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## The Central Hudson Valley: Dutchess, Orange, and Ulster Counties

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The central Hudson Valley was one of the most contested battlegrounds in the War for American Independence, for the Hudson River separated the ardently revolutionary New England from the rest of the states and also linked Canada to New York City. In 1777 the Burgoyne campaign, which began in Canada and was defeated in Saratoga, drew men and resources from the central Hudson Valley. The American victory at Saratoga has been recognized widely as the “turning point” of the Revolution. From 1780 to 1781 George Washington’s headquarters at Newburgh and New Windsor were his last encampments, and at Newburgh Washington squashed the threatened military conspiracy against civilian government. Moreover, throughout the war the region was the “breadbasket” of George Washington’s army, and the area’s fields, flocks, and herds kept his troops, and, at times, the troops of his enemy, fed. In addition, several thousand valley men fought in the war, whether for the Continental Army, the New York militia, or, less frequently, for the King.

The military contest for control of the river valley continued for several years, affecting local society in the central Hudson Valley. Many of the region’s residents initially saw the Revolution as a struggle against a tyrannical British government that was attempting to subvert traditional liberties and rights. As the Revolution dragged on, others concluded that the conflict meant something else as well. Indeed, various groups promoted their vision of what the revolution was, or, more precisely, what they thought the Revolution *should* be. For some people, the war years brought the possibility of political empowerment, as many who had hitherto been denied access to power found in the revolutionary upheaval the opportunity for political advancement. Young, enterprising middle-class men, such as

Dutchess County's Dirck Brinckerhoff and Jacobus Swarthout, who had enjoyed few political opportunities before the war, now emerged to challenge the power and prestige of the landed aristocracy that had dominated the Hudson's east bank. Modestly born Ulster lawyer, George Clinton, shocked New York's elite by being elected the first governor of New York State in 1777. For still others the revolution represented an opportunity to challenge the existing social order. The war revived the tenant conflicts that had troubled the eastern bank of the Hudson in the years before 1774. Laboring men and women spearheaded boycotts against profiteering Patriot shopkeepers and seized staple products during periods of economic distress, demanding economic justice from local dignitaries. This essay will examine the transformation that the military struggle caused in the central Hudson Valley counties of Orange, Ulster, and Dutchess.

### The Mid-Hudson Valley: The Setting

On the eve of the Revolution, the mid-Hudson Valley was one of the most fertile and productive farm regions in British North America. Its grain, flour, and dairy products were sent to the West Indies, Europe, and South America. The port towns of Poughkeepsie (in Dutchess County on the Hudson's east bank) and Kingston (in Ulster) were thriving little commercial entrepôts that served as regional hubs in the vibrant agricultural trade with New York City. Nevertheless, the backcountry away from the river had much in common with Washington Irving's "Sleepy Hollow," small towns, where little happened, and change, when it occurred, happened slowly and imperceptibly.<sup>1</sup>

The mid-Hudson's west bank included the counties of Orange and Ulster, which the Dutch had settled in the mid-seventeenth century. The English followed soon thereafter, and many French Huguenots and some Germans also came to the area. Slavery took hold early, and by the Revolution some 15 percent of the population of the Hudson's west bank consisted of African-American slaves.<sup>2</sup> Despite this diversity, on the eve of the Revolution, much of the west bank remained ethnically and culturally Dutch, perhaps three generations removed from Europe. Dutch customs prevailed. The Dutch Reformed Church dominated. When the Second Continental Congress was approving the Declaration of Independence, Dutch was spoken more regularly than was English in many west bank towns. Indeed, as late as 1774, Kingston (a mere two years away from becoming the state capital) still kept its official town records in Dutch.<sup>3</sup>

Ulster and Orange Counties were populated by freehold farms. Although the "Great Hardenbergh Patent" comprised the western part of Ulster, it lay primarily in the Shawangunk Mountains and beyond and had few tenants. A few families, such as the Hasbroucks and Hardenberghs, dominated local politics and society, but the Hudson's west bank was a society of "roughly equal men," who owned their own land and marketed the produce of their farms and shops.<sup>4</sup>

Dutchess County faced Orange and Ulster across the river on the Hudson's east bank. The Dutch and Germans populated the central and northern parts of the county, but the English predominated in the south. Many of these English settlers were recent eighteenth-century migrants from New England and northern Long Island. As did Ulster and Orange, Dutchess did have some small communities, thriving port towns, and also many freehold farm families. But what characterized the Hudson's east bank, from Westchester north to Rensselaerwyck, was the continued existence of a manorial system, in which landowners used their economic power to politically control the county.<sup>5</sup>

Such landlords as Robert R. Livingston, Beverly Robinson, and Roger Morris possessed leases for more than five hundred tenant families in Dutchess County, many of whom owed their manor lords traditional services and duties that were more characteristic of medieval England than eighteenth-century North America. For example, leases might run for several generations, demand that tenants grind their wheat at the landlord's mill, work several days a year for the lessor, and require symbolic payment of portions of rent in fowl and fruit.<sup>6</sup>

The usual tensions between landlords and tenants were exacerbated by this manorial system. Tenant uneasiness expressed itself in different ways: simple resentment; the nonpayment of rents; intimidation of the landlord's agents; and, at times, outright rebellion. In 1741 and again twenty-five years later, fighting broke out between tenants and landlords on several of the manorial estates.<sup>7</sup>

The Great Dutchess Tenant Uprising of 1766 was significant. Beverly Robinson's attempt to expel both New England squatters and tenants who were withholding rents caused the rebellion that included upward of one thousand participants (about 20 percent of the adult male population) and that resulted in pitched battles between forces of the landlords and rioters. Although this event was unrelated to the growing crisis with Britain, the mutual distrust that landlords and tenants had for each other only increased, and that helped shape the relationship of both groups to the Revolution as it unfolded.<sup>8</sup>

### The Revolutionary Crisis Begins

Unlike in New England and New York City, there was little organized anti-British activity in the central valley before 1774. Indeed, there were few attempts to challenge British authority or policy. Much like the rest of the northern colonies, however, this changed rapidly with passage of the Coercive Acts in 1774. In communities throughout the midvalley—from bustling port towns like Poughkeepsie and Kingston, to smaller, sleepier villages like New Windsor and Amenia—committees of safety, observation, and inspection sprung into action. For example, the Kingston Committee of Safety expressed its dismay at Parliament's attempt in the Quebec Act (1774) to establish “the Romish Religion in America.” This committee was equally shocked by the “avowed design of the

ministry to raise a revenue in America.” The New Windsor Committee of Observation objected to levying taxes “on us without our consent” and asserting absolute legislative authority over the colonies. The committee resolved that such efforts were “subversive of our natural and legal rights as British subjects, and that we would be deficient in point of duty to our King and the British Constitution were we to yield in tame submission to them.”<sup>9</sup>

When the war began in 1775, the people of the Hudson Valley began to choose sides. From the start, both Ulster and Orange Counties enjoyed unusually high responses to Patriot “oath of allegiance” petitions. Indeed, throughout the course of the war, though Loyalism was present in both counties, devotion to the revolutionary cause was quite strong. Although several distinct ethnic groups—English, Dutch, German, and French Huguenots—lived in the region, there is no evidence that any group was more predisposed to Patriotism or Loyalism; indeed, the one clear fact is that there were few Loyalists in either county.<sup>10</sup>

Although Loyalism was weak in Dutchess as well (particularly when compared to nearby Westchester County), the situation was nonetheless more complicated than the one on the west bank. When war began, both landlord and tenant were wary about taking sides in the crisis. While the Livingstons and Beekmans, who owned much of the county’s land, generally supported the new Patriot Provincial Congress and demanded compromises from Parliament, they also sought to control the protest movement, so that the social and political order, which they dominated, was not disturbed.<sup>11</sup>

For a variety of reasons, tenants viewed the Revolution even more warily. First, some Dutchess County tenants were chary about siding with landlords who had oppressed them before 1775, even though other landlords did convince their tenants to side with them. Second, there were rumors that British agents were promising tenants ownership of the land they presently held in leasehold if they fought with the British. Finally, many tenants in southern Dutchess were simply indifferent to the struggle. Possessing no political and relatively little economic power, they were absorbed in the daily toil of farming and expressed little interest in the conflict. Although William Smith thought that tenants in certain Dutchess towns were “forty to one” against independence, this was most certainly an exaggeration. Many were lukewarm Patriots, until New York State offered them the possibility of becoming landowners, when it confiscated and redistributed Loyalist property.<sup>12</sup>

