

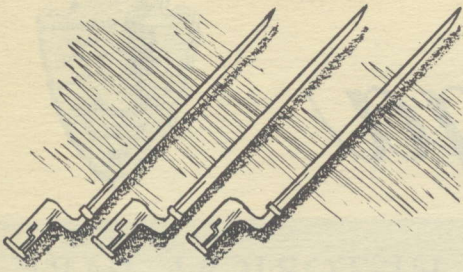
# Saratoga



NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

*New York*





# Saratoga

## NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DOUGLAS MCKAY, *Secretary*

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, CONRAD L. WIRTH, *Director*

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*Scene of the decisive American victory over Burgoyne, 1777, marking the turning point of the American Revolution and a decisive battle in world history*

THE two battles of Saratoga may be considered to mark the turning point of the American Revolution. Saratoga implemented American diplomatic efforts and brought the open intervention of France on the side of the colonists. Without the financial, military, and naval support of France, to which was added later the assistance of Spain and Holland, America's fight for liberty probably would have been lost. Though 4 more years of fighting were necessary in order to bring ultimate victory at Yorktown, Saratoga furnished the physical and psychological impetus which brightened a desperate cause at a moment when failure would have been disastrous. The battles of Saratoga, culminating in the surrender of Burgoyne's army and the complete defeat of the British plan of campaign in 1777 constitute one of those momentous events which shape the destiny of nations. Even in the light of nearly two centuries that have elapsed, the full significance of this epochal victory is difficult to exaggerate or to appraise fully.

### The Burgoyne Campaign

THE Hudson-Champlain route for centuries has constituted a strategic highway. Long the war-path of the powerful Iroquois, this route in pre-Revolutionary years had witnessed the ebb and flow of the tides of invasion as England and France had struggled for possession of the New World. Once again it was to be the theatre of historic events, this time in the drama of a people giving birth to a free nation.

Burgoyne's plan for the reconquest of the colonies sought to wrest from the colonists the control of the historic Hudson-Champlain route with its lateral branch along the Mohawk. Its control by the British would have separated the New England States from the rest of the struggling colonists. The plan called for a coordinated double advance along the Hudson in which the army of Burgoyne moving southward from Canada would effect a junction at Albany with the army of Sir William Howe moving northward from New York City,

*Cover: Detail of the Trumbull painting of the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga. This picture is taken from the Minnigerode copy of Trumbull's work.*

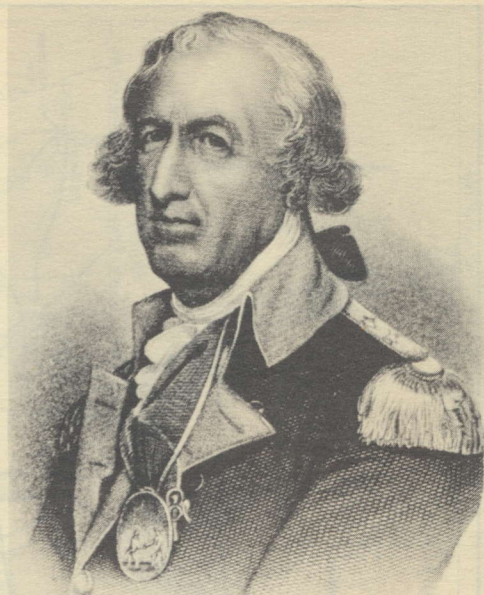


*Gen. John Burgoyne*

the two to be joined by Barry St. Leger moving eastward along the Mohawk from Oswego.

Embarking from St. Johns, Canada, on June 17, 1777, Burgoyne with a force of approximately 9,000 men, consisting of about 4,200 British regulars, 4,000 German troops hired by the King of England, and between 800 and 900 Canadians and Indians, advanced confidently southward to the attack of Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain, which fell an easy prize on July 6. Moving slowly southward through Skenesboro, Fort Ann, and Fort Edward, Burgoyne encountered innumerable delays caused by the rough terrain and the retarding tactics of Philip Schuyler, then in command of the army of the northern department, in felling trees, destroying bridges, and burning crops along the route of the British advance. It was mid-September before Burgoyne crossed the Hudson at Saratoga.

