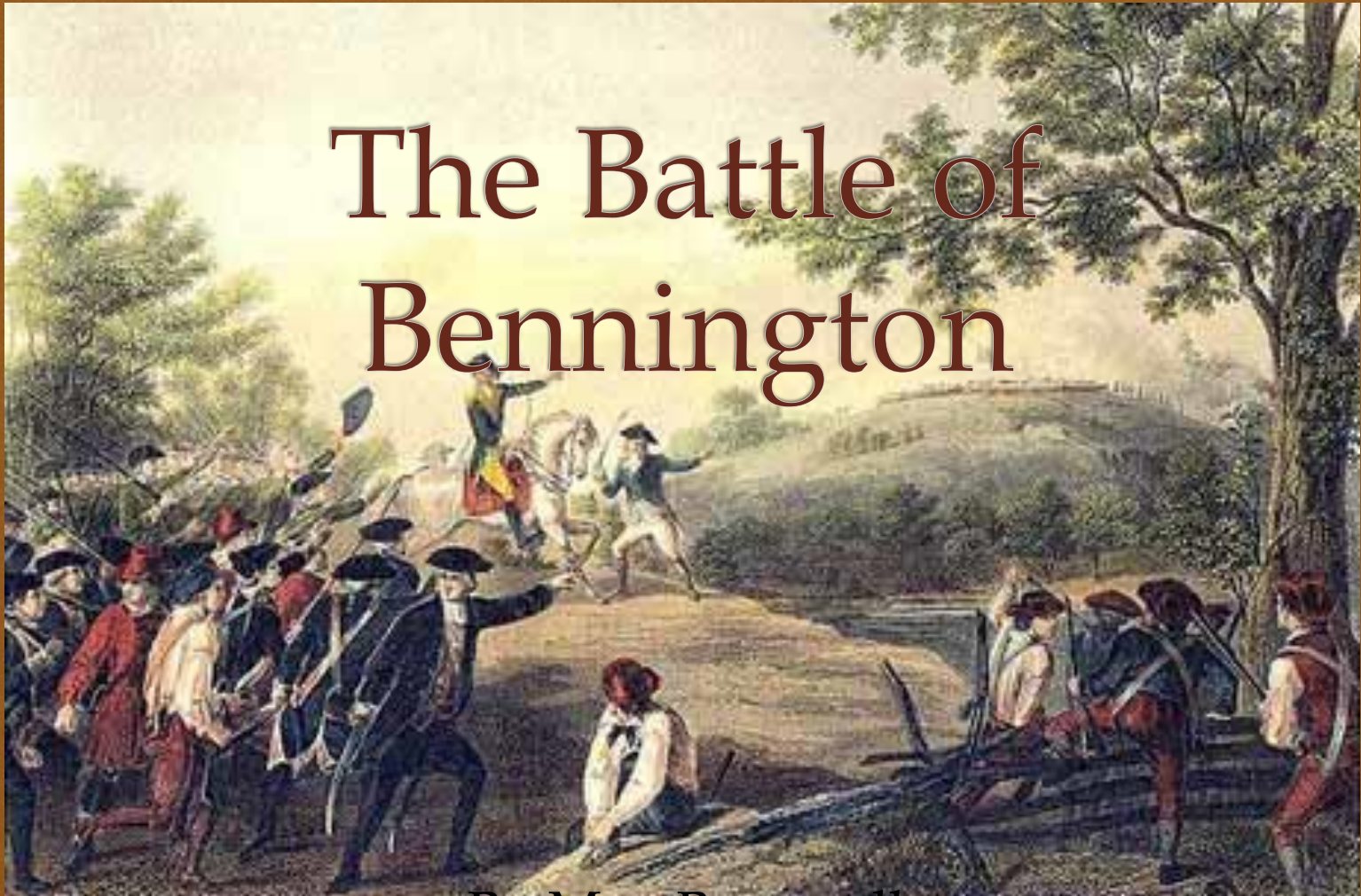


The Battle of Bennington



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2015

Why Capture New York?



- ❧ By the summer of 1777 the British had been trying to stop the American patriots for three years.
- ❧ General John Burgoyne created a plan to try to cut off New England from the rest of the colonies. Burgoyne referred to New England as the “seedbed of the revolution” and thought that by splitting the colonies the rebellion would be put down.



