

Primary Sources Battle of Bennington

Unit: Light Brigade
Brigadier Simon Fraser, Commanding Officer

Simon Fraser to Horatio Gates, 7 September 1777

" Sir. It has been represented to me, by several deserters from your army that Mr. Simon Fraser, a prisoner taken at Bennington, is treated with an uncommon degree of severity. If this report is true I am persuaded it must be owing to some misrepresentation. This person is an Inhabitant on Hoosac Creek, and is the Father of nine children ; he joined us at F. Edward "with other Loyalists, and I got him placed in a Civil employment from which he could draw some temporary income ; he imagined the detachment under the late Lieut. - Col. Baume would have passed near his house, he went along with it, and as it did not go within many miles of his habitation was taken in the action, I am told without arms. Now, Sir, I can appeal to your humanity, if a person answering this description is an object of resentment, or if he deserves to be distinguished by particular ill treatment, and if upon enquiry, you will find his case to be, as thus stated, I hope you will have the goodness to give directions for his enlargement, and putting him on the same footing with other prisoners of war. I send five guineas by the Drummer Major of the 24th Regiment for the use of Mr. Fraser, and must request the favor of some gentleman in your family to forward it to him.

" I have the honor to be Sir

" Your most obed't humble Servant

" Sim. Fraser

" B. General.

James Murray Hadden, *Hadden's journal and orderly books. A journal kept in Canada and upon Burgoyne's campaign in 1776 and 1777, by Lieut. James M. Hadden, Roy. art. Also orders kept by him and issued by Sir Guy Carleton, Lieut. General John Burgoyne, and Major General William Phillips, in 1776, 1777, and 1778. With an explanatory chapter and notes by Horatio Rogers.* (Albany: J. Munsell's Sons, 1884), pp. 456/57.

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Unit: British Marksmen Captain Alexander Simon Fraser

There is no known primary source by Simon Fraser but his role at Bennington is discussed in Stephen G. Strach, "A Memoir of the Exploits of Captain Alexander Fraser and his company of British Marksmen, (in the Campaign of Lieutenant General John Burgoyne) *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* Part 3 (Autumn 1985), pp. 164-179. The Bennington Expedition is covered on pp. 170-172.

Strach thinks that the strength of 50 men for Fraser's unit was probably without officers. Ibid., p. 170.

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Unit: Royal Artillery
Lieutenant James M. Hadden

p. 110:

August 6th The German Troops marched from Fort Anne and encamped at the Cross Roads 2 Miles in our Rear.

Saturday Aug't 9th B. Gen'l Fraziers Corps moved forward to Fort Miller, or rather Duer's

p. 111:

House immediately opposite (7 miles) ; And a Detachment from the Army, consisting of Reidesel's Dragoons, 150 Provincials, 100 Savages, and a part of Capt. Frazer's Rangers, in all 556, with 2-3 Pounders, were Detached towards Bennington under the Command of Lt. Col. Baume of Reidesils Dragoons. [...]

p. 117:

Aug't 14th The Army marched to Duers House (usually called Fort Miller in Gen'l Orders) and encamped on the adjacent heights : Brig'r Gen'l Frazer moved yesterday to Batten

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Kill. There is little worth remarking here, except that Mr Duer married to one of Lord Sterling's Daughters is building a very good House, and being with Congress Gen'l Burgoyne has made it his head Quarters.

Aug't 15th an express arrived to acquaint Gen'l Burgoyne that Lt. Col. Baume was attacked near Bennington about 25 Miles from hence, and had taken Post to act as occasion might require, the Enemy being superior in Numbers. The Reserve to the advanced Corps consisting of the German Grenadiers & Chasseurs, about 7 or 800 Men, with two 6 Pounders were order'd to march and support him under the command of Lt. Col. Brymen.

Aug't 16th Lt. Col. Baume was attacked, defeated, and taken, owing to the tardiness of Lt. Col. Brymen, who did not march a Mile an hour to his support ; Lt. Col. Brymen was afterwards attacked on his march, in which action he lost his Cannon. Brig'r Gen'l Frazer proposed for the advanced Corps to sustain Baume in place of the Corps

p. 119:

advanced Corps was too considerable to be risqued and the loss's which followed were the consequences of this refusal.

