THE WEST POINT CHAIN AND HUDSON RIVER OBSTRUCTIONS IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

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A favorite project of the British during the whole progress of the War for Independence was to gain control of the Hudson River.* To the north, at the head of boat navigation, the Hudson was connected by an easy portage with Lakes George and Champlain, and through them with the St. Lawrence, the great river of the Canadas. Towards the west, the Hudson's principal affluent, the Mohawk, gave easy access to the basin of the Great Lakes and to the magnificent river system of the Mississippi. Thus established by nature as the main artery which connects a vast network of interior water communication with the Atlantic, and which draws on the resources of almost half a continent, the Hudson occupied a position of the highest strategic importance.

The British had been taught this fact in the course of the long struggle with France in the French and Indian War, then but recently terminated. They realized that the use of the waterways from the St. Lawrence through Lake Champlain and southward depended upon controlling the Hudson. Also, every road leading to New England from the remaining colonies crossed the Hudson at some point. A wedge of armed British vessels extending from New York to Canada could deny mutual support to the colonies and thus allow defeat in detail.

But the colonists were equally familiar with the importance of maintaining control of the river as a result of having fought in the colonial wars for its possession. Even before declaring their independence from Britain, the Americans were constructing fortified positions along the river's course in order to deny its use to His Majesty's navy. There were many efforts at obstructing the Hudson River. All the first attempts were unsuccessful; the last, the fortifications and chain at West Point and Constitution Island was an unqualified success.

On 25 May 1775, soon after Lexington, the Continental Congress in Philadelphia passed a resolution that the Hudson River should be fortified to "prevent any vessel passing." Within a few days the New York Provincial Congress ordered a survey to be made of the banks of the river with a plan of setting up defenses at appropriate locations. This survey resulted in a decision to construct a fort and a series of redoubts in the Hudson Highlands on an island in the river opposite West Point called Martelaer's Rock. Construction was eventually started under the supervision of Bernard Romans and the fort that was built was called Fort Constitution. (The island now is known as Constitution Island.)

This first effort was poorly planned and even more poorly executed. Obstruction of the river was to be accomplished solely by fire from weapons placed only on the island and on the east side of the river. Although never subjected to a land attack, the outcome of such attack is easy to predict. The river bank opposite the island (the West Point side) was neither garrisoned nor fortified, and because it was higher, it dominated the island's fortifications. Fort Constitution and its associated fortifications would be evacuated without a fight on 8 October 1777, when confronted by the first British expedition to challenge it.

Another effort at obstructing the Hudson was made near the river's mouth adjacent to Manhattan Island. Here was constructed a chevaux-de-frise between Fort Washington on Manhattan Island and Fort Lee on the New Jersey shore. The chevaux-
de-frize was composed of submerged timber cribs filled with stones and sunken vessels. The submerged obstacles were placed so as either to prevent British vessels from sailing upriver, or at least to make passing the obstruction a slow and delicate operation and render the warships easy targets for the forts' guns and the flaming fire ships.

The obstruction was not completed by mid-July 1776 when two British men-of-war, the Phoenix of forty-four guns and the Rose of thirty-six, easily breached the obstruction and ran the gauntlet of the forts' guns. In all, this obstruction was unsuccessful, especially after November 1776, when Fort Washington fell and the British demolished Fort Lee.

The defense of the Hudson now shifted back to the Hudson Highlands. Some fifty miles north of New York City, the Highlands were formed by a northeastward-pitching mountain mass that strikes across the river over the twelve-mile stretch from Storm King and Breakneck Mountains on the north to Dunderberg Mountain and the city of Peekskill on the south. Entering the narrow valley of the Highlands just below the town of Cornwall, the Hudson River flows south for several miles until it meets, head on, the rocky wall of West Point. Here it turns abruptly east, between West Point and Constitution Island, and, after a few hundred yards it turns as sharply south again. For the next five miles the hills on the east bank recede markerly from the river but those on the west bank above West Point and the town of Highland Falls continue to dominate it. Where the Bear Mountain Bridge now is, five miles south of West Point, the river again enters a narrow gorge between a rocky mass called Anthony's Nose on the east and Bear and the Dunderberg Mountains on the west. It was in the Highlands that the next three attempts at obstructing the river would be centered.

An obstruction was placed on the southern edge of the Highlands near the present site of the Bear Mountain Bridge and consisted of a chain and boom drawn across the river. This obstruction was protected by batteries at Forts Clinton and Montgomery on the west bank of the river and by entrenchments for infantrymen on both sides. A flotilla of five American vessels: two frigates, two galleys and an armed sloop, was stationed north of the obstruction to add additional strength to the strong point. The chain was approximately 1800 feet long and stretched on the oblique (so as to minimize the pressure of the river flow on the logs buoying the chain) between Fort Montgomery and Anthony's Nose. The chain was made of approximately one and one-half inch bar iron, each link from twenty to thirty inches in length and weighing about thirty-five pounds. Some of the chain was brought down from Fort Ticonderoga and some was forged in and around Poughkeepsie. The chain was floated on numerous five-log rafts, constructed with logs approximately fifty feet long, from the chain was stretched a cable boom.

Immediately downstream from the chain was stretched a cable boom. It was planned that logs would be attached to this cable to create an additional obstruction but the logs were never put into the river. On at least two occasions in November 1776, attempts were made to place the chain across the river, but both times it broke under the force of the current. Finally, in March of 1777, the chain was successfully installed. The cable boom was emplaced a few months later.

The Continentals hoped that this combination of chain, boom, forts, and vessels on station would prove a formidable obstacle to the passage of any British force up the Hudson; but it all was in the enemy's hands by October 8, 1777. On 3 October 1777, Sir Henry Clinton, commander of British forces in New York, sailed forth out of New York City with a force of over three thousand troops and a formidable naval squadron under Commodore Howe. The mission of Clinton's expedition was to strike the Highlands' defenses in an attempt to pull pressure off General John Burgoyne, who was then moving with a British force from the north toward Albany. Clinton's plan was to secure the passes in the Highlands, and hopefully to
draw a portion of General Horatio Gates' Continental army from Burgoyne's path.

