

**New York State
Peoples, Places and Priorities
A Concise History with Sources**

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New York State

The state of New York is virtually a nation unto itself. Long one of the most populous states and home of the country's most dynamic city, New York is geographically strategic, economically prominent, socially diverse, culturally innovative and politically influential. These characteristics have made New York distinctive in our nation's history.

In *New York State: Peoples, Places and Priorities*, Joanne Reitano brings the history of this great state alive for readers. Clear and accessible, the book features:

- primary documents and illustrations in each chapter, encouraging engagement with historical sources and issues
- timelines for every chapter, along with lists of recommended reading and websites
- themes of labor, liberty, lifestyles, land and leadership running throughout the text
- coverage from the colonial period up through the present day, including the Great Recession and Andrew Cuomo's governorship

Highly readable and up-to-date, *New York State: Peoples, Places and Priorities* is a vital resource for anyone studying, teaching or just interested in the history of the Empire State.

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1 Introducing New York State

Place and Perceptions

Only New York State borders on both the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. On the one hand, this is just a physical description. On the other hand, it holds the key to the state's history and explains why the area was so important to Native Americans, the Dutch, the French, the British and the colonists. Later, geography enabled New York to become a bridge to the west, an immigrant gateway, an escape route to Canada, a leader in agriculture, commerce and industry as well as the center of American and world capitalism. It was geographically strategic, economically prominent, socially diverse, culturally innovative and politically powerful.

Of course, a state is not just a function of geography. Its Dutch origins, experience with the Iroquois, quasi-feudal land system, avid materialism and fractious politics distinguished New York from other colonies. Moreover, from the start, the area developed a pluralistic society that differed from the more uniform colonies of Massachusetts and Virginia, but better anticipated America's future. As early as 1644, observers noted the then shocking multiplicity of ethnicities, languages and religions that peopled New York. On the one hand, this heterogeneity necessitated a tolerance of difference and bred a spirit of individualism. On the other hand, it could promote conflict. By virtue of this complexity, "the history of New York is not some deviant from the national norm ... but rather a mirror of the national past." 1

Much of New York's history is captured by its nickname, the Empire State. The origin of the term remains obscure, but is often attributed to George Washington who called the state "the seat of Empire" in 1785. 2 Well preceding Washington, the Native Americans considered it their own Iroquoia. In the Colonial period, the Dutch named it New Netherland and envisioned it as part of a commercial empire, as did the English who renamed it New York in 1664. Because of its location, the most important battles over empire were fought in New York during the French and Indian development of the West through Buffalo across to Albany and down to the port of New York. Later, railroads and the thruway followed that same route, which was originally a Native American path and along which 90 percent of New Yorkers live today.

The Empire City raised different historical issues. Indeed, when the English gave it the double name, New York, New York, they "planted seeds of confusion across the path of one who would seek the meaning of a New Yorker. No other state has to deal with such confusion." Although located in an "extreme corner" of the state, New York City overshadowed other cities, towns and rural areas. 3 The resulting regional tension between upstate and downstate is unmatched by any other state. Despite being rejected as the capital of the state and the nation, New York City ultimately became the financial capital of the world. Moreover, it created its own empire by consolidating five boroughs in 1898. Although the state and the nation have had a love-hate relationship with the Empire City, all three entities confronted the possibilities and perils of growth together.

New York is an exceptional state. It has even been called the nation's premier "megastate," as defined by size, "natural grandeur" and influence. 4 Until the 1970s, New York had the nation's largest population, which gave it the greatest number of Electoral College votes and made it politically powerful. Accordingly, it produced six presidents and nine vice-presidents, more than any other state. Indeed, it is notable for "contributing outstanding [leaders] ... innovative laws, governmental programs and projects ... subsequently adopted by Congress and the legislatures in many states." 5

New York has long been a major manufacturing state and the nation's most unionized state. It is also an important agricultural state as "the largest producer of cabbage, the second-largest producer of apples, grapes, ice cream, maple syrup and wine, and the third largest producer of milk and cheese."

6 The legacy of New York's leadership in conservation is one of the nation's largest forest preserves in the Adirondacks and the largest wildlife sanctuary at Jamaica Bay. Steamboats, canals, railroads and highways made New York a pacesetter in transportation. Painting, theater, music and literature made it a prime innovator for the arts. Journalism, radio and television made it central to communications. In all of these ways, New York justified its outsized reputation for outsized accomplishments.

On the other side of the coin, New York also has an outsized reputation for crime, corruption, greed, urban problems, regional conflict and a dysfunctional legislature. Industrial pollution has destroyed its rivers, lakes and human habitats. Suburbs and malls have depleted its cities. In the late 20th century, the state experienced devastating deindustrialization accompanied by deunionization and depopulation. While money mushroomed in Manhattan, poverty stalked other cities as well as many towns and farms. Although the 2001 World Trade Center tragedy temporarily unified the state, the 2008 economic crisis exacerbated antagonisms between Main Street and Wall Street within and beyond the state.

New York's identity is complicated by a "paradoxical political culture" comprised of apparent opposites—"competition and compassion." 7 The one emphasizes individualism and entrepreneurship while the other reflects community and social conscience. Materialism and opportunism are balanced by humanitarianism. Thus, New York was simultaneously a symbol of ruthless capitalism and a leader in public education, labor legislation, philanthropy and social service. The state's wealth enabled it to bankroll benevolence. But as the state's fortunes turned, the tension between these two objectives grew, reinforcing the regional conflicts that have often divided the state against itself. In good times and bad, New York State's priorities have not only mirrored but also influenced the nation's priorities.

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 : Mapping New York

The New York story began long before anything like a state existed. Over millions of years, the area that became New York acquired an unusually diverse geography comprised of mountains, valleys, lowlands, plateaus, lakes, rivers and waterfalls. About 11,000 BCE, during the Clovis Culture period, retreating glaciers left behind distinctive physical phenomena such as the Great Lakes, Niagara Falls, the Finger Lakes, the St. Lawrence River plus the sand and gravel deposits that created Long Island. Stone arrowheads and scrapers indicated a human presence even then. By about 6,000 BCE, during the Archaic period, forests and animals made the area more land portages with light canoes made it possible to go from river to river or from rivers to larger bodies of water such as Lakes Champlain, Chautauqua, Erie, Ontario, Oneida and the Finger Lakes. Being so essential to exploration and transportation, "rivers were the avenues of empires in seventeenth-century North America." 8

The Hudson River played a particularly important role in the area's early development and was always "a fluid force for change." 9 A 315-mile natural wonder, it began as a bucolic little brook on Mount Marcy, the highest point in the Adirondack Mountains, and ended as a busy deep-water port in the nation's greatest city. With land portages, the Richelieu River, Lake Champlain and Lake George linked the St. Lawrence River to the Hudson River. The great New York naturalist John Burroughs pointed out that, unlike most winding rivers, "the Hudson presents a fine, symmetrical shaft that would be hard to match in any river in the world." 10 That shaft created a remarkably extensive inland water passageway that was hotly contested over time as a key to economic, political and military power.

Halfway down, just above Troy, the Mohawk River flowed towards the Hudson providing a route to Oneida Lake and Lake Ontario with some land portages. Just below Troy, the Hudson widened into an estuary, where ocean and river met, blending salt with fresh waters in ever-shifting tides rich with aquatic life. The Mohicans called it "the river that flows both ways." In this sense, wrote Burroughs, "The Hudson is a long arm of the sea, and it has something of the sea's austerity and grandeur." 11

Further down, at the Highlands near West Point, the Hudson cut through the Allegheny Mountains. As the only such passage to the west from Canada to the Carolinas, it created a golden opportunity for exploration and expansion. Finally, the protected harbor at the river's southern point facilitated trade with Europe, Africa, the Caribbean Islands and South America. Within the colonies, the port provided access east to New England and south to Virginia. In the days before railroads, cars and airplanes, New York's water routes defined its own development and shaped the nation's growth. No wonder the Hudson was called "America's River." 12

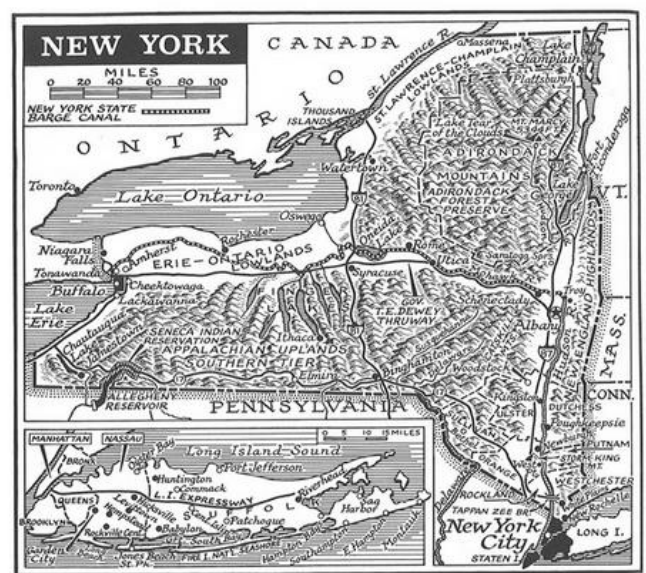
New York State's history reflected the interaction between people and geography. It was a relationship of appreciation, innovation, inspiration, manipulation and exploitation. Noting that complexity, in 1883 writer Wallace Bruce commented that, "It often seems that there are in reality four separate Hudsons—the Hudson of Beauty, the Hudson of History, the Hudson of Literature, and the Hudson of Commerce." 13 Of course, New York State history is not just about one river and the same comment could be made about other natural features. However, because the Hudson was the initial point of entry for the colonists, the first source of struggle between the colonists and the Native Americans, the original link to other natural resources as well as a major source of contention over time, it provides a good prologue for the larger drama of Empire State history.

The following two maps help put the Hudson into the context of the state. Maps are important historical sources because they provide perspective on the physical characteristics of a given area and its relationship to surrounding areas. Maps integrate big pictures with smaller details. By enabling us to visualize developments and events, they help us see history.

The first map is particularly interesting because it combines natural features such as rivers, mountains and lakes with the human impact on those features such as cities, canals and roads. It artfully compresses historical development over time. The second, simpler map shows how New Yorkers have imposed political units on geography in the form of counties. It also divides the state into regions. Together, the maps provide a useful overview and a provocative introduction to the complexity of New York State history. They identify places and clarify developments discussed throughout this book and are referred to frequently.

As you explore the first map,

- 1 Explain how this map verifies and qualifies the importance of the Hudson River.
- 2 Explain how water routes and other natural features integrated and divided the state.
- 3 Explain whether the roads, highway and barge canal (a 1918 version of the original 1825 Erie Canal) reinforced or bridged those differences
4. Explain the location of New York's cities in geographic terms
5. Based on the map, suggest reasons for and against making Albany the state capital.



Source: From *The Megastates of America: People, Politics and Power in the Ten Great States* by Neal R. Peirce. Copyright © 1972 by Neal R. Peirce. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Leisler's Rebellion

The immediate shift from Dutch to English rule was bloodless. The colony was renamed New York, in honor of James, Duke of York and Albany who was given the colony by his brother, King Charles II. Therefore, New York was a proprietary colony until becoming a royal colony in 1685 when the Duke became King James II. The colony's Dutch inhabitants continued owning their property, practicing their religion and speaking their language. They still dominated Albany and Schenectady, with strong settlements in Flushing, Flatbush, Brooklyn and Bushwick. In addition, they remained prominent along the banks of the river that the English now named after Henry Hudson.