### **Rise of the Revolutionary Coalition**

Although the traditional leadership of the midvalley was at the forefront of resistance to Parliament in 1774 and 1775, the beginning of the war opened new opportunities for ambitious men who had been for many years on the periph-

ery of power. This process was most pronounced in Dutchess, where a powerful manorial landlord class still controlled most of the county-wide and town offices. Landlord Beverly Robinson, who purportedly owned one-third of southern Dutchess, was the first judge of the county and a member of the Whig Provincial Congress; Phillip Livingston was the county sheriff; and Robert Livingston Jr., was one of the county's representatives in the Provincial Assembly. By 1776 new faces began to join the customary leadership of Dutchess County: freehold farmers and tradesmen like Dirck Brinckerhoff and Jacobus Swarthout, as well as tenants like Henry Luddington, who had developed local power bases, were elected to the committees in the counties. Nonetheless, their renown had never approached the provincial-wide reputations of the Livingstons, Beekmans, or Robinsons. By 1777, with the traditional leadership moving somewhat hesitantly on wartime issues of importance to county residents, these new, middle-class leaders began to exert greater power first in local Dutchess politics and then in the New York State Assembly.<sup>13</sup>

In Ulster and Orange Counties, a similar challenge to the "old guard" took place. Although historian Edward Countryman is correct in his assertion that the Hudson's west bank was a "society of roughly equal men," a handful of prominent and powerful families had exerted considerable social, political, and economic influence before the war. More often than not, members of the oldest, most prominent families, including the Coldens, Hardenberghs, and Ellisons, had held such prestigious political offices as sheriff, county supervisor, and had been appointed commanders of the local militias. In this hierarchical, deferential society, family name, education, wealth, and prestige counted for much.<sup>14</sup>

As the Revolution unfolded, many of the west bank's old elite found themselves first sharing and then relinquishing their political and military power. Merchants William and John Hasbrouck, leading members of two of the most prominent families in the county, had been the commanders of Ulster's two militia regiments at the beginning of the war, but they were not reelected to commands they had held by appointment for twenty years. Neither received enough votes from their volunteer units to compete for leadership.<sup>15</sup>

Ulster County politics offers a glimpse of the political struggles that characterized this region as it entered the Revolution. On the eve of the conflict, New Paltz's Johannes Hardenbergh was a member of the Duzine (the governing board of the town) as well as the wealthiest man in the town and perhaps in all of Ulster County. A colonel in the Ulster militia for twenty years and a delegate to the First Provincial Congress, Hardenbergh was the grandson of the original patentee of the "Great Hardenbergh" Patent, two million acres that sprawled across western Ulster. In the elections for the county-wide Committee of Safety in 1775, Hardenbergh's neighbors deferentially selected him a member and immediately named him chair and treasurer. Although Abraham Hasbrouck, one of Ulster's most prominent merchants was also on the committee, these two traditional

leaders were joined by new men like Robert Boyd and Johannes Snyder, whose social standing had previously not given them access to county-wide political power. Accustomed to being obeyed, Hardenbergh soon clashed with the more middling members of the committee. Eventually, after a series of squabbles, he realized he had to work with them if he wanted to remain in power.<sup>16</sup>

Although most disagreements between the Hardenberghs and the the Hasbroucks, on the one hand, and the rest of the committee, on the other, were generally procedural, they broke sharply on the issue of support for Ulster's George Clinton. The New York Assembly had recently appointed Clinton the general of the New York militia and put him in charge of Ulster's regiments. Members of the county's elite viewed him as an upstart; Col. John Hasbrouck (Abraham Hardenbergh's cousin and a substantial farmer) refused to serve in a regiment "commanded by Mr. Clinton." Johannes Hardenbergh went further and, abusing his authority as chair, refused to accept the Ulster Committee of Safety's resolution appointing Clinton one of Ulster's delegates to the Provincial Congress, where Clinton had much support among the delegates from Ulster, Orange, and Dutchess. The Provincial Congress reprimanded Hardenbergh, demanded an explanation for his refusal, and then appointed Clinton to the Ulster delegation in the Provincial Congress.<sup>17</sup>

Following continued disagreements with several other committee members, Hardenbergh was ousted from his position as treasurer of the committee. He complained about these political upstarts and refused to relinquish the £300 in the treasury. The committee threatened Hardenbergh with an "altercation" and ordered him to turn over the money. Hardenbergh not only relented, but he soon began cooperating in the new political environment, for which he and most other committee members had little training: democratic political discussion, debate, and compromise.<sup>18</sup>

Despite Hardenbergh's preference for deferential politics and his discomfort with popular decision-making, he was committed to the revolutionary cause. Other members of the colonial elite on the west bank were not so inclined, and they did not fare as well. Cadwallader Colden Jr., son of the lieutenant governor, made clear his disdain for democratic politics and his loyal support for the Crown. He suffered the consequences, when a delegation from the New Windsor Committee of Safety stormed his estate at midnight on June 21, 1776. The committee searched and ransacked his house and ordered him arrested. Colden hoped to remain under house arrest and even offered to pay for guards to stay at his home that night, but the committee refused. When Colden continued to insist upon house arrest, the committee threatened him with the humiliating alternative that he would "be rode upon a rail" to the local jail, if he did not accompany them willingly. This type of theatrical punishment had traditionally been reserved during the Colonial Period for prostitutes, wife-abusers, and other community miscreants, not for men of Colden's stature. To threaten one of the most

substantial men in the midvalley with such a fate, and his apparent belief that the committee would make good on their threat, reveals the extent of the military conflict's challenge to the existing social and political order.<sup>19</sup>

In the place of this traditional elite there emerged in Ulster and Orange a group of talented, opportunistic men, such as Robert Boyd, Charles DeWitt, and Matthew Cantine, who had developed strong local support, but who lacked the wealth and pedigree of the prewar leadership. These newly elected officials in the midvalley were not simply new names; they were men who came from a lower socioeconomic status than the traditional elite. They held divergent views on political leadership and political participation and had a different understanding of the goals of the Revolution. For these men the Revolution offered the opportunity for political and social advancement, something that had been denied them before the war. These new political leaders now had the opportunity to assume political roles on the many committees of correspondence, safety, and inspection. Further, the dramatically increased size of the state legislature (the delegations from the mid-Hudson Valley doubled in size) opened up new opportunities at the state level.

The most dramatic example of the new political opportunities in the midvalley (or in any part of Revolutionary America, for that matter) was the meteoric rise of George Clinton. Clinton was not new to political power, nor was he a simple farmer making his first foray into politics. Born to a "well-to-do" (though not prominent) family on the Ulster-Orange border, Clinton had practiced law in Ulster and New York City, and served as the Ulster representative to New York's Provincial Assembly from 1769 to 1771. He often spoke in the years before the war against British policy and had forged careful and practical alliances with such prominent provincial-wide leaders as Phillip Schuyler and Robert Livingston.<sup>20</sup>

Clinton's rise was swift. In 1776 the New York Congress appointed him a brigadier general in the New York militia, an appointment that drew the scorn of Ulster's traditional aristocracy. Col. John Hasbrouck, commander of the Ulster militia, pointedly asked the New York Congress "how he [Clinton] comes to be promoted to so high a rank . . . and how it was brought about to supercede so many brave officers in the regiment." Clinton's unexpected triumph as New York's first governor in 1777 brought equally critical commentary from the New York elite. Clinton's former ally in the New York Assembly, Phillip Schuyler, a losing candidate, claimed that Clinton's "family and connections do not entitle him to so distinguished a predominance."<sup>21</sup>

### **The War in the Midvalley: 1775–1783**

Although no fighting took place in the region during the first year of the war, from 1776 through 1783, control of the Hudson River Valley remained one

of the primary strategic objectives of the British high command, and the valley's defense was equally important to Gen. George Washington. American control of this region bottled up the British in New York City and kept other British forces far to the north in Canada. In 1776 Washington, whose army would spend more than one-third of the Revolutionary War in or in close proximity to the Hudson River Valley, stated that "the importance of the river in the present contest and the necessity of defending it, are so well understood that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon them." Washington nonetheless proceeded to do so, citing its strategic transportation and communications significance as well as the importance of its agricultural production.<sup>22</sup> His concern for the defense of this strategic region led the Americans to construct an "Iron Chain" and boom across the river just north of West Point. This lightweight impediment was soon outflanked and destroyed by Sir Henry Clinton's forces and rendered useless. In 1776 Washington had also ordered the construction of three forts along the Highlands: Forts Montgomery, Clinton, and Constitution. By the summer of 1777 these three forts were still unfinished and only lightly garrisoned.

