



Printed for R. Baldwin at the Rose, Peter-Noster Row.

Contemporary English map of the battle area.

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Personalities at Saratoga

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The pages of history are often turned on fragile hinges: students have designated the Battle of Saratoga as one of the 15 pivotal battles that shaped western civilization. Probably no other battle was so directly influenced by the personalities and traits of its leaders; two men dominate this great battle, Benedict Arnold and John Burgoyne.

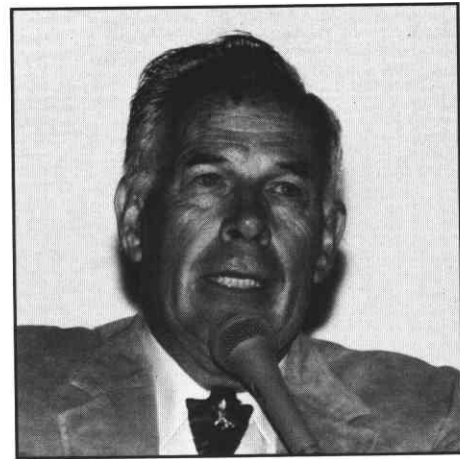
Major General John Burgoyne, also known as Gentleman Johnny, was a gambler and playwright, handsome and debonair. He was a charmer, but exercised questionable judgement. Living the good life with wine, women, and song was his forte. He had returned to England from Canada in the fall of 1776 and wintered in London. There he gained the favor of George III, and usurped command of the 1777 invasion from his superior officer, Guy Carlton, Governor of Canada.

Burgoyne was given command of more than 8000 men. These included British regulars, Brunswick mercenaries, Canadian and American loyalists, and about 500 Indians from the Iroquois confederation. These Indian warriors caused him grief and embarrassment, because they would not conform to the laws and customs of war. He admonished them, "I positively forbid bloodshed when you are not opposed in arms. Aged men, women, children, and prisoners must be held sacred from the knife or hatchet, even in the time of actual conflict. You shall receive compensation for the prisoners you take, but you shall be called to account for scalps." These instructions were ignored.

The campaign was well planned. The main force, under Burgoyne, was to sail down Lake Champlain, portage to Lake George, then sail down to Fort Edwards and march to Albany, where General Howe was to come up the Hudson to join forces and cut the American rebellion in half. General St. Leger was to make a sweep down the Mohawk Valley and isolate most of upper New York.

One of the most important English players in this drama, often overlooked, is Major Skene (also spelled Skeen and Skein), a retired British officer. He had been granted a large land holding, in excess of 60,000 acres, at the lower end of Lake George. Here he had built a well-established enterprise that included a saw mill, supply depot, a foundry and mill, and called it Skenesborough. Skene was an outspoken and fanatic loyalist.

Back in 1775, on the march back from the Fort Ticonderoga, Arnold's men arrested Skene and his family in the name of the Connecticut Assembly and took them to Hartford. There they were held under house arrest at Skene's expense. Skene and his family were accompanied by his slave, John Anderson. It was the custom of the negro slaves of Connecticut to annually hold an election for their own negro governor of Connecticut in imitation of their masters. To the surprise and concern of the Connecticut citizens, John Anderson was elected negro governor on May 11, 1776. The State



Assembly appointed a committee to investigate the election to see if it was part of a Tory plot. Skene and Anderson were found to be innocent. The 25 dollars that Anderson had spent on his election campaign had been earned working on a boat while at Skenesborough.

Skenesborough proved invaluable to the American cause in 1776 when Arnold was given command of Lake Champlain. Its saw mill and shops were used to build Arnold's American fleet which fought the 1776 British naval invasion on Lake Champlain. Although the American Navy was defeated, it damaged the English enough to delay for a year the Canadian invasion. This year of grace led to the defeat of Burgoyne in 1777.

In the summer of 1777 the British invasion force sailed down Lake Champlain and easily recaptured Fort Ticonderoga. When King George learned of the recapture, he rushed into the Queen's chambers shouting, "I have beaten the rebels. It is over." Burgoyne marched on to Skenesborough, where he was greeted and entertained by Philip Skene, recently released from Connecticut. Skene was very much interested in having the British build a road through his property to enhance its value. So he saw to it that Burgoyne, accompanied by his mistress and some twenty horse-drawn carts carrying his wine, food, clothes, and servants, enjoyed all the comforts of Skenesborough. Meanwhile the British army built 20 miles of road across a long swamp, known as the drowned land, requiring 40 bridges. One of the bridges was over a mile in length. This delay was Burgoyne's undoing. Time was crucial. His army consumed a month's irreplaceable supplies and the American forces had a month to assemble and fortify their positions.

