



**ARDSLEY KIWANIS  
BICENTENNIAL PARK  
1776 - 1976**

# The Grand Reconnaissance

During the Philipsburg Encampment in the summer of 1781, while the main camps of the Continental and French armies were located about two miles northeast of this point, George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the combined forces, issued an order written in his own hand, "For Reconnoitering the Enemy's Post at the North end of York Island and the vicinity of it. His Excellency Count de Rochambeau will be pleased to order a detachment of 2000 French Soldiers exclusive of the legion of the Duke de Lauzen and have them in readiness to march at Eight o'clock this evening."

After several delays, the "Grand Reconnaissance" took place between July 21-23, a military operation that involved over four thousand American and French troops who marched south on four separate local roads to reconnoiter the British positions in New York.

*"The ( American ) Troops will march by the right and on the following roads—Sheldons legion & Scammels light Infantry on the North River Road—the rest of the American Troops on the Saw Mill River Road.... The French Troops will commence their march in two columns also—the right column—on what is called the Sprain Road—the left column on the Tuckahoe Road. The Count de Rochambeau will be provided with Guides who are perfectly acquainted with the Roads on which he is to advance and the communications between them and the Saw Mill River Road"*

*George Washington*

Camp near Dobbs' Ferry  
July 13th, 1781

It is believed by some that Washington designed this strong move towards New York City in an effort to convince the British that he and Rochambeau intended to besiege the city and thereby discourage sending relief to the British forces in the south. If so, in this he was successful.



1 The circled numbers denote the locations of interpretive wayside exhibits about the Washington-Rochambeau Philipsburg Encampment.

# Strategy for Victory

"I could scarce see a ground upon which to continue my preparations against New York, and therefore I turned my views more seriously... to an operation to the southward." George Washington



Here in Westchester County George Washington and the Comte de Rochambeau forged an alliance that would lead to the American victory in the Revolutionary War. Here the two generals agreed in the summer of 1781 to take their combined American-French force to Yorktown, Virginia, where the British were massing troops.

Upon hearing here that the French fleet under Comte de Grasse was sailing on to Chesapeake Bay, Washington decided to leave a small force in New York and march south with 2,700 Continental soldiers and Rochambeau's 4,200 troops. At Yorktown the allies besieged the British and forced Lord Cornwallis to surrender.



French warships engage the British fleet at the Battle of the Capes at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, September 5-9, 1781.

Admiral de Grasse (inset portrait, above) and the French fleet changed the course of the American Revolution by preventing Lord Cornwallis from reinforcing his troops—or escaping aboard ships. Cornwallis had no choice but to surrender.



Washington and Rochambeau, September 1781. (After a 19th-century painting by John Trumbull.)

REVOLUTIONARY WAR HERITAGE TRAIL





VILLAGE OF  
ARDSLEY  
1896

# VETERANS WAY

Lest We Forget