The British in New York City engaged in several small raids in the mid-valley in 1776 and 1777, including a half-hearted shelling of the as yet uncompleted Fort Montgomery in the summer of 1777. The key British campaign for control of the Hudson River Valley was an elaborate yet poorly coordinated plan consisting of a three-pronged invasion in 1777. The main force under Gen. John Burgoyne was to depart from Canada in summer and push southward through the Adirondacks to Albany, where it was to meet up with a combined British-Indian force that had been pushing eastward along the Mohawk Valley. The third force was to be an expeditionary unit from New York City under the command of Sir Henry Clinton. Clinton's troops were to move up the Hudson and meet Burgoyne or at least give him support. The military's lack of proper planning, coordination, and execution of this major invasion led directly to the British defeat at Saratoga, the "turning point of the war."<sup>23</sup>

Instead of using all his military resources to support Burgoyne, Sir William Howe, commander-in-chief of the British army in America, took a large force to capture Philadelphia and left Sir Henry Clinton only a small contingent to support the invasion from Canada. About two thousand Continental soldiers and elements of the Ulster and Orange County militia garrisoned Fts. Montgomery and Clinton. The state's new governor, Gen. George Clinton, commanded the posts. On the morning of October 6, after a night of fierce fighting, British troops captured both forts and spent the next several days destroying the forts and the iron chain across the Hudson. The main part of the American force managed to escape northward.<sup>24</sup>

Although the British victory was complete, Henry Clinton's troops suffered almost two hundred casualties and were delayed by the military action. They finally resumed their slow movement upriver and stopped at a number of points along the way, where they landed several small units for limited forays against local militia units. British forces reached Kingston, the state capital, ten days later.

Advance British units entered Kingston before dawn on October 16. Many Kingstonians had already escaped, and local militia forces had stood ready to conduct a delaying action against enemy forces. However, a British raiding party of several hundred troops under Maj. John Vaughn quickly drove these militia units west from the town in predawn fighting on the banks of Esopus Creek just a few hundred yards from the Hudson. Determined to punish the region, British troops burned large portions of the town before departing later that afternoon. Sir Henry Clinton pushed ten miles upriver over the next few days, dropping landing parties at various points (including the Livingston estate at Clermont) before heading south to New York City. By this time, Burgoyne had already surrendered his army at Saratoga, and Clinton's slow northward movement was now irrelevant.<sup>25</sup>

Although the next year witnessed only limited military action in the mid-valley, the Hudson remained a primary target of both British and American strategies for the remainder of the war. Sir Henry attempted a second invasion of the river valley in May 1779, seizing Stony Point in Orange County. However, Washington kept his army between Henry Clinton and the northern river valley. In July "Mad" Anthony Wayne drove the British from Stony Point and sent them retreating southward down the river.<sup>26</sup>

It was the importance of the Hudson that had led Washington in 1778 to order construction of fortress West Point, which overlooked the Hudson in Orange County. He also ordered that a heavy and formidable great "iron chain," be erected to prevent any future British incursion up the river. The British did make one more attempt to gain control of the Hudson in 1780, when Henry Clinton opened secret negotiations with Gen. Benedict Arnold, the recently appointed commander of West Point, to gain control of the fort. Arnold's plans were discovered, when Clinton's aide-de-camp John André was captured. André was hanged in Westchester County as a spy, and Arnold was barely able to escape to safety in British-occupied New York City.<sup>27</sup>

In the last years of the war, the midvalley remained central to Washington's planning. Although the British were defeated at Yorktown in 1781, they continued to occupy New York City for two more years, and their continued threat to the river valley kept Washington and his army stationed nearby. The Continental army encamped in southern Ulster County, in and around the town of New Windsor, while Washington himself took up headquarters a few miles north on the Hudson at Newburgh.

### **Popular Politics and the Committee Movement**

The years of military conflict had a significant impact on the mid-Hudson Valley. The gradual collapse of New York's colonial government throughout 1775 impelled extralegal committees of safety, observation, and inspection to fill the

power vacuum. In most towns these committees developed alongside existing legally constituted town boards and governments. In many communities these committees exerted their influence not only in the political sphere, but also in the economic arena by regulating prices, controlling the importation and exportation of goods, and setting maximum and minimum wage rates for local labor.

The committees enjoyed formidable powers that grew increasingly broad over time in response to wartime needs. Initially, the committees' role was simply to organize and promote revolutionary support and to communicate with the populace about the latest developments in the imperial crisis. With the disintegration of the official provincial government in late 1775, however, the committees became quasi-legal institutions replacing the power of the crumbling old government. Although the committees' powers were curtailed with the creation of the New York State government in 1777, these bodies nonetheless enjoyed significant local authority throughout the late 1770s.

The various committees that emerged in the mid-Hudson Valley during the war were popularly elected and supported. Among the earliest committees of correspondence were those elected at the town meetings of the Kingston Corporation, Poughkeepsie town government, and the New Paltz Duzine. Participation in these meetings was not open to all residents; only freeholders could vote. The people initially elected to the committees tended to be chosen from the traditional community leaders, for the mid-Hudson Valley was still a hierarchical and deferential society. During the war, as old leaders moved up to state and continental positions or retired from active efforts, the social and economic status of committee members elected by freeholders changed substantially. A majority eventually came from the "middling-sorts." In this way, the freeholder-elected committees often served as avenues of advancement for aspiring political leaders, whose social background had heretofore denied them access to prominent elective office.<sup>28</sup>

The powers invested in the committees were often greater than those that town officials had possessed in the colonial period. In 1776 the Provincial Congress gave the committees the authority to tax and appoint tax collectors and assessors. During the war, the committees gradually gained additional political powers and became the governments of many midvalley towns. Besides control over local taxation and legislation, the committees also assumed judicial and police powers. Furthermore, committees employed local militia units as police to enforce their rulings.

Usually, the committees were able to employ community pressure against those suspected of unpatriotic actions or of any activity seen as threatening to the community. These punishments included public denunciations of those considered to be enemies of the cause, symbolic burnings of effigies, and boycotts of shopkeepers and tradesmen who were lukewarm to the Revolution. For example, the Kingston committee stated that if persons were guilty of actions endan-

gering the community, “they should be punished in the public newspapers as enemies to the liberties and privileges of American subjects,” and all residents should abstain from commerce with the offender.<sup>29</sup> The Ulster Association instructed county residents not to patronize establishments, businesses, or shops whose Patriotism was suspect, because “every shilling of property we put in their hands . . . enable them to purchase the chains to bind us in slavery.”<sup>30</sup>

Committees encouraged political action in other ways. At times they sponsored the public destruction of Loyalist assets in such places as the Kingston public market.<sup>31</sup> The committee also acted against members of the county’s oldest and most prominent families, who seemed to impede the war effort. Leading members of valley towns came under public attack; were dislodged from political office; suffered riots or demonstrations at their homes or places of business; or, more ignobly, were arrested and charged with being “enemies of the cause.” Some victims undoubtedly were Tories; others simply lacked enthusiasm for the cause, while still others had put self first and engaged in economic activities that residents felt compromised the integrity of the local economies that were already endangered by the extreme war-time dislocations. As a result, the Revolution successfully challenged the political and social order that had heretofore shaped life in small valley towns.

