
**FISHKILL IN THE REVOLUTION.**

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The birthday of Washington is hailed with joy by a grateful people, and it brings anew to their remembrance the patriotism of their fathers. Every rebel in the triumphant revolution became a patriot, and every loyalist caught something of the opprobium of his sovereign. We may almost forget the eloquence of such master spirits as Otis and Henry in arousing the colonists to action, amid the glory of those who were victorious in arms, but whether we look to those who directed in council, or to the actors on the battle field, they are sharers together in their country's honor. No matter if one must be the Commander-in-Chief, and others in the unknown soldiery; that Montgomery should early fall, and Warren soon after with gun in hand at Bunker Hill, or that Lieutenant-Colonel Barber should perish by the accidental falling of a tree at New Windsor so near the close of the struggle, to cause one, with the poet Horace, to curse him who planted it for such an evil happening, we crown them all, as the righteous are crowned amid heaven's applause. Every engagement, whether resulting gloriously as at Trenton, Princeton, Saratoga and Yorktown, or disastrously, as at Long Island, with its masterly retreat, and Camden and Charleston, with no lack of bravery—freemen were battling for freedom. More was won than the Greeks gained at Marathon, Salamis and Plataea; ours is the larger liberty of a more enlightened government.

Washington rises before us now with his compatriots in arms. We rejoice to be in our rich historical surroundings, and until that history is forgotten there will be in the memory West Point, New Windsor and Newburgh, and the camping grounds at Fishkill, to which we will turn in viewing there Washington and Putnam, and you may see some reason for our observing the anniversaries of Lexington and the disbanding of the patriot soldiers, and that we should have Monell and Lossing to preside.

Already the citizens had been active to duty. They had been nerved by a common danger. Their meetings were held, their resolves were passed, and their names given for any demands which might come. The New York convention had come from White Plains, and had sat in those churches dedicated to religion and set apart for patriotism. Among those members were the
Livingstons, Morises, Van Cortlandt, Van Rensselaer and Jay, and they had held their sessions from September 3, 1776, to February 14, 1777. They were armed as soldiers for whatever they might have to encounter, and they became organizers of our State in drafting our first Constitution, which was fashioned by Jay, who delayed two months in reporting it, until their assembling in Kingston, feeling it was wiser not to make too great haste in their action.

The whole town was much larger in area than now, embracing Wappingers, East Fishkill and LaGrange, and the houses were few, with here and there, from the river landing backward, a substantial Dutch and English structure, except in the village of Fishkill, then the most populous district in the county—and now fast growing to be so again—which could boast of its churches, the one running back in its history sixty years, and there was Graham's school to give academic advantages, like that a little later at Matteawan. The village was along the old post road from New York to Albany, which was the principal thoroughfare, and there was one of the seven post-offices in the State.

We have a happy description of the appearance in 1780, from the pen of De Chastellux, the accomplished French traveller, as he saw it in his visit: "I contained my journey, therefore, and reached Fishkill about four o'clock. This town, in which there are not more than fifty houses in the space of two miles, has been long the principal depot of the American army. It is there they have placed their magazines, their hospitals, workshops, etc., but all these form a town of themselves, composed of handsome large barracks, built in the wood at the foot of the mountains; for the Americans, like the Romans in many respects, have hardly any other winter quarters than wooden towns, or barricaded camps, which may be compared to the hiemalia of the Romans."

As for the position of Fishkill, that it was a post of great importance is evident from the campaign of 1777. It is clear that the plan of the English was to render themselves master of the whole course of the North river, and thus to separate the eastern and western States. It was necessary therefore to secure a post on that river; West Point was made choice of as the most important to fortify, and Fishkill as the best adapted to the establishment of the principal depot of provision, ammunition, etc., these two positions are connected together. I shall soon speak of West Point, but I shall remark here that Fishkill has all the qualities necessary for a place of depot, for it is situated on the high road from Connecticut and near the North River, and is protected at the same time by a chain of inaccessible mountains, which occupy a space of more than twenty miles between the Croton River and that of Fishkill."

