

Remembering the Revolution
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In Orange County, July 1779 was a month of triumphant victory and dismal defeat. On the 15th and 16th, Brig. Gen. Anthony Wayne captured the British garrison at Stony Point. On the 22nd, Iroquois Chief Joseph Brant led a daring raid across the Delaware River and dealt the militia sent to find him a severe blow at the Battle of Minisink (in present-day Sullivan County).

On July 6 at Buckberg Mountain (now in Rockland County), Gen. George Washington and Wayne planned an attack to retake Stony Point, abandoned by the Americans on May 31 when Gen. Sir Henry Clinton's forces took control of King's Ferry. On the 15th, Wayne led his Corps of Light Infantry of about 1,350 men against the British fortification with its garrison of 564 soldiers. After an eight-hour march from Sandy Beach, north of Fort Montgomery, Wayne organized his force into three columns for the attack, which began at midnight. Led by 21-man "forlorn hopes," two flanking forces using only bayonets penetrated the northern and southern ends of the fort's outer works, while the third column created a diversion with musketry to its front. Both assault columns penetrated the inner works, and by 2 a.m. on July 16 Wayne had taken the post at a cost of 15 men killed and 83 wounded. He reported to Washington that "Our officers and men behaved like men who are determined to be free." Though small in scale, the battle was a tonic for flagging American morale.

To the northwest, Mohawk Chief Thayendanegea (Brant) moved down the Delaware River, and on the night of July 19-20 burned houses, barns, mills, the Mahackamack Church, and a fort at the Minisink settlement near present-day Port Jervis. On July 22, some 135 militiamen from Goshen, Warwick, and nearby New Jersey overtook Brant's force of 60 warriors and 27 Loyalists near the mouth of the Lackawaxen at the Minisink Ford of the Delaware River. Col. John Hathorn's attack quickly fell apart as Brant's force isolated or turned back his three divisions. Hathorn and some 45 men made a stand of three and a half hours on "a Rocky Hill" until overrun and scattered by Brant's men. Forty-six Americans were killed.

This month, a remembrance of the British burning of Bedford is planned for the afternoon on July 11, while a re-creation of the American assault at Stony Point will take place at the battlefield July 16-18. To learn more about these and other events commemorating the 225th anniversary of the Revolution, check out the Hudson River Valley Institute's Digital Library at www.hudsonrivervalley.net. - Jim Johnson

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