The issues upon which committees expended the most energy tended to be economic. On the eve of the war, the local committees of observation had supervised economic activities in their counties and towns and enforced the economic measures required by the Continental Association. During the war, when shortages and inflation had become rampant, the local committees scrutinized the trade and economic activities of local shopkeepers, to ensure that they engaged in business practices that promoted the war effort and supported a vibrant local economy.<sup>32</sup>

These activities included regulating prices, preventing hoarding and price-gouging, and forcing shopkeepers to sell necessary foodstuffs at affordable prices. As early as 1776, local committees had begun enacting price controls on a variety of staple products, including wheat, flour, and salt. They also fined shopkeepers and merchants, who violated these price maximums, by confiscating their goods and foodstuffs. Finally, these committees forbade the exportation of certain staple products beyond town boundaries.<sup>33</sup>

As the military conflict dragged on, the committees heightened their efforts to control Loyalists, motivate neutrals, and prohibit economic activities that would weaken the American cause. In 1777 the Ulster Committee, which met regularly at Andrew Oliver’s home, forbade the exportation of flour, meal, or grain outside of the county. In 1778, at the height of the wartime shortages, the town leaders of Marbletown gave permission to export flour, but “not more than four barrels” per person and only on the condition that an equal value of salt be brought into the town. By 1779 the situation had grown so desperate in several

west bank communities, that the export of wheat or its use in distillation was forbidden.<sup>34</sup> Even though it is impossible to know today how much illegal trade there was, committees worked vigilantly to suppress it.

The state government, too, began regulating the prices of various goods once it was created in 1777. Each year from 1777 through 1780, it established various price controls in an unsuccessful attempt to halt hyperinflation. The state set the prices of all grains, flour, vegetables, leather, shoes, and a variety of other products. In addition, the state regulated wages and labor, ordering that “the various kinds of labour of farmers, mechanics and others, be set and affixed, at rates not exceeding seventy-five per centum” over the normal wages for a given locality. Moreover, in 1779 and 1780 and again in 1782, midvalley political officials requested that the State Assembly provide greater assistance in regulating prices. Specifically, the Ulster and Dutchess County committees asked the Assembly to introduce new, even stricter price controls to regulate the soaring price of grain and other staples.<sup>35</sup>

Legislation was passed not only to cap prices and control inflation, but to regulate economic behavior within communities as well. Many believed, as did Dutchess County’s Henry Luddington, that the scarcity of bread in that county in 1776 was not the result of natural forces but of the actions of the “wicked, mercenary intrigues of a number of ingrossing jockies.” In order to set a proper example, committees of observation and safety made public examples throughout the war of those thwarting the committee’s dictates.<sup>36</sup> For example, in 1777 New Windsor residents accused Mrs. Jonathan Lawrence of price-gouging and selling tea for two shillings a pound above the rate the committee had set. Mrs. Lawrence claimed that she only charged the committee set price of six shillings, “but will not let the purchaser have the tea unless he takes a paper bag to put it in at two shillings.” When challenged by the local Committee of Inspection, she sent the tea to her husband, Jonathan, the commissary at nearby Fort Constitution. The committee consequently seized the tea, discharged Jonathan from his duties, rebuked the couple, and agreed to keep a careful eye on Mrs. Lawrence in the future.<sup>37</sup>

### **Crowds, Riots & Popular Revolution in the Mid-Hudson Valley**

Even more significant than the actions taken by the committees in these years was the popular action that occurred throughout the midvalley in the 1770s and 1780s. As early as 1776, Kingston and New Windsor residents took matters into their own hands, for they thought that their elected officials were not going far enough in regulating the economy and prosecuting monopolizers and engrossers.<sup>38</sup> In response, the Ulster Committee reported in 1776 that “we are daily alarmed, and our streets filled with mobs.” According to the Committee,

the situation had grown so desperate in Ulster that if the legislature could not solve the economic woes affecting the central valley, local committees would have to assume authority in the name “of the People at Large.”<sup>39</sup>

Between 1776 and 1779, popular action led to frequent boycotts, forced sales of necessary products, and riots in the mid-Hudson Valley. The first major riot occurred in Kingston in November 1776, when a crowd raided warehouses and stores seizing tea. Two weeks later, one of Ulster County’s first families, the Ellisons of New Windsor, became victims when a large crowd came to William Ellison’s store. After accusing him of price-gouging and engrossment, they seized all the salt “except one bushel,” which they left for his family’s use.

Even merchants who lived outside the three-county-area were not safe from this form of popular activity.<sup>40</sup> Two Albany merchants who had purchased tea in Philadelphia had the misfortune of sending it overland through New Windsor in 1777. A crowd of men and women besieged the transporters, seized the load, asserting that it was being marketed for more than the six-shilling limit the local committee had set, and sold it to themselves at that price. Crowds of local Dutchess women visited Poughkeepsie shopkeeper Peter Messier in the spring of 1777. Accusing him of selling tea above the Poughkeepsie Committee’s imposed price-cap, the women used their own weights and measures to divide and distribute the tea among themselves. The women, accompanied by two Continental soldiers, offered Messier “their own price,” one that was considerably lower than his selling price. The women returned twice more over the next several days to repeat these actions.<sup>41</sup>

The New Windsor and Poughkeepsie riots reveal that rioters often used the local committees’ authority to justify their own actions. The rioters at Ellison’s store reminded the shopkeeper of the committee’s price regulations that he was allegedly breaking. The women who confiscated Messier’s tea specifically stated that “they had orders from the Committee to search his house.” However, it is essential to point out that in each of these activities, the rioters exceeded the committee’s dictates. Neither riot was authorized by the local committee, and indeed, some committee members criticized the New Windsor riot.<sup>42</sup>

The activities of the committees in controlling prices and commerce, as well as in prosecuting hoarders, are clear indications of a public economic policy that aimed to regulate the workings of the free market and protect the community’s interest. The importance of these activities was not the imposition of price controls, for many of the powers of market regulation and price-setting were already well accepted. However, while enforcing these regulations, the committees were functioning as local governments.<sup>43</sup>

The actions of the rioters in seizing foodstuffs were yet another matter. The rioters clearly held traditional economic beliefs that denied the role of an unregulated market in times of economic crisis. They questioned the unfettered use of private property, when they seized goods, making clear their belief that a

shopkeeper was not the only person to decide what to do with his or her merchandise and that the community had a legitimate voice in its distribution as well. During the Revolutionary War, these beliefs and activities became associated, even synonymous, with patriotic behavior and loyalty to the community. Those who participated in the riots were claiming that by their actions they were expressing their loyalty to the cause, while their targets, such as William Ellison, were exhibiting signs of diminished patriotic allegiance and even of Toryism.<sup>44</sup>

Also remarkable was that many of the rioters were ordinary women who had no public, political role and who had limited control over property. During the Revolution, such women often took the lead in Hudson Valley riots. It was a crowd of women, for example, who first confronted Mrs. Lawrence in 1777 for price-gouging and who by so doing forced the committee to act. Furthermore, the crowd that three times raided Peter Messier's store in Poughkeepsie was composed mainly of women. At a riot in New Windsor, a local observer complained to a tea merchant that "the women! in this place have risen in a mob, and are now selling a box of tea of yours [the owner] at 6s per lb."<sup>45</sup>

The action of women regarding economic matters was not limited to seizures and crowd action. Women also used their power as wives and mothers to disrupt the war effort, if the committees failed to regulate the economy. In August 1776 the women of Kingston surrounded the meeting room of the Committee of Safety and declared that if the food shortages were not resolved, "their husbands and sons shall fight no more."<sup>46</sup> These riots were thus not only economic, but also had clear political implications. The site of the women's protest was neither the Kingston public market nor a shopkeeper's warehouse, but the meeting-house where the town's political authorities conducted business. Finally, these women were not just making economic threats of boycotts or disruptions, but promising political action if their demands were not satisfied.