Later, this same writer, observes: "I was thus far faithful in engagements, for I arrived in New Windsor the same day that they left West Point; I hoped to overtake them at Albany, and General Washington finding that he could not retain me, was pleased himself to conduct me in his large barge to the other side of the river. We got on shore at Fishkill Landing place, to gain the eastern road, preferred by travelers to the western. I now quitted the General, but he insisted that Colonel Smith should accompany me as far as Poughkeepsie. The road to this
town passes pretty near Fishkill, which we leave on our right; from thence we travel on the heights, where there is a beautiful and extensive prospect, and traversing a township called Middlebrook, arrive at the creek, and at Wapping Fall. There I halted a few minutes to consider, under different points of view, the charming landscape formed by this river, as well as from its cascade, which is roaring and picturesque, as from the groups of trees and rocks, which combined with a number of sawmills and furnaces, compose the most capricious and romantic prospect."

De Chastellux appears to have been much pleased with Colonel Smith, who married the charming daughter of John Adams, and was the father of the late Mrs. John Peter de Windt, who was then going over the grounds to be the attractive home of this child, and only a short way from the road side, in one of the most lovely nooks in full sweep of the river, she was in sweet peace to dwell. Middlebrook refers to Middlebush, which was then a small hamlet. The old road traveled wound its way from the river up and along the slope back of the present Mt. Gulian House, and just above turned northward in the Poughkeepseine course along the Verplanck place, and that to the old village bore off to the east along where Nathaniel Sackett lived at the Willard H. Muse corner, where the lower landing road from the river came into it, by the side of which a little southeasterly, is the Madam Brett dwelling, from where a road went across the creek by the old mill.

Early in October, 1776, in obedience to a direction of a military council, a major-general was seen coming up through the North Highlands on horseback, at the head of a brigade, into the cantonment at Fishkill. He sat erect, with his keen eye glancing forward, which was kindled into fire in the midst of battle, when his lisping voice could be heard above the roar of cannon. He was stout, but by no means tall, and his rugged mind, of unusual acuteness, gave much expression to a large and interesting face. He was quick to see and ready to act, and knew no fear in the thickest dangers. His schooling had not been in academic halls; in common with many of his countrymen he became familiar with "the arts of war" in his country's service. He was not the polished Athenian, but the uncouth Spartan, with a great heart to be moved with pity, and to be aroused to the loftiest heroism. Parkman, in his "Montcalm and Wolfe," styles him "sturdy" in the earlier war, and Bancroft as "the open and generous-hearted." His friend Barlow sings of him:

"There stood stern Putnam, seamed with many a scar,
The veteran honors of an early war."

There was thus a romance around him, and he had hastened from his plow to Bunker Hill—leaving it in the furrow—where he appeared to direct most in the preparations, although no one was in actual command—a question which has given rise to varied and heated discussion—but with Warren as a volunteer, and Prescott under Ward, directing here, and Putnam there—superior in rank—we may unite in the historian's verdict in awarding "the highest prize and glory to Prescott and his companions," without regard as to pre-eminence. Putnam never boasted of his part, but his own Connecticut
was proud that he was there as her adopted son, and Massachusetts was ready to declare that she gave him birth. Ward gave hearty thanks in his general order to "the officers and soldiers who behaved so gallantly at the action in Charlestown," and in kindling words of prophefy declared: "We shall finally come off victorious, and triumph over the enemies of freedom and America!" The far-seeing Franklin wrote his friends on the other side: "America will fight; England has lost her colonies forever."

It is only foolish to enter into the jealousies of the army, and see long after the bitter accusations of Dearborn, which were not worthy Webster's unanswerable reply in the North American Review. Trumbull's canvas has portrayed the action, and he praises Putnam in his "McFingal," and he must write all aglow to Putnam's honored son, and conclude with: "Accept, my dear sir, this feeble tribute to your father's memory, from one who knew him, respected him, loved him, and who wishes health and prosperity to you and all the good man's posterity."