The Players:

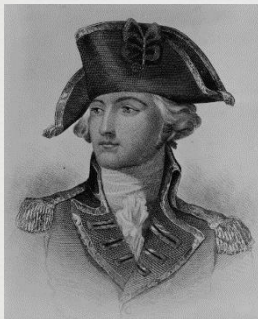


⌘ His plan called for a three part attack:

⌘ Sir William Howe would march his soldiers up from New York City.

⌘ Barry St. Ledger would move in from the west.

⌘ Burgoyne would travel south from Quebec, Canada, all planning to meet up near Albany New York.



The Plan



Burgoyne Sets Out



- ❧ General Burgoyne was traveling with about 8,000 troops including artillery (canons), a baggage train, and supply boats.
- ❧ Originally Burgoyne has requested 11,000 troops, but only 7,300 regulars were gathered. His troops included British Regulars (enlisted British soldiers), Canadians, loyalist volunteers, Braunschweiger soldiers leased from German princes (mistakenly called Hessians by the colonists because the majority of the German soldiers were from the Hessian region.), as well as Native Americans.

Burgoyne's Problems



❧ There were many problems with Burgoyne's campaign:

- ❧ Little preparation had been made for how to transport supplies, the carts that they had were made of raw, green lumber, with wooden wheels without iron rims. The carts would need to travel over rough rutted bumpy trails and without iron rims they would often break down.
- ❧ To make matters worse there were not enough draft animals such as oxen and strong work horses to pull the supply carts needed for the equipment, tents, blankets, and medical supplies.
- ❧ Another problem was that there were not enough horses for the dragoon soldiers, who were heavily armed trained mounted soldiers. The dragoons had to walk with the hopes of acquiring horses as they traveled. They removed their thigh high riding boots, but still carried their 12 pound broadswords.



The Journey South



- For three months Burgoyne traveled south capturing forts at Crown Point, Ticonderoga, and Fort Ann without much colonial opposition.
- However by August he was running low on food, supplies, wagons, cattle, and horses.



Howe Changes Tactics



- ❧ Another problem was that Burgoyne received a letter from Sir William Howe, who had determined not to travel north, but to head into Philadelphia instead where the Continental Congress had been meeting.
- ❧ Burgoyne determines to press on despite the lack of supplies, and Howe's reinforcements. However in order to continue he knows that he will need to gather more supplies and men.



Baum's Mission



- ❧ Burgoyne decides to send Lt. Col. Friedrich Baum, one of his German officers on an expedition to capture military supplies that the Americans had been stockpiling at Bennington.
- ❧ This store house was located at the current site of the Bennington Monument.



Baum's Orders



- ❧ Along the way Baum is to collect:
 - ❧ cattle
 - ❧ horses
 - ❧ loyalist volunteers to send back to the main army.
- ❧ Baum's forces included 460 professional British and German soldiers, about 600 Canadian and Loyalist volunteers, and about 150 Native Americans.

Baum's Orders



- ❧ Lt. Colonel Baum was given the following instruction from General Burgoyne:
- ❧ “It is highly probable that the corps [of Green Mountain Rangers] under Mr. Warner, now supposed to be at Manchester, will retreat before you; but should they, contrary to expectations, be able to collect in great force, and post themselves advantageously, it is left to your discretion to attack them or not, always bearing in mind that your corps is too valuable to let any considerable loss be hazarded on this occasion. . . . All persons acting in committees, or any officers acting under the directions of Congress, either civil or military, are to be made prisoners.”