Women, who had few political rights, were now exerting a public voice about those issues, in which the needs of the domestic sphere crossed those of the public sphere. Women's right to demand salt, tea, or flour at what they considered fair prices fell firmly within the socially and culturally constructed gender roles of eighteenth-century America. Like their counterparts in the French Revolution, women's political action usually formed around issues of family and domestic concerns (particularly food and supplies).<sup>47</sup>

Residents of the mid-Hudson Valley were divided over the best policy to follow in handling the economic dislocations created by the military conflict. Generally, price controls had been needed before the Revolution only in times of economic crisis and only on certain necessities. However, some farm families benefited from wartime inflation, since it increased the profits they earned on the sale of farm produce. Yet many other residents suffered from the depreciated currency and soaring prices charged at shopkeepers' stores. As a result, by the late 1770s, many midvalley residents led the state-wide battle to imple-

ment policies that would halt spiraling inflation. Indeed, from 1779 through 1782, calls from the populous midvalley, which did not face a direct military threat, became increasingly pronounced for government regulation of prices, quality, and distribution of various staple products.<sup>48</sup>

The movement for the community regulation of prices and wages and of the distribution of goods occurred because of wartime exigencies. Whether in the eighteenth or the twenty-first century, wars generally engender shortages of goods and demands for personal sacrifice and community-mindedness. As a result of revolutionary problems, both local and provincial authorities began regulating economic affairs. What is remarkable is not these practices per se, but the methods employed to implement them. Official town authorities who regulated prices also sponsored boycotts and denounced tepid Whigs who threatened the goals of the Revolution. The people out-of-doors also used extralegal popular action in the form of seizures, public denunciations, and riots that sometimes supported the local authorities, but that also at times exceeded what officials thought necessary.

### **Land Confiscation and Its Effects in Dutchess County**

Although Dutchess County was beset by food and price rioting and by other popular demonstrations throughout the war, a revolution of even more far-reaching proportions was unfolding there. Indeed, Dutchess witnessed what was, arguably, one of the most dramatic episodes of the Revolution in New York: tenant unrest and the state's confiscation of landlord property.

The Revolution was not the first time that mid-Hudson valley tenants had resorted to mass violence. Serious conflict had occurred as early as the 1740s, and the Uprising of 1766 was the only time before the Battle of Lexington that British regulars were used in the North American colonies against provincials. This agrarian conflict had little to do with the imperial crisis, but much to do with limited access to land and growing resentment among both longtime tenants and more recent settlers from New England.<sup>49</sup>

At the beginning of the war, both Dutchess County landlords and tenants were generally supportive of, but not enthusiastic about the Revolution. Although some contemporary observers believed that many tenants were Tories who hoped for a British victory that would lead to the confiscation of the large estates and the redistribution of this property among the tenants, there is no strong evidence to affirm that large numbers of tenants in Dutchess were Loyalists, although some undoubtedly were. Allegiances were unstable throughout the war, and Loyalism could also be found among the landlord class.<sup>50</sup>

In 1775 the traditional Dutchess elite continued to represent the county in colonial government. Indeed, landlords Beverly Robinson and Robert

Livingston were elected to the New York Provincial Congress in both 1775 and 1776. Nevertheless, the landed aristocracy was no longer the only voice speaking for the county. The Dutchess delegation in Congress was now almost double the size of the county's representation in the prewar Provincial Assembly and included such middle-class representatives as Dirck Brinckerhoff and Jacobus Swarthout. Although neither Brinckerhoff nor Swarthout were tenants, they were middle-class men drawn from a very different class than the landlord elite and had been elected in the tenant-dominated region of southern Dutchess. Despite these differences, at the outset, both landlord and middle-class representatives shared the common goal of resisting British imperialism and generally worked together in the New York Congress. Once the war began to affect adversely the economy of the Hudson's east bank, however, this alliance weakened. In time, the military conflict and the negative economic consequences that flowed from it sundered the fragile unity between the two groups.<sup>51</sup>

Some of the problems facing tenants on the Hudson's east bank were little different from those confronting freeholders who lived there or on the other side of the river. The economic problems created by the war and the British blockade of New York City had resulted in inflated prices for necessary goods, shortages of essential foodstuffs, and a state tax burden beyond the ability of many to pay. Because of the apparent failure of Dutchess County's traditional leadership to resolve these problems, the "old guard" was effectively pushed from power. In 1777 Robert Livingston lost his reelection bid to the State Assembly, and Beverly Robinson openly declared himself a Tory and fled his estate. Now that landlords had lost their monopolistic hold on political power, or were exposed as Tories, the clamor for the confiscation of Loyalist property began to grow among the county's landless class.<sup>52</sup>

The war had so eroded the tenuous economic conditions that many Dutchess tenants now perceived that freehold ownership of land was their only economic hope. If many Patriot leaders supported the confiscation and sale of Tory property in order to raise money for the war effort, many tenants of southern Dutchess did so because they believed it would lead to their independence and freedom as landowners. As political pressure for land redistribution grew, so too did the possibility that the old, simmering tensions between landlord and tenant might revive, unless some sort of official action on this front was taken. The new state government first approached this problem by confiscating Loyalist-owned manors. In late 1778 a petition from "freeholders and others, inhabitants of the county of Dutchess" stated that unless Loyalist lands were confiscated and redistributed, "tumults and insurrections" might result.<sup>53</sup>

Dutchess County Assemblymen took the lead in calling for land confiscation. Although it was John Morin Scott of New York City who had proposed in the Assembly in 1778 the first serious plan for confiscating Loyalist land, the Dutchess County delegation of Henry Luddington, Jacobus Swarthout, and Dirck

Brinkerhoff became the champions of land confiscation and redistribution. The statewide legislative battle over confiscation can be seen in microcosm in the Dutchess County delegation in the Assembly. Egbert Benson, a conservative revolutionary, who represented landlord interests in the new landscape of popular politics, fought against the confiscation and sale of land in the 1779–1780 Assembly debates. Dirck Brinckerhoff, representing Fishkill in southern Dutchess (where a majority of the householders were tenants) led the fight for confiscation and sale. The legislative battle resulted in a Brinckerhoff victory and the Confiscation Act, which allowed for the confiscation of Loyalist property throughout the state. Brinckerhoff emerged as a champion of tenant-claims for land; Benson, who had previously dominated the Dutchess delegation and been an important provincial-wide voice in the Assembly, lost his bid for reelection.<sup>54</sup>

Ultimately, the Confiscation Act provided for the sale of 496 forfeited lots in Dutchess. Over 80 percent of this land had belonged to the once dominant Loyalist landlords Beverly Robinson and Roger Morris. The law required that lots be no more than 500 acres in size, and 401 separate buyers purchased this land in Dutchess. Although many of these purchasers were already freeholders, some of Robinson's former tenants also purchased the lots they had once worked under lease. In this way, land redistribution of substantial proportion had occurred in the mid-Hudson Valley. Some 150,000 acres of land once possessed by just two landlords had been divided among several hundred residents, including tenants who had not previously owned land.<sup>55</sup>

If tenants demanded land, slaves demanded freedom. Slavery had been an integral part of the economic and social life of the mid-Hudson Valley since the early eighteenth century. Approximately 6 percent of Dutchess County's population in the decade before the Revolution consisted of slaves, and the proportion of slaves on the west bank was probably twice as high. The overwhelming majority of slaves were owned by small freeholders, and very few slaveholders owned more than a handful. In Ulster County, most freeholders did not possess slaves, but those who did averaged about three slaves per household, which was about the same number that the typical Dutchess slaveholder owned.<sup>56</sup>

Although most slaves in the midvalley worked on farms, many were skilled tradesmen and artisans. Hudson Valley slaves worked in grain and flourmills; labored in warehouses on the river docks; and served as teamsters moving goods around the valley and along the river. For the most part, female slaves worked around their owner's home. Michael Groth, the foremost student of slavery in the Hudson Valley, has found that few owners freed their slaves before the Revolution, even though some European Americans were already criticizing the institution.<sup>57</sup>

The rhetoric of the Revolution, with its emphasis on freedom from tyranny and the British attempt to "enslave" North Americans, was surely not lost on African Americans or on many whites. At the outset of the war, some New

Yorkers were already questioning slavery. New York Quakers petitioned the State Assembly very early in the conflict for an end to slavery, and Gov. George Clinton joined the New York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves, which was established in 1785. Nevertheless, although the rhetoric of the Revolution emphasized personal liberty, the wartime need for labor and the heightened fear of slave insurrections overcame the arguments for manumission. Ultimately, the strongest opposition in the midvalley to abolition developed among slaveholding farmers who successfully resisted the ever-growing demand for emancipation for more than a decade after the Revolution.<sup>58</sup>

African-American slaves waged a most powerful battle against slavery in the midvalley, however. The number of slave runaways increased during the war, as slaves used the close proximity of the British army and the various wartime dislocations as their opportunity to flee. Newspaper advertisements seeking the return of runaway slaves reveal that at least sixty slaves escaped from owners in Dutchess County during the war, and the actual number was probably much higher. Some slaves even destroyed their owner's property before fleeing. "Rachel," a Dutchess County slave, fled her master in 1781 with stolen clothes and other belongings. She returned one week later, however, and set her owner's home on fire before escaping south behind British lines.<sup>59</sup>