Moving rapidly up the Hudson, Clinton made a feint at Verplanck's Point on the eastern side of the river about thirty-five miles north of Manhattan. This ruse caused the American General Israel Putnam to order a hurried retreat to defensive positions in the hills near Peekskill. Then, on 6 October, under cover of an early morning fog, Clinton's troops crossed the river and landed on the western shore at Stony Point, some six miles below the Highlands' fortifications. Marching west and north around the Dunderburg, the British forces captured the forts from the weaker land side. The five American vessels were either grounded or put to the torch when a combination of dead calm and ebbing tide prevented their escaping to the north. The chain and boom were useless once the forts were taken. On 8 October, British artificers cut them loose from their moorings at Fort Montgomery, allowing a small shipborne force to move upriver with a flag of truce to demand the surrender of the Continental garrison at Fort Constitution. After firing on the flag of truce, the garrison under Captain Garthom Mott abandoned the fort and its surrounding redoubts and retreated into the hills.

Clinton's force now moved to reduce another chevaux-de-frize located a few miles upriver in the area of Cornwall - New Windsor. This chevaux-de-frize had never been fully completed. It was to consist of a series of square cribs constructed of timber, locked in the corners like a log cabin, filled with stone and submerged across the river channel. Each crib had three or more iron-tipped poles embedded in the stones and projecting downstream and of such length as to rest just below the surface of the water. This placement would enable the poles to penetrate the hull of any vessel driven upon them. The chevaux-de-frize was to extend across the width of the river from Plum Point on the west bank to Pollopel's Island (Better known today as Bannerman's Island) near the east shore where the river was wide and the depth was about fifty feet at mid-channel.

Since only a few of these cribs had been emplaced by the fall of 1777, the obstacle did not have to be reduced, and was easily passed on two occasions. The first occasion was on 11 October when a small reconnaissance force under Sir James Wallace sailed north to Poughkeepsie. The second passing was made on 15 October when a large squadron under Major General Sir John Vaughan was sent north by Clinton in a vain attempt to make contact with Burgoyne. Burgoyne, however, surrendered before these reinforcements reached him, and Vaughan's troops had to be content with merely burning Kingston, seat of the New York Provincial Congress. Before the month had ended, Clinton and his forces had abandoned the Highlands and returned to Manhattan.

Sir Henry Clinton's attempt to help Burgoyne had failed. But his expedition into the Highlands had been a brilliantly executed campaign and was an unqualified success. In five days his force had undone the efforts of over two years' labors to obstruct the waterway. The two forts guarding the entrance to the Highlands had been destroyed, the chain and cable had been severed, the American fleet on the Hudson was destroyed, the chevaux-de-frize had proved a failure, and vast stores of precious ordnance and stores had been captured or destroyed.

The American reaction to Clinton's victory was immediate and positive. Far from abandoning the plan to obstruct the river, General Washington moved swiftly to rebuild the Hudson River obstructions. On 2 December 1777, he ordered General Putnam to "seize the present opportunity and employ your whole force and all the means in your power for erecting and completing...such works and obstructions as may be necessary to defend and secure the river against any future attempts of the enemy." On the same day an order went out to General Gates and his Northern Army to recover all posts on the River and "put them in the best posture of defense."
Interest now centered around fortifying the area at West Point and Constitution Island. A committee was appointed by the New York Provincial Government to make a rapid survey of the West Point area. On 14 January 1778, the committee reported that West Point was the most strategic location to obstruct the navigation of the river and that a chain would be the most effective obstacle. Six days later, the Continental Brigade of General Samuel H. Parsons crossed the river on the ice from Constitution Island and set up camp on what is now the West Point Plain. Despite a severe winter (it was the Valley Forge winter), construction of fortifications began immediately, and efforts were commenced toward providing the chain obstruction.

On 2 February 1778, Colonel Hugh Hughes, Washington's Deputy Quartermaster General, traveled to Chester, New York, to the residence of Peter Townsend, owner of the Sterling Iron Works. There, he contracted with Mr. Townsend for the construction of the iron links, anchors, swivels, clevises and assorted fixtures that were to make up the chain. The contract called for the delivery, on or before the first day of April 1778, of an iron chain, 500 yards in length, with each link to be about two feet long, two and one-quarter inches square, or as near thereto as possible, and with a swivel every hundred feet and a clevis every thousand feet. For this chain, Colonel Hughes contracted to pay 140 pounds (Continental money) for every ton weight of chain and accessories delivered.

Mr. Peter Townsend's son and namesake, writing many years later, states that his father was so anxious to start preparing the chain that he and Colonel Hughes left Chester that very night in the midst of a snowstorm and rode to the Sterling furnaces, about fifteen miles south of Chester near Sloatsburg, New York. By the next morning (a Sunday) he had all his furnaces in operation.

The importance attached by the Americans to the construction of the chain is exemplified by the fact that the contract also called for the "exemption for nine months from the date hereof (2 February 1778), from military duty, sixty artificers that are steadily employed at the said chain and anchors till completed." The teamsters who would transport the material to the river from the Iron Works would likewise be "exempted from impress by any of the Quartermaster-General's deputies during the space of nine months." Finally, the contract called for the company to keep "seven fires at forging and ten at welding" around the clock until the chain was completed.

The chain was made from bar iron into ten-link sections at the forge, with one end-link left open in each section. These sections, weighing a little over a half ton, were transported on ox-drawn carts to New Windsor, on the Hudson River shore, a few miles north of West Point. Although West Point was a shorter distance from the forges than New Windsor, the latter was "up valley" from the Sterling Iron Works, whereas West Point was over a series of snow-covered ridges.

At New Windsor, the sections were joined together to form a continuous chain, which was then stapled to logs treated with pitch. When the ice broke up on the river, the logs and chain were floated down to West Point. The work at New Windsor was under the direction of Captain Thomas Machin, a truly remarkable but relatively unknown patriot.

In charge of constructing the log cribs and capstands, and of floating the chain across the river at West Point was Colonel Thaddeus Kosciuszko. Colonel Kosciuszko, who relieved the first engineer at this site, Colonel Louis de la Radiere, in March of 1778, is credited with the major work of constructing the West Point fortifications.
The chain was first put across the river on 30 April 1775. It stretched from a small cove between Horn Point and Love Rock on the West Point shore to Constitution Island, spanning that portion of the river that "bends" around West Point. The chain was buoyed across the river by approximately fifteen log floats; each float was composed of four logs, forty to fifty feet long, assembled like a raft with twelve-foot logs as cross spars. The logs were treated with pitch and tar, and were sharpened at each end to reduce resistance to the current and the tides. The chain was stapled to the floats to prevent shifting, with swivels inserted approximately every 100 feet to prevent the chain from "binding." The swaying of the chain was reduced by anchors placed at various intervals along the length of the chain, and capstands with guys on the shores.