The 1665 Duke's Laws protected religious freedom, but did not grant the colony representative government. Perhaps fearing that the Dutch would dominate an elective assembly, the Duke deprived New York of a fundamental right of Englishmen that was enjoyed by every other colony. Moreover, separate negotiations with the English towns on Long Island granted them more autonomy than other towns. In 1673, the Dutch reconquered the colony for 15 months. When the English regained power, they antagonized the Dutch colonists by requiring everyone to take a loyalty oath and by making English the official language. Even so, they allowed the use of the Dutch language, Dutch local traditions and property rights. They reluctantly accommodated diversity and bowed to the Dutch spirit of tolerance.

Tensions between the Dutch and the English grew as more New Englanders migrated to New York and threatened Dutch predominance. This ethnic conflict affected one of the most controversial events of New York's colonial history: Leisler's Rebellion. From June 1689 to March 1691, New York was ruled by a man who was not appointed by the King, nor supported by most of the colony's elite, nor elected by the people. In that sense, his ascendancy was an aberration. In another sense, it was the expression of profound discontent among a cross-section of colonists with a variety of grievances. Leisler's Rebellion was not just about one man; rather, Jacob Leisler (1640–91) was the surrogate for tensions that had been brewing in the colony since its founding and that were exacerbated by the shift from Dutch to English rule. The problems were local and regional, ethnic and economic, personal and political. Although the rebellion had a short life, it cast a long shadow.

In 1660, the DWIC sent troops under the command of a 20-year-old military officer to help protect New Amsterdam. Descended from a well-to-do German family, Leisler became a prominent trader of furs and tobacco. A strategic marriage connected him to prestigious Dutch families—the Van Cortlandts and the Bayards. Yet, Nicholas Bayard (1644–1707), Stuyvesant's nephew, was Leisler's greatest critic, calling him a tyrannical, traitorous, irresponsible drunkard. In return, when Leisler was in power, he imprisoned Bayard for 14 months. However, Bayard had the last word when he made sure that Leisler was deposed, hung and beheaded.

The antagonism between Leisler and Bayard started over money that Leisler and his wife inherited upon her mother's death. The fortune was so substantial that the family, led by Bayard, sued to have the will changed and the money disbursed among themselves. They failed. The result fed a nasty private conflict that dominated public affairs for 21 months and significantly affected New York for decades. The family feud over money was the sub-plot for a larger drama over economic, political and social power.

Before the rebellion, Leisler played several constructive roles in the colony. Besides being a captain of the militia and a major trader, he was also a civic leader. He served as a tax assessor, an Admiralty Court justice, a justice of the peace and an agent for Maryland in its dealings with New Netherland. In 1687, the residents of Eastern Long Island chose Leisler to help them protest against Manhattan's monopoly of shipping privileges. In 1689, he represented French Huguenots in purchasing 6,100 acres of land that became the community of New Rochelle. All along, Leisler was expanding his business as

a merchant and buying land in Manhattan, Westchester, Long Island and New Jersey. By the 1680s, he was one of the richest men in New York City.

Leisler was a deacon of the Dutch Reformed Church. He was such an ardent Calvinist that, from 1675 to 1678, he mounted a vitriolic protest against the appointment of Nicholas Van Rensselaer as a religious leader in Albany because he was ordained by the Anglican Church, not the Dutch Reformed Church. This argument earned Leisler the enmity of several important figures in Albany who were connected by marriage to the van Rensselaer family. They included the prominent Schuyler family and Stephanus van Cortlandt, a merchant who was appointed New York City's first native-born mayor in 1677.

Robert Livingston was the Albany city clerk who married Nicholas' wife, Alida Schuyler, after he died in 1678. Connected thereby to both the Rensselaers and the Schuylers, Livingston became a major landholder with great political power. Livingston later called Leisler "a low Dutch quack no better than an asse." 25 At the same time, Leisler's defense of the Dutch Reformed Church won him the support of Albany's ordinary citizens and previewed Leisler's later protest over a perceived Catholic plot to take over the colony, which was a major justification for the 1689 rebellion

There were many other sources of discontent. Dutch resentment of the aggressive new English landholders, merchants and royal officials was exacerbated by ever increasing taxes. Having converted to Catholicism, King James II favored other Catholics with land and political power in the colony. Rumors that Catholics from Canada were planning to invade the colony heightened anxiety. The king also revoked the colony's Charter of Liberties and Privileges that he had originally supported and had been approved by Governor Thomas Dongan in 1683. Adding insult to injury, in 1688 he consolidated New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts into the Dominion of New England centered in Boston, not New York. As a result of all of these factors, many New Yorkers rejoiced when King James II was overthrown in 1688 by his daughter Mary and son-in-law, William, her first cousin. Both were Protestants and William was the Dutch Prince of Orange, next in line to be king. From the Dutch colonists' perspective, the Glorious Revolution promised to protect their culture, religion and political power.

Leisler did not start Leisler's Rebellion. Instead, it was initiated by militiamen from Westchester, Long Island and Queens who seized the fort at New York City and chose Leisler as their captain in June, 1689. Representatives from nine towns (minus Albany) then reorganized the government, formed a Committee of Safety to replace King James' appointees and elected Leisler to be Commander in Chief of the colony. Leisler's leadership seemed confirmed when instructions arrived from England authorizing whoever was leading the colony to continue doing so until further notice. Accordingly, he assumed the title of lieutenant governor in December 1689.

Leisler was an efficient administrator. He strengthened the fort, appointed officials, raised revenue, tried to protect northern New York from attack and sought cooperation with neighboring colonies. Responding to long-standing complaints from Albany and Long Island concerning New York City's monopolies over trade and the packaging of flour, in 1690 Leisler revoked that privilege. Perhaps he was punishing the New York City merchants who opposed him, but the act benefitted Albany merchants who also opposed him. Or perhaps he was just reasserting the Dutch commitment to free trade by declaring, "that the one place should have no more privileges than the other." 26

Leisler's alliance with and sympathy for the masses was demonstrated by releasing all debtors from prison. He made government more democratic by convening a colonial assembly, increasing the number of elective offices and making appointments to other offices. Leisler brought ordinary people into the political system so that carpenters, bakers, bricklayers, shopkeepers and innkeepers were aldermen, sheriffs, mayors and marshals. Moreover, Leisler's elected assembly became a permanent

feature of New York's government and, for the first time, New York City elected its own mayor, a right it did not regain until 1833.

As always, political change was threatening, especially to the existing power holders in Albany. As they saw it, "there were no need of a revolution here [because] ... Men of best figure, Reputation & Estate were at the helm." Consequently, in 1689, elite Albanians held a convention opposing Leisler out of fear that he might "turn the government of this City upside down" and undermine lucrative trading relations with the Indians. 27 Defying Albany's pro-Leisler populace, the anti-Leisler elite, led by Mayor Peter Schuyler and Robert Livingston, controlled Albany for months and refused to let Leisler's troops enter the city. However, they relented after the French, along with Indians who had converted to Catholicism (called the Praying Indians), massacred 60 inhabitants of Schenectady in 1690. This event caused widespread fear of a larger French invasion and confirmed Leisler's warnings of a Catholic plot to take over the colony.

Albany's resistance was important because it was a thoroughly Dutch town and Leisler's Rebellion was supposedly a protest by the Dutch against the English. Although many of Leisler's supporters were Dutch and many of his opponents were English, both groups were on both sides of the divide. Even the Dutch Reformed Church split between its anti-Leisler leadership and its pro-Leisler membership. As Bayard himself insisted, Albany's opposition to Leisler proved that "the notion of a Dutch plot cannot be applicable to Leysler and his adherents." 28 Ethnic conflict was complicated by socio-economic competition.

In Albany, Schenectady and New York City, the Dutch who opposed Leisler tended to be members of the old established, landed and mercantile elite who had merged with the English elite. In Bayard's words, the elite saw the Leislerians as "all men of mean birth, sordid education & desperate fortunes." Indeed, most of the Dutch who supported Leisler were not as well off or as entrenched politically as his opponents. In Schenectady, they had not held political positions before Leisler's Rebellion. However, they were hardly what Bayard called "the mad rabble." Instead, they included landowners, merchants, farmers and artisans interested in rising economically and challenging the existing closed political power structure. They were the "outs" trying to become "ins." 29

Like Stuyvesant, Leisler's arrogance undid him. Over time, he became so autocratic that his supporters began deserting him. He dismissed advisors who disagreed with him, disbanded the legislature when he disliked their laws and increased taxes several times. The list of his enemies grew when the elite were harassed on the street and their houses were vandalized. After Leisler arrested his critics (such as Bayard) and confiscated their lands, some fled the colony and a strong anti-Leisler party emerged.

In the end, Leisler's elite opponents used their London connections to get a new governor appointed by the king. When the governor arrived in March 1691, Leisler had no more standing as the colony's leader. Like Stuyvesant, he resisted losing power, but unlike Stuyvesant, he fought back militarily at the cost of several lives. After finally surrendering, Leisler was arrested with nine of his advisors. Legend holds that it was Bayard who got the governor to sign Leisler's death warrant. After a quick trial, Leisler and his second in command (his son-in-law) were sentenced to die on the gallows in City Hall Park. Although carpenters refused to provide the necessary ladders and crowds protested vehemently, the two men were condemned to be "hanged by the neck and being Alive their bodys be Cutt Downe to the earth that their Bowells be taken out and they being Alive burnt before their faces that their heads shall be struck off and their Bodys Cutt in four parts." 30

Despite the brutal finality of his death, Leisler lived on in a bitter political division between Leislerians (called the Black People) and anti-Leislerians (called the White People). For decades, royal governors felt compelled to favor one side or the other. Thus, from 1692 to 1697, Governor Richard Fletcher supported the anti-Leislerians, but, from 1698 to 1702, Governor Richard Coote, Lord Bellomont,

supported the Leislerians. Leisler's supporters convinced Parliament to pardon him posthumously in 1695, and Bayard was tried for treason in 1701.

With Shakespearean irony, Bayard's grandson married Leisler's granddaughter in 1729. If the personal antagonisms that underlay Leisler's Rebellion were finally resolved, its larger social, economic, and political issues remained unresolved. Leisler's role in exposing New York's internal tensions was so controversial that the state has never commemorated his memory, although a privately-funded statue of him stands in New Rochelle.

Like Stuyvesant, Leisler's personality and policies complicated his historical legacy. At first, the two men hardly seem comparable. Stuyvesant was an agent of the status quo, an efficient, autocratic, colonial governor who held power for 17 years. Leisler opposed the status quo and held power for less than two years. When Stuyvesant lost power, he retired in comfort to his own land in lower Manhattan. When Leisler lost power, he was beheaded. Yet, they were similar.

Both men had strong religious convictions, made constructive changes, provoked much controversy and acquired many enemies. They posed fundamental questions about law and order, autocracy and democracy, economic opportunity and development, social control and cultural diversity. As such, they both reflected the anxieties of the colonial era and had a lasting impact on New York State history. Maybe neither man has a proper memorial because they both raised issues that bedevil us to this day. Perhaps their real memorial is our continuing debate over economic, political and social democracy.