Skene had assured Burgoyne that most of the inhabitants were loyal to the King and were awaiting a show of British force to flock to his banner: this false assurance caused the loss of 10% of Burgoyne's forces. 800 men under Colonel Baum marched to defeat at Bennington, where they had ex-

State of Connecticut. To George Burnham D^r

1778
Nov 10th

To Repairing & Cleaning fourteen Fire Arms With Bayonets &c. by Order of the Sect Men Viz ^t Numb ^r 1 To Cleaning & straightning	£ 1.. 4.. 0
To mending & Cops hardning Locks	0.. 7.. 6
To mending the stocks & ramrod	0.. 8.. 0
No. 2 To Cleaning & mending the riging	1.. 10.. 0
Mending the locks	0.. 7.. 6
No. 3 To Cleaning & mending ramrod	1.. 10.. 6
To Cops hardning Hammer	0.. 3.. 6
No. 4 To Cleaning & making ramrod	1.. 15.. 0
No. 5 To Cleaning & mending stocks	1.. 13.. 0
To mend Locks	0.. 4.. 6
No. 6 To Clean & mend the locks	1.. 14.. 0
No. 7 To Clean & mending the stocks	1.. 13.. 0
To mending the locks	0.. 4.. 0
No. 8 Cleaning & Mending locks straight of barrel	1.. 18.. 0
No. 9 Cleaning & Mending locks	1.. 16.. 0
No. 10 Cleaning & fitting bayonet	1.. 16.. 0
No. 11 Clean & mending locks	1.. 13.. 0
Picking ramrod	0.. 4.. 6
No. 12 Cleaning & mending stocks	1.. 16.. 0
To mending locks	0.. 4.. 6
No. 13 Cleaning & Repairing locks	1.. 16.. 0
No. 14 Cleaning & putting new rod	1.. 18.. 0
Deduct	25.. 18.. 6
Errors Excepted	1.. 18.. 6
	£ 24 0 0

Hartford Nov. 10. 1778

Geo. Burnham

This may certify that the above fire Arms was detach^d for Capt. Joseph Church's company in Col. Cook's Reg^t Garrison into Service by them to the North. & when Return^d Deliver^d them to Mr. Geo Burnham to Clean & Repair them, in the same manner as they were when I detach^d them, which he has done agreeable to Orders, & I believe the above Acc^t is Reasonably & justly charge

Sworn to at same time

Joseph Church Selectman
Before John Linsford one of the Justices of the Peace

A receipt for repairing 14 firearms used in the Battel by Thaddeus Cook's regiment.



A sketch published in England representing an American General and a Rifleman. Note "Rifleman" is holding a musket.

pected to gather cattle and horses. Each of the Dragoons in Baum's column had carried halters and bridles, planning to ride or lead the new mounts back to the army. Finally leaving Skenesborough by the new road, the British marched down to the east bank of the Hudson.

In command of the 3000 Brunswick mercenaries was Baron Von Riedesel, with a strong moral conviction. Prior to leaving Brunswick, a German principality in Europe, he required all camp followers to show proof of marriage to a soldier. Those who could not and wished to accompany the army were married to a soldier by the Lutheran chaplain of the army.

General Riedesel sailed with his men to Canada in 1776. In the spring of 1777, his wife, 2 small daughters, a coachman and maid followed. The Baroness was a bright, determined, strong, and very moral lady. In her journals concerning her trip across the Atlantic, she noted the disturbing sounds coming nightly from the Captain's cabin. A fellow passenger, wife of a British officer, was sharing the cabin and berth of the ship's captain. Baroness Riedesel survived not only the hardships of army life, but 4 years of captivity after the surrender of the British. A third daughter, named America, was born during the captivity. The surrendered mercenaries were marched to Boston, then on to Pennsylvania and Virginia, and finally back to New York before returning to Europe.

On the American side, Benedict Arnold was second only to Washington in popularity in 1777, a man of action, speed, energy and leadership. He had distinguished himself in 1775 with the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, where he was in joint command with Ethan Allen, and the march to Quebec. In 1776 he was given command of Lake Champlain and commanded the Americans in the first naval battle of the war. In the spring of 1777, he led the Connecticut forces that drove the British

back to New York after they had sacked the supply depot at Danbury, Connecticut. The soldiers he had led in these campaigns respected and revered Arnold. Congress, however, had promoted several of his officers over him. So he wrote his letter of resignation. Washington, a close friend, personally asked him to go to Albany and do the impossible, help stop the British march down the Hudson. Up to this time the Americans had not won a major battle.

From the time of Arnold's arrival the morale of the troops rebounded: they turned to him for leadership. General Schuyler was in command and because each respected the other, a good working relationship quickly developed. Leading a relief column up the Mohawk Valley to raise the siege of Fort Stanwick Arnold's name and reputation were enough to discourage the 500 Indians with the British General St. Leger. The Indians deserted the English after raiding their camp and left for home. St. Leger had no choice but to march back to Canada.

