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# Saratoga

## National Historical Park



### “Time Flies By”

—Chronology of the British Campaign of 1777—

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Here is the chronology of the British invasion into New York in 1777. Use this list to help you with your timeline exercise.

There are some vocabulary words with which you might not be familiar. They are:

advance corps (“core”) –a group of soldiers going ahead of the main part of an army  
bateaux (“ba-tow”) –a small boat, able to move through shallow water, and able to hold  
between 10 and 25 men

capitulation (“ka-pit-you-lay-shun”) –a surrender with agreed upon terms

column –a large group of soldiers, sometimes moving along a road or pathway, partly  
independent from the rest of an army

continentals –American soldiers who are part of the regular army

division –a grouping of soldiers, made up of several regiments or parts of regiments

fortifying –strengthening a structure or area by building defenses on or around it  
(like wooden walls, dirt piled up against or around it, trenches, etc.)

garrison –the group of soldiers assigned to defend a fort

loyalists –Americans who supported King George III and remained loyal to England

militia –American soldiers who are not part of the regular army. They often served for  
only a certain length of time per year.

rear-guard –group of soldiers assigned to defend an army’s back

reconnaissance in force (“re-kon-a-sance”) –a group of soldiers assigned to go out  
ahead of the army to gather information about the enemy

redoubt (“re-dowt”) –a temporary fortification built to protect one side or another  
of an army’s camp

regiment –a group of soldiers, about 500 total; the basic unit of an army

siege (“seej”) –a lengthy attack on a fort, town, or city with the intent of capturing it

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**17 June 1777:** Burgoyne and his force leave St. John, Canada. His total force is nearly 9,000 men and 2,000 women.

**1-5 July:** Fort Ticonderoga is attacked for four days by the British Forces

**5-6 July:** Ticonderoga is abandoned by the Americans during the night. The American troops escape across a bridge to the Vermont side of Lake Champlain.

**6 July:** The British Advance Corps and the American rear-guard collide at Hubbardton in Vermont. The Americans are forced back, but not until after they have put up strong resistance.

**Late July:** Burgoyne at this point decides to follow a route southward from Skeenesboro.

Retreating Americans make the terrible wilderness roads even worse by cutting trees down to block roads and blocking streams so they flood roads. Burgoyne takes 20 days to cover 22 miles. His army reaches Fort Edward on 29 July. Burgoyne's army is already having supply problems.

**26 July:** Lt. Colonel Barry St. Leger departs with his small army from Oswego.

**2 Aug.:** St Leger's forces arrive at Fort Schuyler (Stanwix).

**6 Aug.:** Loyalists and Native Americans from St. Leger's Army ambush a relief column of militia at Oriskany. The battle proves to be a bloody draw, but the American garrison of Fort Schuyler uses it as a distraction to attack St. Leger's camp. The attackers seize much of the belongings and equipment of the Indians, leaving them short of necessities.

**16 Aug.:** An 800-man group of German troops detached from Burgoyne's army is overrun near Hoosic, New York while trying to forage for supplies. This is usually called the "Battle of Bennington".

**17 Aug.:** The majority of Indians in Burgoyne's army leave. Unable to get the vast quantities of valuables, prisoners and scalps they'd hoped, most of the "savages" (as they were called) return to Canada.

**7-22 Aug.:** St Leger's forces conduct a formal siege of Fort Schuyler. The British, Loyalists and Germans are put to work digging trenches, attempting to get their small artillery pieces close enough to damage the fort.

- The siege is lifted when word arrives in St. Leger's camp that a large force of American troops is on their way to the fort. (This report is a fabrication created by Benedict Arnold, who has been sent with only a small reinforcement.) St. Leger's army retreats to Oswego. [Burgoyne learns of this on 28 August.]

**19 Aug.:** Horatio Gates, having been named Commander of the Northern Department, arrives in Albany to replace Philip Schuyler.

**8 Sept.:** Gates' army, reinforced with New York Continentals, Daniel Morgan's command of Continental Riflemen and Arnold's column, advances northward from the Albany area.

**12 Sept.:** Gates' Army begins fortifying Bemis Heights to block the advance of Burgoyne's Army. Most of the work is concentrated on the eastern end, overlooking the Hudson River. Strong points are built on the western end, near John Neilson's farm.

