

The Revolutionary War in the Hudson Highlands

Benedict Arnold

Benedict Arnold was a general in the Continental Army. He helped win important battles, including the Battle of Saratoga in 1777. However, Arnold was more interested in his own success than in winning the war. In May 1779 Arnold began speaking with the British about committing **treason**. Treason is when someone acts against his or her own country. Arnold committed treason because he tried to help the British win the Revolutionary War by giving them the American fort West Point.



Arnold became the commander of West Point in August of 1780. He moved into the home of Loyalist Beverly Robinson and began making plans to give West Point to the British. In September of 1780, Arnold met with a British soldier named Major John Andre in the Hudson Highlands. Andre was a top spy for the British. He and Arnold agreed on a plan for the British to attack West Point. Benedict Arnold gave Andre a map of West Point's defenses. Andre was returning to the British army when he was stopped by three men near Tarrytown, New York. They discovered he was a British spy when they found the map of West Point hidden in Andre's boot. Andre was taken to the American army and executed.

When Benedict Arnold heard that Andre had been captured, he rode from Beverly Robinson's house to the Hudson River and sailed to the British in New York City. Arnold escaped capture but his plan to give Fortress West Point to the British was stopped. If Arnold's plan had succeeded, the Americans may have lost the war.

Review Questions

1. What is treason? How did Benedict Arnold try to commit treason?
2. How did Benedict Arnold's plan fail?



Arnold convinces Andre to hide the plans to West Point in his boot

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Beverly Robinson

Beverly Robinson was a militia leader and Loyalist who led attacks against the Continental Army in the Hudson Highlands and helped Benedict Arnold. Robinson was born in Virginia and served in the army with George Washington during the Seven Years War. He later moved to New York and married a wealthy landowner named Susannah Philipse whose family controlled much of the land that is now Putnam County. Beverly Robinson managed the family's land.



Robinson was a Loyalist. After the British took control of New York City in 1776, Robinson refused to side with the Americans. The Continental Army took control of Robinson's lands and he moved to New York City. Robinson used his knowledge of the Hudson Highlands to help the British. Robinson formed a militia called the Loyal American Regiment. He led the militia in the British attacks against the American's Fort Clinton and Fort Montgomery in October 1777. Robinson also helped Benedict Arnold with his plan to give West Point to the British.

Arnold lived in Robinson's house across the Hudson River from West Point and Robinson delivered Arnold's messages to the British. Robinson was on the British ship that helped Benedict Arnold escape from the Americans. Beverly Robinson may have helped the British in the war, but they were still not able to take control of the Hudson Highlands.

Review Questions

1. How did Beverly Robinson gain control of the land that is now Putnam County?
2. Name two ways that Beverly Robinson helped the British army during the American Revolution.



Beverly Robinson's House. George Washington and Benedict Arnold both used it as a headquarters. The building was destroyed by a fire in 1898.

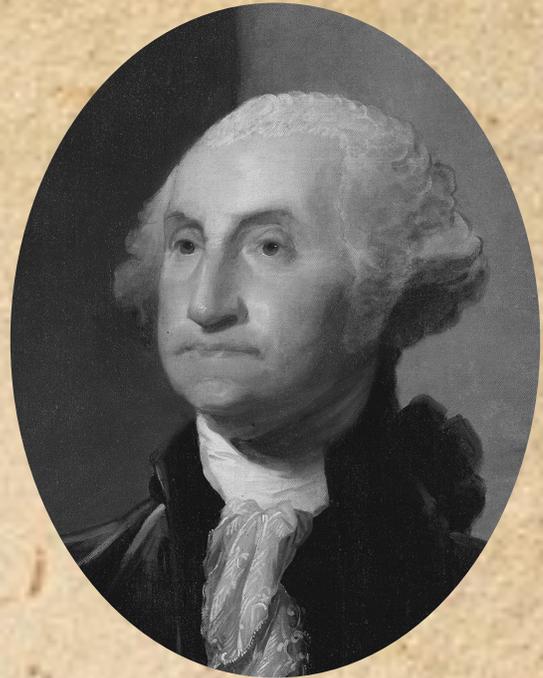
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George Washington

General George Washington commanded the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. He considered the Hudson Highlands an important strategic location for transporting food, supplies, and soldiers between the northern and southern states. In 1778, Washington ordered the construction of Fortress West Point, which he called “the key to America.”

