check, made payable to Marist College/HRVI.

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