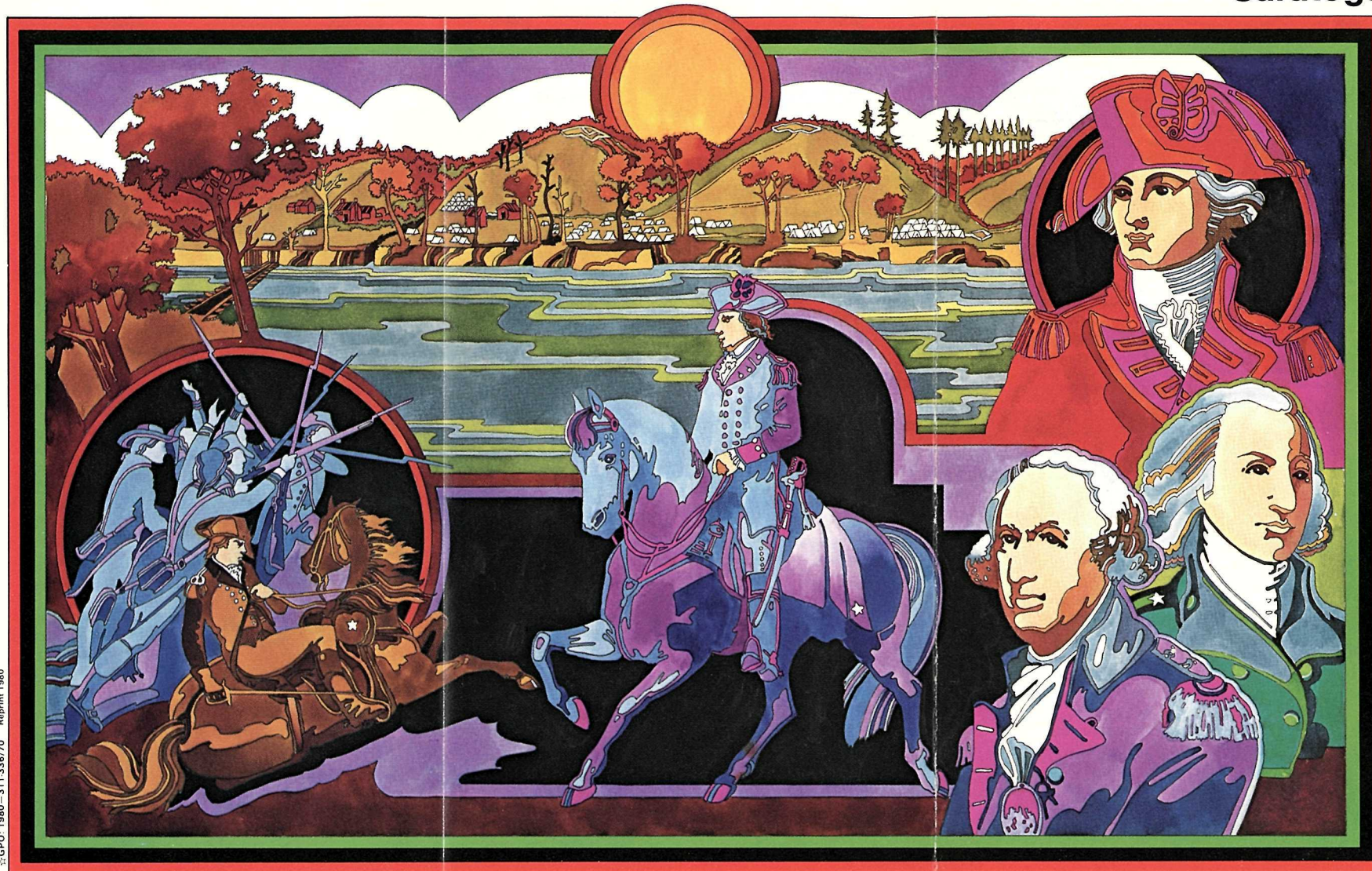


## Saratoga



“Rebellion which a twelve-month ago was a contemptible pygmy, is now in appearance a giant.” So spoke a contemporary after the Battles of Saratoga. Burgoyne’s surrender on October 17, 1777, was one of those signal events that shape the destiny of nations. The American success encouraged a hesitant France to intervene openly on the side of the colonists. Without this support, America’s bid for liberty might have been lost. At home, Saratoga was equally decisive. Though 4 more years of fighting were necessary to bring final victory at Yorktown, the success here brightened a desperate cause at a moment when failure would have been disastrous.