The boom was placed in the water a few months after the chain, and its configuration resembled a rope ladder lying in the water. The rungs were treated logs about eighteen feet long, and they were joined at each end by three links of chain of nearly two-inch bar iron. Most of the logs were obtained from the Fort Montgomery site where they had been collected for use in the uncompleted cable boom. Although the original contract between Colonel Hughes and Peter Townsend did not call for iron bolts, clips, and chain links for the boom, there are sufficient records of bills from the Sterling Iron Works that list such items as to give a clear picture that this company also supplied these iron products. The boom was located slightly downstream from the chain and was easily converted to a footbridge by placing boards over the logs. It is probable that the boom was constructed also to have a bridge between West Point and Constitution Island; the main function of the boom, however, was to prevent ships from bearing down directly on the chain. In other words, it was an additional obstruction.

During the next four years, the chain and boom were taken out of the water each winter and put back across the channel each spring as soon as the ice was off the river. This was done to prevent damage to the chain by the tremendous pressure of the ice flow, and to replace the water-soaked logs. Also the ice itself served as an effective barrier to the passage of ships up the Hudson. This process of picking up and replacing the chain was no easy task, since the weight of just the links and associated iron fixtures was probably over 40 tons, and the water-soaked logs added many extra tons of weight. The operation was accomplished through the use of a large windlass on the West Point side to pull in the chain, while many soldiers in boats guided and assisted as the chain was gradually drawn onto the West Point shore.

A series of artillery emplacements on both sides of the river and on Constitution Island defended the chain and boom. These batteries were situated to place fire on all ships as they approached the obstructions and tried to break through. Some of the emplacements, such as the Chain Battery and the Lanthorne, Water and Know batteries, were at water level; other installations were located on the high ground on the west side of the river. These latter batteries could deliver effective plunging fire onto the relatively unprotected decks of an invading vessel. Backing up these batteries were a series of strategically located forts and redoubts to defend West Point and Constitution Island from a land attack.

No British vessel ever challenged the chain. From the time the obstruction was emplaced until the end of the war, only once did the British move up the river. In late May 1779, Sir Henry Clinton and a force of 6,000 again captured the American forts at Stony Point and Verplanck's Point. But the enemy did not venture the additional fifteen miles to challenge West Point. In 1780, however, the chain was close to destruction when Benedict Arnold's plan to surrender the whole West Point defensive system to the British came close to success.

Arnold did nothing positive to weaken the river obstructions. Rather, by failing to order necessary replacement of water-soaked logs he allowed the chain to come dangerously close to destruction. By September 1780, the chain was resting
heavily on water-soaked logs that Arnold should have replaced long before. The sinking of the chain repeatedly plagued the engineers at West Point since the log floats continuously became water-soaked and lost their buoyancy. When the chain was first set afloat in early spring, it rode high in the water on the logs that were treated with tar and pitch; but by late fall, despite selective replacement of logs, the chain rode lower and lower until much of it was actually below the river's surface. Had Arnold's treason gone undiscovered, Sir Henry Clinton could have easily repeated his tactics of three years prior at Fort Montgomery and simple cut the chain and boom at its mooring once West Point had been turned over by Arnold.

In the early winter of 1782, with Yorktown now history, the chain and boom were taken out of the water for the last time. The boom broke during the operation and much of it was lost. The chain, however, was retrieved intact and deposited on the West Point shore. On 13 April 1783, the schooner Cottle, out of Nantucket with a load of fish oil, rum and other stores, sailed up the Hudson, through the Highland gorge to Newburgh, thus becoming the first American ship to navigate the waterway from its mouth since the British took New York in 1776.

The final chapter of the history of the chain is not very clear. With hostilities ended in the north, interest in the chain rapidly ebbed. In 1783, both General Washington and General Knox were concerned because the stored chain was rusting badly from lack of attention and care. The chain remained where it had been deposited until around 1830 when a portion -- perhaps as much as half -- was sold to the Cold Spring Foundry where it was wrought into bar iron. Prior to the Civil War, a portion of the chain -- one clevis, one swivel and thirteen links -- were placed on display on Trophy Point at West Point where it can be seen to this day. In 1856, a dredging derrick clearing the channel opposite West Point brought up a segment of the boom. The rest broke free and is undoubtedly still resting at the bottom of the Hudson.

The remaining chain stored at West Point was loaned in February 1864 to the New York Metropolitan Sanitary Fair, held in New York City and in Brooklyn. The agreement was to return the chain to West Point when the fair closed, but the commissioners saved money by shipping the heavy links the much shorter distance to the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Here the links remained for almost twenty-five years, mixed and rusting with other pieces of chain, their historic identity unknown. In August 1887, the West Point chain was among thousands of surplus articles sold at public auction. When, a few years later, it was discovered that the historic West Point chain was among these articles sold at that auction, all the chain that could be traced to that sale became "authentic."

Today many links can be found that are claimed to be part of the West Point chain. These bogus articles are most readily identified by their much larger size than the authentic chain. The alleged links average as much as three and a half inches in cross section, have chamfered edges, are close to four feet long and weigh as much as 300 pounds. The thirteen authentic links on display at the United States Military Academy, West Point, are not chamfered, and they adhere closely in size to the specifications of the contract. The cross section dimension of the links are from two and one quarter to two and one half inches, measure a little over two feet long and weigh between 100 and 123 pounds. Other links from the actual chain conform closely to this smaller size and can be found at various museums and historic sites in this country.

When reviewing the many Revolutionary War obstructions of the Hudson River, it appears that the only successful one, the chain and boom at West Point, was also the only one never directly challenged by the enemy. The "Gibraltar of America," as George Washington called West Point, was never put to the test of combat. The mission of the chain was to prevent the British from using the river. This it did. No British vessel sailed north of Stony Point after October 1777.

*Presented April 17, 1966 to members of Constitution Island Association.
Actually, the true birth of the Hudson Gorge, if not so sudden or so clear, is eminently more fascinating than the legendary beginning. In point of time, it is not within the scope of mortal imagination to comprehend just how old are the grey, crystalline rocks of the Highlands. Nor is it within reach of our most modern scientific methods to measure their age even to the nearest ten million years. Enough, perhaps, to say that few geological formations in the world are older.

