

Grade Distribution

- 3 A (highest score 98)
 - 3 B
 - 5 C
 - 3 D
 - 2 F (did not turn in Part 1 of exam worth 45 pts)
 - 1 missed exam
- 45% of final grade now in
– 55% for those who handed in an optional exercise for grading

1

13: Strategic Nature of New York Examples of Military Geography

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2

Military Geography Exercise

Optional Exercise 12 (graded or extra credit) explores the interrelationship between the physical landscape and places in NYS that have important military significance in American homeland military history.

French and Indian Wars
American Revolution
War of 1812



<https://parks.ny.gov/publications/documents/GuidetoNYStateHistoricSites.pdf>
link to NYS historic sites and parks brochure

3

The Nature of Strategic Location

What is “strategy?”

What is a “strategic location?”

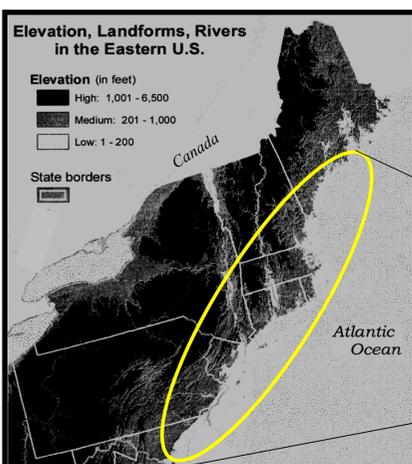
What qualities does this “strategic location ” have?

A location's **geography** (*terrain, weather, climate and culture*) plays an important role in its **selection** and the **planning and execution of the plans**, especially military plans. It goes hand-in-hand with **current technology** (technology of the time frame).

What criteria would be used to choose a strategic location in New York during the 1700s?

4

Topographic Features



In the 1700s, with knowledge of the geographic site and situation of the British colonies PLUS being aware of the military technology of the times, how would you go about devising a plan to conquer them?



5

Strategic Passages

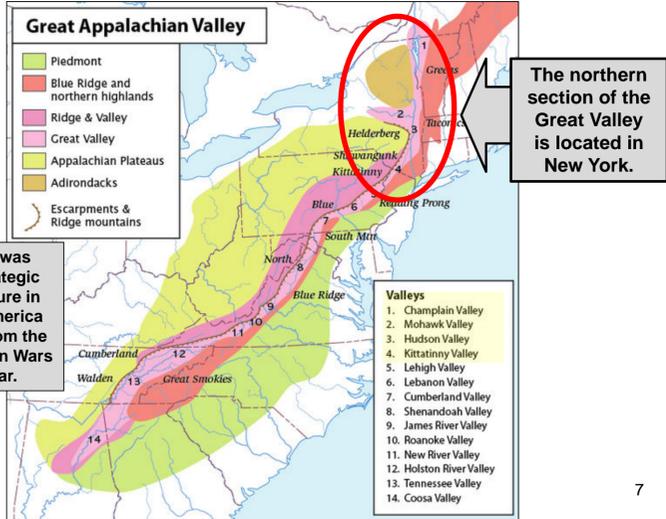
➤ The location of **routes** and **passages** as well as **bottlenecks** and **areas of unimpeded movement** have historically been important. **Control of these areas have been the goal of strategists.**

❖ Among the most important strategic locations in America in the 1700s are 4 sites in NYS:

- ✓ Mouth of the **Niagara River**
- ✓ **Oneida Carry** at Rome
- ✓ **Fort Ticonderoga** between Lake Champlain and Lake George
- ✓ **Gorge of the Hudson** through the Hudson Highlands