Washington wrote to the President of Congress in January, 1776, from Cambridge: "General Putnam is a most valuable man, and a fine executive officer, but I do not know how he would conduct in a separate department." That he should have been chosen among the first brigadier-generals, and soon after among the earliest major-generals, may show the sway he had in the army. I would say, as a lawyer, there is no farther advocacy to be urged, after Webster's words at Bunker Hill, just before his pathetic outburst as to Warren. He has inscribed therein the names of those heroes more lastingly than are those of the Pilgrims chiselled into the granite monument at Plymouth. As Paul, in the Hebrews, calls the roll of the blessed immortals, so Webster, quickened by patriotic inspiration, looks around and speaks in his heart-moving language: "Prescott, Putnam, Stark, Brooks, Read, Pomeroy, Bridge!—our eyes seek for you in vain amid this broken band. You are gathered to your fathers, and live only to your country, in her grateful remembrance and your own bright example. But let us not too much grieve that you have met the common fate of men. You lived at least long enough to know that your work had been nobly and successfully accomplished. You lived to see your country's independence established, and to sheathe your swords from War. On the light of liberty you saw arise the light of peace, like

'another morn,

Risen on mid-day;'

and the sky on which you closed your eyes was cloudless."

And yet Putnam was feeling during those autumn days at his headquarters in Fishkill, those discouragements which the most valiant are to know. A violent storm was spending itself over him. He was eager to serve wherever his Commander-in-Chief would have him go, without the slightest selfish regard, and so in the most perplexing emergency he was called to the command on Long Island, when the illness of General Greene prevented that brave officer from commanding, and only two or three days before the forced engagement, when there was nothing left but for Washington to plan that victorious retreat, which saved from impending disaster. He had so lately been
unable at Peekskill to give aid to the Clintons, who displayed a valor deserving a victory, although it partook largely of the nature of desperation against an outnumbering foe. He could not be playful as he was when he sent his facetious note to General Robertson, and even his courageous reply to General Tryon was to be lost sight of. Colonel Humphreys, who was with him, and knew the full story, and was to become his graceful biographer, relates that no blame could rest on him. He writes:

"General Putnam, having been reduced to a single brigade in the field, and a single regiment at Fort Montgomery, repeatedly informed the Commander-in-Chief that the posts committed to his charge must in all probability be lost, in case an attempt should be made upon them; and that, circumstanced as he was, he could not be responsible for the consequences. His situation was certainly to be lamented, but it was not in the power of the Commander-in-Chief to alter it, except by authorizing him to call upon the militia for aid, an aid always precarious, and often so tardy, as when obtained to be of no utility."

He remarks further: "Governor Clinton, an active, resolute and intelligent officer, upon being apprised of the movement, dispatched a letter by express to General Putnam for succor. By the treachery of the messenger, the letter miscarried."

Fertile as Putnam was in invention, to suggest the *chevaux de frise*, which failed, after all to be an obstruction, to our mortification, and quick as he was to see the natural superiority of West Point for fortifications, and to select it out for that purpose, he was helpless at that critical hour to give assistance. His first duty was at Fishkill, to write out his account of himself for the Commander-in-Chief, and it is exceedingly fitting that we should hear it. It is not a defence; that was not called for. It is the report which is due from any officer in command, to give the unvarnished tale be it whatever it may be, which does not signify, in itself, any misconduct, and is not to be so construed. Only honor is to be thought of, and there is nothing in the following letter to suspect to the contrary. This is his narrative:

"Fishkill, 8th October, 1777.—Dear General: It is with the utmost reluctance I now sit down to inform you that the enemy, after making a variety of movements up and down the North River, landed on the morning of the 4th instant, about three thousand men at Tarrytown; and after making an excursion about 5 miles up the country, they returned and re-embarked the morning following, advancing up near King's Ferry, and landed on the east side of the river, but in the evening part of them re-embarked, and the morning after landed a little above King's Ferry on the west side. The morning being so exceedingly foggy concealed their scheme, and prevented us from gaining any idea as to the number of troops they landed. In about three hours we discovered a large fire at the Ferry, which we imagined to be the storehouses, upon which it was thought they only landed with a view of destroying the said houses. The pickets and scouts which we had out could not learn the exact number of the enemy that were remaining on the east side of the river, but from the best accounts, they were about fifteen hundred. At the same time a number of ships and galleys, with about forty flat boats, made every
appearance of their intention to land troops both at Fort Independence and Peekskill Landing. These circumstances and my strength, being not more than twelve hundred Continental troops and three hundred militia, prevented me from detaching a party to attack the enemy that day on the east side of the river. After we thought it impracticable to quit the heights which we had then possession of, and attack the enemy, Brigadier-General Parsons and myself went to reconnoitre the ground near the enemy, and on our return from thence we were alarmed with a very heavy and hot firing, both of small arms and cannon, at Fort Montgomery, which immediately convinced me that the enemy had landed a large body of men in the morning at the time and place before mentioned. Upon which I immediately detached five hundred men to reinforce the Garrison; but before they could possibly cross the river to their assistance, the enemy, far superior in numbers, had possessed themselves of the fort. Never did men behave with more spirit and activity, than our troops on this occasion. They repulsed the enemy three times, who were in number at least five to one. Governor Clinton and General James Clinton were both present, but the engagement continuing till dusk gave them opportunity, together with several officers and a number of privates, to make their escape. Governor Clinton arrived at Peekskill the same evening, about 11 o’clock, and with the advice of him, General Parsons, and several other officers, it was thought impossible to maintain the post at Peekskill with the force then present, against one that the enemy might, in a few hours, bring on the heights on our rear. It was therefore agreed that the stores ought to be immediately removed to some secure place, and the troops take post at Fishkill until a reinforcement of militia shall come to their aid.

