

THE PALISADES PARKS CONSERVANCY



Xenon spotlight

Palisades Parks Conservancy

in partnership with

**Palisades Interstate Park Commission
The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area
Scenic Hudson**

and

NY State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

presents:

***HUDSON RIVER XENON LIGHT DISPLAY
Revolutionary War Beacons 21st Century Style***

Tuesday November 25th, 2008

5 p.m. - 9 p.m.

On November 25, 2008, to celebrate the 225th anniversary of the evacuation of the United States of America by British troops, the Palisades Parks Conservancy, in collaboration with the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, Scenic Hudson, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and Palisades Interstate Park Commission, will symbolically light five beacon sites that replicate signal locations used by the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. These vital systems summoned the militia in both New York and in neighboring New Jersey and warned residents of the approaching British Redcoats.

The beacon project is part of a bi-state celebration with New Jersey. Our partners in New Jersey, the Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, will light seven additional beacons from Princeton to Navesink. The entire beacon signal system lighting will stretch 108 miles from Princeton, NJ to Beacon, NY.

Xenon spotlights will be sited in the following locations:

New York:

Bear Mountain State Park, Bear Mountain, NY
Storm King Mountain State Park, Cornwall, NY
Scenic Hudson's Spy Rock (Snake Hill), New Windsor, NY
Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site, Newburgh, NY
Scenic Hudson's Mount Beacon, Beacon, NY

New Jersey:

Greenway Meadows, Princeton Township, Mercer County
Washington Rock State Park, Greenbrook, Somerset County
Morristown National Historical Park, Morristown, Morris County
The Beacon Hill Club, Summit, Union County
South Mountain Reservation, South Orange, Essex County
Ramapo Mountain State Forest, Oakland, Bergen County
Twin Lights of Navesink, Monmouth County

The beacons will be lit in progression: NJ sites: 5:00 P.M.; NY Sites: Bear Mountain at 5:01 P.M., Storm King at 5:02, Spy Rock at 5:03, Washington's Headquarters at 5:04, and Mt. Beacon at 5:05.

In New York, the public can view this special event from various locations, including:

Newburgh-Beacon Bridge

Newburgh waterfront (with special guest, George Washington on horseback, weather permitting)

Beacon waterfront

Kowawese Area, New Windsor

Cornwall waterfront

Route 218 Overlook

Bear Mountain Bridge

Little Stony Point

Cold Spring waterfront

Please confirm with your local community that viewing areas will be open to the general public after dark.

With precedents in antiquity, beacon fires were used as a communication tool. Beacon sites throughout the Hudson River Valley were an effective form of communication and instrumental in helping defeat the British during the Revolutionary War. These visual signals alerted both Continental Army regulars and local militia units to prepare for battle and warned civilians of the impending British military threat. At the outset of the conflict, the beacons were simply piles of ignited brush. Other types of beacons varied from tar barrels on top of poles, to pyramids, to wooden towers filled with dried grass or hay that could be ignited.

General George Washington realized that this communication system could be improved and in a letter from April 1776, asked the New York Committee of Safety to appoint a commission to study the issue. According to the recommendations set forth by the committee, each beacon was to be "at the bottom fourteen feet square, to a pyramidal form to about eighteen or twenty feet high, and then to terminate about six feet square, with a stout sapling in the center of about thirty feet high from the ground."

Realizing that any loyalist or British Redcoat could sabotage this communication system by starting their own fire, Washington recommended that cannons be placed at each beacon station. Along with smoke, the firing of the cannon would indicate that this message was not a false alarm. By this order, militia units prepared to take up arms. Conversely, if no cannon was fired, the militia knew not to assemble.

For more information about this event, please contact Susan Smith, Palisades Parks Conservancy, 845-786-2701, ext. 239, Mark Castiglione, Hudson Valley Greenway, 518-473-3835, and/or Jay Burgess, Scenic Hudson, 845 473-4440, Ext. 222.

The **Palisades Parks Conservancy**, the charitable partner of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, is a non-profit corporation exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are welcome and are tax-deductible. Contributions should be sent to the Palisades Parks Conservancy, Administration Building, Bear Mountain, NY 10911 USA, 845-786-2701, or you can use our secure Web site link found at www.palisadesparksconservancy.org.

Palisades Interstate Park Commission administers 29 parks, parkways, and historic sites for the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation in New York as well as the Palisades Interstate Park and parkway in New Jersey.

The **Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area** was established by Congress in 1996 to recognize, preserve and interpret the nationally significant historical, cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley region. Encompassing four million acres, the Heritage Area follows 154 miles of the Hudson River including highlands, rolling countryside and scenic shoreline. The area extends from just north of Manhattan to the Capital Region near Albany. The roots of American landscape art, architecture, early settlements of the Dutch and French Huguenots, and major Revolutionary War sites can all be found in the Heritage Area. The Heritage Area is managed by the Hudson River Valley Greenway. For more information see www.hudsonrivervalley.com.

Scenic Hudson, a crusader for the Hudson Valley since 1963, works to protect and restore the Hudson River and its majestic landscape as an irreplaceable national treasure and a vital resource for residents and visitors. Through environmental advocacy, Scenic Hudson views our natural environment as an irreplaceable source of spiritual and artistic vitality and that it must be preserved forever. For more information, please visit: <http://www.scenichudson.org>

The **New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation** oversees 178 state parks, 35 historic sites, and 77 developed beaches. For more information on any of these recreation areas, call 518-474-0456 or visit www.nysparks.com.

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