Although slavery did not receive its death blow in the Revolution, the continued existence of the institution was debated often in the New York Assembly, which actually called for gradual emancipation as early as 1785. Although the Council of Revisions vetoed the bill, the emancipation of slaves in several other northern states, including the newly independent Vermont, kept the debate alive in the decade after the war. Slavery was gradually abolished in New York beginning in 1799 with the passage of an emancipation act. Farmers in Ulster, Orange, and Dutchess, however, remained opposed.<sup>60</sup>

### War and Economic Opportunity in the Mid-Hudson Valley

Even though the wartime midvalley economy was characterized by shortages of staple products, hyperinflation, and an increasingly devalued currency, it also offered economic opportunities that were not lost on enterprising farmers and artisans.<sup>61</sup> The enemy blockade halted the importation of British textiles and thereby encouraged increased domestic production of clothing and other manufactured goods. Perhaps most important for Hudson Valley farmers, between 1781 and 1783, the encampment of Gen. George Washington and his Continental army around New Windsor created a large market for agricultural produce. The number of the troops changed from year to year (from only a few hundred to several thousand), but there was, almost without interruption, a body of men and women who needed to be fed, clothed, and supplied on a daily basis.<sup>62</sup>

Although this situation was atypical, most people of the area participated in economic activities to support the war. For example, even before the troops were encamped around New Windsor, the farmers of the region had been brought into a production network that supplied the army wherever it was stationed. As part of this system, the Continental Commissary Department built a series of supply routes and depots throughout the northeastern states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut.<sup>63</sup>

The extent of wartime production in the mid-Hudson region can be examined through the Coenradt Elmendorph Account Book. Elmendorph was an army commissary, instructed to make purchases for the military throughout Orange and Ulster counties. He was a resident of Kingston, a lieutenant-colonel in the Continental Line, and a person of some wartime prestige in the Hudson Valley. Elmendorph directed purchases, hired laborers to move the produce, employed the butchers and bakers to service the army, and was one of the Continental government's representatives in determining the price of goods for a given locality.<sup>64</sup>

Elmendorph's "Invoice of Supplies, 1778–1779" records in detail the types of goods he purchased, the quantity, the unit cost, and total price. He also listed the farmers from whom he purchased goods, their towns, the date of the purchase, and the payment his customers were to receive. This ledger reveals the market opportunities that the military conflict created for west bank farmers and the extent to which they took advantage of the prospects.

Elmendorph transacted business with 440 customers. Production of alcohol (primarily in the form of distilled grain whiskey and rum) earned the highest profits for local farmers in their dealings with the commissary. Liquor was part of a soldier's daily ration and was used in surgery as an anesthetic. It consequently accounted for nearly 40 percent of local earnings, even though far more farmers engaged in the production of beef or grains than of whiskey. Beef and pork accounted for about 35 percent of Elmendorph's purchases. One hundred and eighty-three farmers produced meat products, but only forty produced alcohol. Elmendorph also purchased grain from local farmers. Two hundred and sixty-six farmers sold, on average, sixty bushels of grain to Elmendorph.<sup>65</sup>

This evidence suggests that a large number of midvalley farmers were engaged in substantial production for the war. Although Patriotism and devotion to the cause cannot be discounted as a possible motivation, economic self-interest induced many farmers to sell. However, if farmers refused to sell, the army would have requisitioned whatever it needed anyway, leaving the farmer in no position to decide what he wanted to sell to the military and what he wanted to dispose of in other ways. The most significant aspect of this production, however, is the way it was marketed. Almost all of the produce was sold to an army agent who paid in cash or notes, an experience that was new to many mid-Hudson farmers, who were more accustomed to exchanging produce with neighbors or bartering with local shopkeepers.

The war years also witnessed an increase in domestic textile manufacturing. Before the Revolution, the North American colonies annually imported more than ten million yards of linen and cloth from England. The nonimportation movement and the Revolution changed that. Not only did the farmers of mid-Hudson communities agree not to import British manufactures, but they began wearing homespun and engaging in domestic manufacturing. To increase wool production the Ulster County Committee of Safety voted in 1775 to “improve the breed, and increase the number of sheep,” and tried to secure a pledge from local residents not to kill any “sheep under four years old, or procure them to be killed by others; neither will we sell the best of our sheep to butchers, or others employed by them to purchase, whereby the breed of our sheep is so much injured.” Anyone who sold or ate lambs or ewes was denounced as an enemy of the American cause.<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, during the war, the Ulster Committee of Safety employed hundreds of women to sew stockings and blankets and to weave the fabric needed for military uniforms. The state government assessed local towns a quota of shirts, shoes, and other products, and it then sent to the towns the wool, cloth, or other raw products needed to produce these goods. The local committees distributed raw materials to local farm families, who spun and wove the finished products, which were then collected and sent to the army supplier. For example, in April 1777, the Provincial Congress paid £600 for stockings and blankets to the Ulster Committee, which then distributed the cloth and yarn to local farm families for production. Ulster also became a focal point for shoe manufacturing for the Continental army, as the various county committees collected and then sent hides to Marbletown, where the hides were tanned and then “put-out” to local cordwainers to manufacture shoes at eighteen to twenty shillings a pair.<sup>67</sup>

Even with these developments, the midvalley failed for several reasons to develop into an extensive postwar manufacturing region. First, the market for finished products was still small and dispersed, and after the war those urban areas, where the demand existed, could get their goods more cheaply from British producers. In addition, local merchants in the region (and elsewhere) favored investing in bonds, public certificates, real estate, and a variety of other areas, but not in developing a rural outwork system of manufacturing. These other mediums of investment were potentially much more profitable in the postwar period than a large-scale network of outwork production.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, the midvalley connection to commercial markets received a boost from the war, as military contractors and merchants actively sought farmers’ goods and thereby opened up a variety of opportunities and a competitive market hitherto unknown to many yeoman farm families. After the war, speculators from New York City, recognizing the possibilities that lay in developing the Hudson Valley into a sophisticated manufacturing region made their way

north to implement their ideas. Daniel Parker and William Duer won military contracts and opened a series of stores in Orange and Ulster to purchase local grain. Dutchess County's Melancton Smith opened a store in 1783 near the old main army camp in New Windsor with the plan of promoting a continued high level of market production in the area. In this way, the war impelled farmers to view their production and trade in market terms.<sup>69</sup>

The Revolutionary War had other profound effects on the mid-Hudson Valley economy. First, the valley, like much of the northeast, was flooded with a variety of paper currencies. Some small farmers had never used cash before, and most had never used it regularly. The war, therefore, helped produce a farm population increasingly astute in commercial matters. Before the war many farmers had dealt only with neighbors or their local shopkeeper. These exchanges were primarily for obtaining goods; the farm produce they exchanged was a tool to help obtain the goods they needed.

Although these economic developments were significant for the war period, the increased production of agricultural goods and textiles was not sustained in the years following the war. Essentially, this enlarged production, much like the increased use of cash was a response to immediate wartime needs. The relatively limited market for manufactured goods, as well as the existence of alternative, and more profitable, investments for those with capital, restrained, at least temporarily, the region's long-term economic development.

### **The Aftermath of War: The Mid-Hudson Valley after 1783**

How had the Revolution changed the mid-Hudson Valley? The most famous fictional character to live through the struggle, Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle, found that the Revolution brought about dramatic changes to his community. After he returned to town from the Catskills and some twenty years of sleep, he was befuddled by the unfamiliar surroundings and was briefly mistaken for a Tory. Indeed, he found that the "very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquility."<sup>70</sup>

What did Rip detect to be the big difference? Politics! A new democratic spirit of debate and discussion (indeed, he is not uncoincidentally returning to town on election day!). Instead of a small group of Dutch elders sitting on the porch of the local tavern dictating the activities of this fictionalized town, villagers are debating and arguing politics, "haranguing vehemently about the rights of citizens-elections-members of congress."<sup>71</sup> In essence, what Washington Irving described in a fictionalized form was a far more democratic, egalitarian society, which he believed, had emerged in the central Hudson in the years following the Revolution.

