

Saratoga

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historical Park
New York



Detail from *The Surrender of Gen. Burgoyne* by John Trumbull
COURTESY ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

“I have always thought Hudson’s River the most proper part of the whole continent for opening vigorous operations. Because the course of the river . . . is precisely the route that an army ought to take for the great purposes of cutting the communications between the Southern and Northern Provinces, giving confidence to the Indians, and securing a junction with the Canadian forces.”

—Gen. John Burgoyne, 1775



General John Burgoyne by Sir Joshua Reynolds
© THE FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK

The Campaign of 1777

From the moment he arrived in America in 1775, British Gen. John Burgoyne believed in the Hudson River as a strategic highway through the northeast. His northern campaign plan of 1777 was to move his army south from Canada via the Lake Champlain-Hudson River route to Albany. A smaller force under Col. Barry St. Leger was expected to support this by marching east from Lake Ontario into the upper Mohawk Valley. Burgoyne and St. Leger would meet at Albany and join forces with Sir William Howe’s sizable army in New York City. Together they would destroy the rebellion.

But Howe had other ideas. Leaving only a small force under Sir Henry Clinton in New York, he planned to move against the patriot capital at Philadelphia via Chesapeake Bay. Colonial Secretary Lord George Germain approved this, believing that Howe would return to New York in time to cooperate with Burgoyne. Howe was then already at sea and committed to the Philadelphia campaign when Germain’s approval reached him. This meant that if Burgoyne needed help from New York City during his invasion from Canada, few troops would be on hand to help him. Burgoyne left St. Johns (now St. Jean), Canada, on June 17, 1777. His total force included 4,000 British regulars, 3,200 German auxiliaries from Braunschweig and Hessen-Hanau, 250 Canadian and loyalist soldiers, 400 Iroquois

and Algonquian warriors, and about 1,000 noncombatants and camp followers. His first major objective, Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain, fell on July 6 after a four-day siege. Moving south through Skenesboro and Fort Edward, the British were impeded by rough terrain and Gen. Philip Schuyler’s delaying tactics. As commander of American troops in the Northern Department, Schuyler was charged with halting Burgoyne’s invasion.

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 August 6 he stopped American militia marching to aid the fort. But learning that a strong force under Gen. Benedict Arnold was on its way, St. Leger raised the siege and retreated to Canada. More serious was the fate of a detachment Burgoyne sent to Bennington. On August 16, Gen. John Stark’s and Col. Seth Warner’s New England troops shattered this force, inflicting 900 casualties.



COLLECTION OF INDEPENDENCE
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
Major General
Horatio Gates
by Charles
Willson Peale

Despite the setbacks, Burgoyne severed communications with Canada and risked all on a push to Albany. His army crossed to the Hudson’s west bank at Saratoga (now Schuylerville) in mid-September and continued advancing south. Four miles north of Stillwater, he came upon the 8,000 Americans commanded by Gen. Horatio Gates, who had replaced Schuyler. The Americans were dug in on Bemus Heights, a strong position where the road to Albany squeezed through a defile between the hills and the river, as US 4 does today.

American artillery on the heights and in redoubts along the Hudson commanded both river and road. Col. Tadeusz Kosciuszko, a Polish military engineer serving with the Americans, had chosen and fortified the site. Burgoyne’s heavily burdened army had to go between the hills and the river, risking destruction, or drive the Americans from the fortified heights. The British general chose to attack.

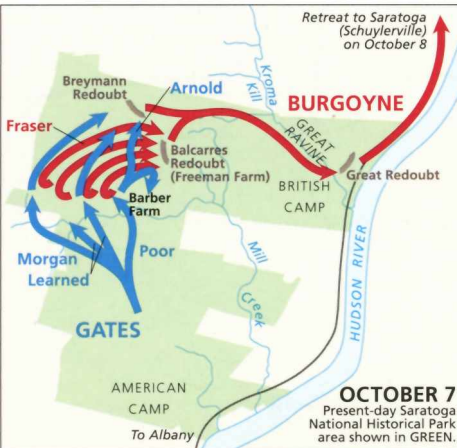


The Battles of Saratoga

On September 19 the British advanced on the American camp in three columns. Two headed through heavy forests covering the region; the third, made up of mostly German troops, marched down the river road. Seeing Burgoyne’s army in motion, American scouts notified Gates, who ordered Col. Daniel Morgan’s corps of Virginia and Pennsylvania riflemen to track the British march. About 12:30 pm, some of Morgan’s men brushed with the advance guard of Burgoyne’s center column in a clearing—Freeman Farm—about a mile north of the American camp.

