



Cannon and musket fire reverberated through the Highlands as Gov. Pataki presided over the finale of Patriots' Weekend 2002 with the dedication of the Fort Montgomery State Historic Site on October 6. (New York's first governor, George Clinton, had commanded the fort during the battle 225 years before.) Earlier, Libby Pataki had cut the ribbon opening the suspension bridge across Popolopen Creek that has reconnected the twin forts of Montgomery and Clinton. To symbolize the battle's climax, re-enactors from the Brigade of the American Revolution added to the din from fireworks and cannons aboard the HMS *Bounty*, *Providence*, and *Clearwater*. Leading up to the 6th, a lecture and seminar sponsored by the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College set the stage for a Grand Encampment, naval battle, and fireworks at West Point on October 5 to commemorate the bicentennial of the U.S. Military Academy.

In December 1777, New York's leaders had a critical decision to make: how should they re-fortify the Hudson? Over that month, French engineer Louis de la Radière prepared a report that recommended on January 2, 1778, that Major General Israel Putnam, commander in the Highlands, rebuild Fort Clinton rather than raise new works on the "west point" of the Hudson. Still, Radière's analysis would soon help him trace out a new Fort Clinton - at West Point. In less than a month, the fort would begin to rise. Fortress West Point would grow to be the "Key to the Continent."

As a part of your holiday travels, visit a Colonial house near you that is decked out in Christmas finery, and reflect on the sacrifices of the patriots who gave us the bounty we now enjoy. You could join the Schuylers on Dec. 6, at the Schuyler Mansion in Albany; the Washingtons in Newburgh for the "Washington's Headquarters by Candlelight Open House" on Dec. 8 and 14; or the Ellisons for "A Candlelight Christmas" on Dec. 13 and 14, at the Knox's Headquarters State Historic Site in Orange County. - JIM JOHNSON

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