Much happened during the Revolution to support this fictionalized view. In the first place, the war created new opportunities for political advancement. Before the war, the political leadership in each of the three counties under analysis came from a small, socially and economically prominent part of the population. New leaders emerged in all three counties. Some had been wealthy and prominent before the war, but many had been modest in their backgrounds and experience, even if they had been ambitious in their goals. These men used the new town and county committees, the dramatically expanded state assembly, and the broader franchise offered by the Revolution to advance themselves and their own self-interest.

A new “class” of leadership, represented best by middle-class leaders like George Clinton and Dirck Brinckerhoff, emerged and replaced established families that had led their towns and villages for generations. Many of these new leaders began their political careers serving on local committees of safety and inspection and quickly graduated to representing their neighbors in the New York Provincial Congress and the State Assembly. Yet, many of the old families remained powerful and influential. The Hasbroucks and Hardenberghs continued to wield great economic power and remained important political leaders on the Hudson’s west bank, but they now did so in a vastly different political and social environment, one in which power was competitively struggled for and, often, shared.

Some of the most prominent prewar leaders of the mid-Hudson did not survive the war with their power intact. Some, like Dutchess landlord Beverly Robinson became Tories, forfeiting their elite status. Nevertheless, most of the truly powerful families in the midvalley retained their status and property. Even though the Livingstons of Dutchess suffered politically during the war (Phillip lost his reelection bid for county sheriff, and Judge Robert his seat in the Assembly), they reemerged in the years following the struggle as important political players in local, state, and national politics. The various branches of the Livingston family retained their large landholdings and tenants, and continued to enjoy enormous power through the nineteenth century.

Slavery in the mid-Hudson Valley survived the war virtually intact. Although the number of runaways increased, midvalley farmers were among the staunchest defenders of chattel slavery and resisted efforts to end the institution. Indeed, farmers in the three mid-Hudson counties were still fighting against the gradual emancipation bill in New York at the end of the eighteenth century.

Probably the most dramatic development of the Revolution in the mid-Hudson was the impact of the Loyalist land confiscation program. As described, hundreds of different buyers purchased lots carved from the estates of Roger Morris, Beverly Robinson, and others, many of the buyers being former tenants on these estates. Farmers, who once worked on land that had been leased for

several generations and for which they were required to make improvements and perhaps work for several days for the lord, now owned their own five-hundred-acre lots with no obligations to former landlords. The fact that many of these new independent landholders lost title to their land over the next few years because of an inability to pay taxes or to meet loan payments does not detract from what had been one of the most important developments of the war and which surely was of great importance to these families. Although tenantry continued in Dutchess and the northern valley after the Revolution, the land redistribution of the 1780s opened opportunities for land ownership and freehold status previously denied to hundreds of Dutchess farmers.

### Notes

1. Peter Kalm, *Travels in North America: The English Version of 1770*, ed. Adolph B. Benson (New York, 1987), 335, 647, and Richard Smith, *Journal from New York to Albany*, reprinted in Nelson Greene, ed., *History of the Valley of the Hudson*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1931), 1: 9, describe the midvalley in the eighteenth century. Economic life in the Hudson can best be viewed through town records and mercantile accounts. For the west bank, see “*Benjamin Snyder Account Book, 1765–1798*,” New-York Historical Society, N.Y.C. (NYHS), and the “*Kingston Trustees Minutes, 1736–1783*,” Ulster County Clerk’s Office, Kingston, New York. For the valley’s backcountry, see Martin Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780–1860* (Durham, N.C., 2002), 13–31.

2. Nathaniel Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Ulster County* (New Philadelphia, 1880); Edward Ruttenber, *History of Orange County, New York* (New York, 1911). The best analysis of mid-Hudson Valley slavery is Michael Groth, “Slaveholders and Manumission in Dutchess County, New York,” *New York History* 78 (1997): 33–50, and *idem*, “Forging Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley: The End of Slavery and the Formation of a Free African-American Community 1770–1850” (Ph.D. diss., Binghamton University, 1994).

3. Alice Kenney, *Stubborn for Liberty: The Dutch in New York* (Syracuse, 1975), 69–70, 88–89; Thomas S. Wermuth, *Rip Van Winkle’s Neighbors: The Transformation of Rural Society in the Hudson River Valley* (Albany, 2001), 15–16.

4. Wermuth, *Rip Van Winkle’s Neighbors*, 38–42. Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760–1790* (Baltimore, 1982), 26–27; the phrase is from Countryman and is particularly accurate when comparing the west bank to Dutchess County. Carl Nordstrom, *Frontier Elements in a Hudson River Village* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1973).

5. Patricia Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York, 1971), 188–190; Staughton Lynd, “Who Should Rule at Home: Dutchess County in the American Revolution,” in his *Class Conflict, Slavery and the United States Constitution* (Westport, Conn., 1980), 30–31; Henry Noble McCracken, *Old Dutchess Forever! The Story of an American County* (New York, 1956), 470–71.

6. Bonomi, *Factious People*, 180–96; Sung Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1978), 235–80.

7. In Ulster County in 1790, 3,945 of 4,590 farmers owned their own freehold, Census for the State of New York for 1855 (Albany, 1857). For the east bank, see Kim, *Landlord and Tenant*, 39–40; 235–37.

8. Bonomi, *Factious People*, 220–23; Kim, *Landlord and Tenant*, 381–96.

9. “Letter from an Anonymous Kingston Farmer” in Peter Force, ed., *American Archives*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ser. (Washington, D.C., 1837–1853), 1: 1230, herein cited as *American Archives*; Resolves of New Windsor Committee, *American Archives*, 2:131–33.

10. Countryman, *People in Revolution*, 104–105.

11. Lynd, “Who Should Rule at Home,” 32–34; George Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert Livingston of New York, 1746–1813* (New York, 1960), 60–62; and Philip L. White, *The Beekmans of New York in Politics and Commerce, 1647–1877* (New York, 1956).

12. *Historical Memoirs from July 12, 1776 to July 25, 1778 of William Smith*, ed. William Sabine (New York, 1958), 118; Lynd, “Who Should Rule at Home?” 34–35.

13. Countryman, *People in Revolution*, 313–316. For background on political divisions in Dutchess, including Brinckerhoff’s rise to power, see Bonomi, *Factious People*, 245–46.

14. Wermuth, *Rip Van Winkle’s Neighbors*, 38–40.

15. Robert Boyd to George Clinton, July 3, 1776, *Public and Private Papers of George Clinton*, 1:244–47; E. M. Ruttenber, *A History of New Windsor, Orange County* (Newburgh, N.Y., 1911).

16. “Minutes of the Provincial Congress, May 25, 1776,” *American Archives*, 6:1333. Background on Hardenbergh can be found in Sylvester, *History of Ulster County*, 84–87, and Countryman, *People in Revolution*, 225.

17. This ongoing political intrigue can be followed in “Hasbrouck to New York Congress, Kingston, Mar. 8, 1776,” *American Archives*, 4:137–38; “Minutes of the Provincial Congress, May 31, 1776,” *American Archives*, 6:1349; and “Ulster Committee to New York Congress, June 14, 1776,” *American Archives*, 6:898–900.

18. “Ulster Committee to New York Provincial Congress, July 4, 1776,” *American Archives*, 6:1273–1274.

19. “Cadwallader Colden, Jr., to Ulster County Committee, June 27, 1776,” *American Archives*, 6:1112. See also, Eugene Fingerhut, *Survivor: Cadwallader Colden II in Revolutionary America* (Washington, D.C., 1983), 53–54.

20. E. Wilder Spaulding, *His Excellency George Clinton: Critic of the Constitution* (New York, 1938), 39–41; John P. Kaminski, *George Clinton: Yeoman Politician of the New Republic* (Madison, Wis., 1993).