6

Inland Corridor



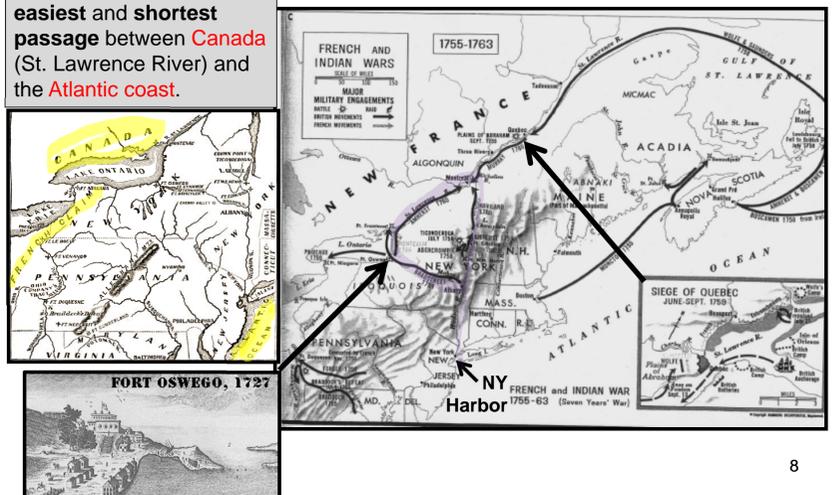
The Great Valley was an important strategic topographic feature in eastern North America in all conflicts from the French and Indian Wars to the US Civil War.

7

French and Indian Wars

The **New York Colony** was strategically located between French and English territories, allowing the **easiest and shortest passage** between **Canada** (St. Lawrence River) and the **Atlantic coast**.

Conflict between England and France for control of North America

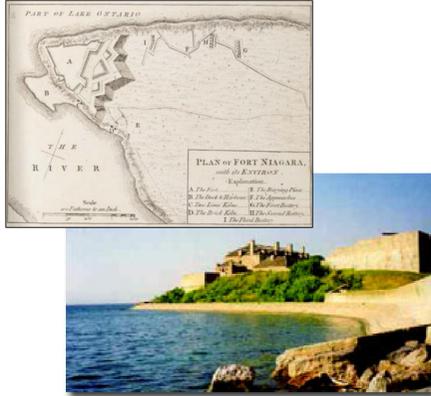


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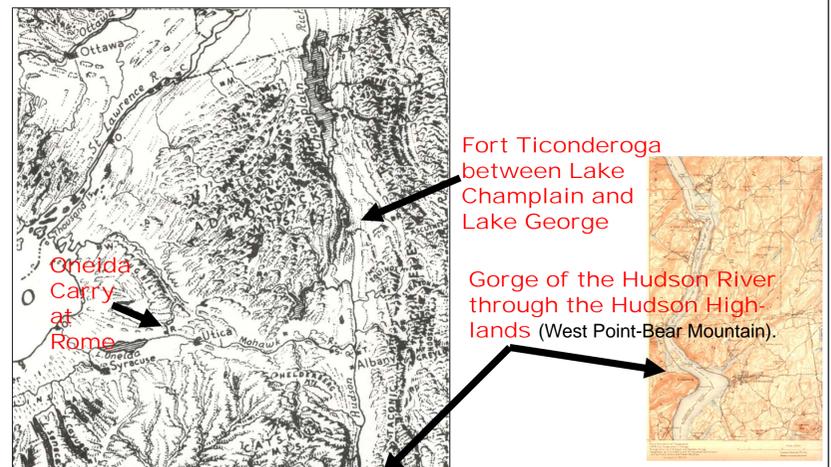
Fort Niagara – a player in 3 wars

The fort played an important role in the struggles of France, England, and the United States to control the Great Lakes region and also helped shape the destiny of the Iroquois.

