

When the Revolution broke out Erskine at once sided with the colonists and sold his products to the patriots. Because he was one of the few engineers in the country, Washington appointed him as Geographer and Surveyor General to the Revolutionary Armies. Erskine made most of the military maps including those for the Jersey campaigns. In the New York Historical Society there are 114 of the 129 maps in Erskine's own handwriting; several are in the possession of J. P. Morgan; the remainder are in Washington. These maps are models of accuracy and execution.

The road to Ringwood was carefully guarded, and a battery was planted on the mountain at Suffern. Erskine organized and drilled a company of men ready to march against any attack. Several times the English troops got as far as Mahwah, just over the mountains. Once a raiding party reached Ringwood and set fire to the house. Mrs. Erskine escaped in her nightgown, her watch safely hidden in her slipper. Fortunately the raiders had found their way first to the wine cellar. While they dallied there, American troops arrived, and the invaders were driven off.

Erskine administered the industry so efficiently that he was called the "Lord of Ringwood." He built a dam at Tuxedo and dug a ditch to carry the waters of Lake Tuxedo to increase the waterpower. He also built a dam at Greenwood Lake. Day and night the forges were turning out ammunition for the patriots.

There are a number of entries in Washington's expense accounts, such as items for washing and for shoeing of horses, that refer to stops at Ringwood. Washington was at Ringwood when he sent orders for the suppression of the Pompton mutiny. General Howe's report of this uprising was written in the house. When the war ended there was a great victory dinner at the Manor, attended by Washington and guests from as far as New York. Impressed by the beauty of the country, Washington is said to have suggested that Ringwood would be ideal for a great recreation ground. He foresaw that New York would become the largest city in the country, if not in the world. Thirty-five miles away, New York was then a two-day's journey; the time required now is less than two hours.

On that tragic day, October 2, 1780, on which the young Major André was executed at Tappan Robert Erskine died as a result of exposure while on a surveying expedition. Though some of Washington's staff were present, the General did not witness the execution of the young English spy. The shutters of headquarters at Tappan were closed, and it is possible that the saddened Commander in Chief was travelling through the northern hills to the home of his devoted friend.

In 1782 Washington returned to Ringwood and planted an elm beside the brick crypt in which Erskine was buried. The grave may be seen today, and, beside it, that of Erskine's secretary, Robert Monteith.

After Erskine's death his widow and her second husband, Robert Lettis Hooper, an army officer, managed the property for 3 years. In 1783 all the iron was offered for sale and the place was closed.

It was not until 1807 that the Ringwood mines and forges were again active. The property was purchased by Martin Ryerson, who ran the industry successfully for 30 years. Under his 3 sons who followed him the business dwindled, due partly to the opening of the Pennsylvania fields and to the improvement in methods of iron manufacture.