As the Dutch and the English competed for control of the colony, they confronted the intricacies of colonization. Their cultural differences and political struggles echoed the tensions between the Indians and Europeans.

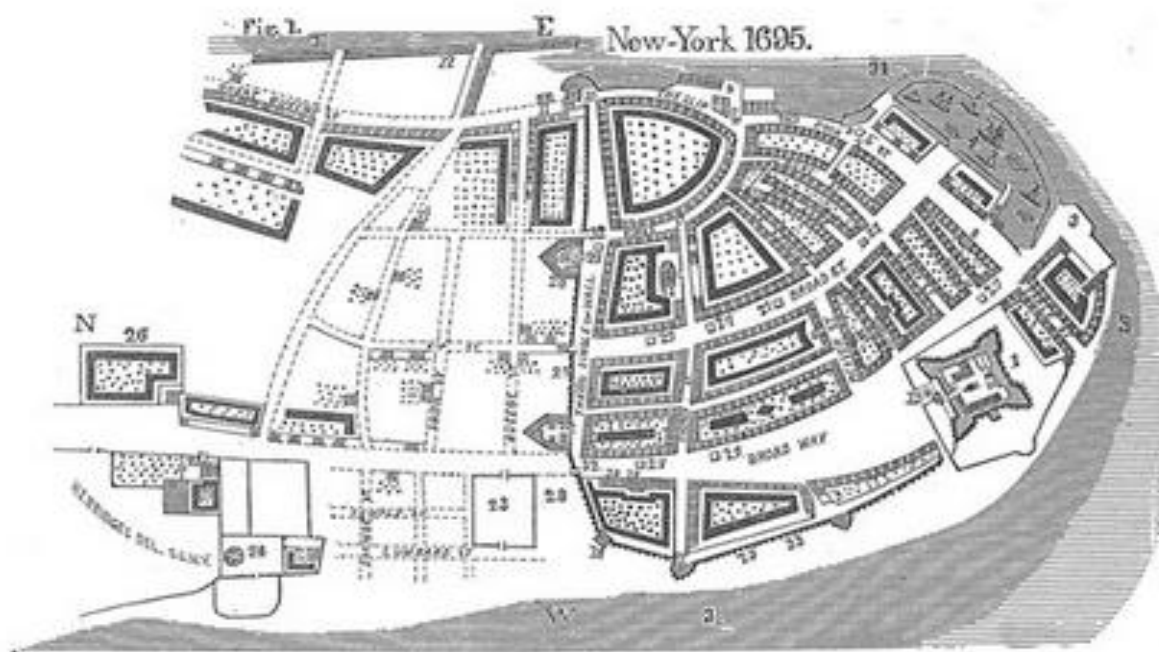
By the same token, the continuities between Dutch and English rule paralleled the positive interactions between the Indians and Europeans as they borrowed from each other and learned to live together.

To be sure, there were wars, but there was also trade. Many tribes were displaced or eliminated, but the Iroquois Confederacy was a formidable obstacle to European conquest. There were the very rich, the very poor and slaves, but there also was substantial economic opportunity for many in between. Together, the Indians, the Dutch, the Africans, the English and other Europeans established a distinctly dynamic and complex foundation for further growth.

Figure 2.2 : Comparing Cities The following maps of New York City, Albany and Schenectady were drawn in 1695 by the Reverend John Miller, an Episcopalian minister who was chaplain to English troops stationed in New York from 1693 to 1695. These maps are schematic and were completed when he returned to England. Nonetheless, they are considered fairly accurate representations that provide useful information about colonial life.

In examining them:

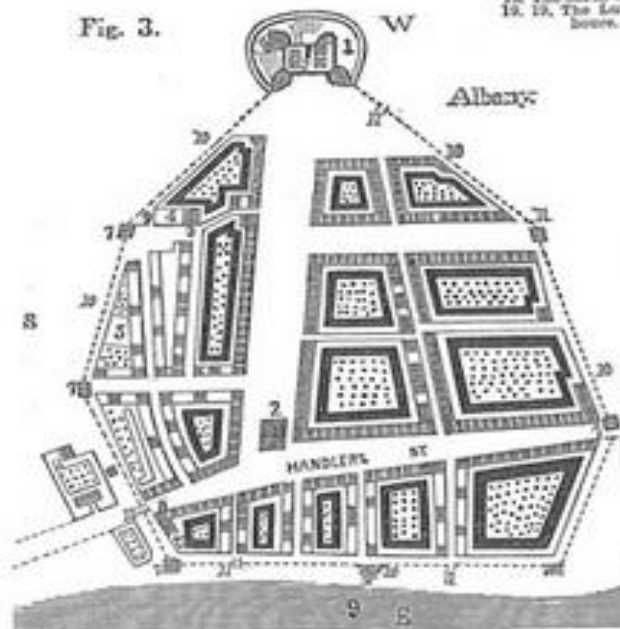
- 1 Compare the three communities regarding their geographic location, size and complexity.
- 2 Explain how they differed in providing for protection, food, trade, religious practice and interaction with Indians.
- 3 Explain how these maps reflected the strengths and the weaknesses of colonial New York.



THE EXPLANATION OF FIG. 1.

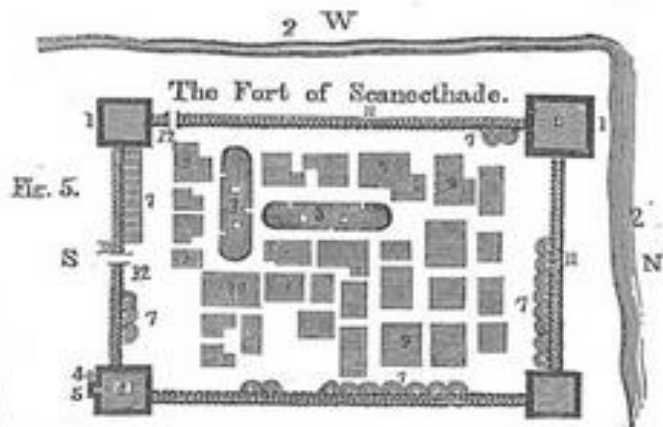
- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. The chappell in the fort of New York. | 20. 20. The stone points on the north side of the city. |
| 2. Levee's half moon. | 21. The Dutch Calvinist church, built 1692. |
| 3. Windmill battery of 15 guns. | 22. The Dutch Calvinist minister's house. |
| 4. The old dock. | 23. The burying ground. |
| 5. The cage and stocks. | 24. A windmill. |
| 6. Standhouse battery of 6 guns. | 25. The king's farm. |
| 7. The stadi (or stable) house. | 26. Col. Dougan's garden. |
| 8. The custom house. | 27. St. Weis. |
| 9. The bridge. | 28. The plot of ground destined for the R. mi-
nistry's house. |
| 10. Barracks, or the slip battery of 10 guns. | 29. 29. The stockade, with a bank of earth on
the inside. |
| 11. The dy blockhouse and half moon. | 30. The ground proper for the building an R.
church. |
| 12. The slaughter-houses. | 31. 31. Showing the sea flowing about N.
York. |
| 13. The new docks. | 32. 32. The city gates. |
| 14. The French Church. | 33. A postern gate. |
| 15. The Jews synagogue. | |
| 16. The fort well and pump. | |
| 17. Eliu's Alley. | |
| 18. The works on the west side of the city. | |
| 19. 19. The Lutheran church and minister's
house. | |

Fig. 3.



THE EXPLANATION OF FIG. 3.

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. The fort of Albany. | 7. 7. The block houses. |
| 2. The Dutch Calvinist church. | 8. The stadi-house. |
| 3. The Dutch Lutheran church. | 9. A great gun to clear a gully. |
| 4. The burying place. | 10. 10. The stockade. |
| 5. The Dutch Calvinist burying place. | 11. 11. The gates of the city, six in all. |



THE EXPLANATION OF FIG. 5.

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. 1. The blockhouses. | 7. 7. The sties for logs. |
| 2. 2. Heave running beside the fort. | 8. The blockhouses, destined for a church. |
| 3. 3. Indian wigwams. | 9. 9. Those and others like them are houses. |
| 4. The flag-staff. | 10. A great barn. |
| 5. A centry box. | 11. 11. A stockade. |
| 6. The spy-loft. | 12. 12. The fort gates. |

Source: John Miller, *A Description of the Province and City of New York* (no place given: Gowan's Bibliotheca Americana, 1862), 92-97.

3 From Colony to State: 1690–1790

TIMELINE

1735 The Zenger Trial
1741 The “Great Negro Conspiracy”
1753–56 King’s College Controversy
1754 Albany Congress
1756–63 French and Indian War
1763 Proclamation Line
1764 Sugar Act and Currency Act
1765 Quartering Act and Stamp Act
1767 Townshend Act
1768 Fort Stanwix Treaty
1773 Tea Act
1774 Tea Party and First Continental Congress
1775–83 American Revolution
1776 Declaration of Independence
1777 Battle of Saratoga and First State Constitution
1777–95, 1801–04 George Clinton was governor
1789 George Washington’s inauguration in NYC
1795–1801 John Jay was governor
1799 Gradual Emancipation Act

Introduction

Under British rule, New Yorkers faced several identity crises. Their mixed Anglo-Dutch ethnicity, interactions with the Iroquois Confederacy, proximity to French Canada and pivotal role in two wars combined to create more complications than any other colony faced. All of these factors posed perplexing problems that divided New York internally. While pursuing the rights of Englishmen for themselves, they perpetuated slavery for others. Their status in the British Empire evoked pride as well as friction. Consequently, New Yorkers both supported and opposed rebellion. Although a new identity emerged from the American Revolution, many of the underlying ambiguities and divisions remained. The transition from colony to state was an anxiety-ridden story of multifaceted, shifting loyalties.

Everyone had to find ways to deal with this complexity, but no group was more challenged by it than the Native Americans. From the moment of contact, they had to adapt and, as the colony grew, their adaptation strategies matured. Two examples of that process during English rule were a brother and sister, Molly and Joseph Brant. They were raised at Canajoharie, a Mohawk village on the Mohawk River, a major route for the colonizers. Their stories revealed the complexity of using selective adaptation to navigate the perils of coexistence and colonization. Their struggles paralleled the colonists’ own struggles with identity, adaptation and resistance within the British Empire.

Molly (or Mary) Brant (1735?–96) carefully negotiated the native and European worlds. Although she understood English, she only spoke Mohawk. Although she consumed European goods, she dressed in the Mohawk style. Although she ably fulfilled traditional tribal feminine roles, her influence extended to international affairs. She never led a quiet, simple life. Famous in her own day, Brant was feared by both the Americans and the British because, said a diplomat, “one word from her is more taken notice of by the five Nations than a thousand from any white Man without Exception.”¹ Molly Brant was a powerhouse.

Born to Mohawks who had converted to Christianity, she was a hybrid from the start. At about 20 years old, Brant became the housekeeper for Sir William Johnson (1715–74), who was 20 years her senior,

a baronet and British Superintendent for Indian Affairs in North America. More than a housekeeper, she was already pregnant when she joined the Johnson household and later bore him seven other children. At Johnson's mansion, Brant supervised a staff of servants, slaves, gardeners and clerks. In addition, there were frequent visitors and Indian conferences involving hundreds of guests and extensive gift giving in keeping with Indian custom. Taking charge on this scale was consistent with Mohawk traditions, which elevated women to leadership roles in the community.