I am, &c.,

ISRAEL PUTNAM.”

But this simple story was not enough. It was believed to be Washington’s opinion that “the works were defended with resolution,” but Hamilton must needs criticize the defence of the Clintons as well as the conduct of Putnam, which was not in accordance with the praise bestowed by others of high rank. There was a feeling stirred up in the breasts of a number of the inferior officers in regard to the propriety of the course pursued, that, whether proceeding from envy and malice, or a lack of judgment, if they were in error, it became the duty of the Congress to demand an inquiry into the cause of the loss of these forts, which was only a matter of justice to those personally and intimately concerned, and McDougal, Huntington and Wigglesworth were named by Washington to conduct it, who wrote from Valley Forge to Putnam in Connecticut, to come over to Fishkill to attend it, as they would question the commander, and his letter is a most delicate portraying of his own personal friendship, with his own unshaken confidence in him, while he must heed the rising clamor.

There is not a word to be construed into any doubt. The conclusion is characteristic of the writer, there being no yielding in discharging a conscientious requirement, and no withholding of becoming sympathy. He tells
him: "General McDougal is to take the command of the posts in the Highlands. My reason for making this change is owing to the prejudices of the people, which, whether well or ill-grounded, must be indulged, and I should think myself wanting in justice to the public and candor toward you, were I to continue you in command after I have been almost in direct terms informed that the people of the State of New York will not render the necessary support and assistance while you remain at the head of that department. When the inquiry is finished I desire that you will return to Connecticut and superintend the forwarding of the new levies with the greatest expedition."

McDougal then took the command at Fishkill, and he was directly afterward superseded by Gates, who was flushed with his northern victory, and was maneuvering to supplant Washington. Colonel Lamb was appointed later to be both at West Point and Fishkill, and remained until the close of the war. Putnam, soon after his coming, moved up with his men to Red Hook, but immediately returned and went down into Westchester, and after a little, pursuant to order, was in action in Connecticut, where he had a letter in the October following, in 1778, from Washington, sympathizing with him on the loss of his wife, with this touching paragraph: "Remembering that all must die, and that she had lived to an honorable age, I hope you will bear the misfortune with that fortitude that becomes a man and a christian."

Washington wrote to his old friend on June 2, 1783, from the Headquarters in Newburgh, when he took leave of his soldiers: "I can assure you that among the many worthy and meritorious officers with whom I have had the happiness to be connected in service through the course of this war, and from whose cheerful assistance in the various and trying vicissitudes of a complicated contest, the name of a Putnam is not forgotten; nor will be, but with that stroke of time which shall obliterate from my mind the remembrance of all those toils and fatigues through which we have struggled for the preservation and establishment of the rights, liberties and independence of our country."

Putnam's headquarters were probably at the Wharton House, and yet one of his letters from Fishkill would appear to have been written at Colonel John Brinckerhoff's, from a head line as to the distance from the camp. There was but little opportunity in his short stay to mingle with these legislators then in session, or with the worthy residents of the town, who were too seriously concerned in the unknown ending of the struggle to think but little of the social side. It was a military town to them, and his was the military life. He was a superb horseman, and was frequently seen reigning his steed in riding to the river and returning. The rivalries of officers immediately around him may have been a disturbance, but his meditations were not as to himself, but as to the welfare of his country.