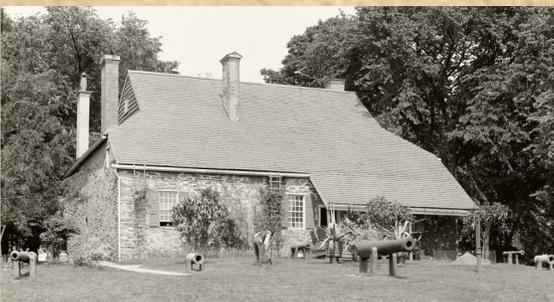
Washington had headquarters throughout the Hudson Highlands during the war, including in Fishkill and Havestraw. In September 1778 and July 1779, Washington was in present day Garrison, New York and stayed at the home of Jacob Mandeville. He also used the home of Loyalist Beverly Robinson in present day Garrison as a headquarters in 1780. From 1782 to 1783, Washington made a headquarters in Newburgh, New York at the North end of the Hudson Highlands.

Washington made some of his most important military and political decisions in the Hudson Highlands. Washington was in Beverly Robinsons house when he first learned about Benedict Arnold’s treason. While at Newburgh, he turned down a plan for an American monarchy and sent an important letter to State Governors about how the new republic should be run. Washington made history in the Hudson Highlands.



Review Questions

1. Why did George Washington consider the Hudson Highlands a strategic location?
2. Name two important things George Washington did in the Hudson Highlands.



George Washington’s headquarters. From 1782-1783, Washington made his headquarters at the farmhouse of Jonathan Hasbrouck in Newburgh. The site was close to West Point and gave the General strategic views of the Hudson River.

In 1850, Washington’s Headquarters became the first public historic site in the United States. Today, visitors can tour the farmhouse and view artifacts from the Revolution. —**Open Space Institute**

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Tadeusz Kosciuszko

Tadeusz Kosciuszko was a Polish military engineer who built fortifications for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. Kosciuszko attended a military academy in Poland and studied military engineering in France. He came to America in 1776 with a belief in democracy and introduced himself to Benjamin Franklin. Franklin helped Kosciuszko get his first job building defenses for the Continental Congress building in Philadelphia.

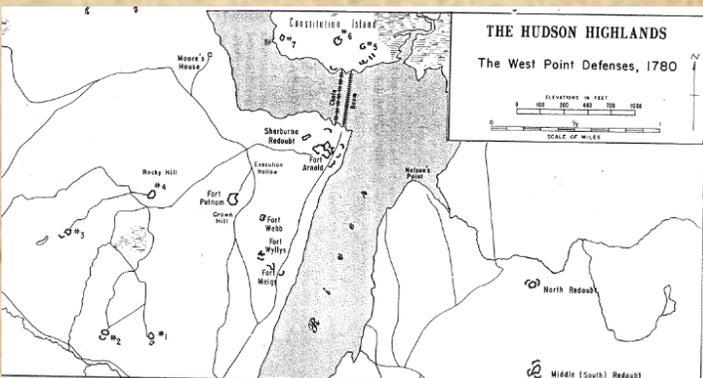


One of Kosciuszko's most important projects was designing the defenses of Fortress West Point. George Washington personally selected Kosciuszko for the job. West Point took Kosciuszko more than two years to build. It was the largest fort in the United States at the time. Kosciuszko used **redoubts** to create rings of defense around West Point's main building, Fort Putnam. A **redoubt** is a temporary defensive structure, usually made of earth and stone, that is designed to protect an important point like a hill. Soldiers used the redoubts as lookout areas. They helped defend against a land attack on West Point.

Kosciuszko continued to build fortifications for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. He was given American citizenship at the end of the war for his service.

Review Questions

1. Where did Tadeusz Kosciuszko learn to build military fortifications?
2. What is a redoubt? How did redoubts help defend West Point?



Map of West Point's Defenses in 1780.
This map shows how Kosciuszko's redoubts formed a defensive perimeter around West Point's forts.