By this time the tide of events had already started running against the British. The battle of Oriskany, on August 6, checked the advance of St. Leger down the Mohawk Valley. Here General Herkimer and his German farmer mili-



*Gen. Horatio Gates*

tia cut their way out of an ambushade prepared by St. Leger's Tories and Indians in desperate hand-to-hand fighting. Of still greater concern to Burgoyne, however, was the defeat of his expeditionary force to Bennington on August 16, by New England militia under John Stark and Seth Warner.

Despite these setbacks Burgoyne decided to cross the Hudson, sever his communications with Canada and risk all on a push to Albany. Four miles from Stillwater the British advance came upon the Americans, 9,000 strong, firmly entrenched at Bemis Heights under the command of Gates, who had supplanted Schuyler on August 19.

### **Battle of September 19**

The American position had been selected and fortified by the Polish engineer, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, serving with the American Army. On September 19, the Royal Army advanced upon the American camp in three parallel columns through the heavy forests covering the region. The British objective was to discover and occupy a strong position close enough to

the American fortified lines to serve as a basis for siege operations against it. The forward movement of Burgoyne's army was detected by American scouts on the east side of the Hudson, and Gates ordered out Morgan's corps to reconnoiter the position of the enemy. The first phase of the engagement opened about 12:30 in the afternoon when a detachment of Morgan's men brushed with the advance guard of Burgoyne's center column in a clearing known as the Freeman Farm, located about 1 mile north of the American camp.

For more than 3 hours the fighting swayed back and forth across this bitterly contested clearing as each side strove desperately for a decision. Repeatedly the hard-pressed British regiments charged with bayonets, only to be stopped short by the deadly fire of the American riflemen. Under the skillful direction of Benedict Arnold, American reinforcements were so placed as to seriously threaten to outflank the British right. Finally, when the British position had become critical, fresh German reinforcements arrived from the river column. Throwing these men with great force against the American right, Burgoyne succeeded in steadying the British line and forcing the Americans gradually

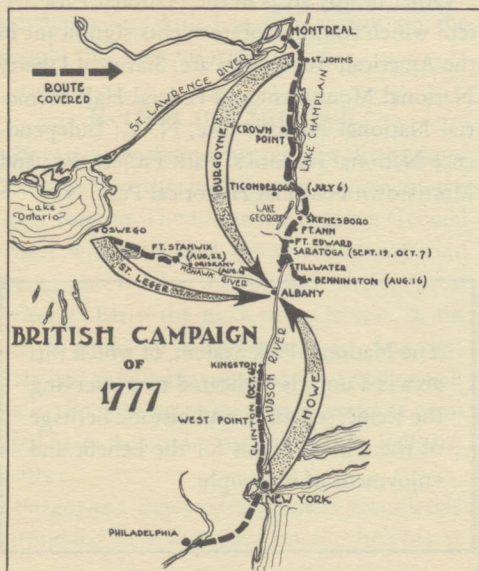
to withdraw. But for the arrival of the Germans and the temporary absence of Arnold, who had left the field to obtain reinforcements, the fate of the Burgoyne campaign might well have been decided here.

Burgoyne was stopped in his advance about 1 mile north of the American lines with a badly crippled army, but left in possession of the immediate field of battle. He then decided to entrench his troops in the vicinity of the Freeman Farm and await the cooperation of Howe or Sir Henry Clinton who were then stationed in New York City. Nearly 3 weeks of futile waiting brought no aid from either, although on October 6, unknown to Burgoyne, Clinton succeeded in capturing the forts along the highlands of the Hudson.

### Battle of October 7

With the strength of his opponent greatly increased by 4,000 reinforcements, mostly from New England, and with his own supplies rapidly diminishing, Burgoyne's position became a desperate one, necessitating either an advance or a retreat. After some hesitation, he decided to risk everything on a second battle.