The Americans

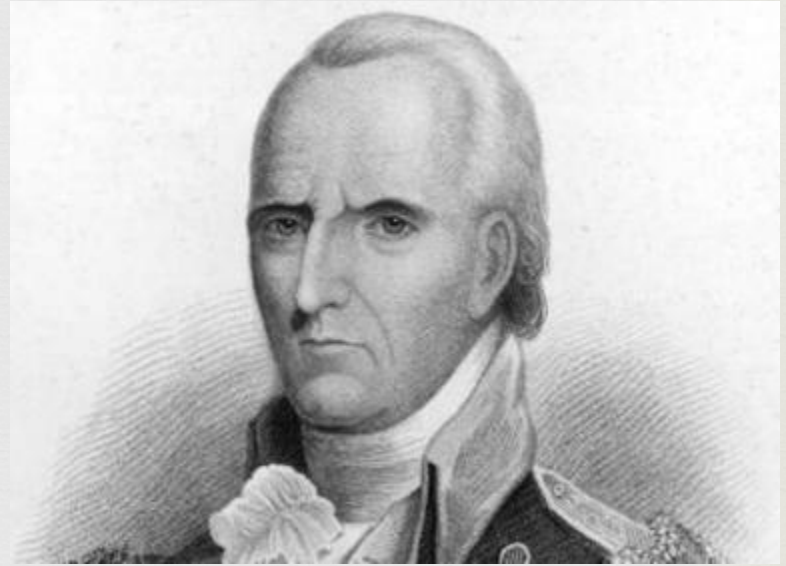


- ❧ The American side for the Battle of Bennington included militiamen from the New Hampshire Grants, Vermont's Green Mountains, the Berkshires of Massachusetts, and Connecticut, as well as New York.
- ❧ These volunteers were mostly farmers and townspeople.
- ❧ Because they were not career soldiers they did not have a great deal of training, nor did they have money for uniforms or expensive weapons. They wore their own every day clothing, and carried their personal guns.

Who was John Stark?



- ❧ Lt. General John Stark had fought with the Continental Army at Bunker Hill, in Canada, and at the Battle of Trenton.
- ❧ He chose to leave the army after he was passed over for promotion, but agreed to take command of the New Hampshire militia as long as he was able to operate independently and was not under the authority of the Continental Congress.
- ❧ At Bennington he commanded about 2,200 men who had gathered to stop Burgoyne's advance through New York.
- ❧ Though his men were not accustomed to following military orders, Stark knew how to lead them. He used humor to calm the nervous soldiers about to face the cannon for the first time by joking, "The rascals know I'm an officer; they're firing a salute in my honor."



Baum Sets Out

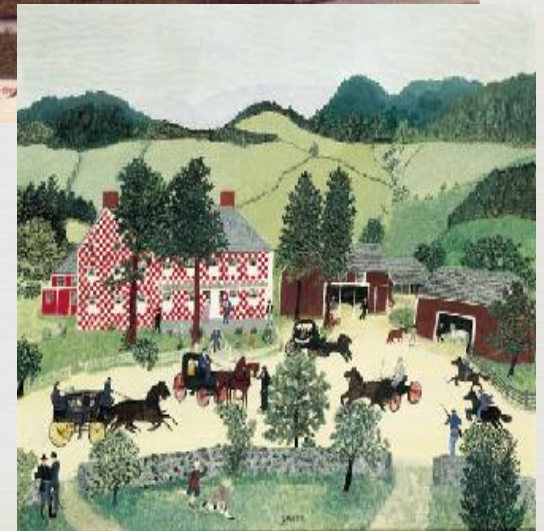


- ❧ On August 11, 1777 Colonel Baum set out on his mission to gather provisions, horses, and cattle.
- ❧ As Baum and his troops are moving about the countryside, they are seen by many colonists who help to spread the word that Baum is on the move and heading to Bennington. One of these colonists was John Weir. According to local lore John Weir of Cambridge earned the title the Paul Revere of Bennington by riding out to warn General Stark, “the Hessians are coming!”





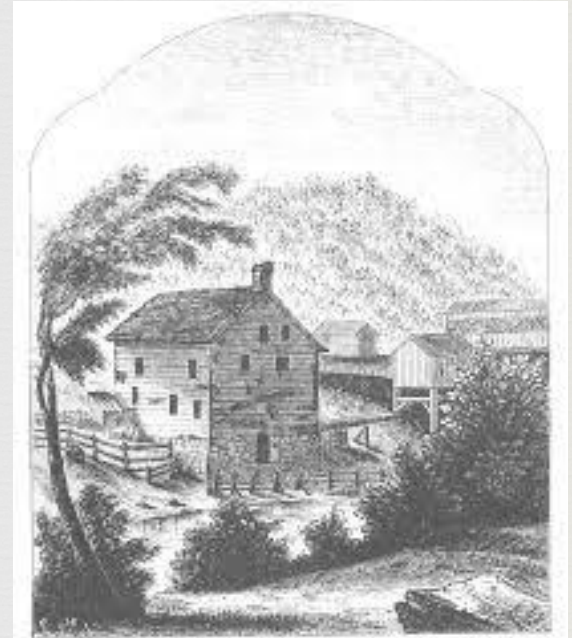
✧ By August 13, 1777 Baum and his troops have made it to Cambridge New York. Baum rests the night at the “Checkered House”, where he learns from a captured militiaman that Stark knows he’s coming.