For centuries the Lake Champlain-Hudson River route had been a strategic highway through the northeast. In pre-Revolutionary years, this route was bloodied during the wars between England and France for control of North America. Once again it was to be a theater of historic events, this time the drama of a people aiming to establish a free nation.

Gen. John Burgoyne’s plan for the British campaign of 1777 called for his army to move southward from Canada along the Champlain-Hudson route to Albany. To support him and create a diversion, Col. Barry St. Leger was to march east from Lake Ontario with a smaller force and penetrate into the upper Mohawk Valley. After reaching Albany, Burgoyne would place his force under Sir William Howe, who headquartered in New York City with a sizeable army of his own. The two armies would then be in a position to make a concerted effort to quell the rebellion.

Depicted in the cover illustration by Celia Strain are (clockwise from bottom left) the wounding of Gen. Benedict Arnold, the Great Redoubt where Gen. Simon Fraser was buried, Gen. John Burgoyne, Gen. Philip Schuyler, and Gen. Horatio Gates.

National Historical Park, New York





Sir William, however, had his own plans. Taking the bulk of his force, he would move on Philadelphia, the patriot capital, by way of Chesapeake Bay. He left only a small force under Sir Henry Clinton in New York. Colonial Secretary George Germain had endorsed Howe's plan, trusting that he would return to New York in time to cooperate with Burgoyne. But Howe was already at sea and deeply committed to the Philadelphia campaign when he received Germain's conditional approval. Thus it happened that the troops best positioned to help Burgoyne were not available in the required numbers. And to succeed, Burgoyne's campaign depended on mutually supporting armies. When his army advanced from Canada without support from New York City, it became an isolated column in a vast and hostile wilderness.

Burgoyne embarked from St. Johns (now St. Jean), Canada, on June 17, 1777. His total force of some 9,000 men included about 4,200 British regulars, 4,000 German troops, and several hundred Canadians and Indians. Confidently, Burgoyne advanced southward to attack Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain. On July 6, after a 4-day siege, the fort fell. Moving on southward through Skenesboro, Fort Ann, and Fort Edward, the British were impeded by rough terrain and the delaying tactics of Gen. Philip Schuyler, then commanding American troops in the Northern Department charged with halting Burgoyne's advance. Schuyler's soldiers felled trees, destroyed bridges, and burned crops before the path of the British.

Time and the tide of events now began to run against Burgoyne. St. Leger halted his advance down the Mohawk Valley to besiege Fort Stanwix. In the Battle of Oriskany on August 6 he stopped an American column marching to aid the fort. But learning that a strong force under Gen. Benedict Arnold was on its way, he raised the siege and retreated toward Canada. Even more serious was the fate of a detachment of men Burgoyne sent to Bennington, Vt. On Au-

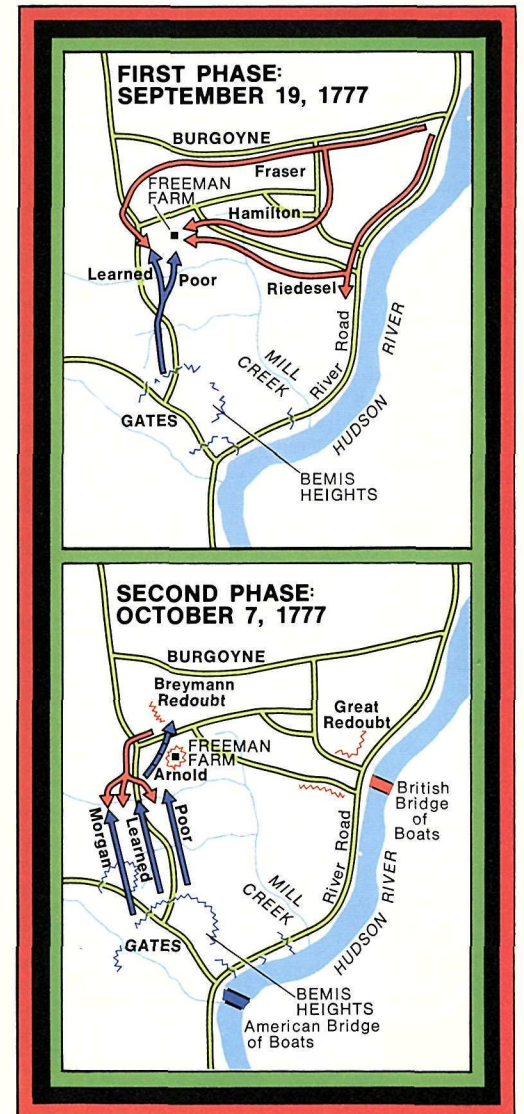
gust 16 John Stark's and Seth Warner's New England militia shattered this force, inflicting about 800 casualties.