An anecdote is told about him. At his own headquarters, after the defection of Arnold, there was a heated discussion over that fallen and infamous betrayer. Lamb, who had been with him, declared he had much merit as a soldier, when Putnam, in his lisping speech, interrupted them with: "Whath all thith? God cuth it, gentlemen, let the traitor go! Here's Washington's health in a brimmer." The loud talking ceased.
The veteran had no patience with Arnold. He had himself the offer by
the British, after the battle of Bunker Hill, to be made a major-general, with
a large fortune—for they knew his ability and sought thus to weaken our
ranks—which he indignantly spurned.

Thacher notes this in his military journal: "In the memorable and distressing
flight of the American army through New Jersey in 1776, General Putnam
was always near, always the friend, the supporter and confident of his be-
loved chief." But I will leave my Putnam now, who has graced Trumbull's
canvas, and has had a Dwight to write his epitaph in letters of glory.

There is good reason to see why the Commander-in-Chief should be so
much turned to Fishkill, and be so much there through those seven years, or
it will be seen when the simple story shall have been fully written by the
painingstaker historian. They who were in council in Peekskill saw its unsur-
passed natural position to guard those Highlands from the north, up through
which the enemy never dared to venture, but chose, rather, the broader
way of the river, with its less risk of being driven back. Near the northern
gateway breastworks are seen, which were not thrown up like Fort Nonsense
was at Morristown, to keep the soldiers out of idleness, but there was the ex-
pectation of a battle there just after the loss of Fort Montgomery and Fort
Clinton, when the British were looked for to attempt to force their way north-
ward. The narrow way is a very Thermopylae for defence. The Beacon
Heights were lighted up by order of Congress, in common with others, for an
important service in giving army signals. The great highways, north and
south, and east and west, crossing at Fishkill, made it a centre of influence.
The county of Putnam, named in honor of the hero, was not yet formed from
Duchess. The sittings of that early legislative body were alone enough to
give distinction and arouse State pride, but there was much more. In that
earliest meeting of the Sons of Liberty after the news from Lexington, so full
of ardor, a woman offered to enlist in the cause, if other women would. Was
she Molly Pitcher, or like her, who aroused such spirit at Monmouth? The
patriotic citizens could go no further. Their sons with their fathers enlisted;
their wives and daughters displayed the Roman and Grecian virtues. They
opened their hospitable homes to the officers, and mercy and justice going
hand and hand with religion, one of their houses of worship was given up for
a hospital, and the other for a prison, to minister for the good of the army.

It is probable that it was in the Wiltsie house, at the upper river landing,
where the following note was written by the hero of Stony Point, who was
secretly planning for some other like surprise:

"Fishkill Landing, 4 Aug., 1779.—Dear Sir: You'll please to order a de-
tachment of one hundred and fifty men, with two days provisions, under the
command of Colonel Butler. I wish you to order Major Hull with him.

"Interim believe me yours,

"ANT'Y WAYNE, B. G.

"To Mr. Nath'l Sackett.

"N. B.—The detachment will move to-morrow morning early."
Fisher's storehouse was near by, and off on Spy Hill below may have been quartered the very men that Wayne was asking Sackett to order for his contemplated expedition. The Verplanck house was given for the use of Baron Steuben, and within those walls were many interesting gatherings in those days, the most historic of which was the organizing, in part, the Society of the Cincinnati. Directly off there in the river shallow is a rock on which Hendrick Hudson is said to have stood when making his voyage northward and southward, which Weir has pictured on his canvas. Sackett's home was in the present bounds of Matteawan, and also the Madam Brett house—our most ancient building, and in which yet appears to be the spirit of the stately dame—where Henry Schencck gave room to President Yates, of the Fishkill convention, and to leading military men. Nearing Fishkill, is the old Scofield house at Glenham, where Lafayette was honored, and close by John Bailey forged out his sword for Washington, esteemed perhaps as much as that which came from Frederick. The Wharton house was used by the army officers generally, and has a record of its own, and we have but a little of it in Cooper's Spy. A little below was laid away in unmarked graves in that old burying-ground many a true-hearted soldier, whose Lady Percy far away mourned deeply for her loved Hotspur. Many were carried off by disease, and the sufferings borne at one time in the camp were very great. A historian writes: "Clothing became so scarce in the Highlands that a building was erected at Fishkill as a retreat for naked men. Soldiers patched their clothes until patches and clothes both gave out, and they were sent to this retreat for naked men." The Van Wyck house was opened by Robert Brett, son of Madame Brett, to Loudon, who printed the ordinance for organizing the State government, and published the New York Packet. The Colonel Abraham Brinckerhoff house at Brinckerhoffville, then occupied by Colonel Derick Brinckerhoff, is where Lafayette lay very sick with a fever, and he entertained Washington. When his mill building was burned Washington gave him the aid of soldiers to rebuild it. He was very firm in his resolution, and it is said that when Whitefield was ready to preach within his hearing with all his eloquent fervor, he went directly on to his accustomed place of worship.

