

Thomas Ward

The year is 1780, the twentieth year of the reign of His Most Gracious Majesty, George III, King of Great Britain, and the sixth year of the great rebellion in several of the British colonies of North America.

You are Captain Thomas Ward, of the Loyal Refugee Volunteers. Your unit, which numbers about a hundred and sixty men, lies at the very bottom of the hierarchy of corps raised for the suppression of the rebellion. Indeed, it is so humble that none of its members, not even your good self, are entitled to pay, rations, uniforms, weapons, or ammunition. Rather, the Loyal Refugee Volunteers, have, since April of this year, earned their bread by providing wood to fuel the fires, and beef to fill the bellies, of the soldiers defending the city of New York and the loyal counties that surround it: Staten Island, King’s, Queen’s, and Westchester. They do this on the west bank of the Hudson River, in Bergen County, in the Province of New Jersey, most of which is in the hands of Rebels.



Loyal Counties of the Province of New York

Recent Events of the Rebellion in the Province of New York

1778

6 February: The Rebel Legislature of the self-described “State of New York” approves the Articles of Confederation, a pact designed to promote co-operation among various Rebel groups.

18 June: British forces evacuate Philadelphia. Three thousand loyal subjects leave the city. Many of these take up residence in the city of New York.

24 May: Sir Henry Clinton takes command of all British military forces in North America.

1 June: Captain Joseph Brant, chief of the Mohawk, leads a party of Loyal Iroquois in a successful raid against the Rebels at Cobleskill, in the Province of New York.

18 July: Loyal forces under Captain Brant destroy the Rebel supply base at Andruston, in the Mohawk Valley, in the Province of New York, some 200 miles northwest of the city of New York.

21 July: The main rebel army concentrates at White Plains, in the county of Westchester, some 35 miles north of the city of New York.

31 August: Loyal forces, led by Colonel Simcoe of the Queen’s Rangers, ambush Rebel Indians on the Van Cortlandt estate in Westchester County, some 17 miles north of the city of New York.

1779

30 June: Sir Henry Clinton issues the Philipsburg Proclamation, which frees all slaves belonging to Rebels.

19 August: A large party of Rebels conducts a successful raid on the British Army outpost at Paulus Hook. While Loyal forces retained control of the fort and its guns, the Rebels managed to capture 158 members of the garrison.

2 November: Sir Henry Clinton issues a commission to Abraham Cuyler, a prominent loyalist and veteran of the recent war with France, to raise of battalion of 600 men from among the thousands of loyalist refugees in the loyal counties of New York. Lieutenant Colonel Cuyler, who calls his new unit the Loyal Refugee Volunteers, begins to recruit in the city of New York and Queen’s County.

1780

8 January: Noting the failure of Abraham Cuyler to fill the ranks of his battalion with recruits, Major General Tryon refuses to provide the unit with either rations or pay. Thus, the men already enlisted into the Loyal Refugee Volunteers were given leave to look for work.

19 April: Having obtained a contract to provide fire-wood for the British forces in New York, Abraham Cuyler resumes recruiting for the Loyal Refugee Volunteers.

30 April: Major General James Pattison, military commandant of the city of New York, sends a detachment of 100 men from Paulus Hook to Bull’s Ferry, where they guarded a party of wood cutters led by Abraham Cuyler. Soon thereafter, Pattison assists the Loyal Refugee Volunteers to build a fort at Bull’s Ferry. This consists of a blockhouse and a stockade, both made of wood, and an obstacle belt made up of felled trees (*abattis*.)

7 June: Abraham Cuyler orders Captain Thomas Ward to take a lieutenant and thirty men on a raid against the Rebel-held village of Cloester, 14 miles north of Bull’s Ferry. He further orders that any proceeds of the raid be shared with the men of the Loyal Refugee Volunteers who remained at the fort at Bull’s Ferry.

24 June: Sir Henry Clinton leads a reconnaissance in force into northern Westchester County.



Report of the State of the Refugee Post on the West side of Hudson's River

11th July 1780

The defences of the Post consist of a substantial, two story Block house with two four Pounders in the upper story- a strong Stockade which runs, in right lines, from the Right and Left of the Blockhouse, to the edge of the Precipice, and, an Abbatis surrounding the whole at the distance of nearly, sixty feet from the Stockade, which is form'd of Stakes about nine feet high, with Creneaux and a Banquette.

The Refugees are lodged in the area included by the Stockade:

they are in number about one hundred- but being laboriously employ'd during the day, they can afford few men for duty at night.

The Ridge of the Hill in front of the Abbatis rises gradually till it becomes about forty feet higher than the base of the Block house, at the distance of three or four hundred yards;

to this spot an Enemy can approach with cannon in security.

Upon the whole, the Post, tho' it appears capable of defying a Coup de main, is no where proof against Artillery.

It was recommended to the Commander of the Refugees to make a good ditch without the Stockade, throwing the excavated earth against it.

Wm. FYERS Lieutenant
and Sub Engineer

His Excellency the Commander in Chief

Artillery



Serving a Six-Pounder Cannon

Characteristics of British Field Pieces Circa 1780

	Six-Pounder Cannon	Three-Pounder Cannon	Royal Howitzer
Projectile	Solid Shot	Solid Shot	Explosive Shell
Horses	Four	Three	Three
Range	1,000 yards	750 yards	750 yards
Weight	900 pounds	500 pounds	700 pounds