21. "Col. John Hasbrouck to New York Congress, Mar. 18, 1776," *American Archives*, 5:138; Countryman, *People in Revolution*, 198.
22. Washington's quote is cited in Louis V. Mills, "Attack in the Highlands, the Battle of Ft. Montgomery," *Hudson Valley Regional Review* (Sept. 2000), 39–40.
23. Mark Lender and James Kirby Martin, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic* (New York, 1981), 83–87.
24. Mills, "Attack in the Highlands," 39–40.
25. "General John Vaughan to Sir William Howe, Oct. 17, 1777," *Dutchess County Historical Society Yearbook* 21 (1936), 118–19.
26. Lincoln Diamont, *The Chaining of the Hudson: The Fight for the River in the American Revolution* (New York, 1989), 156.
27. Diamont, *Chaining of the Hudson*, 158–74; William Sterne Randall, *Benedict Arnold: Patriot and Traitor* (New York, 1990), 526–37.
28. "Minutes of Mar. 14, 1775, New Windsor Town Meeting," *American Archives*, 2:131–33. The resolves and proclamations of New Paltz are in *American Archives*, 2:832–33, 1183–84.
29. "Ulster County Committee Minutes," Apr. 7, 1775, *American Archives*, 2:298–99.
30. "Resolves of the Ulster Association, 1775," *American Archives*, 2:132–33.
31. The pamphlets were also burned in Marbletown; see *American Archives*, 1:1100, 1183–84; 1201.
32. For the "non-importation" agreements in Ulster, see Ulster County Association, Jan. 6, 1775, *American Archives*, 1:1100–1101. For the general background and purpose behind the "non-importation" movement, see Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution* (New York, 1972), 137–38.
33. These activities were not unique to the Revolution. Midvalley communities had a long history of regulating economic activities within their towns. See, for example, "Minutes of Corporation of the Town of Kingston," 12 Feb. 1748, Ulster County Clerk's Office.
34. Alphonse Clearwater, *History of Ulster County, N.Y.* (Kingston, N.Y., 1907), 281–82; Sylvester, *History of Ulster County*, 202.
35. Some of the prices were firmly set by the Congress, such as wheat at thirteen shillings per bushel, and "good merchantable wheat flour" at one pound sixteen shillings per hundred gross weight. Other prices, such as leather and various animal skins were set "in the proportion of the price they usually bore to raw hides." See *Journals of the Provincial Congress*, 1:455–57, Apr. 3, 1778, for a full listing of the regulation of prices. Ulster County's call for new price controls can be found in "Ulster County Association instructions to Assemblymen, 1779" Matthew Visscher Folder, Albany Institute; "Ulster

County to New York State Legislature, 1782,” Box 4239, New York State Library, Albany; Dutchess County’s requests can be found “Jacob Heermans to Council of Safety, Nov. 1777,” *Journals of the Provincial Congress*, 2:457.

36. “Henry Luddington to New York Council of Safety, Dec. 3, 1776,” *Journals of the Provincial Congress*, 2:355.

37. *American Archives*, 5:635, 638–39.

38. “Ulster County Committee to New York Convention,” Nov. 18, 1776, *Journals of the Provincial Congress*, 2:229–230.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Barbara Clark Smith, “Food Riots and the American Revolution,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ser., 51 (Jan. 1994): 15.

41. Correspondence of John Hathorn, Dec. 2, 1776, Rutenber, *History of New Windsor*, 67–68; and Countryman, *People in Revolution*, 183.

42. Correspondence of John Hathorn, Dec. 2, 1776, Rutenber, *History of New Windsor*, 67.

43. For examples of prewar economic regulations see the “Minutes of Corporation of the Town of Kingston” Mar. 2, 1772, [for regulation of wheat prices], and Mar. 2, 1728, Nov. 8, 1752 [for regulations on other economic activities], Ulster County Clerk’s Office.

44. For a discussion of the political implications of revolutionary rioting, see Smith, “Food Riots,” *William & Mary Quarterly*, 5–12. For suspicions that Ellison was unpatriotic because of his economic dealings, see “Boyd to Clinton, July 3, 1776,” *Clinton Papers*, 1:244–47.

45. “James H. Kip to James Caldwell, New Windsor, July 14, 1777,” *Journals of the Provincial Congress*, 506.

46. New York Convention Proceedings, Aug. 1776, *American Archives*, 5th Series, 1:1542–43.

47. Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York, 1980), 44.

48. For New York farming interests that supported both inflationary policies and paper currency, see Matson, “Liberty, Jealousy, and Union: The New York Economy in the 1780s,” in Paul Gilje and William Pencak, eds., *New York in the Age of the Constitution* (New York, 1992), 114–115.

49. Kim, *Landlord and Tenant*, 367–415; Bonomi, *Factional People*, 218–24; Philip Schwarz, *The Jarring Interests: New York’s Boundary Makers, 1664–1776* (Albany, 1979).

50. Lynd, “Who Should Rule at Home?” 34. Lynd’s research on the Revolution in Dutchess County remains the standard interpretation. The following section on the debate over land confiscation in Dutchess is informed by Lynd’s research.

51. Countryman, *People in Revolution*, 215–17; Lynd, “Who Should Rule at Home?” 34–36.

52. Lynd, “Who Should Rule at Home?” 42–43.

53. *Ibid.*, 46.

54. *Ibid.*, 51–53; Countryman, *People in Revolution*, 173–74.

55. Lynd, “Who Should Rule at Home?” 52–53; 59–60.

56. Groth, “Forging Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley,” 75; Federal Manuscript Census for New York, Ulster County, 1800.

57. Michael Groth, “Laboring for Freedom in Dutchess County,” 60–62, in Myra B. Young Armstead, ed., *Mighty Change, Tall Within: Black Identity in the Hudson Valley* (Albany, 2003). For slave life in the mid-Hudson Valley in the eighteenth century, see Margaret Washington, ed., *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York, 1993), 6–8. Truth spent the first thirty years of her life in Ulster County.

58. For an overview of the antislavery arguments during the Revolution, see Gary Nash, *Race and Revolution* (Madison, Wis., 1990); Groth, “Forging Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley.”

59. Groth, “Forging Freedom in the Mid-Hudson Valley,” 85–86; and *idem*, “Laboring for Freedom,” 70–71.

60. Countryman, *People in Revolution*, 284–85; Groth, “Slaveholders and Manumission,” 35–36.

61. For new policies of taxation, see Robert Becker, *Revolution, Reform, and the Politics of Taxation in America: 1763–1783* (Baton Rouge, La., 1980).

62. The extent of Ulster’s production for the war can be seen in George Clinton’s report for 1778, where he argued that the entire west bank, “Having long been the seat of the war,” had been “ravaged plundered and greatly exhausted.” “Clinton to F. M. Dana, Feb. 17, 1778,” *Clinton Papers*, 2:824–25. Indeed, in 1778, the Continental army was fed almost exclusively on Ulster wheat; see *Olde Ulster*, 3:365–69.

63. Louis C. Hatch, *The Administration of the American Revolutionary Army* (New York, 1904), 86–115; Flick, *Revolution in New York*, 179–202.

64. This and the next several paragraphs are based on an analysis of the “Coenradt Elmendorph Account Book, 1778–79,” New York State Library, Albany, and Ulster County Wills and Inventories, 1760–1791, Ulster County Surrogate Court, Boxes 9–49.

65. “Coenradt Elmendorph Account Book, 1778–79.”

66. James Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (New York, 1972), 110–13, 182; “Ulster County Committee Resolves,” Mar. 14, 1775, *American Archives*, 4th Ser., 2:132; and Alexander C. Flick, ed., *The American Revolution in New York* (New York, 1926), 184.

67. Flick, *American Revolution in New York*, 187. See also the reports of the commissaries of clothing in *Clinton Papers*. Commissar John Henry worked out of Shawangunk—see his report of Aug. 26, 1778, *Clinton Papers*, 3:693; 4:31–32. Commissar Peter Curtenius was in charge of the store in Wallkill. See his report in *Clinton Papers*, 3:692.

68. James Henretta, “War for Independence and American Economic Development,” in Ronald Hoffman, John McCusker, and Russell Menand, eds., *The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period, 1763–1790* (Charlottesville, Va., 1988), 81–86; Virginia Harrington discusses New York merchants’ fondness for provincial bonds and real estate, not manufacturing in her *The New York Merchant on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1935), Chapter 4.

69. For the Duer and Parker plans, see Duer to William Alexander, June 15, 1781, Alexander Papers, NYHS; Daniel Parker to Duer, June 26, 1781, Duer Papers, NYHS. For Smith’s store, still in operation in 1785, see Duer Papers, Box 8, NYHS.

70. Washington Irving, *Sketch Book* (New York, 1915), 50–51.

71. *Ibid.*, 51.