

George Washington and the bulk of his Main Army faced the winter of 1781 from their huts and tents in the Hudson Highlands. Surgeon James Thacher wrote in his diary that the conditions at West Point were terrible: "Twelve or 14 months' pay are now due to us, and we are destitute of clothing and the necessaries of life. The weather is remarkably cold, and our tents are comfortless." The weather was not quite as disagreeable for (now) British Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold. The year in which he committed "treason of the blackest dye" ended on Virginia's James River, along with his force of 1,500 Loyalists and regulars. In the new year, British, American, and French armies would find themselves on the road there as well.

Last fall, the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College commemorated the 225th anniversary of the Benedict Arnold-John André conspiracy with Patriots' Weekend 2005. Some 300 people attended the opening conference, "Treason!: Benedict Arnold, John André, and the Plot to Betray West Point," at Marist on Sept. 29. Seven historians and biographers discussed why Arnold turned from Revolutionary hero to traitor, and the roles played by Maj. John André and the three volunteer militiamen who captured him — John Paulding, Isaac Van Wart, and David Williams. On Sept. 30, Dr. James Kirby Martin, Distinguished University Professor of History at the University of Houston, delved into Arnold's disillusionment in his lecture at the U.S. Military Academy; and Professor Willard Sterne Randall, Historical Scholar in Residence at Champlain College, explored Arnold's career and treason in his talk sponsored by the Historical Society Inc. (serving Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown) at the Tarrytown Music Hall.

On Oct. 1, the Van Cortlandtville Historical Society hosted a wreath-laying ceremony honoring Paulding at the Old Cemetery at Van Cortlandtville; another wreath was placed at the grave of Isaac Van Wart in the Elmsford Reformed Church Cemetery. Both events featured honor guards consisting of three officers and 18 cadets from the U.S. Military Academy, echoing the attendance of cadets at the funerals of these two patriots. At Croton Point Park, Mott's Artillery Company and the 5th New York Regiment fired on the sloop *Clearwater* (playing the part of the British Sloop of War *Vulture*) after historian Lincoln Diamant

explained the role of the *Vulture* in the André affair. And at Patriots' Park in Tarrytown, 500 people watched the recreation of the capture of André (portrayed by John Lopez) by the three militiamen (played by Sean Grady, George Bock, and Dan Hess). As a preview to the capture, Hugh Francis (in the guise of André) had ridden André's route from the Underhill House in Yorktown to the park on Sept. 17, sponsored by the Kenyon and Muenster families.

The rest of the weekend's events took place at the George Washington Masonic Historic Site (de Wint House) in Tappan, Rockland County. More than 1,500 people attended the 21st annual Colonial Day (sponsored by the Tappan-town Historical Society) and the encampment by the Brigade of the American Revolution. Lecturers John E. Walsh, Lincoln Diamant, Carl Oeschner, and Dennis Corcoran explained aspects of Arnold's treason and André's capture. Re-enactors performed drill and fired muskets and a cannon; a highlight was when American

soldiers repelled an attempt by Crown forces to free André. Proprietor Robert Norden Jr. hosted the re-enactors and their guests at an 18th-century dinner at the Old '76 House restaurant, bringing to life Mable's Tavern, where André had been imprisoned.

The next day, a crowd gathered to watch the recreation of André's trial by actors from the Brigade of the American Revolution on the front porch of the Tappan Reformed Church's manse. Just as it happened in 1780, American troops marched "André" to the top of the hill that now bears his name, where he confronted a hangman and a cart provided by the New Jersey Militia, Heard's Brigade. At noon, an announcement was made that André had been executed 225 years ago to the date and time. A wreath-laying and three volleys from the brigade followed remarks by Dr. Ray Raymond, former political officer at the British Consulate in New York City. As the smoke cleared, it was apparent that the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area had brought vividly to life one of the most important chapters in American history. (You can hear the lectures, and view video and photographs of Patriots' Weekend 2005, at www.hudsonrivervalley.org.)

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