**13 Sept.:** Having accumulated a reserve of supplies, Burgoyne's Army begins crossing the Hudson River on a bridge of boats at Saratoga (Schuylerville).

**18 Sept.:** About 500 militia led by Colonel John Brown raids the fortification complex at Ticonderoga and the supply base at Diamond Island, Lake George.

- Although the fort itself is too strongly manned, the attackers at Ticonderoga capture prisoners, bateaux, and seize some of the outer defenses. The raid at Diamond Island is unsuccessful, as the small garrison had been alerted. Although the British still hold these posts, the attack demonstrated the difficult position of Burgoyne's Army.

**19 Sept.: First day in the Battles of Saratoga**

Burgoyne tried to engage the American Army. He divided his army into three columns and advanced toward the American fortified lines. Realizing that the western defenses were not completed, the American Army assigns General Arnold's division to advance toward the British and try to fight them away from the defensive lines on Bemis Heights.

- The fighting began around noon at the farm of John Freeman. In a long afternoon's battle, the British managed to hold the field—due to the toughness of their troops and

timely reinforcements late in the day. Because the British held the battlefield, Burgoyne regarded it as a victory. However, his army lost over 500 casualties (the Americans, some 400) and had not opened a way to Albany.

- 20 Sept.-6 Oct.:** Burgoyne's Army encamped and fortified its position. Burgoyne had decided to wait for assistance from the British forces near New York City. The American Army was reinforced with militia from New York and New England. Both armies spent the time patrolling and raiding the other's outposts. (The Americans seem to have won more of these encounters than the British and their allies.)
- 26 Sept.:** Gates and Arnold argue: Arnold was relieved of his command. Although Arnold was intending to travel to personally petition Congress for redress, some staff officers, hostile to Gates, convince Arnold to remain.
- 3 Oct.:** General Sir Henry Clinton ascended the Hudson River from New York City with some 3000 troops.
- 6 Oct.:** Part of Clinton's forces attacked and captured two forts near Bear Mountain: Forts Clinton and Montgomery.
- 7 Oct.: Second day in the Battles of Saratoga**  
Burgoyne decided to send a reconnaissance in force to probe the American lines. If successful, a general assault would be ordered for the following day. Some 1700 troops with eight cannon and two howitzers advanced around mid-day.
- The Americans noted the movement and attacked the British column deployed near Simeon Barber's Wheatfield. In a fierce fight, the British were driven from the field in considerable disorder. Pursuing American troops managed to overrun a German-held redoubt, whose capture threatened Burgoyne's entire Army. Nightfall ended the action, and the British withdrew to the protection of their river fortifications.
- 8 Oct.:** Burgoyne's Army begins to retreat toward Ticonderoga—some 60 miles north. This retreat did not begin until after nightfall and was hampered by bad weather, appalling roads and exhausted draft animals.
- 9-10 Oct.:** Gates' Army began a slow pursuit of Burgoyne's. Burgoyne managed to move his army a mere nine miles in this period and only reached Saratoga (Schuylerville). When advance elements of Gates' Army approached, Burgoyne put his troops into defensive positions in Saratoga. Burgoyne ordered General Philip Schuyler's country estate burned to make it easier for the British forces to defend their position.
- 11-15 Oct.:** Burgoyne's Army was besieged in its positions in Saratoga. Gradually, the Americans were able to close up all avenues of escape. Burgoyne started negotiations to end hostilities 13 October.
- 13-15 Oct.:** Negotiations for capitulation between Gates and Burgoyne. Gates gave very generous terms, as he had received news that General Sir Henry Clinton's column was approaching. (Only a small part of this column actually came near Albany. Some 1700 troops under General John Vaughn burned Esopus (pronounced "es-oh-pus" –present-day Kingston) and got within 30 miles of Albany by ship. They were ordered to withdraw when General Clinton received orders to break off the action to support General Howe's forces operating near Philadelphia.)
- 17 Oct.:** The articles of capitulation are signed and known there after as the Convention of Saratoga. The basic agreement was that Burgoyne's forces would lay down their arms and be marched to Boston. From there they would be put on British shipping and sent anywhere in the world, so long as they did not take up arms against the Americans again.