To begin with, there was a vast sea called, after man developed his passion for naming all things, the Grenville Ocean. For unrecorded ages, out of that ocean settled an ever thickening layer of ooze which became a thousand feet and more thick. Slowly but constantly the colorless sediment solidified to complete the first step in forming the Hudson Highlands. Then, some seven hundred million years ago, the calm of the Grenville Ocean was abruptly broken; for the next one hundred million years or so, cataclysmic eruptions from the deep bowels of the earth struck time and again with a terrible pressure and a searing, rock-melting heat. The sedimentary stone was changed into its present forms of schist, gneiss, and granite. And nothing in six hundred million years since has been able to alter the basic structure of those rocks. While melting and squeezing the previously level ocean bed, those internal, igneous explosions lifted and twisted it. A jagged, tortured patch of mountains resulted — forerunners of the Hudson Highlands.

As if the hundred million years of unchecked fury had left her utterly spent, Nature subsided and let her gentler methods take over; wind and water waged their steady war of erosion against the granite heights. Oceans came and receded. New layers of rock formed on the old. Loose splinters of the mountains, undercut and worn by powerful winds, tumbled from the peaks. Prehistoric rains washed and smoothed the rugged slopes. Waves smashed and plucked. But above it all, endless ocean or featureless erosion plain, the highest spires of the craggy, grey mountains stood uncovered — arrogant islands in the vastness.

Recovered by a slumber lasting a quarter of a billion years, Nature roused herself and lashed out once more from the center of the earth. In an unrestrained spasm of energy, she uplifted at a stroke (by her clock) the Taconic Mountains, a belt of sharp ridges running from southwest to northeast and stretching through the present northeastern portion of the United States. The sturdy peaks which had for so long withstood the elements found themselves, tumbled and pitched on edge, a part of this newer and grander range.

Once more oceans came and went as the plastic surface of the earth slowly fluctuated. Once more waves and wind and rain worked at reducing the stubborn rocks. And once more, when the oceans attained their greatest depth, the ancestors of the Highlands remained just above the surface. Then that second long stillness was broken. In a mighty and sudden effort the Acadian Mountains were thrust up, signalling the start of a restless and quavering period which would endure for the next eighty million years. The murky seas that bubbled around the Highlands during those eons were laden with animal life, including long, shark-like creatures. Ultimately, a paroxysm of violence raised the Appalachian Mountains and, at long last, ended the uneasy era. After eighty million years of disruption, the Taconic Mountain Range was shattered. Only portions remained; among them were the Berkshires, the Green Mountains, and the thrice-struck Hudson Highlands.

A general land elevation accompanying the Appalachian upheaval raised the Hudson Highlands above sea level for the last time. But the forces of erosion never rest. Through succeeding millions of quiet years the elements gathered and deposited sediment around the array of disordered, jagged peaks. Eventually the summits of the Highland hills looked out, as mere bumps, over a vast, monotonous, unrelieved, peneplain. Slowly, ever so slowly, the surface of the earth began to rise. As slowly, a sluggish stream began to collect rain water draining from the south slopes of the Highlands. It meandered to the
"ICE AND INDIANS, PIRATES AND PATRIOTS"

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After bearing gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense to the Christ Child in Bethlehem, the three Magi, awed by their encounter with the infant, made their way from the City of David to the far points of the compass.* One, called Anasia, came by some mysterious route -- probably supernatural -- to the wild jumble of mountains which would someday be known as the Hudson Highlands. There, on the summit of High Tor, he erected an altar for worship according to his special rite. The Indians, angered that this strange visitor was ignoring their own all-powerful sun god, plotted to slip up the flank of High Tor and destroy both the intruder and his "pagan" altar. They would have done it, too, but for a miracle. Just at the last moment, as the paint-streaked savages closed in on their prey, the sky darkened and thunder rolled and the very earth split asunder, swallowing the hostile warriors. Water eventually filled the vast, heaven-created chasm, forming a magnificent river.

Thus, in legend, is the birth of the "River of Legends" explained.

It is easy to understand why the early explorers, traders, and settlers had to seek in myth an explanation of the Hudson River's incongruous path through the Hudson Highlands. That waterway, rising some three hundred miles from the sea, in a storybook Adirondack lake endowed with a storybook name, Lake Tear of the Clouds, behaves as rivers should through most of its course. It pours rapidly but correctly down from the mountains, gaining strength and speed and size, until it reaches Albany. There, fed by the Mohawk River from the west and finding itself only six feet above sea level, the previously turbulent stream calms down, deepens, and broadens. Beauty lost as the waters grow sedate is more than gained as they become stately. From Albany to the Hudson Highlands - a unique strip of mountains running roughly east-west approximately fifty miles above New York City - one can not fault the river's logic. But, when the current reaches that great, granite barrier, reason seems to fail. Water is supposed to take the path of least resistance; and that path would be to bypass the Highlands to the west and to flow into the Atlantic through a sister stream in New Jersey.

Rather than seek a route around the mountains, the Hudson slices bravely through them in a narrow, twisting, picturesque gorge. Stone cliffs drop directly into the water in many places while precipices attainable only to a skilled climber overlook the river's tortuous fifteen mile passageway through the rugged heights. Washington Irving wrote of the "awful defiles" created when the "gigantic Titans had erst waged their impious war with heaven, piling up cliffs on cliffs, and hurling vast masses of rocks in wild confusion." One amazed American officer, on first viewing the area during the Revolutionary War, confided to his journal that only a poet or a painter could adequately describe the "huge mountains, rocky cliffs, and venerable forests in one confused mass." Other travellers were similarly impressed with the majesty and strength of the terrain along the Hudson's corridor through the Highlands. But, romantic and wondrous as were the "precipitate mountains to the water's edge," they were also a strong natural obstacle to military or commercial movement. For that reason, the Hudson created canyon through the Highlands was destined to become a focal point of the War of Independence.
ocean through a marshy, delta-like land. That dirty, shallow, lazy stream would develop into the majestic Hudson River.

Eons passed. Years were to swell a scale to measure the changes taking place; decades, even centuries, little better. Animals walked, then flew. Eventually, dinosaurs waddled in the sticky mire of the Hudson delta. Imperceptibly, the surface of the earth inland from the ocean continued to rise. The wandering, slow-moving river settled into one bed and began to flow over ever more rapidly. Gradually, inch by inch -- perhaps inch by century -- it ate its way backward into the tussle ridges at its headwaters. Gradually did the crystalline rocks concede to this new invasion. Finally, only the massive ridge of Storm King-Breakneck separated the northernmost rivulet of the Hudson from its brother waterway in the north. And then, after having withstood the best Nature had to offer for half a billion years, the Grenville granite succumbed to the nibbling headwaters of the Hudson River. The water worked through and annexed the northern streams.