Despite these setbacks, Burgoyne decided to sever his communications with Canada and risk everything on a push to Albany. On September 13, he crossed to the west bank of the Hudson at Saratoga (now Schuylerville) and began marching southward. Four miles north of the village of Stillwater, the British force came upon the Americans, 9,000 strong. In command now was Gen. Horatio Gates, who had replaced Schuyler. The Americans were entrenched on Bemis Heights, a strong position where the road to Albany squeezed through a defile between the hills and the river, as does today's U.S. 4.

American artillery on the heights and in redoubts along the Hudson commanded the river and the road. Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a Polish military engineer serving with the Americans, had chosen and fortified the site. Burgoyne's heavily burdened army had either to run the gauntlet between the hills and the river, thus risking destruction, or drive the Americans out of their fortifications on the heights. The British general chose to fight.

On September 19 the Royal Army advanced upon the American camp in three separate columns. Two of them headed through the heavy forests covering the region; the third, composed of German troops, marched down the river road. The British objective was to occupy a strong position from which to conduct field operations against the American entrenchments.

American scouts operating on the Hudson detected Burgoyne's army in motion. When advised of this, Gates ordered Col. Daniel Morgan's rifle corps to reconnoiter the enemy's march. About 12:30 p.m. a detachment of Morgan's men brushed with the advance guard of Burgoyne's center column in a clearing known as the Freeman Farm, about 1 mile north of the American





camp. Action was renewed after a brief lull, and for more than 3 hours fighting swayed back and forth over the farm. Repeatedly the British regiments had to re-form their lines and charge with fixed bayonets, only to be stopped by the deadly fire of the numerically superior Americans. It was discipline and bayonets versus sheer numbers; and in this forested, ravine-slashed terrain the British regiments began to waver.

On the advice of Benedict Arnold, American reinforcements were placed where they threatened to outflank the British right. At this crucial point, German reinforcements arrived from the river road. Hurling them against the American right, Burgoyne steadied the wavering British line and gradually forced the Americans to withdraw. Except for this timely arrival and the near exhaustion of the Americans' ammunition, Burgoyne might have been defeated that day.

Though he held the immediate field of battle, Burgoyne's advance had been stopped about a mile north of the American line and his army roughly treated. Shaken by this "victory," the British commander ordered his troops to entrench in the vicinity of the Freeman Farm and awaited support from Clinton, who was preparing to move north toward Albany from New York City. Nearly 3 weeks of anxious waiting brought no aid from the south, however. True, Clinton did capture the forts along the Hudson south of Albany on October 6. But Burgoyne did not know this, nor was Clinton's distant success an immediate threat to Gates.

By now Burgoyne's situation was critical. Faced by a growing American army (4,000 militiamen had joined Gates), without hope of help from the south, and with supplies rapidly diminishing, the British army became weaker with each passing day. Burgoyne had to choose between advancing or retreating. He decided to risk a second engagement, and on October 7 ordered a reconnaissance-in-force to test the American left flank. Aply led and supported by eight can-

non, a force of 1,500 men moved out of the British camp.