Brant expanded this role to become a key advisor to Sir William throughout their 15 years together, providing him with important Mohawk contacts and influence. She continued bridging English and Mohawk interests for ten years after his death.

Molly Brant was considered such a threat that Indians supporting the Revolution burned down her house in Canajoharie and stole or destroyed all her goods after her information helped the British win the Battle of Oriskany in 1777. Molly and her children finally fled to Canada where they were supported by the British. Into the 1790s, she attended important public functions wearing Mohawk style clothing but made of fine cloth and moccasins embroidered with silk ribbons. When she died aged 60, she was buried in an Anglican churchyard in Canada, far from the Mohawk valley. To Canadians, Molly Brant was a heroine; to Americans she was a traitor. Both versions acknowledged her importance.

Molly's younger half-brother, Joseph Brant (1743–1807), was equally formidable. Not born into a position of power, Brant acquired fame and fortune based on his personal attributes, military prowess, diplomatic skill and connections. Respected and resented, admired and feared, Joseph Brant was the best-known Indian of his era. He bridged cultures and continents. His Mohawk parents raised him as an Anglican and, after his mother's first two husbands died, she married a prosperous Mohawk who was a friend of William Johnson. Visiting Molly brought Brant to the attention of Johnson, who became his mentor. In his teens, Brant earned a silver medal for fighting with Johnson in the French and Indian War. After the war, Johnson sent Brant to an Indian school in Connecticut where he was exposed to European culture, learned English and began translating Christian texts into Mohawk.

After the war, Brant became Johnson's translator, a role that was enhanced by his mastery of at least three different Indian languages. His Indian name, Thayendanagea, meaning "two sticks bound together," symbolized the strength derived from cooperation and interdependence, as in the Iroquois League. Alternately, it could have unintentionally presaged Brant's life's mission to strengthen his people by combining Indian and European cultures. After William Johnson's death, Brant was secretary to his son, Guy Johnson (1740–1788), the new British superintendent of Indian affairs. With Guy, Brant traveled to England in 1775, met the king, became a Mason and secured verbal assurances that Mohawk land would be protected if the Indians remained loyal. Brant's charm, fluency and refinement amazed and impressed the English. Portraits painted of him in England evoked his dignity and prominence.

The American Revolution propelled Brant to military renown as a skilled warrior and as England's most loyal Mohawk ally. He participated in the 1776 British conquest of New York City and, with secret intelligence from Molly, helped win the Battle of Oriskany in 1777. Brant's British allegiances alienated many Iroquois so he built a mixed force of loyalist native and white volunteers drawn to his charisma. From 1778 to 1780, he and his men waged guerrilla warfare in the Mohawk Valley against settlers who called him "Monster Brant" and destroyed his home. ² However, the record is mixed because Brant was also praised for mitigating brutality on his raids and for treating prisoners humanely.

Brant's efforts earned him a British military commission plus a nice salary. He bought a sizable farm near Fort Niagara and built a lavish house staffed by servants and slaves. He also gained stature by marrying a prominent Mohawk matriarch and by being considered the major Iroquois spokesman, a role that angered several traditional sachems. Furious when the 1783 peace treaty failed to protect

Indian land after the American Revolution, Brant tried to organize a pan-Indian resistance movement and led many Mohawks to Canada. Again, he traveled to London where he and Molly received pensions and got some restitution for Mohawk losses during the war. He also went to Philadelphia where he received a personal monetary reward, but no land concessions.

Rather than give up, Brant concentrated his efforts on a Canadian land grant near Grand River, Ontario where he wanted to resettle all Iroquois. However, the tribal mothers warily concluded that it was safer to keep some Iroquois on the American side of the border and some on the British side. The result was a bifurcated Confederacy. Members of various tribes settled in separate villages along the Grand River—near to each other but maintaining their distance and distinctness, as in the old League. Some Indians protested when former white loyalists also arrived, but Brant saw them as rent-paying model farmers and as buffers against the British. The bigger problem was how to guarantee Indian security, a quest that Brant pursued without success for the rest of his life. Endless negotiations bred endless complications that embroiled Brant in endless conflicts over land; but, he never gave up. Even as he lay dying in 1807, he pleaded, “Have pity on the poor Indians. If you can get any influence with the great, endeavor to do them all the good you can.”³

Joseph Brant was a striking example of the advantages and disadvantages of being, as his biographer suggested, a Man of Two Worlds.⁴ Selective assimilation brought him prestige and wealth. Many considered it capitulation, but Brant saw it as a way to protect his people and advance their interests along with his own. Brant struggled to balance the demands of his English and Indian loyalties in his military and diplomatic careers. So too, he always used his Indian name although others used his Christian name. He wore European suits at home, but Mohawk clothing abroad. This kind of conscious adaptation was consistent with the long adaptive process that had transformed Indian life since contact.

Albeit a mixed blessing, selective adaptation was a creative survival strategy. The unconventional lives of Molly and Joseph Brant underscored the complexity of this process in the colonial period. By crossing cultural barriers, they defied stereotypes and dramatized the dilemmas posed by change. The fact that they both ended up famous but exiled, demonstrated not only their personal power and ethnic commitments, but also the uncompromising nature of historical forces. In the end, firm political borders overwhelmed fluid cultural borderlands.

This chapter focuses on the dilemmas that New York faced as a colony. Like the Brants, New York juggled identities and loyalties. Torn between two worlds, it too adapted. Much of the story revolved around what it meant to be an Englishman outside England. While the colonists wrestled with the meaning and scope of colonial government, they also confronted the inconsistencies of slavery. In 1756, they waged war with imperial authority, but in 1776, they fought against it. Internal divisions made difficult decisions more difficult. Nevertheless, New York managed to resolve them well enough to move forward as a new state in a new nation. It was a major accomplishment.

Colonial Rumblings

The Morris–Cosby Case, the Zenger Trial and the Kings College controversy tested the colonists’ self-concept under British rule. Proud to be part of the British Empire, the colonists nevertheless began questioning the ramifications of imperial power. English rule brought economic benefits in terms of trade networks and protection on the high seas. Its political benefits included jury trials, a colonial assembly, town government and the right of freemanship, or citizenship. However, most power still resided with the royal appointed governor and his appointed council. Conflict was inevitable.

Some colonial governors were competent, but William Cosby (1690–1736) was not one of them. Consequently, his term as governor from 1732 to 1736 revealed the weaknesses of imperial government and the long-range causes of revolution. Much of the problem was that Cosby’s

appointment had nothing to do with merit and everything to do with connections. Born into the Irish upper classes, he further improved his status by marrying into the English aristocracy. When the sitting New York governor suddenly died, Cosby was sent to New York despite a mediocre military career marked by the illegal confiscation of goods from a Portuguese ship, a history of gambling and a volatile personality.

These unfortunate characteristics reinforced simmering hostilities to royal administration of the colonies and justified efforts to limit the power of the royal governor, particularly by controlling his salary and other administrative funds. As soon as Cosby arrived, he demanded that Rip Van Dam (1660–1749), the colonial Council president who had been interim governor, give Cosby half of the salary he had collected while serving in Cosby's place. Facing refusal, Cosby sued Van Dam, but avoided a jury trial, thereby violating a key traditional right of Englishmen. When Chief Justice Lewis Morris (1726–98) dismissed the case, Cosby replaced him with Associate Justice James DeLancey (1703–60) and removed Van Dam from the colonial Council, the governor's hand-picked advisory body.

Such arbitrary behavior offended the colonists and intensified simmering resentments against colonial governors. As a member of the colony's landed elite with inherited seats in Westchester (Morrisania) and New Jersey, Morris was in a good position to seek redress. Moreover, he was allied with other powerful landed families, especially the Livingstons. In a 1733 election for the colonial Assembly, Morris challenged the pro-Cosby candidate, who was backed by James DeLancey and Frederick Phillipse (1626–1702), both leading merchants from prominent colonial families. Despite the fact that DeLancey was the colony's most popular politician at the time, Morris won the election. It was an effective, peaceful form of protest against the abuse of power and a preview of protests yet to come.

Morris' supporters started a newspaper called the New-York Weekly Journal to attack Cosby and challenge the New York Gazette, a royalist paper run by William Bradford. The Morrisites hired John Peter Zenger (1697–1746), Bradford's former apprentice, as printer. The material in the Weekly Journal was written by James Alexander (1691–1756) and William Smith, Sr., two Presbyterian lawyers who defended Van Dam. The Weekly Journal was the colony's first opposition paper. It criticized Cosby as tyrannical, corrupt and incompetent. On the premise that, by attacking himself, the paper was also attacking royal authority, Cosby had Zenger arrested for seditious libel in 1735. While Zenger languished in jail for eight months, his wife printed the Journal herself. When Chief Justice James DeLancey disbarred Alexander and Smith in order to prevent them from defending Zenger, they recruited Andrew Hamilton (1676–1741), a prestigious Philadelphia lawyer as their replacement.

In a momentous defense, Hamilton claimed that people should have the right to criticize their leaders. The issue, he said, was

not a small or private concern ... not the cause of a poor printer, nor of New York alone ... It is the best cause. It is the cause of liberty ... the liberty both of exposing and opposing arbitrary power ... by speaking and writing truth. 5

Defying DeLancey's narrow instructions, the jury acquitted Zenger and established the precedent, albeit not the automatic guarantee, of freedom of the press. Equally importantly, it affirmed the basic principles of democracy—that governments should be accountable to the people, that opposition is legitimate and that ordinary people should play a political role. In other words, the Zenger case accomplished exactly what Cosby most feared. It challenged royal hegemony and strengthened the resistance to perceived tyranny.

The Zenger case was the logical extension of earlier political developments. The Dutch settlers checked Governor Peter Stuyvesant's authoritarianism by obtaining a greater voice in colonial government from the Dutch West India Company. Now the focus of discontent shifted to England's appointed royal

governor and the locus of authority shifted to the king and Parliament. Therefore, when the Morrisites wanted Cosby removed, they sent Lewis Morris to London. After months in London, Morris came to better understand the difference between the colonies and “the world on this Side of the water.” Dismayed by “universal avarice and corruption” in the royal government, he concluded that Parliament was totally “unconcerned at the Sufferings of the People in America.” 6

Although Morris’ mission failed abroad, it stimulated political activity at home. Petty factionalism began giving way to more stable party systems. The elite still dominated, but reached out to the electorate, which was expanded in 1701 to include more small property holders and more urban residents without property. Consequently, the Morrisites styled themselves as a people’s party favoring more frequent elections, more elected officials and more powers for the Assembly rather than the governor. Indeed, the Assembly was gradually weakening the governor by reducing his influence over legislation and by granting his salary for one year at a time, instead of five.