Map of British Plan of Campaign, 1777



Monument to Arnold's wounded leg





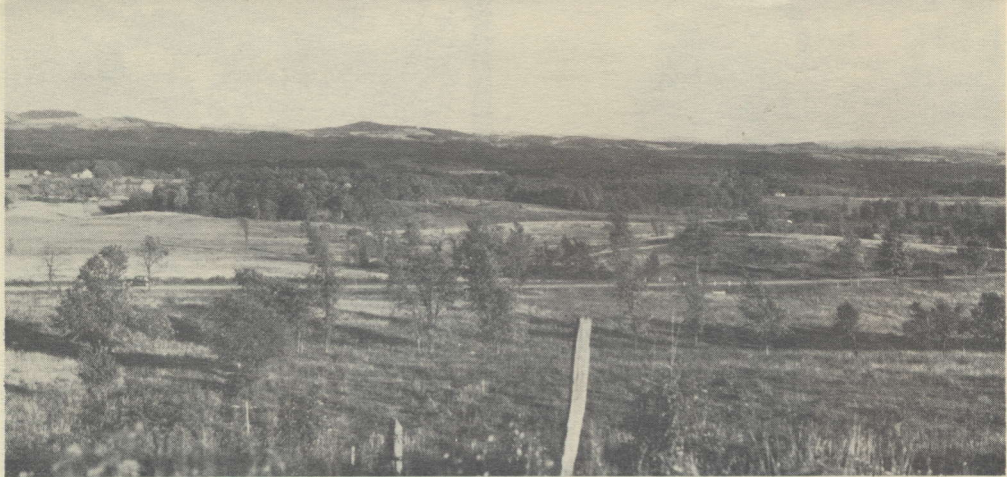
*The Schuyler House*

On October 7, Burgoyne ordered a reconnaissance in force to determine the nature of the ground and the advisability of a thrust at the American left. With a force of 1,500 picked men led by his ablest generals and supported by 10 cannon, Burgoyne advanced toward the American left. After moving in a southwesterly direction through heavy forests for approximately two-thirds of a mile, the troops deployed in an open clearing where a portion of them foraged in a wheat field. Though the larger part of Burgoyne's front was open, both his flanks rested in woods thus exposing them to a surprise attack.

As the Royal Army advanced, driving in the American advanced sentries, the alarm was beaten in Gates' camp. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Arnold, without consulting with Gates, began the attack with his division of 4,000 men, using the heavy forest to cover his approach to the enemy. Repeatedly the British line was broken by the American attack which was directed by Arnold and Morgan simultaneously against the British right, left, and center.

In this critical stage of affairs Gen. Simon Fraser, Burgoyne's second in command, rode back and forth among his men in a desperate effort to encourage them to make a successful stand and to cover the now general British retreat. Noticing his activity and appreciating the value of his leadership, Arnold ordered Morgan to have his sharpshooters single out General Fraser. Despite the first shots which warned him that he was the object of a concentrated fire, Fraser refused shelter and continued to lead his men until a bullet finally found its mark. Mortally wounded, he was carried from the field.

With the fall of Fraser, the British column was swept back to its entrenchments on the Freeman Farm, and the American forces rushed forward in a fierce attempt to storm the British lines. In less than an hour after the opening of the attack, Burgoyne had lost 8 cannon and more than 400 officers and men, killed, wounded, or prisoners. Flushed with victory, the Americans were led by Arnold in a savage attack on the Balcarres Redoubt, a position of great strength which lay on the Freeman Farm.



*View of Saratoga battlefield looking toward the Hudson River from Fraser Hill*

When repeated American attacks failed to carry this position, Arnold wheeled his horse and dashing between the crossfire from both armies rode northwest in the direction of the Breymann Redoubt. There, towards the close of the day, Arnold led the successful assault on the Breymann Redoubt, a key British position, turning the tide of battle and sealing the fate of the Burgoyne campaign. Only darkness saved Burgoyne from complete disaster. It was in leading this assault that Arnold was wounded in the left leg. Had he died there, posterity would have known few names brighter in American history than that of Arnold. Colonel Breymann was killed in this assault on the redoubt that bore his name.