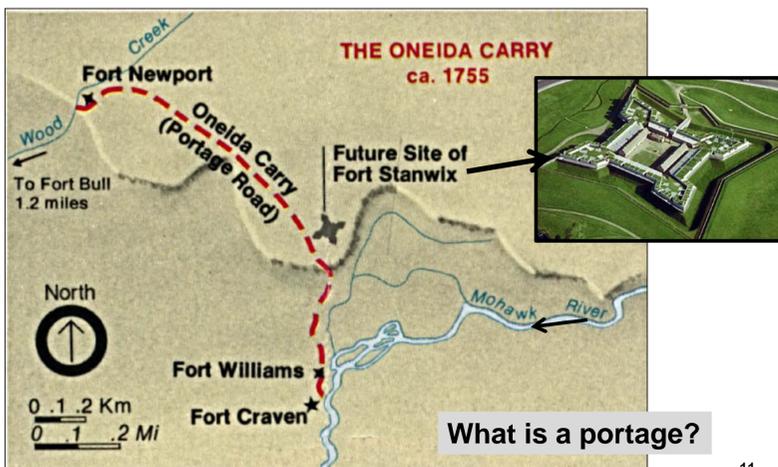
- The French built the fort in 1659 overlooking the mouth of the Niagara River to control passage.
- Britain gained control of Fort Niagara in 1759, during the **French & Indian War** after a 19 day siege.
- The British held it throughout the **American Revolution** but yielded it to the U.S. in 1796 by the treaty.
- During the **War of 1812** Fort Niagara was captured by the British (1813). It was returned to the United States in 1815 at the end of the war.



Strategic Passages



Oneida Carry (present-day Rome, NY)



11

Site of Ticonderoga

The site of **Ticonderoga** was considered a strategic position because it controlled the route between **Lake Champlain** and the **Hudson Valley**.

It was important to the Iroquois, the French, British and Americans.



Site of Fort Ticonderoga

Occupying this site meant controlling all travel between St. Lawrence River Valley (Montreal) and New York Harbor.

Historical map of Fort Ticonderoga showing its strategic location on the western shore of Lake Champlain. Below are two aerial photographs: the left one shows Lake George, Lake Champlain, and the La Chute River; the right one shows the actual site of the fort on a hill overlooking the water.

13

NY and the American Revolution

The American Revolution, 1777-1779. This map shows the movements of British and American forces across the Northeast. Key events include the Battle of Brandywine (Sept. 26, 1777), the fall of Fort Mifflin (Oct. 4, 1777), and the signing of the Declaration of Independence (Sept. 17, 1776). The map highlights the British advance from New York City towards Philadelphia and the subsequent retreat.

July 4, 1776 the Declaration of Independence is signed in Philadelphia. Great Britain controlled the seas. The Royal Navy quickly blockaded all primary colonial ports and controlled coastal traffic.

About one third of all battles of the American Revolution were fought on New York soil.

14

NYC and Vicinity

New York City, New York Harbor and the lower Hudson River were quickly secured by the British and remained under their control throughout the Revolution.

The American Revolution, 1776-1777. This map focuses on the New York City area, showing the British occupation of the city and the surrounding region. It marks the August 1776 Battle of Brooklyn and the subsequent evacuation of the Continental Army across the Hudson River to West Point.

15

NY and the American Revolution

❖ Britain planned to end the war by splitting the colonies in half by having:

- Gen. Howe move north from New York City
- Col. St. Leger move east from Oswego
- Gen. Burgoyne move south from Montreal

❖ All were to meet at Albany in victory!

1777 ATTEMPT TO ISOLATE NEW ENGLAND. This map illustrates the British strategy to cut off New England from the rest of the colonies. It shows Gen. Burgoyne's route from Montreal down the Hudson River, Col. St. Leger's route from Oswego through the Mohawk Valley, and Gen. Howe's route from New York City north towards the Hudson. The map also shows the locations of various forts and the eventual meeting point at Albany.

16

What Happened?

Howe never made it past West Point.

- Americans controlled the Hudson Highlands. Because of the S-shape of the Hudson there, British ships had to slow down.
- The Americans put an iron chain across the river to block passage.
- Howe retreated to NYC, not able to deliver supplies north to Gen. Burgoyne.