The ensuing battle ranged back and forth over the farm for over three hours. Then, as outnumbered British lines wavered under deadly American fire, German reinforcements arrived from the river road. Hurling them at the American right, Burgoyne steadied his breaking line, gradually forcing the Americans to withdraw. Burgoyne held the field but was stopped a mile north of the American lines,

holding the British center. Under fierce pressure from all sides, the Germans joined the withdrawal into fortifications on Freeman Farm. In the hour of fighting, Burgoyne lost eight cannon and over 400 officers and men.



Able led and supported by eight cannon 1,700 men moved out of the British camp.

Marching 1,300 yards to the southwest, the troops deployed in a clearing on Barber Farm. Most of the British front was posted in open fields, but the topography made both flanks vulnerable to surprise attack. The Americans now knew Burgoyne’s army was moving. About 3 pm they attacked in three columns under Col. Morgan, Gen. Ebenezer Learned, and Gen. Enoch Poor. Repeatedly the British line was broken, then rallied, and both flanks were hit hard and driven back. Gen. Simon Fraser was mortally wounded as he rode among his men to encourage them to make a stand and cover the developing withdrawal.

Before the enemy’s flanks could be rallied, Gen. Benedict Arnold—effectively relieved of command after a quarrel with Gates—led Learned’s brigade against the German troops

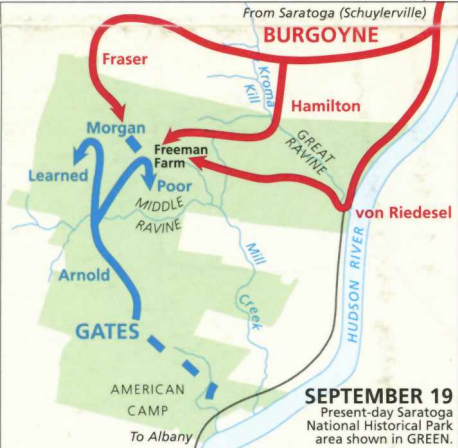
holding the British center. Under fierce pressure from all sides, the Germans joined the withdrawal into fortifications on Freeman Farm. In the hour of fighting, Burgoyne lost eight cannon and over 400 officers and men.

Flushed with success, the Americans thought victory was near. Arnold led one column in a series of savage attacks on the **Balcarras Redoubt**, a powerful British fort built on Freeman’s Farm. Failing repeatedly to carry this position, Arnold wheeled his horse and, dashing through both armies’ crossfire, spurred northwest to the **Breymann Redoubt**. Arriving as the Americans began assaulting the fortification, he joined the final surge overwhelming the German soldiers defending it. Entering the redoubt, he was wounded in the leg. Had he died there, posterity would have known few brighter names than Benedict Arnold.

Darkness ended the fighting, saving the British from immediate disaster. That night Burgoyne left his campfires burning and withdrew his troops behind the **Great Redoubt** protecting the high ground and river flats at the battlefield’s northeast corner. The next night, after burying Fraser in the redoubt, the British began retreating north. They had suffered over 1,200 casualties in three weeks; American losses were fewer than 500.

After a miserable rainy, muddy march, Burgoyne’s troops took refuge in a fortified camp on the heights of Saratoga. There, an American force grown to nearly 17,000 men surrounded the exhausted British army. Faced with such overwhelming numbers, Burgoyne surrendered on October 17, 1777. Under the terms of the Convention of Saratoga, Burgoyne’s depleted 6,000-man army marched out of its camp “with the Honors of War” and surrendered its arms along the Hudson River’s west bank.

One of the most decisive victories in American and world history had just been won.



his army badly bloodied. Shaken by his victory, he ordered his troops to dig in near Freeman Farm and await support from Clinton, who promised to send troops north to aid Burgoyne. He waited nearly three weeks, but received no further word from

Tour Saratoga Battlefield



The Great Redoubt, a British hilltop fortification above the Hudson River (tour stop 9)

Use this guide, along with maps and exhibits in the visitor center and interpretive markers on the battlefield, to learn more about the battles of Saratoga. The 10-mile, 10-stop auto tour starts near the visitor center at the parking area's south end. If your time is limited, we recommend Neilson Farm, Barber Wheatfield, and Balcarres Redoubt.