Because Morris’ party ran petition campaigns and held frequent rallies, the public was drawn into the political system and the debate over imperial prerogatives. Power relationships were in flux. Torn between their provincial self-interests and their imperial loyalties, concludes one historian, New Yorkers were “suspended between two worlds, and which rules applied was no longer quite so clear—especially since, without quite realizing it, they were now making so many of their own.” Or, as Morris put it, “the Seeds are sown” for substantive change. 7

From 1753 to 1756, the debate over change focused on education. Angry that “Our neighbors have told us in an insulting tone that the Art of getting Money is the highest Improvement we can pretend to,” New Yorkers decided to build a college. 8 But the proposed college was controversial. The central issue was whether the new King’s College (later Columbia) should be controlled by the Anglican Church. After all, Harvard and Yale were Congregational and the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) was Presbyterian. Only Benjamin Franklin’s Philadelphia Academy (later the University of Pennsylvania) was secular. To Anglicans, a college in New York would complement their existing southern base at Virginia’s College of William and Mary. Moreover, it could help offset the influence of the Great Awakening, which brought evangelical (New Light) Protestantism to the colony from 1739 to 1741 further increasing religious diversity. More than ever, New York’s heterogeneity differentiated it from Virginia and Massachusetts and made it harder to govern. An Anglican college would reassert British dominance.

Underlying the imperial context was a struggle for power between New York City’s mercantile DeLanceys, who were Anglican supporters of the Crown, and the upriver, land-based Livingstons, who were Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian critics of the Crown. In the 1750s, the competition between these two families came to symbolize competing interest groups. However, politics were actually shaped by several prominent families linked by intermarriage. Their ever-shifting alliances were based on economic, more than personal, priorities. Robert Livingston himself admitted, “we Change Sides as Serves our Interest best.” 9 Such complications notwithstanding, James DeLancey was the most powerful man in New York during this period as chief justice, leader of the Assembly, lieutenant governor and acting governor. In the case of King’s College, DeLancey’s strong familial and economic ties to England influenced his support for an Anglican college and, as acting governor in 1754, he granted its charter accordingly.

DeLancey’s decision was fiercely opposed by three prominent Presbyterian, Yale educated lawyers called the Triumverate. The most prominent was William Livingston (1723–90), who later signed the Constitution and was governor of New Jersey for 14 years. The most radical was John Morrin Scott (1730–84), an activist before the Revolution, military leader during the Revolution and politician after the Revolution. The most moderate was William Smith, Jr. (1728–93) whose father trained Livingston and Scott in the law. Smith helped defend Zenger and was later chief justice of New York. Both Smith

and Scott were married to Livingstons, but Smith sided with England during the Revolution and became chief justice in Canada. By education and affiliation, the Triumverate started from positions of influence. They used that status to test and clarify the relationship between the colonies and the Mother Country. In that process and in their different responses to revolution, they mirrored larger colonial dilemmas and divisions.

Using a weekly journal significantly called the Independent Reflector, the Triumverate advocated a radical concept of higher education suited to the special characteristics of colonial New York. They wanted the new college to be open to all Protestants, but dominated by none. Although still requiring attendance at weekly Protestant services and still closed to Catholics and Jews, the plan was to separate church from state, learning from dogma. Livingston believed that faculty should be chosen for their knowledge, not their religious affiliation, and that they should be allowed to evaluate, not simply reiterate, ideas. He envisioned a college located in the city so that students could learn from real life, prepare for a variety of careers and become civic leaders. Moreover, he insisted that the college be incorporated by and answerable to the representatives of the people sitting in the colonial assembly, not to royal authority.

The Triumverate lost the short-term battle because the college was controlled by Anglicans, even though other Protestants were allowed to attend. However, they won the long-term war because Livingston convinced the assembly to limit the college's funds and because the constant criticism hurt the college's enrollment. Meanwhile, the commitment to diffusing knowledge led the Triumverate and their relatives to organize the New York Society Library in 1754, which made books available to the public for a nominal membership fee. Most remarkably, Livingston made the colony's first proposal for county grammar schools run by community leaders and staffed by teachers paid with public funds. After the Revolution, King's College was redefined as a secular institution called Columbia College and was supervised by a new secular public body, the Regents of the University of the State of New York. Created in 1754, it was responsible for all education in the colony and was the first time any colony endorsed higher education as a civic responsibility. By paving the way for the full spectrum of secular public education, New York planted another seed for change. The King's College controversy, the Cosby struggle and the Zenger case translated European ideas into "a distinctively American idiom [for] a distinctly American audience." 10 Building on the traditional rights of Englishmen, all three instances encouraged debate and dissent, which in turn encouraged a self-reliant spirit that could slowly fray the colonists' attachment to their Mother Country. New York was becoming a truly Independent Reflector .

The French and Indian War

The French and Indian War (1756–63) revolutionized power relationships in North America. It eliminated the French, entrenched the British, weakened the Indians and opened the door to the American Revolution. Although war was not officially declared until 1756, it really began in 1754 and was part of a larger, longstanding imperial competition between France and England. Two previous conflicts in North America in the late 1600s and the early 1700s over who would control Canada (New France) and the Ohio Valley "saw the first large-scale military mobilizations in the Hudson Valley.... What had been a commercial frontier of the 17th century Dutch Empire became in the 18th century the most important military frontier in North America." 25

France and England struggled to control the Niagara River, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario on the west as well as Lake George, Lake Champlain, the Richelieu River and the St. Lawrence River on the east. Because of its strategic location on the Hudson River corridor, Albany became British headquarters. In all of these areas, Indians were critical because they represented much needed manpower and because they were skilled warriors familiar with the territory. However, they were hardly hired hands. Rather, they backed either side or changed sides as best suited their interests. They had their own agenda and their own leaders, thereby making the war a three-way struggle for North America's future.

The Iroquois had long played the British against the French in order to protect their own integrity and interests. Thus, they had formed a Covenant Chain with the English in 1677 and a Grand Settlement with the French in 1701. Although both nations appreciated the importance of aligning with these powerful tribes, traders and settlers often violated the agreements. In 1753, Mohawk Chief Hendrick (1691–1755), Molly Brant's uncle, claimed that the Covenant Chain was broken because the English were not protecting the Iroquois against competing Indian tribes, nor against land grabs by European settlers. Signifying the importance of the Chain, the colonists took his complaints seriously enough to convene the Albany Congress in 1754.

Reputed to be the first formal inter-colonial meeting, it was actually preceded by several other intercolonial conferences about Indian issues in the late 1600s and early 1700s. All were held at Albany, which was a critical link to the Indian fur trade. At the 1754 conference, the delegates tried to refurbish the Covenant Chain with presents. In addition, Benjamin Franklin proposed that the colonies organize themselves along the lines of the Iroquois Confederacy in order to more effectively meet the French challenge. But the seven colonies could not agree and soon they were embroiled in the French and Indian War during which the Seneca, Cayuga and Onondaga backed the French while the Mohawk, Oneida and Tuscarora supported the English.

Mohawk policy in the French and Indian War was shaped by friendship with Sir William Johnson, a Scots-Irishman who so bridged cultures that he was called the White Savage, was considered the Colonel of the Six Nations and was adopted by the Mohawks. In addition, he fathered eight children with Molly Brant after his first common-law wife died. Johnson's Indian name was Warraghiyagey, which meant he who does great things or, significantly, he who does much business. Originally recruited to manage his uncle's landholdings in 1638, Johnson used his family connections to get official appointments from Governor George Clinton. Unlike most colonists, Johnson treated the Indians with respect, learned their language, shared their festivals, paid fair prices for their land and led them in battle. His relationships with Molly and Joseph Brant enhanced his prestige with the Mohawks.

Much to the dismay of Albany's leaders who traditionally controlled Indian relations, Johnson was appointed Indian agent for the colonies in 1746. Indian diplomacy required hosting costly conferences and giving extremely costly gifts. Because he was not properly reimbursed, Johnson resigned in 1751. At the Albany Conference, he helped acting governor DeLancey reassure the Mohawks that the Covenant Chain was still strong and Mohawk Chief Hendrick requested Johnson's reinstatement as Indian agent. Two years later, Johnson became British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, making him even more powerful than before.

While Johnson befriended the Indians, he also purchased thousands of acres of land from them and recruited settlers who challenged native land rights. He became rich through an extensive trade network with the Indians and a lumber business for which he purchased 40 slaves while others worked in his house. His mastery of the Indian trade through Oswego reduced British dependence on trade through Montreal and gave them military flexibility against the French. Using his Indian allies to help the British in the French and Indian War, Johnson acquired fame that cemented his power.

Johnson was not trained militarily and was not a major leader in the French and Indian War. Nonetheless, his Indian connection was important for the war and its aftermath. In fact, the one bright moment of the early war was when Johnson, backed by Mohawk and New England troops, stopped the French at the Battle of Lake George in 1755. Grief over the death of his loyal ally, Chief Hendrick, was offset by praise for suffering a bullet wound and saving a French officer during battle. Johnson's reward was a huge monetary grant plus the title of baronet and appointment as British Superintendent for Indian Affairs in 1756. But the French destroyed several Central New York forts from 1756 to 1758, including Fort Oswego, where Johnson traded, and Fort William Henry on Lake George, which he built. The French also held Fort Carillon on Lake Champlain.

Until 1758, the war looked bad for the English, who lost many engagements, including two led by a young George Washington (1732–99). However, the tide turned when British General Jeffrey Amherst (1717–97) took command and began winning battles. Johnson and Amherst formed a strained partnership. In 1759 Joseph Brant and James DeLancey, Jr. joined Johnson to defeat the French at Fort Niagara. Also in 1759, General James Wolfe took Quebec and Amherst retook Fort Carillon, renamed it Fort Ticonderoga and regained control of Lake Champlain. Johnson accompanied Amherst in the successful 1760 attack on Montreal where Johnson and Brant provided important Mohawk support. The Indians led the British around dangerous rapids and convinced Canadian Indians not to help the French. This victory effectively ended the war in North America, but fighting continued in the Caribbean and Europe until 1763.

Amherst was willing to let Indians help him win battles, but he scorned them. An arrogant, dictatorial man, he dismissed Johnson's recommendations to observe Indian diplomatic customs essential to the Covenant Chain. Instead, Amherst abruptly reversed those policies and antagonized the Indians. After the victory at Montreal, Amherst became governor-general of the British colonies. In strengthening British fortifications along the Canadian border, he increased the number of British soldiers who harassed and plundered the Indians. He ended gift giving on the premise that it made Indians lazy, but it really made them indignant. He reduced the amount of ammunition and gunpowder provided to them on the premise that it would reduce killing, but it really reduced their ability to hunt and caused starvation. He also stopped the supply of alcohol.

Together, these actions crystallized long-standing resentments and led 13 tribes to participate in a 1763 rebellion identified with Ottawa Indian chief Pontiac. Most of the fighting was west or south of New York, but included the Seneca and an engagement at Niagara. Victory went back and forth with perhaps as many as 2,000 settlers killed or captured. Amherst ordered that all captured Indians be killed and approved of sending smallpox-infested blankets to the Indians as "gifts." His ruthlessness led to his recall, apparently with Johnson contributing complaints to London. In 1766, Johnson negotiated a peace agreement with Pontiac and got the Seneca restored to the Covenant Chain.

In 1768, Johnson negotiated the Fort Stanwix Treaty by which the British agreed to a line limiting European expansion beyond a large concession of Mohawk land west of Albany (see the maps in Figures 2.1 and 3.2). However, Johnson pushed the line further west than authorized in order to provide more land that he and his friends could acquire. Whereas Indians thought the line promised security, the settlers and speculators thought the line limited opportunity. Consequently, the 1768 line was ignored, as was the 1763 Proclamation Line, whereby England prohibited settlement beyond the Appalachians. Nonetheless, the Fort Stanwix Line became the basis for future Native American land claims.