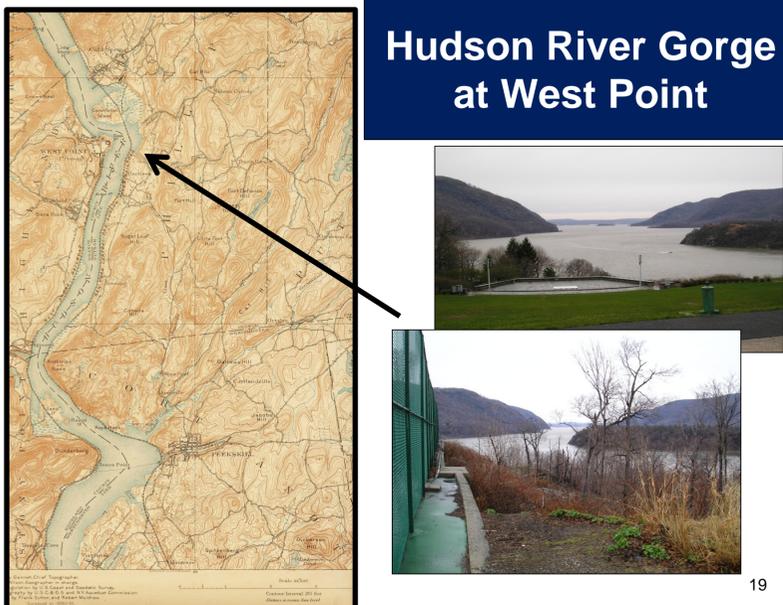
17

Hudson River Gorge at Bear Mountain

Looking south (NY harbor 50 mi away). The photograph shows the Hudson River flowing through the Bear Mountain Gorge. An arrow points downstream towards the river. The site of Fort Montgomery is marked on the right side of the gorge.

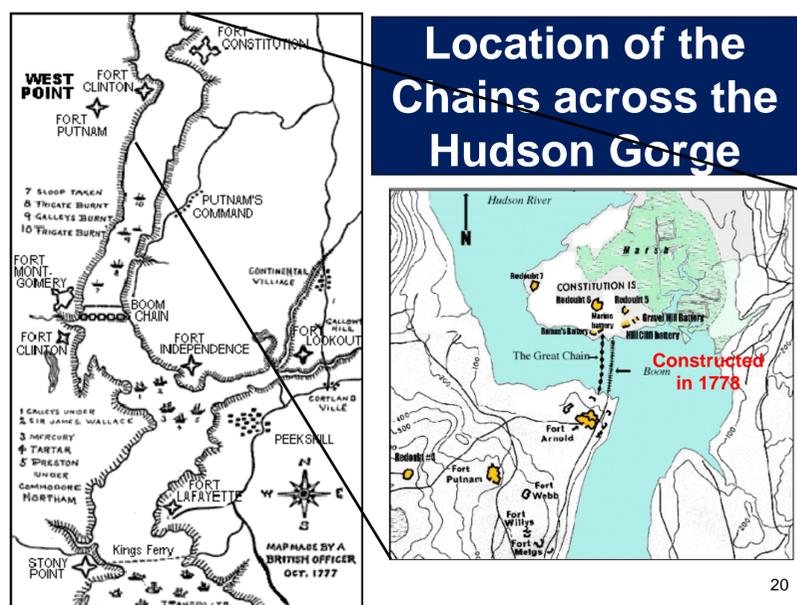
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Hudson River Gorge at West Point



19

Location of the Chains across the Hudson Gorge



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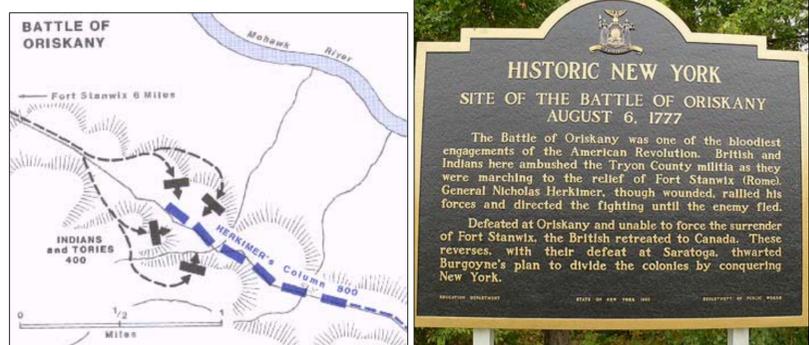
What Happened?

St. Leger never made it past Rome.

- British and Indian forces moving into the Mohawk Valley encountered a large American militia at **Oriskany**.
- After a fierce battle, and with false rumors present, the Indian forces abandoned the British troops.
- St. Leger retreated to Oswego.