When Arnold returned to Stillwater, General Gates had replaced General Schuyler as Commander of the American forces, through political conniving. Hostility and friction soon developed between Gates and Arnold. Two more diverse characters could not be imagined. Gates, always the schemer, had surrounded himself with yes-men. Gates' Adj. Colonel James Wilkinson had also served under Arnold, who held him in low esteem and had called him a coward. Arnold was aggressive, outspoken and abrasive and caught up in the preparation for battle.

History has not been kind to General Horatio Gates. He was an ambitious, conniving man, called Granny by his troops. There had been a long standing bloody feud between New York and New England over the ownership of the New Hampshire Grants (Vermont). While Schuyler was preparing the defense against the invasion and gathering men and supplies,



Colonel Daniel Morgan

Gates had rushed to Philadelphia. Using the feud to feed the hatred of the New Englanders towards Schuyler and the New Yorkers, Gates inveigled the appointment to succeed Schuyler as commander of the Northern Army.

Two contemporary officers of Gates' made these comments about him: "The best that can be said of Gates as a soldier is that he had considerable insight into Burgoyne's character. Burgoyne defeated himself." And, Gates was a "strange figure of a soldier, seamed of face, flabby of body, fussily absorbed with the trivia of army routines. No officer who served with him for long retained any illusion of his military gifts."

George Washington requested another remarkable soldier to report to Albany, Colonel Daniel Morgan, with 500 of his Virginia riflemen. An old comrade of Morgan's from the Canadian invasion, Colonel Dearborn, was assigned to Morgan's regiment. He brought 300 seasoned Continental troops with him. After the surrender of the British, Burgoyne told Morgan, "Sir, you command the finest regiment in America."

One of Morgan's soldiers, Tim Murphy, is credited with firing the shot that directly influenced the outcome of the second Saratoga Battle, mortally wounding General Fraser, who was rallying the British forces.

This campaign was the vindication of the militia forces. Two thirds of the American forces were militia regiments from New York and New England. There were two Connecticut

regiments at the Battle, led by Colonel Latimer and Colonel Cook. I have a personal interest in Colonel Thaddeus Cook: I was born and raised on the same farm in Wallingford, Connecticut. I learned to ride a horse, milk cows, drive oxen, hunt deer, rabbits, and partridge in the same woods and even skinny dipping in the same swimming hole. He was my grandfather four generations back. Thaddeus Cook had served as a lieutenant with his militia company marching with General Amherst in the campaign that captured Fort Ticonderoga from the French. He remained active in the Connecticut militia and, as a Major in 1773, accompanied Silas Dean to Westmoreland (now upper Pennsylvania). According to the Connecticut Charter, this was part of Connecticut at that time. Their mission was to establish a legal system for that wilderness area.

In 1775 Thaddeus and his men marched to answer the Lexington Alarm. On December 25, 1776, he crossed the Delaware with Washington and fought in the Battle of Trenton. Early in 1777 he and his men were called to repel the British invasion of Danbury, Connecticut, and again in 1779 to drive the British out of New Haven. He was with General Sullivan in 1779 when the Americans destroyed the Iroquois Confederacy. In 1787 he was a member of the Connecticut constitutional convention which ratified the U.S. Constitution. His remains lie in our family plot in Wallingford, Connecticut.

At Saratoga, his regiment was attached to General Poor's brigade, part of Arnold's division. He saw extensive action in both battles, on September 19th and October 7th. Thaddeus Cook's regimental journal, which he kept while at Saratoga, is stored at the Antiquarian Society at Worcester, Massachusetts.

We hear or read little of the Oneida Indians that served with the American forces; they are twice mentioned in Thaddeus Cook's journals. Once he admonished his men to stay away from the headquarters when the "savages" bring in prisoners. And later he advised his men that in battle the Indians will be wearing red knit caps, so that they will be recognized as American allies.

On September 13, 1777, Burgoyne's forces crossed the Hudson river and slowly moved south. By the 18th they were about 2 miles from the fortified position of the Americans on Bemis's Heights in Stillwater. On September 19th the first battle of Freeman's Farm was fought. The American forces faced the best military fighting force Europe had to offer and fought them to a draw. Veterans of the Seven Years war in Europe stated it was the hardest, most intense battle they had ever seen. Arnold, with Morgan's regiment and Poor's division, stopped the British. Casualties were high on both sides.

Gates had held seven thousand of his troops idle during this battle. Arnold accused him of incompetence and cowardliness and stated that if Gates had committed those troops that day the British would have been defeated. A violent argument followed and Arnold tendered his resignation. At the insistence of several of his friends, Arnold stayed with his troops, but without a command.