After marching southwesterly about three-quarters of a mile, the troops deployed in a clearing on the Barber Farm. The larger part of the British front faced an open field, but both flanks rested in woods, thus exposing them to surprise attack by the enemy. As the Royal Army advanced, the American scouts retired and the alarm was beaten in Gates' camp. About 3 p.m. the Americans attacked in three columns under Colonel Morgan, Gen. Ebenezer Learned, and Gen. Enoch Poor. Repeatedly the British line was broken, then rallied, and both flanks were severely punished and driven back.

At this crucial point, Gen. Simon Fraser, who commanded the British right, rode among his men in a desperate effort to encourage a stand and cover the developing withdrawal. In the fog of battle, Fraser was shot, possibly by a member of a party detailed by Colonel Morgan for that purpose. Mortally wounded, Fraser was borne from the field.

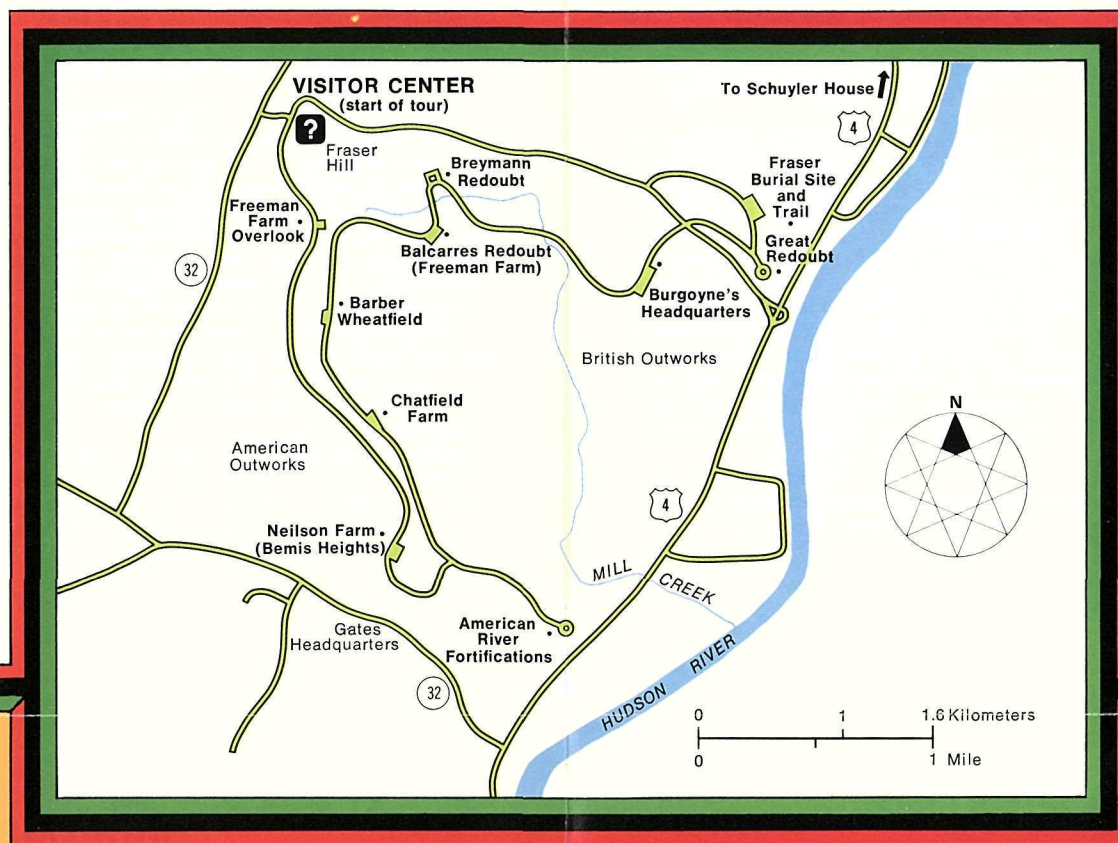
Before the enemy's flanks could be rallied, Arnold—who had been relieved of command after a quarrel with Gates—rode onto the field and led Learned's brigade against the German troops holding the British center. Under tremendous pressure from all sides, the Germans joined a general withdrawal into the fortifications on

the Freeman Farm. Within an hour after the opening clash, Burgoyne lost eight cannon and more than 400 officers and men.