Aug't 17th. Early this morning the Army marched to Batten Kill to cover the retreat of Lt. Col. Brymen's Corps : About Noon they returned across the Ford over the Creek, and in the evening we returned to our old encampment at Duers House, [...]

p. 131:

From everything the Army could learn, the plan of operations for this expedition was infinitely too large for its numbers, and it might have been known that the Inhabitants were in general unfriendly. The meeting Gen'l Stark

p. 132:

was accidental, he being on his way to join their main Army near Albany.

As for Col. Skeene, with the best intentions in the world, he was a famous marplot, and Ministry were highly culpable in recommending him to the confidence of Gen'l Burgoyne which I hear is the case. He acted like a showing his powers to every Man who pretended to be friendly, among which number were many of the Rebel Soldiers, who to remove doubts took the Oath's of allegiance and were told to wear *White Papers* in their Hats, that, being the distinguishing mark of Friends, to crown the folly of this farce they were permitted immediately to return, in fact, to join their respective Corps in the Rebel Army.

The trusting so important an affair to a Man who cou'd not utter one word of English when "*insinuations*" were required and address expected certainly can hardly be palliated by the jealousy of Gen'l Reidesil from a wish to employ the Germans on some important enterprize. Because the Regiment of Dragoons were to be mounted surely it was no reason they shou'd be detached with *Swords* weighing at least 10 or

p. 133:

12 Pounds, particularly as Dragoons cannot be expected to march or manouvre well on Foot and be expert at Treeing or Bush fighting, a task the British Light Infantry of this Army are not fully equal to. Tho. Col. Baume (as might be expected from a good Officer in his own line of Service) took an advantageous post, he extended his front too much (occupying above 1/2 a Mile) and thus weaken'd the whole; He had an English Engineer with him Lieut D — who very *judiciously* threw up his works on the side of the Hill and the Enemy coming in his Rear of course soon made an attack in front certain of success.

The day of the Action (very unfortunately for himself & Party) a half Pay Captain in the British Army with 90 Men on their way to the Army met with Lt. Col. Baume and remain'd with him, these unfortunate Men made a noble resistance from behind a Stone Fence, but overpower'd by numbers their leader, whose

p. 134:

name was *Depeyster* [i.e. Francis Pfister] and most of the Party fell; of those who escaped the first onset and were taken many were killed in Cool blood or otherwise treated with the utmost cruelty: this at once held forth a shocking example and deterr'd any others of our friends from joining us.

It does not appear that the Dragoons made any violent efforts, the Indians to a Man, and most of the Canadians Ran away at first and got safe in to us. Luke Le Corn and his Son in Law M. *Lenodier*, the former Commanding the Indians (famous for his cruelties to the English Prisoners during the last War) and the latter the Canadians were among the first who got in, and scarce making a stop at the Army their panic made them proceed to Canada, where they were followed by most of the Indians: Had Gen'l Burgoyne known of this, further flight he declared he wou'd have secured the *Heroes* as Deserters; in Canada they were out of his power and cou'd tell their own Story.

p. 136:

A report is current in the Army that an old picque between Brymen & Baume might occasion his tardiness, as he was heard to say " We will let them get warm before we reach them," when he heard the firing: It seems to have been reserved for him to give the last blow, as, to lay the fault wholly on his Shoulders wou'd certainly be unjust when almost every person concerned seems to have had a principal share in the disaster. It is also said & the Gen'l Orders seem to countenance such a report, that, the Support grumbling, induced Lt. Col. Brymen to wait unnecessarily for them to Cook their Kettles. Had they arrived in time it is probable the

p. 137:

Enemy wou'd have retired, but being attacked severally the Enemy only fought about half their own numbers and Night preserved the Reinforcement from *Baume's* fate.