### **Retreat and Surrender**

Burgoyne withdrew his men on the night of October 7 to the high ground north of the Great Ravine. The following evening General Fraser, who had died from wounds received during the battle, was buried in the Great Redoubt. Early the next day, October 9, the British took up their retreat to Saratoga. They had suffered approximately 1,000 casualties in the fighting of the past 3 weeks as compared to an American loss of less than half that number.

Burgoyne's depleted army was completely surrounded in a few days on the heights at

Saratoga (Schuylerville) by an American force which by this time had grown to nearly 20,000 men. Hopelessly outnumbered, provisions all but exhausted, devoid of help from the south, Burgoyne was forced to surrender on October 17. The remnants of his army, numbering approximately 6,300 men, stacked their arms on the level flood plain along the banks of the Hudson at the edge of town, according to the terms of the Convention of Saratoga drawn up between Gates and Burgoyne.

### **The Park**

In 1938, Congress passed legislation authorizing establishment of Saratoga National Historical Park. In 1941, under this authority, 1,429 acres of historically important land, previously acquired by the State of New York, were accepted by the Federal Government for administration and protection as a national historical park project. Later, other historically significant parts of the battlefield were acquired and the establishment of the park was accomplished on June 22, 1948. The present area contains 2,322.27 acres of Federal lands.

The Schuyler House and surrounding 25 acres of land were acquired for the park on March 30, 1950, through the generosity of the late George S. Lowber, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Schuylerville, N. Y., and the heirs of Mrs. Jesse L. Marshall.

Situated at Schuylerville (Old Saratoga), N. Y., this estate was the summer residence of Gen. Philip Schuyler both before and after the Battles of Saratoga. The present house was erected in 1777 by General Schuyler shortly after the surrender of Burgoyne's army. Few historic houses of contemporary period in the United States have undergone so little change since first built.

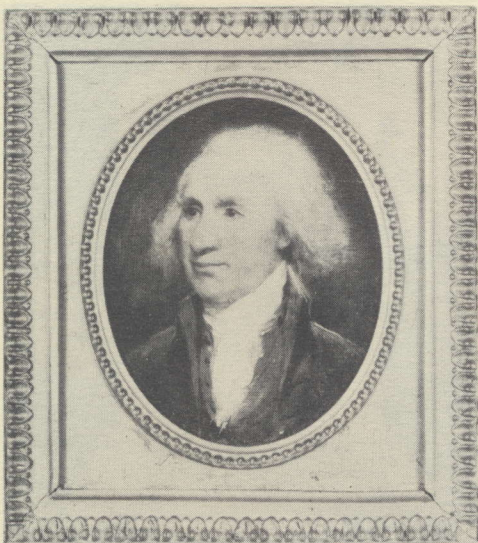
Among the distinguished guests who visited the Schuylers in this house were Gen. John Stark, George Washington, Gov. George Clinton, of New York, Alexander Hamilton, and General Lafayette.

### How to Reach the Park

The park is on the upper Hudson River 28 miles north of Albany, N. Y., between the villages of Stillwater and Schuylerville, and may be reached by automobile from the north or south over U. S. 4 or State Route 32. From the west, convenient connections with U. S. 9 may be made over State Routes 9P and 423.

Daily bus service is available from Mechanicville or Schuylerville. Inquire locally for schedules.

*Gen. Philip Schuyler*



### About Your Visit

The park is open from early spring until late fall, depending upon weather conditions, which is normally from April 1 to November 30.

A temporary museum, containing relics of the Revolutionary Period and exhibits designed to present the story of the Battles of Saratoga and the Burgoyne Campaign, is open daily from 8:30 a. m. to 5 p. m. The John Neilson House, used as quarters for American staff officers during the battles, is usually open for inspection. Informational signs and markers along the various park roads will assist you to visualize events connected with the battles.

Organized groups are given special service if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.

### Administration

Saratoga National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is R. F. D. No. 1, Stillwater, N. Y., is in immediate charge.

### Related Areas

Other nearby areas in the National Park System which commemorate events significant in the American Revolution are: Statue of Liberty National Monument and Federal Hall Memorial National Historic Site, N. Y.; Independence National Historical Park Project, Pa.; and Morristown National Historical Park, N. J.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