The Colonel John Brinckerhoff house, near Swartwoutville, is the Washington's Headquarters in Fishkill. It has had a peculiar interest to me. The view of it should have been in Lossing's Field Book. Washington was there for days together, in October, 1778, and had a hearty welcome. In one of those quaint rooms, still well preserved, he wrote letters to Lincoln, the President of Congress, Lafayette, Gouverneur Morris, the Committee of Arrangements, and Gates, upon the old varied theme, the affairs of the war, and could we have all the letters that were written from those headquarters we have named, we would have from those high spirited officers a readable volume. The leaders in the northern army were there, and passed that way to the east and the west.

Washington had much regard for Colonel Brinckerhoff who was then an old man. They were in walks together, and it is likely the Colonel spoke of his
own pious Dutch ancestry, and he could well recollect when there were still many Indians in the vicinity, whose old fishing grounds were along the creek down in the village and whose quarters were in the Fishkill Hook. He had known Ninham, the last king of the Wappingers, who pledged himself and the remnant of his people to aid our fortunes. He naturally made some inquiry one day as to army affairs, to which the General could give no reply, but asked: "Can you keep a secret, Mr. Brinckerhoff?" The answer was, "I can," expecting to hear something. "So can I," came in surprise from the usually grave Washington. But the Colonel's ruling hour was to come. At night when the time for retiring came, the Colonel said to the General: "You are Commander-in-Chief of the forces of the United States?" "Yes, sir; I believe that I am," was the reply. "General," the brave Colonel went on to say, "I am Commander-in-Chief, too, of my own household, and you are my guest. I am in the habit of closing the duties of the day by calling my family and servants together, reading the Scriptures and offering family worship. The reading and the prayer will be in the Low Dutch language; but I would be glad to have you join in spirit in the worship." Washington assented, and they knelt down together in fervid devotion.

Washington was returning from Hartford, where he had been in conference with Rochambeau, and stayed with Col. Derick Brinckerhoff on the night before the discovery of the treason of Arnold, and the next morning was riding with his aid, Hamilton, Lafayette and Knox, with their suite, on his way to West Point, when in the midst of the North Highlands he met the messenger with that distressing news, and turned aside and went into a house near the roadside, which has been pointed out to me, and in which I have been, where the sad story was related. For the once the heart of the fearless man gave way. He had been at Valley Forge and knew the suffering there had been in Fishkill, where the dead out-numbered those of any of his battlefields, and he had learned of the intrigues of Gates to be himself the chief, but to think that Arnold who had been entrusted with so much, and had shown so much courage, should become a betrayer, he pathetically asked, "Whom can we trust now?" Hamilton scarcely needed so soon afterward to write so eloquently of the virtues of Andre. Why did he not, rather, let his ready pen delineate with the most exquisite touches a portrait of Hale?

