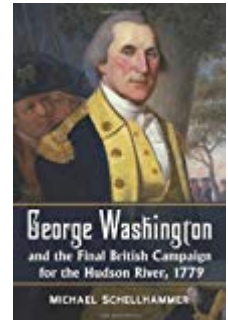


Michael Schellhammer. *George Washington and the Final British Campaign for the Hudson River, 1779.* Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2012. viii + 226 pp. \$40.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-7864-6807-2.



Reviewed by James Sandy

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

The U.S. Army counts sixteen campaign honors during the American Revolution. None of those campaigns include the events in New York in 1779, a period which saw General George Washington and Sir Henry Clinton struggle over control of the Hudson River. The generals and their armies never met in actual pitched battle during this period, but through a series of cavalry and naval raids and other maneuverings a crucial moment in the American Revolution was decided. Michael Schellhammer's *George Washington and the Final British Campaign for the Hudson River, 1779* is an admirable attempt at capturing and analyzing the events of this forgotten campaign and its weighing importance in the greater American War for Independence.

Schellhammer's purpose is to provide an operational history of the campaign of 1779 while simultaneously examining the campaign in the larger context of its importance to the outcome of the conflict. This work also shares the battle of minds between Washington and Clinton and their ongoing chess match along the Hudson. Going

even further, Schellhammer's true purpose is to bring this forgotten campaign out of the shadows and place it properly within the American War for Independence. Schellhammer's central argument makes a claim for the utter importance of the campaign, something others have not claimed. He argues that the victory by Washington in 1779 secured and solidified American control of the Hudson River and its surrounding areas. He continues on to claim that it was this campaign that finally influenced Clinton to abandon combat operations in the northern colonies and to focus the bulk of British resources and manpower in the South.

The majority of the narrative reads as an operational history of the events of the campaign of 1779. Schellhammer tells a fascinating story of the last British offensive in the northern colonies. The Hudson River represents the central feature of this campaign as Clinton and the British move up the river and attack several key locations such as King's Ferry and New Haven. Captured well by Schellhammer is the outright Fabian nature of the

struggle between Clinton's advancements and Washington's careful maneuverings, as well as the nature of the British raids. The description of "desolation warfare" used at places like Fairfield brings life to this previously faceless campaign. Several key individuals, organizations, and events stand out within the narrative. First is General "Mad Anthony" Wayne. General Wayne has been characterized as a reckless and incapable military commander in the established historiographies. This was a reliable trend until recently, as Wayne has received an image makeover in recent scholarship. Schellhammer is among those offering a reassessment of the brash officer. Wayne occupies a central position in the narrative, and is praised for his actions at Stony Point and his handling of Washington's light infantry corps. Another scholar who has set out to change Wayne's image is Alan Gaff in *Bayonets in the Wilderness* (2008). While Schellhammer discusses Wayne's revolutionary actions, Gaff takes on the period immediately following the War for Independence. Another point of interest is Schellhammer's discussion of the Culper Ring. This intelligence organization, crafted with Washington's guidance, tackled a difficult task, gathering intelligence within the occupied city of New York. The example of Nathan Hale suggests why Washington could not simply send his men into enemy-controlled New York posing as civilians. Instead he needed a well-organized group of individuals constantly building relationships and gathering intelligence. The Culper Ring did just that, and became an incredibly reliable tool for Washington in the campaign of 1779. Schellhammer is not the first to discuss the Culper Ring and its importance to the "Forgotten War" of 1779, as Alexander Rose's *Washington's Spies* (2007) is focused on that very connection. Schellhammer takes things further and places the intelligence problem and solution within the larger context of the campaign and its impact on the greater War for Independence. The final point worth mentioning is Schellhammer's treatment of the events at Stony Point, which he sees as the cul-

minating moment not only in the campaign of 1779 but in the trajectory of the overall struggle against the British. Stony Point is the climax of both Schellhammer's narrative and his arguments. The Battle of Stony Point was a combination of everything else this work focuses on. Washington utilized accurate, dependable information from the Culper Ring as he commanded General Wayne and Light Infantry Corps to launch a midnight assault on the British position known as the Little Gibraltar because of its strategic position on the Hudson. The American victory was secured through a frenzied night fight that took the British by surprise. This was to be the seminal moment of success for the Americans in the campaign.

Schellhammer offers a compelling narrative of an oft-forgotten campaign. He argues that the American success in denying the British control over the Hudson during these summer months was instrumental in the overall trajectory of the war. This work is a well-researched and -written piece of scholarship that puts its audience both inside Washington's mind during the campaign and on the ground with American soldiers up and down the Hudson River. Schellhammer has authored the first account of this campaign, but undoubtedly not the last as this work opens the door for other scholars to investigate and comment on this underrepresented period in the American War for Independence.

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