Flushed with success, the Americans believed that victory was near. Led by Arnold, one column launched a series of savage attacks on the Balcarres Redoubt, a powerful British fieldwork on the Freeman Farm. After repeated assaults failed to carry this position, Arnold wheeled his horse and, dashing through the crossfire of both armies, spurred northwest to the Breymann Redoubt. He arrived just as American troops began to assault the front and left of the fortification. Arnold joined them in the final surge that overwhelmed the German soldiers defending the work. Upon entering the redoubt, he was wounded in the leg. Had he died there, posterity would have known few names brighter than that of Benedict Arnold.

Darkness ended the day's fighting and saved Burgoyne's army from immediate disaster. That night the British commander left his campfires burning and withdrew his troops behind the Great Redoubt, which protected the high ground and river flats at the northeast corner of the battlefield. The next night, October 8, after burying General Fraser in the redoubt, the British began their retreat northward. They had suffered 1,000 casualties in the fighting of the past 3 weeks; American losses numbered less than 500.

After a miserable march in mud and rain, Burgoyne's troops took refuge in a fortified camp on the heights at Saratoga. There an American force that had grown to nearly 20,000 men surrounded the exhausted British army. In the face of such great odds, Burgoyne was forced to surrender on October 17, 1777. By the terms of the Convention of Saratoga, Burgoyne's depleted army, some 6,000 men, marched out of its camp "with the Honors of War" and stacked its weapons along the west bank of the Hudson River. Thus was gained one of the most decisive victories in American and world history.



#### About Your Visit

The park entrances lie 30 miles north of Albany, N.Y., on U.S. 4 and N.Y. 32. Taxi service is available from Saratoga Springs, Mechanicville, and Schuylerville.

The visitor center is open daily except Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. Both the John Neilson House and the Freeman House are usually open in summer, and park roads are open from about April 1 to November 30 as weather permits. The Schuyler House is open from late June to Labor Day.

#### Administration

Saratoga National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is R.F.D. 1, Box 113-C, Stillwater, NY 12170, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

#### Seeing Saratoga Battlefield

This guide, used in conjunction with the maps and exhibits in the visitor center and the interpretive markers on the battlefield itself, will help you to gain a clearer understanding of the battles of Saratoga. The auto tour route begins at the south end of the parking area. The complete tour is 9 miles long and takes about 4 hours. (Those with less time should be sure to stop at the Neilson Farm, the Barber Wheatfield, the Balcarres Redoubt, and the Schuyler House.)

- 1 Freeman Farm Overlook.** In 1777 the land here was owned and farmed by John Freeman, a loyalist who went north to join Burgoyne's invasion force. The fields in front of you were the scene of the major fighting of September 19. Col. Daniel Morgan's Virginia riflemen opened the clash shortly before noon by firing on the advance guard of Burgoyne's center column from their post in the Freeman House, a stout cabin of logs. Toward dusk it appeared that the British would be driven from the field, but the timely arrival of German troops saved them. Shortly afterwards, with ammunition running low and darkness setting in, the Americans retired to their camp around the Neilson Farm on Bemis Heights, about 1 mile south, or to your right.
- 2 Neilson Farm (Bemis Heights).** Both before and after the battles, these heights were farmed by John Neilson, who joined the American troops opposing Burgoyne's advance. His restored home stands to-

day much as it did when American staff officers used it for quarters in September 1777. The high ground here is named for Jotham Bemis, who kept a tavern at the foot of the hill. Stakes outline the American fortified line that extended toward the southeast. The other half of the line ran southwesterly along the Quaker Springs Road and the ridge south of the D.A.R. Monument. About ¼ mile to the south are the sites of General Gates' headquarters and the field hospital where American wounded were treated.