Johnson welcomed peace and used his enhanced prestige to build political alliances and buy more land making him one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in British America. However, he died suddenly during an Indian conference he was hosting in 1774 and was buried in the Anglican Church that he built near his two homes, all three of which are historic sites. He was replaced by his nephew and son-in-law, Guy Johnson, who drew the map in Figure 2.1 and who fled to Canada during the American Revolution.

For the Indians, the French and Indian War was tragic. The defeat of the French by the British in 1763 limited their diplomatic and commercial options. For 175 years, they tried to adapt to the European invasion. Through the Covenant Chain, they hoped to protect their place in the new imperial contest over their land, their Iroquoia. After the French and Indian War, the Iroquois were cornered by the English and the colonists. Weakened by decades of struggle and internal divisions, they had little choice but to sign away their land or move west. By 1800, New York State controlled almost all of Iroquoia with the remaining tribes penned up on small reservations that mocked their former might.

The French and Indian War also redefined the relationship between England and the colonies. With the French threat eliminated, the British and the colonists focused more intently on each other. Whereas the Indians were marginalized by the power realignment, the colonists became more important. Indeed, they entered a new power struggle with Parliament that resulted in reassessing their cherished rights as Englishmen. During the decade following the French and Indian War, crisis after crisis strained the imperial relationship. Although not the colonists' original intention, rebellion became inevitable when all other strategies for self-assertion within the imperial framework proved inadequate.

The struggle began immediately after the French and Indian War ended. Waging war was so expensive that it motivated the British to reassess their colonial policy. Instead of not taxing the colonies and not enforcing trade regulations, Parliament decided that the colonies should contribute to their own support through taxes and stop trading outside the limits of mercantilism. Under this system, the colonies were supposed to provide raw materials to England, where they were to be converted into marketable goods and sold back to the colonies. Accordingly, the colonies were prohibited from trading with anyone but England and from using their own raw materials to produce their own ships or manufactured goods. The idea was to keep the colonies dependent and the profits flowing to the Mother Country.

However, because the laws were poorly enforced, the colonists systematically violated them and developed their own economy. Although mercantilism was supposed to only benefit England, her pattern of "Benign Neglect" actually benefitted the colonies. Consequently, they resisted the new restraints and taxes. They were further upset when the British prohibited expansion beyond the Appalachian Mountains. The 1763 Proclamation Line was just the first of many irritants that gradually alienated the colonists from Parliament. The French and Indian War closed one phase of the colonial era and opened another.

The American Revolution

The year 1777 was a turning point for the American Revolution in New York and its significance is memorialized in the 77 steps of the state capital building. A battle, a murder, a riot, a secession, an election and a constitution recast military and political realities. No state saw more military action, suffered more human and material loss or confronted more complications than New York. In the midst of war, New York wavered between unity and division, radicalism and conservatism, aristocracy and democracy. Its struggles exemplified the struggles of the emerging nation.

John Adams, Massachusetts' revolutionary leader, future vice president and president, knew that New York was "a kind of key to the whole continent." He also saw that New York politics were "the devil's own incomprehensibles." However, he could not understand why New York was the last colony to sign the Declaration of Independence. "What is the reason, that New York is still asleep or dead, in Politics and War?" he asked in June 1776. "Have they no sense, no Feeling? No sentiment? No Passions?" Indeed, they did. In fact, it was precisely because they had so many passions that they exasperated Adams and, as he saw it, served "to embarrass" the rebel cause. 29

Part of the problem was the existence of different regional interests compounded by divisions between merchants, large landowners, small farmers and artisans. In the Mohawk Valley, resentment of the Iroquois and Sir William Johnson motivated some residents to support the rebels while others stood by England and the Johnson family. In the Hudson Valley, hostility towards New England settlers motivated some Dutchmen to favor Britain, but many small farmers still resented the British troops who put down their protest against land tenancy in 1766. Other Hudson Valley tenants followed the political position of landlords whom they liked and rejected the lead of those whom they disliked.

Close economic and cultural ties to England kept Staten Island loyal while close ties to New England made eastern Long Island rebellious. Throughout the colony, many farmers were more interested in

crops than in politics and slaveholders feared that the spirit of revolution might spread to their slaves. Meanwhile, the Quakers and the Shakers opposed war altogether. In light of such complications, one-third of New Yorkers supported independence, one-third opposed it and the last third was ambivalent. Hence, New York dallied.

The British did not dally. They saw that controlling the centrally-located colony of New York would strengthen their control over all the other colonies. Accordingly, there were more British troops in New York than in any other colony before 1763, after which the numbers only grew. Then, in June 1776, England sent the largest flotilla since Roman times to anchor off New Jersey. On July 2, Sir William Howe (1729–1814) and his army landed on loyalist Staten Island, the strategic entry to New York harbor. In response, New York's Fourth Provincial Congress met in White Plains and finally signed the Declaration of Independence on July 9. In August, Howe defeated George Washington at the Battle of Brooklyn in the new nation's first military engagement involving the most personnel of any battle in the war.

Despite suffering serious losses, Washington and his troops managed to escape at night from Brooklyn to Manhattan and up the island. A minor victory at the Battle of Harlem Heights was soon offset by defeat at White Plains, giving the British control of downriver New York. As the rebels fled, a suspicious fire devastated a quarter of New York City, creating chaos and a housing shortage for the royal occupiers. New York City remained royal headquarters until the 1783 peace treaty.

As such, it was home to the loyalist press, loyalists from other states and slaves seeking the freedom promised by the British army. The whole region, including Long Island, Staten Island and Westchester, was inundated by English troops who commandeered houses, crops and livestock. While some residents benefitted from the demand for goods and services, others resented being scorned by officers and bullied by soldiers. Moreover, they were horrified by the inhumane conditions on the prisoner of war ships stationed in New York harbor where thousands of soldiers died of disease and starvation.

Why did England focus on New York rather than on John Adam's Boston, which is usually considered more central to the American Revolution? The answer is the Hudson River. As George Washington explained in 1777, the route from Canada down the Richelieu River, Lake Champlain and Lake George to the Hudson River gave the English a supply line to America and access to a secure port suitable for a large naval force. Furthermore, by dominating the Hudson and controlling New York, England could separate New England from the southern states and limit the rebels' military coordination. For Washington, the Hudson was so critical to the Revolution that it dominated his time and strategy throughout the war. Accordingly, he established headquarters at Newburgh and assigned General George Clinton (1739–1812) to protect the Hudson at West Point with two forts and a massive chain across the river to stop the British fleet. As a middle state, New York was a crucial middleman in the American Revolution. No wonder that fully a third of the Revolutionary battles were fought on New York soil.

Holding the Hudson was not easy because the British were determined to take the river and, with it, New York (see Figure 3.2). In October 1776, they captured Valcour Island, near Plattsburgh, but retreated to Canada for the winter. In 1777, they tried again with a three-pronged strategy that involved moving one northern force down to the Hudson from Lake Champlain, a second western force from Lake Ontario to Oneida Lake to the Mohawk River to the Hudson, and a third southern force up the Hudson from New York City. As the Marquis de Lafayette understood, New York was "the pivot on which turn the operations of the enemy." 30 However, the British plan proved better in theory than in practice.

In July, General John Burgoyne (1722–92) led 9,000 British forces down from Lake Champlain and took Fort Ticonderoga. Rather than risk defeat by the bigger British army, the rebels under General

Philip Schuyler (1733–1804) outwitted Burgoyne by obstructing the roads with logs and impeding his progress. Furious that British troops were seizing their livestock and crops, local farmers chased away their animals and burned their fields. Although loyalism was stronger in New York than in any other state except Georgia, Burgoyne never had enough troops or supplies. Moreover, “Gentleman Johnny” was always encumbered by heavy artillery and his extensive collection of wardrobe and wines. In August, Burgoyne lost the Battle of Bennington when he failed to get expected support from New York secessionists, who had just created a free republic that later became Vermont. Burgoyne did not understand that, although the Vermonters wanted to separate from New York, they still wanted to be part of the new nation.

In August, British General Barry St. Leger (1733–89) commanded a second group of 600 British troops coming from Oswego. It included British regulars, 100 German mercenaries (Hessians) and 150 colonial loyalists led by Sir William Johnson’s family. In addition, Joseph Brant led a mixed group of 1,000 Indians from various tribes and assorted settlers who dressed like Mohawks. Aided by information that Molly Brant sent her brother, the British ambushed the patriots in the Battle of Oriskany, near Fort Stanwix, now called Fort Schuyler. With over 750 fatalities, Oriskany was the bloodiest battle of the war.

After several chiefs were killed, the Indians withdrew in order to conduct their mourning ceremonies. Thus depleted and dismayed by reports of patriot forces advancing under Benedict Arnold, St. Leger withdrew to Oswego instead of joining Burgoyne. That decision seriously weakened Burgoyne’s position at Saratoga. On the other side, the patriots lost many of their own leaders and the new men who took over were radicalized by the conflict, as were many local residents. Persecution of loyalists intensified and many fled to Canada. The Battle of Oriskany polarized the Mohawk Valley (see Textbox 8.3).

At the same time, the rebel forces suddenly grew in response to sensational accounts that Indians had murdered and scalped Jane McCrea, a young woman traveling to meet her soldier fiancée. Despite the fact that they both were loyalists, this widely publicized, romanticized story reinforced anger at Indian allies of the British combined with a sense of duty to protect white women. The fortified rebel army regrouped, cut off Burgoyne’s supply line and recaptured Fort Ticonderoga. Burgoyne’s weary, hungry, sickly troops were losing ground and British reinforcements from New York City still had not arrived. Left with no options, Burgoyne surrendered. The critical Hudson River lifeline had been saved.

The Battle of Saratoga was a turning point in the war. It bolstered the rebels’ spirits and inspired more recruits. Most importantly, it convinced France to support the Revolution and provide aid that proved critical to the colonists’ struggle against a superior military power. Significantly, George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette jointly accepted the surrender of Lord Charles Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781.

During the war the Hudson Valley was in perpetual turmoil and settlers living near Lake Champlain and Lake George were always vulnerable to the plunder and depredations of the huge British army moving down from Canada. The Mohawk Valley was also devastated by the war. Not only were many men lost in battle, but loyalists and Mohawks led by Joseph Brant raided rebel settlements such as Cobleskill and German Flats in 1778. Seeking revenge for Oneida attacks on his and his sister’s homes, Brant also destroyed Oneida villages and almost all other Mohawk Valley settlements. Crops and cattle were seized; homes were ransacked and burned; men, women and children were killed. In response, George Washington ordered Generals John Sullivan and James Clinton to retaliate. They destroyed 40 villages of the loyalist tribes in 1779. After counter attacking, Joseph Brant led many Mohawks to Canada and the remaining Native Americans gradually relinquished their land.

While the countryside was being abandoned, Albany was being inundated. The city was a refuge for locals fleeing their isolated farms and villages as well as for down river rebels fleeing British control. Always fearing attack from the British or the Indians, Albany County's citizen committees organized the militia, compelled loyalists to leave and strengthened fortifications. Barracks were built nearby and Albany's hospital treated the casualties. Vacant loyalist houses were appropriated by refugees and soldiers or converted into mini-hospitals. Faced with a daunting struggle for survival, "the quiet heroism of ordinary people" enabled the city to prevail. 31 With New York City out of commission, Albany became central to the state's rebellion and its capital in 1787.