21

Oriskany Battlefield



Considered to be a significant turning point in the War of Independence, the **Battle of Oriskany** (August 6, 1777) has been described as one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

22

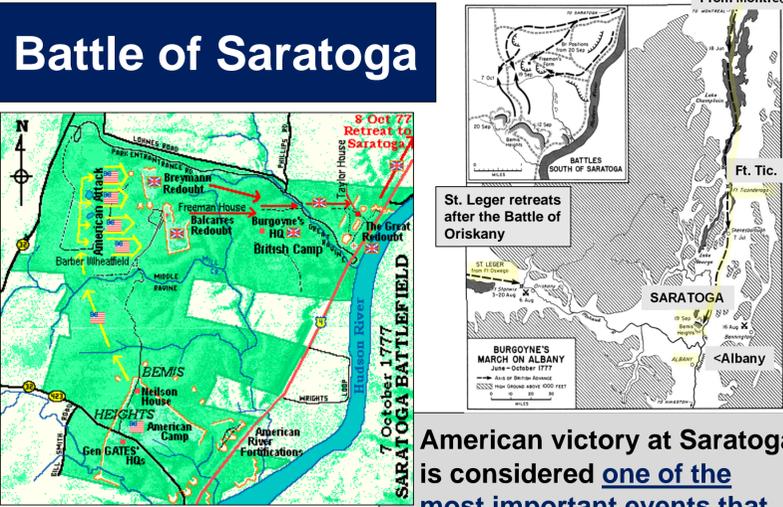
What Happened?

Burgoyne never made it past Saratoga.

- He was forced to surrender after the second battle of Saratoga after
 - meeting much militia resistance as his force moved south
 - dealing with bad weather
 - running low on supplies

23

Battle of Saratoga



American victory at Saratoga is considered one of the most important events that changed world history.

24

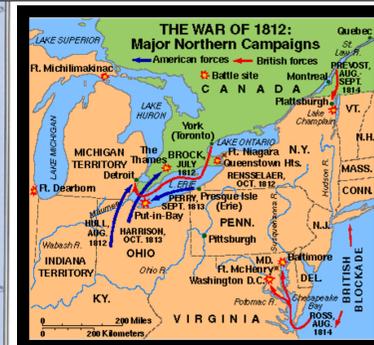
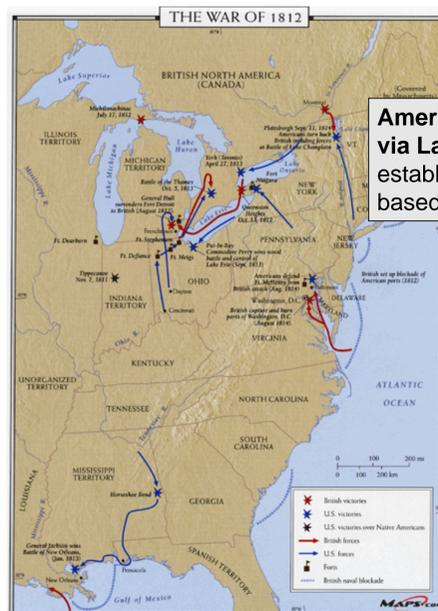
The Aftermath

- ❖ After the *Battle of Saratoga* (1777), only the area south of Bear Mountain, including NYC, remained under British control.
- The New England Colonies were linked to the Middle and Southern Colonies via inland routes. Food and manufactured goods were exchanged.
- Victory convinced France to join the war on the American side.
- Only 1 other battle (Elmira, 1779) was fought in NY.
- Revolutionary War ends in 1781.