Arnold had been the only American General Officer on the field that day. According to contemporary observers, had it not been for Arnold, Burgoyne would have marched into Albany. All the Colonels in Poor's command signed a resolution praising Arnold's leadership and supporting his retention

of command. This was framed and presented to Arnold.

Burgoyne was in a box, with supplies running low and no response from New York City. He daily expected Clinton to advance up the Hudson to join forces. (Howe had sailed for Philadelphia) After vacillating for two weeks, Burgoyne made a desperate drive on October 7th at Freeman's Farm. Gates sent Morgan, Poor, and Learned into action. Arnold, against direct orders, mounted his horse and rushed to the sound of the fighting. He was described as "chaffing like a caged lion, could stand it no longer." "No man shall keep me in my tent today. If I am without command I will fight in the ranks." At that time, the action of a General Officer on the field largely determined the issue of battle. And there was none better than Arnold. It was stated as a curious fact that an officer who had no command was the outstanding leader in the field.

An interesting observation was made that all the British officers, Burgoyne, Fraser, Phillips, and Riedesel, were leading their men on the battle field, while General Gates remained in camp about two miles in the rear. He attempted to direct, rather than lead his forces. The militia followed Arnold into battle. Inspired by his head-long dashing attack, they rallied again and again; the men described Arnold as being in the center of every engagement. At the crucial moment of battle, Tim Murphy, one of Morgan's riflemen, fatally wounded General Fraser, an inspirational English leader. With Fraser removed from the battlefield the British lost their spirit. General Fraser had been invited to dinner that same evening in the house occupied by the Riedesels. During the battle the house had been commandeered for an emergency hospital. The wounded Fraser was brought in and died in the room in which he was to have been guest of honor.

Late in the day, while charging a German redoubt, Arnold's leg was shattered and his horse killed, falling on him. Colonel Dearborn, his old comrade, reached him and held him. Arnold said, "It's the same leg wounded in Canada. I wish it had been my heart." On that day, Arnold reached the summit of his fame. If he had died that day, October 7, 1777, he would have been one of America's greatest heroes.

The surrender of the British army was the turning point of the war. The French, convinced that their old enemy could be defeated openly, allied themselves with the new nation.

Lieutenant Anburey, a British officer, writing several weeks later, reflected: "The courage and obstinacy with which the Americans fought were the astonishment of everyone, and we now became fully convinced that they are not the contemptible enemy we had hitherto imagined them..."

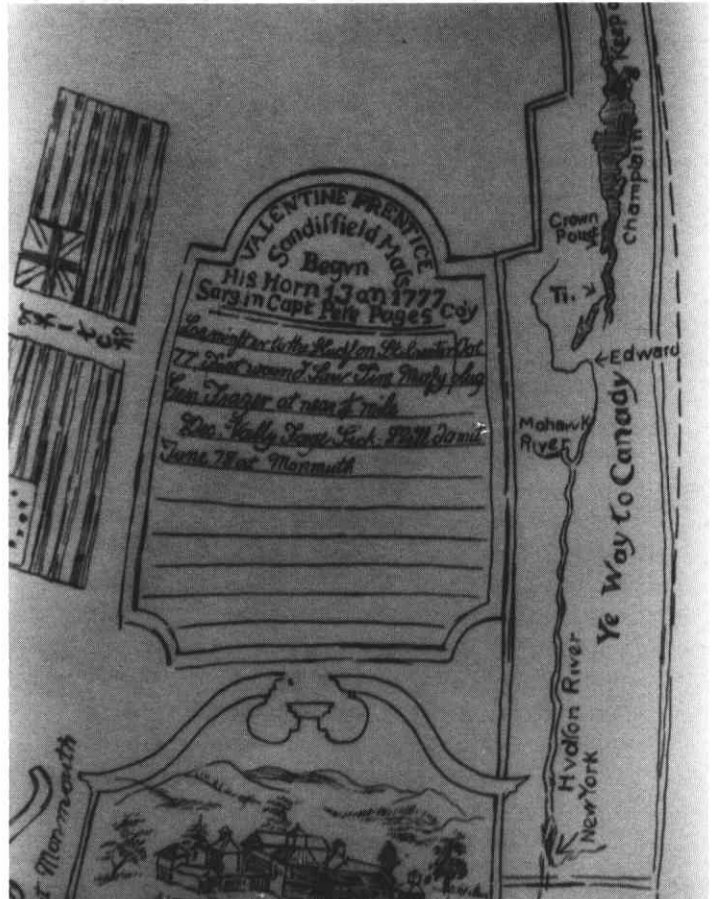
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A sketch by Herb Sherlock in *Black Powder Snapshots*, representing Tim Murphy shooting General Fraser.



Drawing of the carving on a powder horn made by Valentine Prentice, on which he writes "saw Tim Murphy plug General Fraser at near 1/4 mile." This horn is listed in *American Powder Horns* published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Plate XXVII).