As part of their 1777 campaign, the British burned down Kingston and destroyed one of the Livingston manor mansions. The two sites were related. Kingston was then the state capital, its third largest city and the place where the new state constitution was written. It symbolized the Revolution. The manor mansion belonged to one of the state's most powerful political families. The Livingstons were major Hudson Valley landowners allied with the Presbyterians against their arch-rivals, the DeLanceys, who were urban merchants allied with the Anglicans. For decades, the two families competed for control of colonial politics, often shifting policy positions in pursuit of power. However, after 1776 most of the DeLanceys fled to Canada or England, thereby abdicating dominance to the Livingstons, who were active in the pre-Revolutionary protests and in writing the new state constitution. Burning a Livingston mansion conveyed contempt for the current colonial power structure.

In truth, that structure was already changing as colonists created extra-legal local committees in response to the Sugar, Stamp and Tea Acts. Comprised of a cross-section of the community, these groups expanded political participation beyond the traditional elite. By 1776, county, district and town committees were taking charge of recruiting, supplying and paying soldiers, regulating prices, building forts, negotiating with the Indians, financing the care of the poor and punishing loyalists. They mobilized public opinion and organized rebel resistance. In other words, they assumed the functions of self-government. Inherently revolutionary, these ad-hoc committees may have been more significant than battles as barometers of change. In one scholar's opinion, "These committees were the most powerful democratizing agencies in the Revolution." 32

Women participated too. In April 1777, a 16-year-old female version of Paul Revere raced through the countryside from Fredericksburg, New York at night on horseback summoning the local militia to cut off British forces in nearby Connecticut. Women across the colony supported the riots against British legislation and contributed to the boycott of British goods, especially tea, salt and flour. Not only did they make homespun cloth, but in Poughkeepsie during May 1777, they violently seized tea from merchants who were hoarding it to bolster prices. The Daughters of Liberty complemented the Sons of Liberty. Some women accompanied their husbands and others served the troops in various roles. Women's contributions to the Revolution at home, in the marketplace and on the battlefield gave them a positive public role that challenged conventional gender stereotypes. Women defied their exclusion from politics and insisted on being heard, not just seen.

That same spring of 1777, a Livingston manor uprising exposed another form of grass roots protest. These rioters were tenants on the eastern portion of the Livingston family's 160,000 acres of land. Like earlier protestors, they wanted to fully own the land they worked. The prospect of a British victory in 1777 fueled the tenants' hope that manor lands would be confiscated, divided and sold. More concerned with property ownership than with revolutionary ideals, the tenants refused to serve in the state militia and conspired to overthrow their landlords. In May 1777, about 400 of Livingston's 2,000 tenants took up arms only to be overwhelmed by the state militia. Two rioters were hung and 300 were arrested. Most of them were the newer, poorer settlers and squatters from New England. Regardless of their status, the message was clear. The manor system and the presumed prerogatives of the elite were under attack. As one member of the Livingston family acknowledged, "the little aristocracy which [was] formerly enjoyed in this State is torn up by the root." 33

Even so, the Livingstons were realists. Knowing that the value of their land depended on their tenants' productivity, they increasingly defended their tenants against New England raiders and state demands for militia service. Practicality also influenced their attitude when the new state constitution was being written during 1777. According to Robert R. Livingston (1746–1813), the times demanded "Swimming with a Stream which it is impossible to stem." The elite, he said, "should yield to the torrent if they hope to direct its course." 34 Albeit reluctantly, the elite helped forged a delicate compromise between the old aristocratic politics and the new democratic politics. The result was hardly radical, but it began revising power relationships.

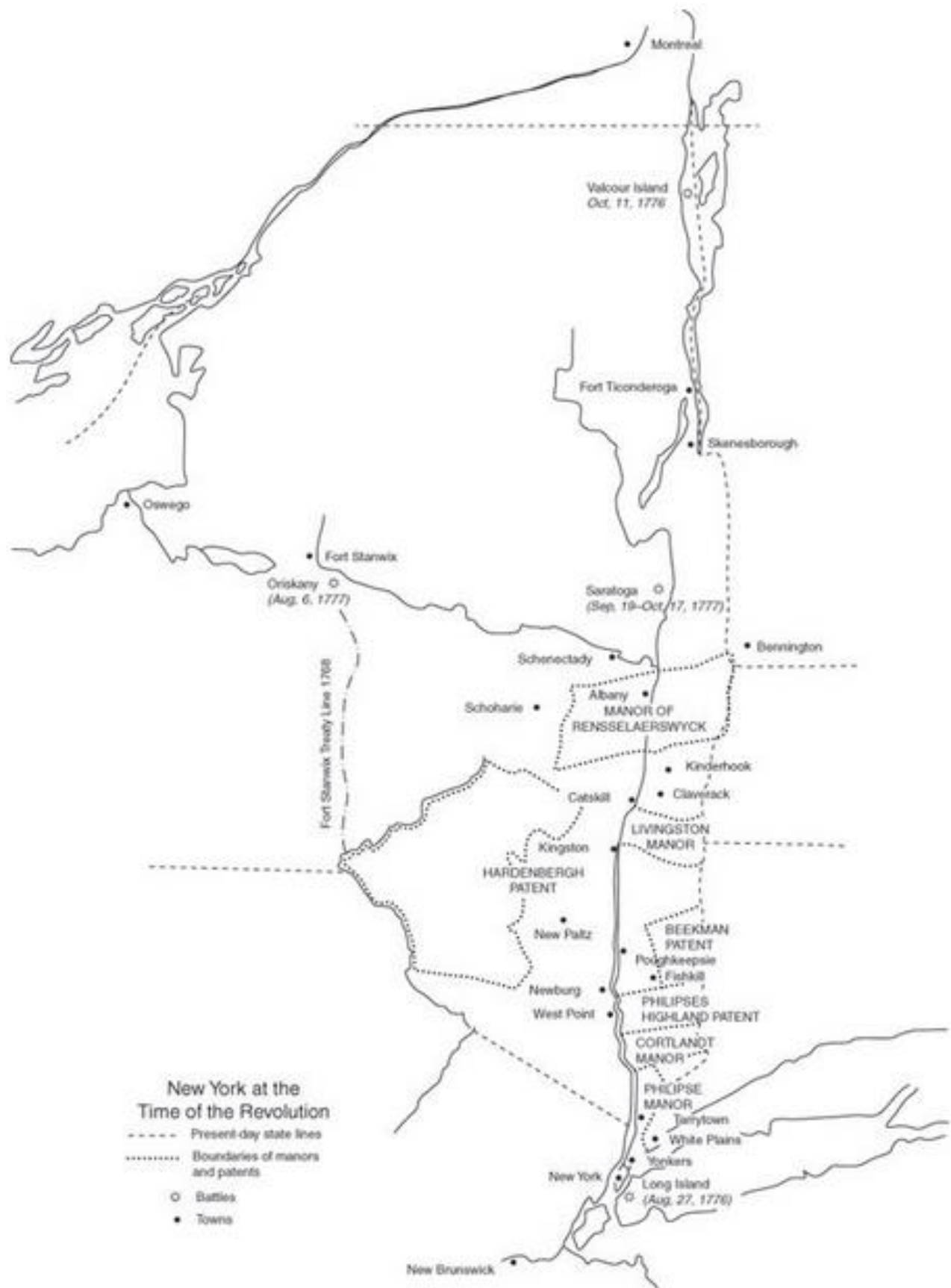
One indication of change came in 1776 when representatives were elected to the provincial congress that would write the new state constitution. A radical concept at the time, only two states used a participatory democratic process, with New York preceding Pennsylvania by a month. The men elected also reflected change. Although half represented the old elite who had controlled almost all pre-Revolutionary political offices, the other half represented the rising middle classes, men who had only held minor local offices previously.

Differences of opinion and interest bred controversy that necessitated compromise, much of it engineered by John Jay and Robert R. Livingston. The basic structure of colonial government was retained, but the governor lost power while the assembly gained both size and power. In addition, the appointive council was replaced by an elective senate. New York was the first state to make the governorship an elective office chosen by secret ballot. Property qualifications for voting were retained, with more property required to vote for governor and senators than for assemblymen. Nonetheless, about one-third of adult white males could vote for the governor and senators while about two-thirds could vote for the assembly. All estate owners were allowed to keep their land, but the Livingston, Cortlandt and Rensselaer manors lost their guaranteed assembly seats. Nor would Albany and New York City continue to be overrepresented as compared to the rural districts.

No one at the Provincial Congress suggested giving women the right to vote, but the issue of abolishing slavery was raised. Over opposition from slave holding counties, Jay managed to get the slave trade (but not slavery) prohibited in New York. He also made sure that separation of church and state, the right to a jury trial and the right to counsel were protected. Admittedly, it took until 1787 to get a formal state Bill of Rights, but New York already had a strong tradition of civil liberties as embodied in the Flushing Remonstrance and the Zenger case. Moreover, the new state constitution appended the entire Declaration of Independence as a bold assertion of faith in "unalienable rights." If archconservatives and radicals were disappointed with the final document, almost everyone else was pleased because, said an Albanian, it "preserved a proper line between Aristocracy on the one hand and Democracy on the other." 35 The rights of Englishmen were evolving into the rights of Americans.

Figure 3.2 : Mapping Colonial History

The following map shows the relationship between the geographic, political, economic and social factors of New York's history. It captures the complexity of the colonial era.



Source: Alice P. Kenney, *Stubborn for Liberty: The Dutch in New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1975), 156.

George Clinton

The first test of the new form of government was the election of June 1777. It was a big surprise. Originally, Philip Livingston wanted to be governor. However, because his brother William Livingston was the new governor of New Jersey and his cousin, Robert R. Livingston was the new chancellor of New York and his nephew John Jay was the state's new chief justice, Philip Livingston decided to abstain lest the family still seem too powerful and incur popular wrath. Instead, the elite nominated General Philip Schuyler, a wealthy man and major landowner from one of the state's oldest, most prestigious upstate families connected by marriage to the Cortlandts, Rensselears and Livingstons.

Schuyler served in the French and Indian War and was a delegate to the 1775 Second Continental Congress. In that same year he became a major general under George Washington with whom he developed a close friendship. Due to political intrigue, Schuyler was blamed for the loss of Fort Ticonderoga in 1777, but was later exonerated. He then left the army and began an extensive political career including three terms in the New York State Senate and two terms in the United States Senate. In addition, Schuyler was a regent of the University of the State of New York for 20 years and an early advocate of canals. Together with his son-in-law, Alexander Hamilton, Schuyler favored strengthening the federal government after the Revolution. He was one of New York's best-connected, most respected leaders.

General George Clinton was selected to run for lieutenant governor. A large, commanding, plain-spoken man, Clinton had a good military reputation from serving in the French and Indian War and building defenses for West Point. He was known as a vehemently anti-British member of the colonial assembly and the Second Continental Congress. Despite a well-to-do Scots-Irish grandfather plus some distant family ties to British nobility and former royal governor George Clinton, this George Clinton was not part of New York's elite. Rather, he was an Ulster county lawyer whose father was a farmer, surveyor and later a judge. His mother was Irish. Studying law with a member of the Triumverate allied Clinton with the Livingstons. Marrying into a prestigious, albeit not wealthy, Ulster County Dutch family, the Tappens, gave him status and important local contacts.