Fishkill was indeed a busy military town. Great trains of wagons came into it from every direction with army provisions; officers and soldiers came and went, but not to leave until the general disbanding; many travellers passed on those highways, and there were visitors to the encampment from every side. We are indebted to Lossing, Monell and Bailey for some of the traditions, as you are in Orange to Eager, Ruttenber and Headley, but many have been lost. But we here and there get some glimpses of those surroundings in the revolution. Here is something from Wm. Ellery's journal, who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Under date of November 7, 1777, he jots down: "Breakfasted at Adriance's and set off for Fishkill, where we arrived at noon. Could get no provender for our horses but at the Continental stables. Waited upon General Putman, who was packing up and just about setting off for White
Plains. Chatted with him a while, and then put off for the Continental Ferry at the North River. In our way to the ferry, we met President Hancock, in a sulky, escorted by one of his secretaries, and two or three other gentlemen, and one light horseman. This escort surprised us, it seemed inadequate to the purpose of either defence or parade. But our surprise was not of long continuance, for we had not rode far before we met six light horsemen on the canter, and just as we reached the ferry a boat arrived with as many more. Those with the light horsemen and the gentlemen before mentioned made up the escort of Mr. President Hancock. Who would not be a great man? I verily believe that the President, as he passes through the country thus escorted, feels a more triumphant satisfaction than the Colonel of the Queen’s Regiment of Light Dragoons, attended by his whole army, and an escort of a thousand men."

John Adams was writing this in his diary on the 18th of the same month: "Rode to the Continental Ferry, crossed over and dined at Fishkill, at the Dr’s. Mess near the hospital, with Dr. Samuel Adams, Dr. Eustis, Mr. Wells, etc. It was a feast; salt pork and cabbage, roast beef and potatoes, and a noble suet pudding, grog and a glass of port."

The next day he continues: "Lodged last night and breakfasted this morning at Loudon’s, at Fishkill. Here we are at Colonel Morehouse’s, a member of Assembly for Duchess county."

Dr. Thacher mentions in his military journal of his dining at that hospital with those army surgeons, and of his going to and from Fishkill, which adds a little to the picture we have of those scenes. There was much passing between New Windsor and Newburgh and Fishkill. The Commander-in-Chief often crossed in his barge from New Windsor to Denning’s Point, classically known as Pres’p’ Isle, and sometimes was accompanied by William Denning, whose home was at Salisbury Mills, who came to be afterward the owner of that land. There the chieftain would rest under those grand old trees, to be known thereafter as the Washington Oaks, where he would meet some messenger from Fishkill with his letters, or would wait until one was sent up there and had returned.

Undoubtedly he passed many hours in most serious meditation, surveying the whole military field. The Balm of Gilead tree at Balmville has some little history in its one hundred and fifty years, but the older of those oaks was growing when Alfred was reigning, so like Washington in his disinterestedness. Newburgh and New Windsor were in his full view. He saw the charming Pollopel Island below, where we would like to see his own statue rising aloft as the sentinel of freedom, with that of Hendrick Hudson.

While Washington was full of cares in being anxious for his country, and was to meet many perplexities, and was to overcome in his temptation in refusing the crown, not waiting until it had been thrice offered him, like Cæsar, lured by the eloquence of Antony—to yield and blast the fair hopes of those who had been struggling and sacrificing for a larger liberty, still in all that camp life there was a sunnier side. He had been drawn closer to his companions in arms in Fishkill, around that great encampment. There he met the Clintons,
and he could not but admire the intrepid war governor, who was never indirect in speech, nor was he ever carried away with a vain ambition. Even Hamilton was to be a constant surprise in all the demands that were made on him, who was ready to give his counsel to the Congress, as he was to suggest directions in the field, and, had he been a few years older, it is questionable if he would not have aspired to be the first in command, so full of genius was he, and so conscious of his powers.

Hamilton was then much drawn to Burr—who had lost Washington's favor—who was so like him in culture and brilliant gifts, and whose war record with Montgomery had thrown around him a charm of romance. They were alike in statue, and alike attractive. Neither was perfect in morals, but the one with his even more courtly manners, sinned more deeply than the other. Both were highly distinguished, but perhaps Burr surpassed as the astute lawyer, as he did as a soldier, and Hamilton in writing and statesmanship, with more effectiveness in oratory; each might have used Wolsey's language to the other—

"Beware of ambition,
By that sin fell the angels,"

for it wrecked their happiness and turned them to be enemies, for them to agree to meet in combat, and the one to slay the other.

Lafayette then came near. He was so young, so ardent, so unselfish, he was all the while an encouragement, and like Rochambeau, could be trusted in council. He was giving for our independence the proudest part of his history, which must have lighted up his prison walls in Olmutz, and how he rejoiced to see us in coming back to give us his blessing, and to receive the benediction of a grateful people.