- 3 American River Fortifications.** This strongpoint was the key to the American strategy against Burgoyne in 1777. Infantrymen and cannon here, supported by batteries along the near riverbank, commanded the road, the flood plain, and the river, closing off the Hudson Valley route to Albany. This powerful position, established under the direction of Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a Polish military engineer and volunteer in the patriot cause, forced the British to move through rough, wooded terrain west of the valley to attack the main American line on Bemis Heights. The result was the clash on September 19.
- 4 Chatfield Farm.** An American outpost placed on this ridge, the site of Asa Chatfield's farm in 1777, could observe any advance against the center and left of the patriot line. Beyond the ridge before you is the Middle Ravine, across which American and British

pickets exchanged musket shots during the weeks preceding the October 7 battle. It was from this overlook that American scouts first observed the British movement toward the Barber Farm on October 7.

- 5 Barber Wheatfield.** Here and in the field farther west (beyond the first row of trees) the Americans on October 7 intercepted 1,500 British and German soldiers advancing southwest in an attempt to outflank the American left. Fierce fighting followed and, as American reinforcements rushed in, Burgoyne's troops were compelled to withdraw to fortifications on the Freeman Farm. Northwest of here is the spot where British Gen. Simon Fraser was mortally wounded while attempting to rally his men.
- 6 Balcarres Redoubt (Freeman Farm).** After the battle of September 19, Burgoyne's forces hurriedly constructed a fortified line from the river to the Breymann Redoubt. The strongest part of this line was located on the Freeman Farm where the British built a log-and-earthwork redoubt 500 yards long and from 12 to 14 feet high. Named for Lord Balcarres, who commanded the British light infantry, it was manned by 1,500 men and mounted eight cannon. On October 7 Burgoyne's flanking column, retreating from the Barber Farm, withdrew to this point. Benedict Arnold led Poor's brigade and parts of Learned's and Brig. Gen. John Paterson's commands in a series of costly

and unsuccessful attacks against this work. The redoubt is outlined by stakes.

- 7 Breymann Redoubt.** This fortification, a single line of breastworks about 200 yards long and from 7 to 8 feet high, guarded the British right flank and the road to Quaker Springs. It was held by German troops under the command of Lt. Col. Heinrich Breymann. The interval between the Breymann and Balcarres Redoubts was defended by Canadian volunteers posted in two log buildings. While Arnold led the attacks against the Balcarres Redoubt, other American troops prepared to assault this work. Driving the Canadians from their position, the Americans charged the Germans on the flanks and center. As Learned, Morgan, and Col. John Brooks led their men over the front of the breastwork, Arnold entered it from the rear. He fell with a leg wound as the position was captured. The redoubt is outlined by stakes. Arnold's wound is commemorated by the nearby "Boot Monument."
- 8 Burgoyne's Headquarters.** The path here leads to the site of Burgoyne's headquarters, which at the time of the battles consisted of a large marquee or tent. It was established after the action of September 19 and was the center of command and camp life between the two engagements. Burgoyne chose the site because of a nearby spring.
- 9 Great Redoubt.** On this hill and two others to the north,

the British built a system of fortifications which they called the "Great Redoubt." It was designed to guard the hospital, artillery park, and supplies on the river flat, and the boat bridge across the Hudson. Burgoyne withdrew his army to this vicinity during the night of October 7.

- 10 Fraser Burial Site and Trail.** A 1-mile loop trail passes the traditional gravesite of Gen. Simon Fraser, mortally wounded during the second battle of Saratoga. Beyond the gravesite, the trail continues to the sites of the British hospital, artillery park, baggage area, and the Taylor House where Fraser died. Portions of the Old Champlain Canal may also be seen along the trail. (Note: The loop trail is fairly steep. Persons with unusual physical limitations should take this into consideration before using it.)
- To reach the Schuyler House and Saratoga Monument from this point, return to U.S. 4 and turn left. Schuylerville is 13 kilometers (8 miles) north.

The Schuyler House, situated in Schuylerville (historic Saratoga), was the country home of Gen. Philip Schuyler both before and after the battles. The present house, erected in 1777 shortly after Burgoyne's surrender, was the center of Schuyler's extensive farming and milling operations.

The Saratoga Monument, completed in 1883, commemorates the surrender of the Crown forces under Gen. John Burgoyne to Gen. Horatio Gates on October 17, 1777. The 155-foot memorial stands on a summit within what was Burgoyne's entrenched camp during the final days of the campaign. The top floor offers a beautiful panoramic view.