- 1 Freeman Farm Overlook** In 1777 John Freeman, a loyalist who went north and joined the British invasion force, leased and farmed the ground east of this open field. Major fighting September 19 took place on his farm. Around noon, Morgan's riflemen fired on the advance guard of Burgoyne's center column from their posts near the Freeman House.
- 2 Neilson Farm (the Summit)** Before and after the battles John Neilson farmed these heights. He joined the American troops to oppose Burgoyne's advance. Today his restored home looks much like it did in 1777 when Arnold and Poor used it for quarters. Posts outline the fortified American lines. Gates' headquarters and the American field hospital sites are about one-half mile south.
- 3 American River Fortifications (Bemus Heights)** Col. Tadeusz Kosciuszko, a Polish military engineer and volunteer in the patriot cause, directed construction of this powerful position, which was key to American strategy against Burgoyne in 1777. Batteries along the near riverbank supported patriot infantry and cannon posted here. This closed off the Hudson Valley route to Albany and forced the British to attempt to attack the American line at the summit on September 19.

- 4 Chatfield Farm** An American outpost on this ridge, the site of Jesse Chatfield's farm in 1777, spotted the British movement toward the Barber Farm on October 7. Middle Ravine lies beyond the ridge in front of you. American and British pickets exchanged musket and rifle shots across the ravine just before the second battle began.
- 5 Barber Wheatfield** On October 7 here and in the field farther west (beyond the first row of trees) Americans intercepted 1,500 British and German soldiers advancing southwest in an attempt to reconnoiter the American left. After an hour of fierce fighting, Burgoyne's troops retreated to fortifications on Freeman Farm. British Gen. Simon Fraser was mortally wounded while trying to rally his men northeast of here.

- 6 Balcarres Redoubt (Freeman Farm)** This log-and-earthen work stretching about 375 yards was named for Lord Balcarres, commander of British light infantry. This was the strongest fort the British built following the September 19 battle. On October 7 the British flanking column withdrew here after being driven from the Barber Farm. Today, the redoubt is outlined by posts.
- 7 Breymann Redoubt** Outlined by posts today, this single line of breastworks about 100 yards long and seven to eight feet high guarded the British right flank and the road to Quaker Springs. The redoubt was named for Lt. Col. Heinrich Breymann, whose German troops were stationed here. Nearby Boot Monument commemorates Benedict Arnold's leg wound, received here just as Americans captured the position.

- 8 Burgoyne's Headquarters** The path leads to the site of Burgoyne's headquarters, a location Burgoyne chose because of a nearby spring. Set up after the action of September 19, it consisted of large marquees or tents and was the center of British command and camp life between the two battles.
- 9 The Great Redoubt** The British built this strongest of three hilltop forts along bluffs overlooking the river to guard their hospital, artillery park, Indian and American loyalist camps, food stocks, boats, refugees, and floating bridge. Burgoyne withdrew his army to this vicinity during the night of October 7.
- 10 Fraser Burial Site and Trail** A one-mile loop trail passes Fraser's traditional gravesite. The trail continues to the sites of the British hospital, artillery park, baggage area, and Tayler House, where Fraser died. Parts of the Old Champlain Canal may also be seen along the trail. Persons with physical limitations should take into consideration that this loop trail is fairly steep.

THIS ENDS YOUR TOUR of the Battlefield Unit. To reach the Old Saratoga Unit (Saratoga Monument and Schuyler House), travel eight miles north on US 4.

Safety and Regulations Please be careful as you tour the park. Watch for stinging insects, especially near exhibits. Unpaved trails are rough. Poison ivy is common. **Always check for ticks after walking.** Winter visitors: please be alert to occasional severe weather conditions. For firearms regulations check the park website.

Victory Woods These 22 acres mark the final encampment site for the British Army under Burgoyne prior to the October 17, 1777, surrender to American forces under Gates.

Schuyler House This estate was the country home of Gen. Philip Schuyler both before and after the battles. The British burned the original house and outbuildings to keep the Americans from using them for cover during an attack. The present house, built shortly after Burgoyne's surrender, was the hub of Schuyler's farming and milling operations.

Saratoga Monument Commemorating Burgoyne's surrender to Gates, this 155-foot stone obelisk (completed in 1883) stands where Burgoyne's camp entrenched during the campaign's final days.

Directions and Hours The park entrances are 30 miles north of Albany, NY, on US 4 and NY 32. For operating hours please visit the park website.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all; call or check our website. Service animals are



Schuyler House

welcome. The Wilkinson Trail, walkway to the lower area of Stop 10, second floor of the Schuyler House, and upper levels of the Saratoga Monument are not fully accessible. The walkways at stops 2 and 7 are steep.

More Information
SARATOGA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
648 Rt. 32
Stillwater, NY 12170-1604
518-670-2985
www.nps.gov/sara
sara_info@nps.gov

Saratoga National Historical Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more, visit www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation.
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

©GPO:2018—403-332/82045 Last updated 2018
Printed on recycled paper.