Skirmish at Sancoik Mill



- ❧ Baum continues to press on through rainy August heat, humidity, mosquitoes, and poor roads.
- ❧ On August 14th there is a skirmish between Baum's troops and an American scouting party at Sancoik Mill.
- ❧ Baum is able to take possession of the mill and food stored there, while the Americans retreat toward Bennington.
- ❧ His men are able to take five Americans prisoner during the skirmish and learn that fifteen to eighteen thousand men are gathered to fight against them in Bennington.
- ❧ Though he knows he is outnumbered he presses on expecting the militia to leave Bennington as they approach.



The Americans Move Forward

- ❧ However Stark and his men do not retreat from Bennington but rather move toward Baum's troops.
- ❧ Baum had little respect for Stark's poorly trained backwoodsmen, but knew that they had more men than he, so he sends for reinforcements.



Baum Takes the High Ground



- ❧ Later that same day, Baum positions his men on the top of a steep hill with their two cannons. They build earthen fortifications around the top of the hill to offer more protection against colonial musket fire.
- ❧ This location will later be known as Hessian Hill.
- ❧ Why would this seem to be an advantageous position for Baum's men?



A Standoff Occurs



- ❧ Baum also placed troops at the Sancoik bridge to guard it. Baum himself stays back with his baggage train.
- ❧ There is now a standoff between Baum's and Stark's men.
- ❧ The Braunschweigers hold a strong position at the top of the hill, but Stark has the strength of superior numbers.

The Native Americans Fall Back



- ❧ On August 15, 1777 it rains. Baum decides to post a small force of Loyalists on a lower hill across the river (What is now Caretaker's Rd.) This spot becomes known as the "Tory Fort."
- ❧ The 642 German reinforcements that Baum had requested are slowly making their way over the muddy rain soaked roads under Colonel Breymann.
- ❧ Meanwhile, one of the Native American elders is killed and the Native Americans become nervous and move back behind Baum's rear guard.



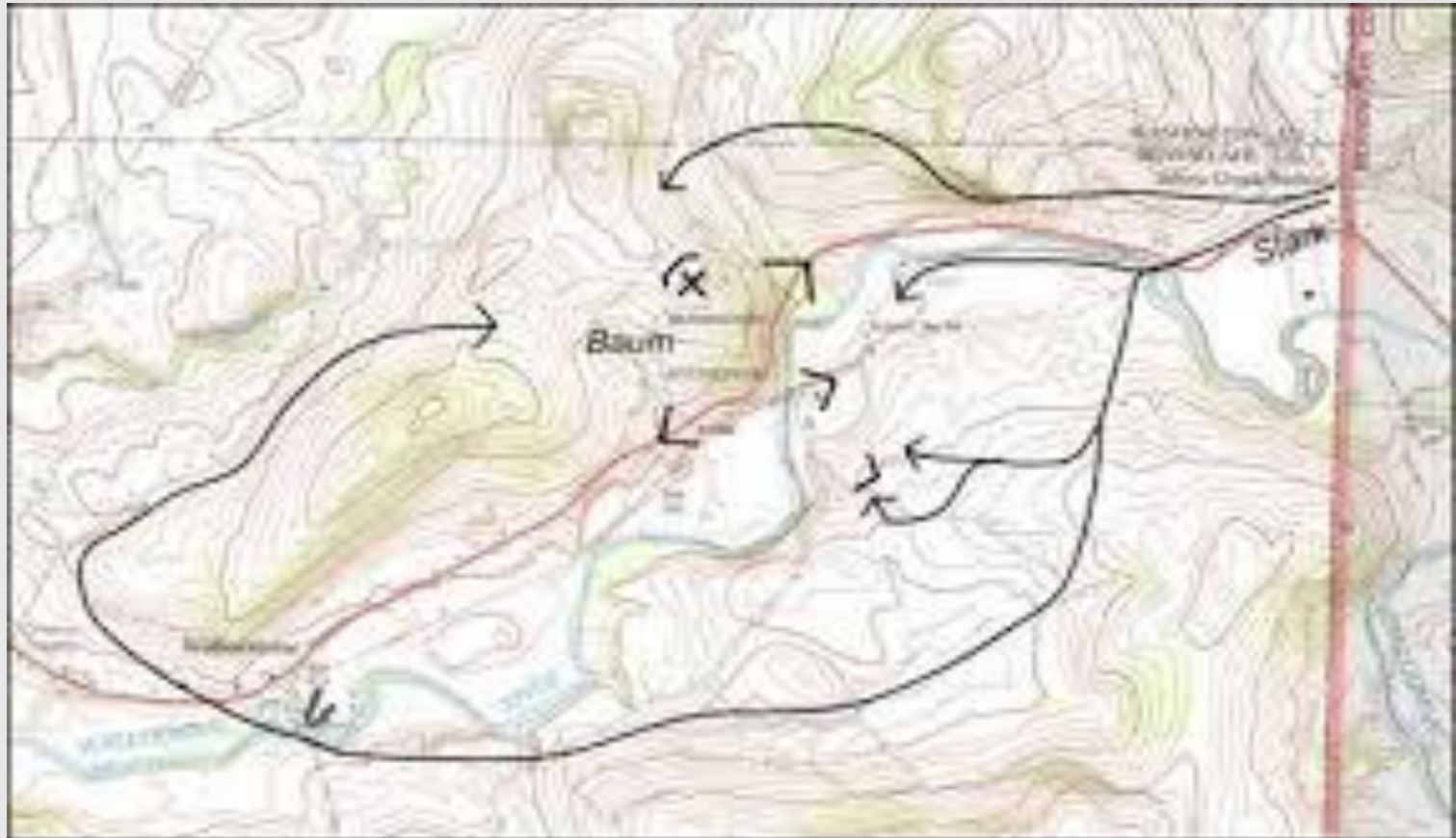
Stark Attacks!