Strengthened by the addition of new watercourses, and sped along by the still rising land, the Hudson immediately set about consolidating its conquest of the mighty mountains. At first fitfully, then more steadily, the current dug deeper and deeper into its own bedrock. Downward progress was retarded but once and that when the burrowing river reached the solid, close-grained mass which today we know as West Point. After scouring flat the top of that unbroken bulk -- and incidentally making a parade ground for future generations of cadets -- the waters searched out a path around the point. Taking advantage of an irregular weakness, they cut a zig-zag course between West Point and Constitution Island. With that defiant obstacle bypassed, the torrent, unabated, cut lower yet until -- about a million years ago -- a chasm had been carved more than seven hundred feet below the level of the present river bed. It must have been a breathtaking view had mankind but been on earth to appreciate it.

Next came the ice. Preceded by an arctic chill killing plants and animals in its path, a great glacier slid down from the north. Beginning somewhere in the region of a bay which would one day also bear the name of Henry Hudson, the mass of ice began to radiate southward, following, like water, paths of least resistance. One tongue, finding the Hudson Valley, sped ahead of the main sheet. It entered and filled the deep, beautiful gorge through the Highlands. That channel, though, was too constricted, causing ice to pile up until it eventually spilled over the tops of the Highlands themselves. At its greatest height, the surface of the ice was about one mile above the peaks.

Carrying boulders, sand, and dirt, and bearing down with an immeasurable weight, the glacier acted as an enormous, natural sheet of sandpaper. Northern slopes and summits of the Highlands show effects even today of the sanding. They are generally smooth and evenly rounded whereas the southern flanks, plucked of loose boulders by the glacier, are irregular and precipitate. Giving under the immense burden of ice, the land itself sank. Fortunately, the glacier began to thaw and to retreat towards its Arctic home before the Highlands were pushed beneath the surface of the sea.

Though receding, the glacier was not yet ready to quit punishing the Highlands. It would have, indirectly, a final fling. As the cold, white sheet withdrew, huge ice chunks, broken free from the forward edge, lodged to melt in valleys or were carried by rivers out to sea. Several larger than normal blocks converged on the narrow gap between Storm King and Breakneck after the main body of ice had retreated north of those two ridges. Reinforced with glacial debris, the ice caused a solid jam in the defile. As water from the melting glacier rose behind it, the ice and boulder barricade grew higher and thicker. The frigid lake increased in size as the glacier continued slowly to melt its way northward. Pressure on the dam intensified until -- probably after a mid-summer thunder shower -- it burst with a sharp, resounding crack, letting loose a foaming, crushing cascade of ice and water which rushed headlong in a three hundred foot crest through the Highlands. It was a fitting finale to the ice age.
After that first, angry surge of the flood had vented itself, the river remained a rampaging torrent for hundreds, maybe thousands, of years. Until the glacier finally freed the St. Lawrence, the Hudson was the sole exit for the entire northern watershed, including the Great Lakes. During that era, the water level was more than a hundred feet above West Point's plain. About ten thousand years ago, the St. Lawrence assumed its share of the burden and the Hudson fell to near its present level. The land, pushed down by the glacier, remained only slightly higher than the waves of the Atlantic. Therefore, when the volume of fresh water flowing through the Hudson's channel was so drastically reduced, salt water entered and the once raging river became a tidal estuary while its once remarkable granite gorge was filled up with several hundred feet of silt. The river was then very much as we know it today.

About that time man first gazed upon the river. A single, lithe scout peered over it from the west bank. He was Asian. His remote ancestors had crossed the Bering Strait, on a land bridge, and had worked their way south and east. He still retained oriental features, especially high cheek bones and straight, black hair, but he had grown tall and supple during the long migration. Through narrowed eyes he watched impassively as the current flowed past; then, as the water stopped and the tide pushed it back upstream, his eyes opened and he became excited, very excited! A legend carried by the first Asians and handed down from generation to generation proclaimed that they were fated to wander until they found a wondrous water flowing in two directions. Promptly titling the newly discovered river, "The-Water-Which-Runs-Two-Ways," Indians took up residence in the Hudson Valley.

Those first Indians, Algonquians all, staked out claims along both banks of the broad river and, proving that they were every bit as civilized as other human beings, soon began to war among themselves. Mohicans on the east bank became the tribal enemies of Mincoes on the west shore while Tappans watched the sun rise over the island of their chosen foes, the Manhattans. But one should not jump to the conclusion that these Algonquians were warlike; they were not. Indeed, life along the Hudson was so pleasant that those first, dusky inhabitants had little real inclination to fight one another. Furthermore, the Hudson, serving as a wide no man's land, separated would-be warriors and provided a ready-made excuse to avoid massive tribal assaults. It was no obstacle, however, to excursions for captives. And that was generally the form of warfare waged along the Hudson -- seizure of an enemy brave or two for sacrificial purposes, reprisals, counter-reprisals, and so on and on.

A prisoner's fate was rarely a pleasant one. Sometimes they were kept as slaves; less often, adopted into the new tribe; but usually death at the torture stake awaited them. When a captive was to be killed, everyone in the village gathered for the spectacle. In his youth, each warrior, preparing for the day when he might be captured, had learned a death song. In defiance of his captors and tormentors, he would chant it as long as possible. Going along with the grisly game, his captors tried to prolong the suffering by administering tortures so as to induce the most excruciating pain while not quite causing unconsciousness. Older children were allowed to begin the ceremony by burning patterns on the chest of the unfortunate Indian. Squaws next stripped his flesh in long, careful bands. A brave, usually the one who had made the capture, scalped his victim and, one by one, placed glowing coals on the exposed skull. The eyes of the poor wretch were gouged out, but not until he was forced to watch himself be emasculated. And through it all, the mournful death chant continued. Properly done, and with full cooperation from a sturdy prisoner, such entertainment could last two or three days.
Through centuries, the tribes lived contentedly along the silver river. Fish and game were plentiful. Squaws scratched good plots for corn. Tobacco was grown and copper was worked. Raids by and against nearby tribes were diversions rather than dangers. The only cloud over that idyll: existence was in the form of the terrible Mohawks. From time to time, out of the west, those remorseless members of the Iroquois nation would strike the villages along the Hudson, slaughtering and exacting tribute. But, content with having once more cowed the gentler Algonquians, they always returned to their western lands. All things considered, life was good as the unnumbered years rolled by.

Of course, it could not last. The white man came — first merely looking, then trading trinkets for furs, then moving in, and in the end evicting the red man.