James Murray Hadden, *Hadden's journal and orderly books. A journal kept in Canada and upon Burgoyne's campaign in 1776 and 1777, by Lieut. James M. Hadden, Roy. art. Also orders kept by him and issued by Sir Guy Carleton, Lieut. General John Burgoyne, and Major General William Phillips, in 1776, 1777, and 1778. With an explanatory chapter and notes by Horatio Rogers.* (Albany: J. Munsell's Sons, 1884).

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Unit: 9th Regiment of Foot
Roger Lamb

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In the mean time the British army halted at Fort Edward, while some were employed in bringing forward provisions, stores, &c. over the carrying place from Lake George to Hudson's River. This was found a work of much difficulty, owing to the want of horses and carriages. To remedy this great inconvenience, which retarded the movement of our troops, it was determined to send out a detachment, in order to bring in horses to mount the Brunswick dragoons, if a sufficient number could be found.

Lieutenant colonel Baum, a German officer, was ordered on this service with the following troops :—

Brunswick dismounted dragoons.....	150
Captain Frazer's Rangers*.....	50
Peter's Provincial Corps.....	150
Provincial and Canadian Volunteers.....	56
Indians.....	80

Total..... 486

~~Major~~ Governor Skeene was sent with this detachment, from whose supposed knowledge of the country, and influence among the inhabitants much was expected.

Lieutenant colonel Baum was instructed by general Burgoyne to march directly to Bennington, a place about twenty miles east of Hudson's River, intelligence having been received that the Americans had a considerable magazine there.

On the 11th of August, colonel Baum took post at Batton Kill, and on the 12th he proceeded to Cambridge,

where his advance guard fell in with and defeated a party of American troops, took eight prisoners, one thousand bushels of wheat, and one hundred and fifty bullocks, which he sent to the British camp. Here the colonel was informed that near eighteen hundred of the enemy were posted at Bennington, and that they had a very considerable magazine there, besides two thousand bullocks and three hundred horses. Encouraged by the success of his first attack, the colonel determined to press forward and dislodge the enemy from that post. He sent every day exact reports of his progress and situation to general Burgoyne, with which the general was perfectly satisfied, and approved his design of attacking Bennington so soon as the colonel could be fully informed of the enemy's number and situation, that it might be attempted with a prospect of success, and without running any risque. Early in the morning of the 14th of August, the colonel was attacked by a body of seven hundred Americans, who, after having a few shot fired at them, retired, and dispersed. By some prisoners taken on this occasion, he was informed that the enemy were strongly entrenched at Bennington, that they expected a large reinforcement from the American army, and intended to attack him as soon as the reinforcement had joined them. On receiving this information, the lieutenant colonel very properly deferred his intention of pushing on to Bennington, and halted in his post, sending off an express to inform general Burgoyne of his situation, and desiring that some troops might be ordered to sustain him. His report was written in such high spirits, that the general was induced to believe that he asked for a reinforcement more to enable him to attack the enemy, than from any apprehension of his corps being in danger of an attack themselves. In consequence of the above information, lieutenant colonel Breyman was ordered

to march with his corps, the battalion of German grenadiers, and that of Barnier's, (about five hundred men), with two pieces of cannon, to sustain lieutenant colonel Baum: an officer was sent off to inform the latter that lieutenant colonel Breyman had began his march early on the 15th. The distance between the two corps, rendered this reinforcement useless to lieutenant colonel Baum, as they could not get up time enough, to support him, owing to excessive bad roads, and a continued rain. August the 16th, in the morning, several bodies of men in arms were observed approaching his post. Lieutenant colonel Baum was assured they were loyalists; but their numbers increasing, he ordered out parties to reconnoitre, and soon perceived he was surrounded by the Americans, from Bennington. On a signal being made by the Americans, he was attacked on all sides by superior numbers; he maintained his post above two hours, and often repulsed the enemy; but finding that his men had expended all their ammunition, and lieutenant colonel Breyman's corps not yet appearing, he was obliged to think of a retreat, with the dragoons, (the Provincials, Canadians, and Indians being already cut off from him). He twice forced his way through the enemy, and was as often attacked by fresh troops. As a last resource, he ordered his men to draw their swords, and rush in upon the enemy, where, notwithstanding every effort of bravery, this valiant corps, overpowered by superior numbers, was entirely broken, and most of them were either killed or taken prisoners: among the latter was their wounded commander.