- ❧ The weather clears on August 16th and Stark moves forward on his plan to defeat Baum's troops.
- ❧ He divides his men into three groups in order to slowly surround Hessian Hill in a pincer attack. At three o'clock that afternoon the Patriots attacked from all sides.



Surrounding the British



“There they are boys!”



✧ Just before the attack, Stark is supposed to have said to his men, "There stand the redcoats; today they are ours, or Molly Stark sleeps this night a widow."



Retreat!



- ❧ Early in the fighting the Native Americans already nervous and dispirited leave the fighting and return west to rejoin Burgoyne.
- ❧ By about four o'clock that evening the British had been defeated. After using up their supply of ammunition the Braunschweigers were forced to flee their fortification. The Americans chased after them killing or capturing them.



What Happened to Baum?



- ❧ Colonel Baum is gut shot and wounded before being taken prisoner.
- ❧ He later dies of his wound in a home east of the battle over the Vermont border.
- ❧ The Americans were also able to force the Loyalists to desert the Tory Fort and fired on them as they tried to escape by crossing the river.

Breymann Arrives



- ❧ At the end of the first Battle of Bennington the Americans had suffered few losses, however the troops were widely spread out: looting, guarding prisoners, and chasing down Baum's surviving men.
- ❧ It is at this point that Breymann with his 642 reinforcements finally arrives.
- ❧ Remember, Breymann would have no way of knowing that Baum has already lost the battle, the only way they could communicate was by sending messengers back and forth.



Seth Warner and the Green Mountain Rangers Join in!



- ❧ Luckily for the Americans Colonel Seth Warner's Regiment of Green Mountain Rangers faced Breymann until Stark could again gather his men to join the attack.
- ❧ The fighting lasted until night, with the Americans using the Braunschweiger's own cannon against them until Breymann's men were forced to retreat.
- ❧ General Stark explained, "At Sunset we obliged them to retreat a second time; we pursued them till dark, when I was obliged to halt for fear of killing my own men."



Disaster for Burgoyne



- ❧ The attempt to get supplies was a great failure for Burgoyne. He was in an even more dangerous position than he had been before sending Baum out.
- ❧ Now not only were they low on food and supplies, he had also lost ~907 men, killed and captured.
- ❧ For Burgoyne there was nothing to do now, but continue on toward Saratoga and the turning point of the American Revolution.
- ❧ There on October 17, 1777 General Burgoyne would surrender his entire army to the American Patriots.
- ❧ The battle for New York, was lost



Far Reaching Effects of the Battle of Bennington

- ❧ For the Patriots the victory at Bennington raised spirits and brought in hundreds of new militia enlistments.
- ❧ Many historians believe that had Baum been successful in his mission the outcome at Saratoga may have been very different and the Americans may not have gotten the French support we needed to win the American Revolution.

Saratoga, New York

October 17, 1777

BURGOYNE SURRENDERS AT SARATOGA!

French Aid Coming to the States?

*The harsh realities of war in the American countryside
(or, Leave the champagne at home, Johnny!)*

"Oh Fatal Ambition"

And it all happened right
here.