History is silent on the identity of the first European to see "The Water Which Runs Two Ways." He may have been a Viking. John Cabot, sailing only five years after Columbus crossed the blue ocean, could have discovered the river, but his records are less than accurate. An Italian employed by France, Giovanni da Verrazano, came across the mouth of the river in 1524, but did not explore it. He named it "Grand River." The following year, Estevan Gomez, a Portuguese citizen sailing for Spain, journeyed to the wide waterway and may have gone part way up it. "San Antonio," he dubbed the waters. Unknown traders, probably French and Dutch, followed the scent of fur as far as the site of Albany. Their fate, and for that matter, their fortune, has never been ascertained. The river remained a mystery until an English sea dog, hired by the Dutch, set out to seek a short cut to Cathay.

Out from Amsterdam, on Saturday, March twenty-fifth, 1609, sailed the Dutch yacht, Half-Moon. Henry Hudson, the experienced captain of the eighty ton vessel, steered for the North Star while keeping a wary eye on his crew — a malcontented and mixed lot of English and Dutch. Soon blocked by fles of ice and threats of mutiny from penetrating the Arctic Circle, Hudson changed course, touched at Cape Cod, and then turned south. On August 21, of the coast of Virginia, not far from the struggling, two year old settlement of Jamestown, the ship's cat began running from one side of the deck to the other, mewing strangely. Crew members could see nothing. After carefully pondering that omen, Hudson decided to reverse course and proceed northward. Poking the nose of his shallow-draft ship into Chesapeake Bay and the Delavare River, the captain correctly surmised that neither could be the long sought short route to China. He continued along the coast until, on a foggy September morning, an eerie fire, seeming to float above the horizon, lured the curious explorer landward. When the sun scattered the morning haze, Sandy Hook showed up dead ahead. Sailing into "a great stream out of the bay," Hudson anchored within sight of high hills and verdant forests. That night Robert Juet, one of the English officers, wrote in his log book, "This is a very good land to fall with, and a pleasant land to see."

More than a week was passed in exploring the bay and trading with Indians. Hudson, politely returning a visit made by the native chieftains to Half-Moon, went ashore in full ceremonial procession. He was serenaded by savages who gathered around and "sung in their fashion." Unhappily, the harmonious setting did not prevail. Later, with or without provocation, warriors in canoes attacked five sailors in the ship's longboat. Rain had extinguished the fire for their matchlocks, leaving the five at the mercy of Indian arrows. Nightfall and some hearty rowing saved them, but not before one of their number was killed and two others were painfully wounded. To guard against future incidents, Hudson took two braves hostage, outfitted them with red coats, and confined them in the ship. It became tense in New York Bay; it was time to continue the voyage.
Autumn’s first bright leaves were appearing when the little ship, hampered by a northerly wind, began the journey up-stream after midday on September 12. Next day the wind remained contrary, but *Half-Moon* rode several miles with the tides. Far from being discouraged, the crew was growing eager -- such tidal action in so large a body of water could indicate that they were in a strait connecting the Atlantic with the Pacific. And that alluring ocean might, just might, lie beyond those haze-enveloped mountains looming on the northern horizon. The 14th dawned bright and clear and brought a spanking, southeast wind. Billowing sails rushed the excited explorers all the way from upper Manhattan Island to a site near modern Peekskill before the afternoon was half over. Wanting to use all the friendly wind, Hudson determined to attempt the treacherous looking passage through the forbidding mountains that day. With "high land on both sides," *Half-Moon* threaded the strange route, successfully negotiated the "S" turn between West Point and Constitution Island, and, to the jubilant cries of her crew, steered northward toward open water as dusk began to settle. Anchoring at dark under the bulking eminence of Storm King, Henry Hudson very likely felt closer to success than he ever had -- or would. In the last moments of daylight, he had plainly seen that the waterway widened suggestively beyond the mountains now towering over him. Moreover, the tides were obviously still active, and the fish-filled water was salty. He probably slept little.

Teasingly, a thick, river fog enshrouded them at dawn. With triumph possibly within reach, and a southerly wind waiting, the impatient explorers chafed as they rode at anchor. Intrigued with thoughts of what the day might bring, the sailors guarding the two hostages grew lax. In a trice, the redskins had squirmed through a porthole and were swimming ashore. No chase was given for at that moment the mist began clearing and the crew turned out to get under way. Safely on shore, and seeing *Half-Moon* departing, the Indians shouted "in scorne" and made vulgar gestures. The journal of the voyage leaves it to our imagination to picture what the savages might have thought was vulgar. Maybe it is appropriate that the Indians chose that moment to escape and to mock the white men; as the day wore on, it must have become more and more obvious to Hudson that he was on a river, not a passageway to the Pacific. In consolation, natives living near that night's anchorage turned out to be "very loving people."

After reaching the vicinity of the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, the English navigator, disappointed but resigned, turned his Dutch ship southward. No longer hurried by vain hopes of reaching the Pacific, he conducted a more leisurely return trip. Days were spent walking along the shore, bantering with Indians, and investigating possible sites for settlements. Amazed by the profusion of trees, counting great quantities of chestnuts, noting the abundant slate and stone for houses, and finding the soil to be suitable for farming, Robert Just wrote that the area north of the Highlands would be "a very pleasant place to build a town on." The chief of the "loving people," quite likely eager to get another dram of the white men's intoxicating water, intercepted *Half-Moon* and pleaded with Hudson to come ashore for a visit. The captain, tired now of river exploration and impatient to cross the Atlantic before the onset of winter storms, declined the invitation. Not even two maidens, "of the age of sixteen or seventeen yeares," were inducement enough; the high poof of *Half-Moon* disappeared downstream, leaving the "loving people" and their maidens behind. We are not told what the crew thought.

Catching a good wind, *Half-Moon* made the stretch through the Highlands on the first day of October, but the breeze died suddenly leaving her becalmed off Stony Point. There, Hudson had his last adventure on the river which would bear his name. When Indians from the mountains came to trade, one stole into a cabin and grabbed a pillow, two shirts, and two bandoleers. Seen escaping, he was shot and killed. The explosion frightened the other Indians. They all leapt from the ship and swam away. All, that is, but one; he swam near the longboat and attempted to overturn it. Grabbing a cutlass, the ship's cook cut off the redskin's hand at the wrist. Splashing helplessly with the bloody stub, he sank. Incensed,
his fellow braves lined the banks to fire arrows at the offending white men. They even paddled to within arrow range in canoes. Arrows, though, were no match for gunpowder; the Indians had the worst of the exchange and the Europeans, gathering a fresh breeze, sailed away unharmed.