Imagine everyone's shock when Clinton won not only the race for lieutenant governor, but for governor as well. Certainly Schuyler was mystified because, he said, Clinton's "family and connections do not entitle him to so distinguished a prominence." Perhaps that was the point. Clinton won by carrying the votes of soldiers whom he commanded in the militia and farmers in the counties of Ulster, Orange, Dutchess and northern Westchester. Schuyler carried the frontier areas and the Albany region, which was his family's seat. (Because the downriver counties were still under British control, they did not vote.) Just as important as the vote for Clinton was the vote against Schuyler as a member of the elite and a Livingston ally. In fact, Schuyler blamed his defeat on the refusal of all Livingston manor tenants to vote. Others noted the feeling in the Hudson Valley that no one should be elected governor who was a Livingston or had "any connection with that family." Thanks to the new state Constitution, voters could express their real opinions through a secret ballot without fearing reprisal from their landlords. Democracy made a difference. 36

Clinton was elected governor seven times. His biographer called him "probably the most effective, most well-liked, and (after Patrick Henry) the most charismatic of the wartime governors." 37 That might explain why he was unopposed in 1779 and why Schuyler only got 683 votes after challenging Clinton in 1783. As their enmity grew, Schuyler asked John Jay to run for governor in 1785, but Jay considered Clinton too popular to beat. However, Clinton became vulnerable by leading the Anti-Federalists during the debate over the U.S. Constitution and Hamilton orchestrated such an effective attack on Clinton that he almost lost the election of 1789. The Schuyler-Hamilton offensive was even stronger in 1792 when Clinton was barely reelected amid claims of fraudulent ballot counting. He was finally defeated in 1795 by Jay who served two terms. Although Clinton declined to run in 1797, he returned to office by

a landslide in 1801. He then served as U.S. vice president from 1804 until his death in 1812. It was an exceptional and exceptionally long political career.

Surprisingly ignored by history, Clinton was so important in his own day that he inspired the term Clintonism. The man embodied the concept perfectly. He represented republicanism—a faith in local government supporting and supported by small property owners, farmers, shop keepers and artisans. This meant constructing roads and canals to help farmers get their goods to market and building public schools to help the working classes rise economically. However, Clinton was less interested in the poor who could not vote. Nor did he push for abolition because many of his Ulster county supporters owned slaves. In other words, Clinton's political principles were pragmatic. Within that context, he stood for "the politics of opportunity" rather than "the politics of privilege." 38

While emphasizing the needs of the aspiring middle classes, Clinton also addressed the interests of merchants, large landowners and land speculators, all of whose success benefited the state. Clinton speculated in land himself, including 6,000 acres on the Mohawk River near Utica that he purchased with his friend George Washington and sold by lots at a profit. Consequently, it is not surprising that Clinton promoted land sales but opposed property taxes on small landowners. Instead, he supported heavy taxes on the southern district and jealously guarded the state tariffs that brought in a third of the state's revenues through New York City's port. During the post-war depression, he also authorized taxes on large landholders. Under Clinton, the state pursued a policy of promoting economic growth by providing loans to businessmen and farmers as well as by chartering banks, manufacturing companies and canal companies. The latter was particularly important to Schuyler, who tied canals to economic development. The fact that all of these policies were supported by men who were supposedly Clinton's enemies confirms that he was a skilled professional politician.

Clinton personally led the militia against the Livingston manor rioters in 1777, but his most extensive efforts to protect the state concerned Vermont (see Figure 1.1). In a region that was claimed by New York, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, settlers had conflicting land grants. Even Jay and Clinton had property in the area. Some of the settlers were former tenant farmers resentful of New York's manorial system and therefore hostile to the state. Some were Congregationalists who scorned a state that practiced religious toleration. Most just wanted land.

Led by Ethan Allen, they proclaimed independence from New York in 1777. Clinton asked Congress to resolve the dispute, but Congress did not act. During the delay, Vermonters imprisoned residents who remained loyal to New York, seized others' land and cattle, and harassed anyone unwilling to join Vermont's militia. Clinton refused to compromise and threatened to call out New York's militia. Not until 1791 was the conflict resolved by making Vermont a state and compensating New York for its lost property. To Clinton, it was a brazen theft of land and a profound insult to his state.

The governor was also disappointed by Congressional inaction regarding five British forts near Canada that were evacuated after 1783. Congress resisted granting New York sole power over the forts and Massachusetts offended Clinton by offering its own troops for security. Similarly, in 1784 Massachusetts suddenly claimed 150-year-old land rights in western New York that had already been ceded to the nation. In order to undermine Massachusetts' claim to the land, Clinton maneuvered to acquire the land from the Oneida in 1785 without the required federal approval. Because Congress under the Articles of Confederation was too weak to arbitrate the land dispute with Massachusetts, the two states negotiated a compromise in 1786 that let New York control the land politically, but divided the land for the purposes of sale, thereby shortchanging New York economically. Once again, Clinton felt betrayed by both Congress and Massachusetts.

Burned by these losses, Clinton made sure to assert state power over loyalist property. Originally, there were about 35,000 loyalists in the state. One-third left but the two-thirds who remained became the

focus of communal anger, especially those who were wealthy and powerful. Clinton used the state's right to confiscate and sell loyalist land in order to promote wider land ownership while bolstering state finances. For example, land owned by two men in Dutchess County was sold to 401 men, some of them previous tenants on that same land. To be sure, speculators bought much of the land, but when they sold the land, they still helped redistribute it. Conservatives such as Schuyler and Hamilton opposed the violation of loyalist property rights even as they both acquired land in the redistribution process. Although Clinton and his friends benefitted too, the governor valued the economic democratization stimulated by breaking up large estates. Moreover, he knew that revenue from the land sales would support state development.

After the Revolution, Clinton's republican principles and his commitment to the state made him skeptical of an overbearing national government controlled by the rich. The conflicts over the forts and Vermont confirmed his concerns about centralized power. Thus, Clinton became an anti-Federalist and led New York's campaign against replacing the Articles of Confederation with the United States Constitution. He worried that a large, powerful central government would undermine representative, local government, especially if it was dominated by the "ambitious and despotic," whom he called "the vultures of power."³⁹ From Clinton's perspective, enabling Congress to tax the states would negate the whole purpose of the Revolution as would failing to explicitly protect individual and states rights. Clinton particularly opposed letting the federal government control customs duties on trade, which would deprive New York of considerable revenue obtained from the port.

Clinton's key opponents in the Constitutional debate were John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, who with Virginia's James Madison, penned the famous Federalist Papers that made the case for a strong central government. Hamilton (1757–1804) was a real New York story. As the illegitimate son of a humble woman on the Caribbean island of Nevis, Hamilton's parentage was much less impressive than Clinton's. After migrating to New York, Hamilton entered Columbia College at age 16, but dropped out in order to join the Revolution.

Like Clinton, Hamilton earned Washington's admiration in combat, including the battles of Brooklyn, Harlem Heights and White Plains. Unlike Clinton, Hamilton defended the rights of loyalists. Like Clinton, Hamilton acquired status by marrying Philip Schuyler's daughter. Unlike Clinton, Hamilton identified with the interests of the landed elite, urban lawyers, bankers and merchants who opposed Clintonism. In the fight over the Constitution, Hamilton and Clinton became enemies.

Although the Clintonians actually had the largest representation at the Poughkeepsie ratifying convention, they lost momentum after New Hampshire and Virginia ratified the U.S. Constitution in 1788, thereby guaranteeing that the document would prevail. If New York did not sign, it risked being isolated between New England and the South. Furthermore, the southern district of New York might have seceded from the state and joined the new nation anyway, thus depriving the state of the port and its lucrative revenue.

Appreciating these dilemmas, Clinton muted his opposition to the Constitution so that some of his delegates could support ratification while also calling for amendments to protect the rights of states and individuals. Consequently, in 1788, enough Clintonians voted for the Constitution so that it passed by 30 to 27, the closest margin of any state. Despite being "the reluctant pillar,"⁴⁰ New York City celebrated with a massive parade in which Hamilton, the only New Yorker to sign the document, was honored by a model ship named after him. But sentiments remained strong and federalist mobs attacked anti-federalists in New York City and Albany.

As the nation's first capital, New York City hosted the inauguration of the nation's first president in 1789. Washington chose Hamilton to be the nation's first Secretary of the Treasury. Just as Clinton had feared, Hamilton successfully tied the rich to the nation and replaced New York State's tariff with a

federal tariff. Moreover, Hamilton continued to influence New York State politics and became Clinton's major critic. In election after election, Hamilton relentlessly accused the governor of preferring Clintonism to nationalism, of pitting rich against poor, and of being a dangerous demagogue. These attacks gained credence when Clinton was accused of using his office to benefit his friends and when ballots "disappeared" during the election of 1792.

John Jay's two terms as governor further eroded Clinton's aura of invincibility, but not his national stature. Accordingly, Clinton was chosen by the Democratic-Republican Party to replace Vice President Aaron Burr, the controversial New York politician who killed Alexander Hamilton in an 1804 duel. Clinton was elected Vice President of the United States in 1804 and 1808. Having balanced the state ticket with Schuyler in 1777, now he balanced the national ticket as a New Yorker paired with Virginia's Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. He was too old to be a real threat, but old enough to be venerated. After 45 years of public service, Clinton's remarkably long political career ended in 1812 when he died in office at age 72.

George Clinton personified New York's development from colony to state. His marriage revealed the continuing influence of the Dutch and the elite in New York politics while enabling him to serve as a bridge between ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes. At the same time, his popularity and policies reflected the emergence of a new more democratic spirit that modified (without eliminating) the power of New York's aristocracy. Clinton's career confirmed the premise that the Revolution was not just about "home rule," but also about "who was to rule at home." 41 Clinton's military and civilian public service dealt with the complex challenges of the colonial era. These included control of the river and the land, relationships with Native Americans and slaves, conflicts with the French and the British, tensions between the rising middle classes and the old aristocracy as well as disputes over local and national power. In all of these ways, Clinton proved that New York really was, as John Adams observed in 1776, the "key to the whole continent." 42

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Web Resources

www.brooklynonline.com/history Battle of Brooklyn, neighborhoods, historic houses

www.conferencehouse.org Staten Island Revolutionary house

www.frauncestavernmuseum.org George Washington and the Revolution

www.hrvh.org/exhibit/aa07 African Americans in the Hudson Valley

www.hudsonvalley.org Historic sites—Phillipsburgh manor, Van Cortlandt manor, etc.

www.morrisjumel.org George Washington and the Revolution

www.nyhistory.org/slaverycollections Many documents www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany Colonial Albany—maps, people, places, blacks, ethnics, region www.nysha.org NYS Historical Association at Cooperstown museums

www.nysl.gov/scandocs/historical Digitized documents on the Revolutionary era

www.nysl.nysed.gov/mssc/vrm Van Rensselaer manor papers—history, documents, Anti-Rent wars, trade, labor

www.oneidaindiannation.com Tribal history, culture, women, American Revolution

www.onondaganation.org Tribal history, culture, government, land, lake

www.oswego.org/history/fortontario French and Indian War, American Revolution

www.pmlib.org/localNYS NYS battles, cities, historic houses <http://sullivanclinton.com/maps/map.html>
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