Colonel Breyman had not received the smallest information of this engagement; he arrived on the same ground, and on the same day, but not till the action was over. Instead of meeting his friends, as he ex-

p. 154:

pected, he found himself briskly attacked on all sides. Notwithstanding the severe fatigue they had undergone, his troops behaved with great vigour and resolution, and drove the Americans from several hills, on which they were posted. They were, however, at length overpowered, and their ammunition being unfortunately expended, they were obliged with great reluctance to abandon two pieces of artillery they had brought with them, and retreated with good order in the dusk of the evening.

Roger Lamb, *An Original and Authentic Journal of Occurrences During the Late American War, from its Commencement to the Year 1783* (Dublin, 1809)

Primary Sources Battle of Bennington

Unit: 9th Regiment of Foot
Roger Lamb

From the encampment of Fort Edward, the expedition to Bennington (detailed in the Author's American Journal) was undertaken, and maintained chiefly by the Germans ; although the British thought that they themselves ought to have been employed chiefly in it. The issue of this operation in its failure was differently accounted for ; but the principal cause seemed to be owing to the delay of marching to the place. The expedition set out at eight o'clock in the forenoon, and did not arrive there, although but twentytwo miles, until four o'clock in the afternoon of the next day !

Roger Lamb, *Memoir of his own Life* (Dublin, J. Jones, 1811), p. 179

Primary Sources Battle of Bennington

Unit: British Headquarters New York City/23rd Regt of Foot

Captain Frederick Mackenzie

31 Aug^t

A flag of truce came down from Providence this day. They assert that Gen^l Burgoyne's army has met with a very severe check near Albany, and that 700 of The King's troops were killed and taken; also many Officers; - but as they do not mention the name of any officer, or give any particulars, no great credit is given to their report.

3rd Sept

A Man came in last night who reports, that the advantage obtained by the Rebels near Albany, was over a Detachment of 300 men only, which having been sent out by Gen^l Burgoyne to collect Horses, Waggon, &c, for the use of the Army, was surrounded and attacked by near 4,000 of the Militia, and the whole, except about 80, killed, wounded & taken. The Rebels are said to have had about 100 men killed in the affair.

9th Sept

The Rebel papers say that a considerable detachment of Gen^l Burgoyne's Army was cut off the 16th Aug^t at a place called Bennington. We have no accounts, of that affair, except from them.

15th Sept^r

The accounts published by the Rebels of the affair at Bennington the 16th August, makes Gen^l Burgoyne's loss to be very considerable. Above 700 men killed & prisoners. They also report that the Corps under the Command of Col^o St Leger, has been obliged to raise the siege of Fort Stanwix, and retire. In one of their papers the Rebels give a Copy of the Instructions given by Gen^l Burgoyne, to Lieu^t Col^o Baum, who commanded the detachment defeated by them at Bennington; by which it appears that the objects of that Expedition were, to try the affections of the Country, to mount a Regiment of Dragoons, to obtain large supplies of Cattle, Horses, and Carriages, and to disconcert the Enemy. To effect the last, he was to give out that his Corps was the advanced guard of the Army, which was to penetrate through Connecticut towards Boston, and that they were to be joined at Springfield by a body of troops from Rhode Island.

Although this was well calculated to alarm the Country, it had not the desired effect. The people who defeated Col^o Baum were almost entirely Militia of the adjacent Country.

Colonel Baum appears to have committed a great fault in venturing so far into the Country without support, and without having been thoroughly informed of the Enemy's force in that neighborhood.

If the defeat of Colonel Baum's detachment has been as considerable as the Rebels give out, and Col^o St Leger has been obliged to raise the siege of Fort Stanwix, General Burgoyne's difficulties in penetrating to Albany will be exceedingly increased, as his force is not only weakened, but his flanks are uncovered.