Henry Hudson left New York Harbor on October 4, and landed in England six weeks later. He had not located a route to the Far East, but by exploring the stream he had christened "River of the Mountains," he had become one of the world's most famous failures.

Hudson's story spread quickly and far in the Old World. Dutch fortune seekers came to the "River of the Mountains" the very next year, and the next. Soon, permanent trading posts were established. Settlers were not far behind. In 1620, the Pilgrims requested permission to start their new life on the shores of the Hudson. Turned down, they opted for Massachusetts. Three years later, thirty French speaking, Protestant families came to the New World to stay. Fort Orange was raised on the long hill where Albany now stands, Esopus (Kingston) was planted, and clearings were made on the islands at the mouth of the river Henry Hudson had explored. In 1625, those first families were joined by another forty-five souls. Officially, the river was renamed "Mauritius" in honor of the great soldier-stadholder, Prince Maurice of Orange. Practically, though, called it "North River" to differentiate between it and the Delaware, the "South River."

Although a new flare-up in the chronic war between Mohawks and Mohicans hindered progress above the Highlands, settlements south of those mountains flourished. By 1628, Manhattan proudly claimed two hundred and seventy people and several windmills; not thirty years later there were in the town on the tip of the island over a hundred quaint houses and about a thousand quarrelsome persons. Trade prospered, ships were built, new settlements sprang up, and the feudal Patroon system was instituted. The first great manors of the Hudson were founded.

But, inevitably, the Indian war could not be limited to the Indians. In spite of the fact that Dutch and Mohican relations had been generally good, many settlers saw in the Indian war an opportunity to weaken the local tribes. As hundreds of refugee Mohicans streamed down the Hudson to escape marauding Mohawks, William Kieft, a particularly inept governor, thought he saw his chance. At midnight, February 25, 1643, militia massacred six score sleeping men, women, and children. Understandably, the Mohicans never again trusted or adored the Dutch. Intermittent warfare between whites and reds would plague the Hudson Valley for many decades to come.

Peg-legged, pompous Peter Stuyvesant replaced the brutal Kieft in 1647. The new governor was able, aggressive, and quickly unpopular. He wasted no time before putting his personal stamp on the colony. Manhattan became New Amsterdam. Selling liquor to Indians was forbidden; worse, a tax was slapped on alcoholic beverages consumed by the heavy drinking burghers themselves. Schools were opened, bucket brigades were organized, fences were repaired and painted. Conciliatory gestures were made to calm the Indians. Improved relations were arranged with other colonies. Tactless and overbearing, Stuyvesant nonetheless governed the opinionated inhabitants of New Netherland with a comprehensive, firm, long-needed efficiency. When a severe earthquake struck through the length of the Hudson Valley in 1663, local wags claimed that it was "old silver leg" trying to straighten the river's channel through the Highlands.

Stuyvesant's rule -- and Holland's -- ended fifty-five years, almost to the day, after Hudson claimed the "sweet smelling" territory for the Netherlands. Colonel Richard Nicolls, an Englishman working for England, sailed into the harbor at the head of an expedition of four hundred and fifty men and four ships. New Amsterdam became New York without a drop of blood being spilled.
English rule and English settlers altered the flavor of the New World province. New Netherlands, like New Amsterdam, became New York; Fort Orange was renamed Albany; Esopus was changed to Kingston; and the noble river finally received the name of its explorer. Not surprisingly, the two cultures clashed. Even such a seemingly reconcilable matter as how properly to celebrate Christmas produced bitter sparks. It was with unrestrained joy, then, that the burghers welcomed a Dutch force which reconquered the province in 1673. Briefly, Netherlands sovereignty was restored, but the ecstatic Dutch inhabitants had scant opportunity to profit from their release. Six months later, at a European treaty table, New York was turned back to Britain. The infuriated American Dutchmen had nothing to do but chew through the stems of their long clay pipes and make the best of it. Although they became English subjects, their peculiar habits and peculiar stubbornness left an impact on the Hudson Valley which would not be worn away.

With that colonizing genius possessed only by the English, Royal officials bent their efforts toward making New York a peaceful and profitable province. As events would prove, it would be easier to fashion fortunes than to establish tranquility in the New World. But they tried. Most Indian chiefs, finding these new white men more to their liking, agreed to cooperate. Mohawks and Mohicans, at English insistence, called off their lengthy war. For the first time in decades, human blood did not redden the Hudson's surface. Counties were laid out; courts were instituted; and that ultimate sign of civilization—post offices were established. By the last decade of the 17th century, New York was not only prospering, it was booming.

Underneath, however, all was not well. Unrest, feeding on economic agitation and anti-Catholic sentiment, sprang into full rebellion. In June 1689, Jacob Leisler, wine merchant and militia captain, seized the city. The following March he sent an expedition of one hundred and sixty men up the Hudson to capture Albany. With the fall of that northern town, the "Democrats," as Leisler's followers styled themselves, controlled all of New York. At Leisler's call, representatives of five colonies met at New York City in May, 1690. Even though the purpose of the gathering was limited to considering a combined assault against the French and Indians in Canada, a significant precedent of united colonial action was set by that first colonial congress. The resulting expedition was something less than spectacular; it succeeded merely in reaching Lake Champlain before dwindling provisions and shrinking perseverance forced it back. As a matter of fact, all of Leisler's luck was running out. Early in 1691, he was captured, tried, and executed by a force sent out from England. Nevertheless, his two year rule of a New York "Republic" had conjured up dual specters of colonial independence and combined colonial military action. He had lived eighty-five years too soon.

After the Leisler affair, New Yorkers turned their attention to money matters only to discover that their town was an expanding center for a burgeoning, lucrative, new business—piracy. With the blessings and protection of then Governor Benjamin Fletcher, the lower Hudson became a booming haven for buccaneers. Numerous dark coves and tree-shrouded streams along the river assured safety while the governor's benevolence and letters of marque assured success. What was worse, the pirates did not limit their activities to high seas robbery. An entry in Albany's records for 1696 complained that "pirates in great numbers infest the Hudson at its mouth and waylay vessels on their way to Albany, speeding out from covers and from behind islands and again returning to the rocky shores, or ascending the mountains along the river to conceal their plunder." Tainted gold poured into New York making the fortunes of many an otherwise proper and respected businessman.
As the scurrilous affair reached such proportions that the Hudson was bidding well to achieve the notoriety enjoyed by the Barbary Coast, the Ministry in England took steps to squelch it. Richard Coote, Earl of Bellomont, arriving with a mandate to wreck up the piracy ring, succeeded Fletcher. A well armed vessel was fitted out and turned over to one of New York's more distinguished gentlemen, Mr. William Kidd. He was charged with bringing the "pirates, free booters, and sea rovers to justice." Kidd's approach to the problem of clearing the seas was rather unusual -- he efficiently began picking off the latest prey himself, leaving little for the other pirates to steal. Thus was launched the career of Captain Kidd, king of sea robbers.