The Baron Steuben grew more and more winning in the Verplanck homestead. Washington first met him at Valley Forge. He had shown an unusual zeal as a teacher in the tactics of war, and was a most captivating figure, having been a Lieutenant-General under the illustrious Frederic, with a most intricate knowledge of the science of arms. He had sacrificed largely personally in espousing our cause, and often Washington must have looked on him with profoundest admiration, and listened to him with rapt attention, as he drew him out to tell the romantic stories of his earlier soldier life. Very likely the Commander-in-Chief delighted to see him explaining to the solider those lessons he would have them learn, and perhaps he was asking afterward of his Chief concerning his own going out with Braddock, and the fuller history of that former strife, which was to be the training school of our own leading warriors, while he, in turn, would discourse of his Frederic, who was, in his age, to give his own sword in admiration to the American hero. The Baron must have compared those two Generals together, for he could scarcely do otherwise, and, perhaps, his example in seeking to aid our fortunes may have led Frederic to a more enthusiastic study of Washington. They were not at all of a kindred mould, and yet a closer observer would see something alike, as there must be some likeness, like that of a family, in the same sphere of genius.
And occasionally Washington was seen in freest intercourse in those Fishkill homes, as he enjoyed those so much in and around Newburgh. His commanding form, superior horsemanship, reserved manners, measured speech and thoughtful respect, were often to be spoken of, and children's children have heard the glowing chapters.

And do you wonder, Mr. President and members of our Society, with your own love for historical researches, that I should have been instinctively led to seek my home in old Fishkill? My dearest teacher was an historian, and a very Arnold of Rugby, and I caught from his lips and his pages the passion which has such a hold on me. I have a pride in the history of Fishkill, and of this whole region, and I thought as a boy I would like to dwell along this charming river about Newburgh. With a simple love of Nature, I have felt that Wordsworth could not have known a more wonderful delight among his own bewitching lakes. With the broken mountain chain, and its varied vales and heights, with those ever-inviting hills around, we have no less scenery to give to Nature's fondest lovers the fullest enjoyment. The landscape stirs us in the snows of winter with another beauty from the foliage of summer.

Washington must have turned to it to admire it as a lover, in its rich variety of charms, for he was not without that "spirit" to drink "the spectacle," and did he not write poetry to his mountain lass in his youth? Ask of the traditions in his own Virginia if he was not much like the rest of us. Looking across from Denning's Point to the slope at the Headquarters must have brought to his eye his own Mt. Vernon, and the Potomac, which is much like the Hudson here, without the charms of our Highlands. And in his happy retirement, seeing his country, under Heaven's own guidance, fully beginning a career of unexampled glory, he has mused over the disbanding of his associates in arms on yonder height, to be again in the midst of the moving scene, with his eager glance now and then sweeping over the river he had so frequently crossed toward the dear old Fishkill encampment, with those hallowed spots all around, associated so closely with others of the Revolution, and he could hear the laughter and song intermingled, which must come to cheer the heart, for he was again at the head of the army. Did he dream, then, that he had enrolled himself among the world's great commanders, to have sterner virtues than Caesar, to be more illustrious than Marlborough and Frederic? But his aims had not been like theirs, and his glory was of another lustre. In truth, he had gone out into his way to do his duty wherever it might lie; not thinking of anything but to do a good service.

But we would not invest him with the qualities of the heavenly angels, for he belonged to our own species, and had our own natures. He was not perfect, as perfection is measured above; but he had acquitted himself as best he could, and that was all. He was full of the frailties which belong to us, he would have told us himself, but was there a truer actor in that drama?

It was a beautiful picture to see him there at Mt. Vernon, sitting down as a citizen of the new Republic, addressing himself to a citizen's duty. If he ran backward into that past which had honored them all, he was but allowing himself with them to be borne on the wings of the imagination which will
have their way. He saw that many of his comrades had already fallen, and not one is now left, for "there is no discharge in that war," which every one must pass through; but theirs was the triumph in overcoming a kingly power, and in establishing the free and better rule of a sovereign people. Perhaps, as Americans, we do too much admire; this is the very essence of patriotism. But with such a land as ours, given to us by freemen, and to be the birthright of freemen forever, we would be lacking in a patriot's love, and unfaithful to the memories of our fathers, were we to feel not the stirrings of the patriot's enkindlings on the Birthday of Washington, and indulge ourselves in the fervor of patriotic eulogy.