25

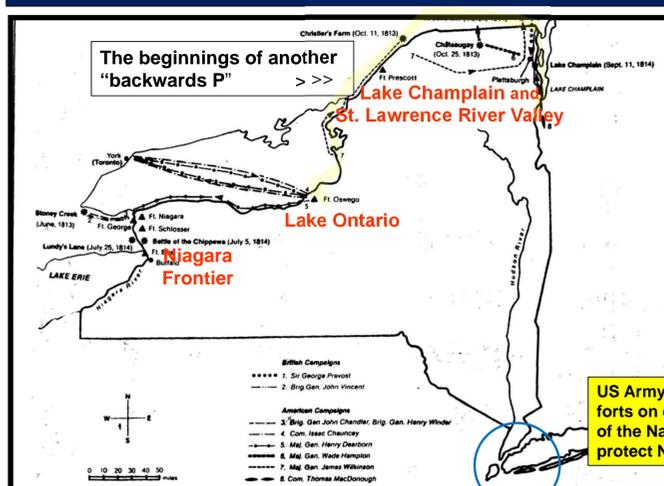
War of 1812

American forces tried to attack Canada via Lake Champlain lowland. The U.S. established a naval fleet on Lake Ontario based at Sackett's Harbor, NY.



26

War of 1812

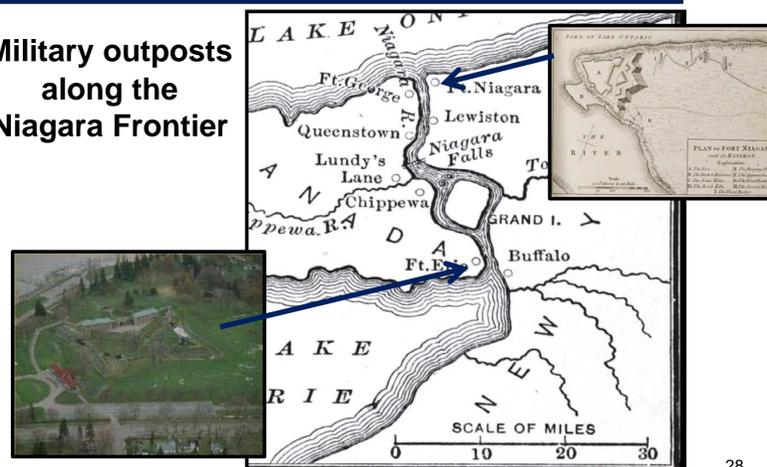


US Army builds forts on either side of the Narrows to protect NY Harbor

27

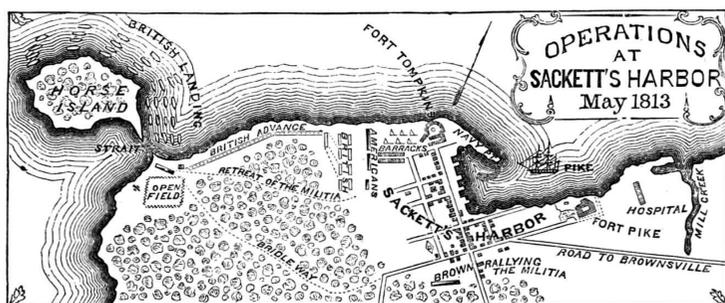
War of 1812: Niagara Frontier

Military outposts along the Niagara Frontier



28

War of 1812: Sackett's Harbor



Sackett's Harbor, NY was the site of the principal American shipyard and naval base on Lake Ontario. The British crossed Lake Ontario in an attempt to capture it but were repulsed by the Americans.

29

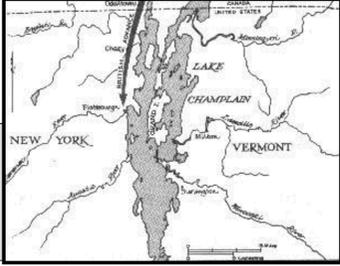
War of 1812: Fort Oswego

Fort Oswego guarded the mouth of the Oswego River which was a route into central New York.





War of 1812: Battle of Plattsburgh



❖ **Battle of Plattsburgh** - Sept. 1814 (aka Battle of Lake Champlain) **ended the final British invasion** of the northern states during the War of 1812.

The Americans were able to use the victory to:

- 1. Demand exclusive rights to Lake Champlain,**
- 2. Deny the British exclusive rights to the Great Lakes and**
- 3. Deny any territorial gains made against the New England states during the war.**

NEXT

The Growth of the State of New York in the new United States

32