Before his capture and subsequent swinging, Kidd returned to the Hudson with a treasure variously estimated at about one million dollars in mid-twentieth century purchasing power. Its disposition has never been completely explained. It could have been buried anywhere along the Hudson from a location south of Albany to the sands of Gardiner's Island. Kidd Point (or more prosaically, Jones' Point) opposite Peekskill is the leading contender for the treasure cache in the Highlands. Generations of young men -- and some not so young -- have dug for that hidden fortune. It may be that the next generation will uncover it.

A decade after Kidd's bones glistened on a gibbet, war and hard times in Germany finally brought the resilient peoples of the Rhine Valley to despair. They decided to migrate to America. But where? After checking all available sources, the Germans were struck and convinced by similarities between descriptions of the Hudson Valley and their own Rhineland. And so the Palatine Germans, the "tarmakers," came to the augst river. They chose to build their homes just north of the Highlands on a site that, precisely one century earlier, explorers from Half-Moon had selected as "a very pleasant place to build a town on." They called it Newburgh. Following quickly on the heels of those first Germans came thousands of their compatriots. They were joined, too, by French Huguenots seeking freedom from religious persecution. Unnumebered Englishmen crowded in. Blacks, some free, most slaves, became abundant. A few Indians also were held in slavery. Dutchmen continued to join their New World relatives, apparently having decided that English rule could be tolerated after all. Many of all nationalities came as indentured servants. All in all, New York in the first two-thirds of the 18th century was a magnet of great power for Europe's disaffected. They came seeking freedom, planning a new life, searching fortune, and praying for peace. Whatever they achieved of the first three, they did not find peace in the Hudson Valley.

Of wars, the colonies had more than enough, even for the most reckless adventurers. Indians, increasingly reluctant to see their hunting grounds devoured, and waxing ever fonder of the white man's firewater, could be depended upon to go on the warpath from time to time. A sudden loss of hair was a disease endemic in the New World; the scapling knife joined great and small pox, bloody fluxes, and childbirth as major hazards to good health. But the red men could have been tolerated, perhaps even loved, if the white men could have kept the peace among themselves. They could not.

Leaving European lands did not mean leaving European wars. Conflicts between Old World enemies inevitably involved New World colonies. As France and England resumed their ancient feud, America was added to the long list of battlegrounds. When the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 drove James II from the throne and replaced him with William and Mary, Americans were caught up in the ebb and flow of a struggle which would endure most of a century. Coleridge, far from the source of antagonism and often confused over the origins of the fighting, supported their monarch -- but they insisted on naming the conflicts as they saw them. The War of the League of Augsburg became King William's
War; Queen Anne's War was the American version of the War of the Spanish Succession; while the War of the Austrian Succession had its counterpart on this side of the Atlantic in King George's War. That bewildering procession of wars, interspersed with Indian outbreaks on the frontiers and clashes with the Spaniards in Florida, settled almost nothing. France controlled Canada in 1688, at the outbreak of the fighting, and retained it sixty years later when the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle temporarily ended the bloodshed. Actually, battles in the colonies were not especially bloody; blundering officials too seldom managed to bring opposing forces together, while militiamen, imbued with the importance of living to fight another day, too seldom remained in the proximity of the foe on those occasions when he was encountered. But, it should be carefully noted, important patterns were set. The Hudson River - Lake Champlain route became the high road of war; men from all the colonies sailed bravely northward to invade Canada while Bourbon soldiers started south on the same path to strike the colonies. That neither side was ever quite successful did not detract from the importance each attached to the route itself. Colonial cooperation was the second pattern to evolve. Though the various colonies could never have been accused of having been overly friendly toward one another, the danger of a common enemy did draw them closer. Moreover, the seeming inability -- or indifference -- of the mother country to provide protection gave all Americans an awareness of the benefits of mutual defense.

The stage was set for the final colonial clash, the French and Indian War. This one, called the Seven Years' War in Europe, would finally remove French authority from North America. Ironically, unlike previous conflicts, this one would start in America and spread to Europe. And, perhaps poetically, it was triggered by a rash, twenty-two year old Virginia militia officer, Colonel George Washington.

Eight colonies had sent representatives to a congress in Albany to discuss steps for a combined defense. Unfortunately, the delegates had been unable to agree on a plan of unity proposed by Benjamin Franklin. As a matter of fact, they were discussing it when war began. Nonetheless, one more step toward colonial unity had been taken. And once again that step had been taken on the banks of the Hudson.

Bumbling amongst leaders and bickering amidst units were a features of the French and Indian War -- as had been true in all previous wars in Pioneer America. But this time there was a difference; more forces and better generals were sent out from England and a sincere effort was mounted to oust the French. Predictably, the Hudson was again chosen as the axis of a major invasion of Canada. French forces halted one column at Fort Ticonderoga in 1758, but a year later General Jeffery Amherst captured the Lake Champlain fort and, in another year, marched into Montreal. By 1763 the French had admitted defeat and, at long last, were driven from America. The King's loyal subjects in the colonies richly deserved their much desired peace. Peace hopes were illusory, though, even then.

In spite of wars, people along the Hudson's shores had increasingly prospered and procreated; had cleared large farms and begun numerous industries, had started businesses and built towns. The Valley of the Hudson bustled with activity. That is, all of it bustled except the Hudson Highlands. Few men were eager to scratch for a living in that rocky soil when good land was available farther north. Population and civilization advanced rapidly above and below the grim mountains, leaving the ghostly peaks to nod in near complete primordial loneliness. That is not to say that they were totally neglected. Some men, wealthy and in search of a summer home, chose the Highlands specifically for their splendid isolation. Beverley Robinson, past friend and future foe of George Washington, was one. Another was Stephen Moore, whose ostentatious home on the flats beneath West Point was widely known as "Moore's Folly." A few men, too poor to move on, erected wretched huts and attempted to squeeze survival from the stony fields. These indigent farmers were never very numerous and, as a rule, they did not remain long. In short, while the colony of New York flourished, the Hudson Highlands remained wild and inhospitable.