The Diary of Frederick Mackenzie Allen French, ed., 2 vols. (Cambridge, Harvard U Press, 1930), vol. 1, pp. 171, 172, 175 and 178/79.

Primary Sources Battle of Bennington

Unit: 31st Regiment of Foot
Lieutenant Francis Napier

17th. [August] About two O'Clock in the morning the Corps were ordered to accoutre & be in readiness to turn out at a moments warning. This was occasioned by news arriving that a large body of the Enemy had attacked and defeated a Detachment consisting of part of the Reidesel Dragoons, Indians, Canadians, Captn. Frasers Rangers & provincial Loyalists.¹¹⁴ The intention of this detachment was to get possession of some magazines of provision &c which the Rebels were collecting at a place near Bennington. The reinforcement (consisting of the German Advanced Corps) sent to their assistance did not arrive 'till after the Engagement, which however they renewed & forced the Enemy to retreat for Three Miles. The Chasseurs pursued them when for want of ammunition they were obliged to retire. The Germans lost four pieces of Cannon, two of which they left in the woods where the Rebels found them *two days after* the action. The Germans Sec. amounted to about 1200, the Rebels supposed to be about 5000. The loss is not yet known but must have been very considerable on both sides.

S. Sydney Bradford, "Lord Francis Napier's Journal of the Burgoyne Campaign" *Maryland Historical Magazine* vol. 57 No. 4 (December 1962), pp. 285-333, pp. 308-09.

Primary Sources Battle of Bennington

Unit: 47th Regiment of Foot

Richard Pope

14 [August] About 200 of the dragoons of Reidesel under Lieutenant Colonel Baum were ordered to Bennington, by the Route of Manchester, to destroy a large magazine, and procure horses to mount the Regiment

16. They were attacked at Manchester, by a body of the Rebels, whom they defeated, & after having destroyed a small magazine, proceeded on their Route towards Bennington, but were attacked within a few miles of it (at a place, called St. Coicks mills) on the 16th by 3500 of the Enemy.

Cap^t. Frasers company of Rangers, consisting of 50 men, the Provincial volunteer Corps, and 100 Indians, made up part of the Detachment – The Rebels made four separate attacks, at the same time, on the Front, Flanks & Rear – The detachment supported itself with great valour, for some hours, but were overpowered by Numbers, left two pieces of Cannon, and were almost entirely cut the pieces.

The German light Infantry and Grenadiers of 542 men under the Command of Lieu^t. Col: Breyman, who were sent to Support Col: Baum, did not arrive till after the action, which however they resumed, and forced the Enemy to retreat 3 Miles – But having expended all their ammunition, were now Obligated in their turn to retire, with the Loss of 2 Pieces of Cannon.

“Richard Pope’s Book” Microfilm roll 16, Saratoga National Historical Park; original in the Henry Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California, pp. 79-81.

Acc. to Park Ranger and historian Eric Schnitzer, Pope undoubtedly served in the 47th Regiment of Foot but his name does not appear on any regimental list; he may therefore have been a gentleman volunteer like Thomas Anbury until he received a commission.

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Civilian

Mrs. Vance about "A Hessian Deserter re-captured, in Salem"

Rebecca & I went out after dinner I think, to pull flax, alone, not far from the house. a Hessian soldier, with his gun & military clothes, came along, enquiring in broken English, the way to Bennington. He was deserting from the British (at Fort Edward) & finding his way through the country to New England. But he told us, he was in advance finding the road to Bennington & that the whole army was not far behind him. This so alarmed Rebecca, that, eager to get all the news from him we could, followed him, conversing with him, many rods, till we got to the foot of the hill south of our house. Suddenly we heard crackling in the bushes. A party of Tories were secreted on a little hill, east of the road, at the foot of the big hill. Who they were I do not know. [Dr. Adams's scouts from Arlington?] There was more than a dozen of them. They rushed upon the Hessian, took away his gun, pinioned him, & said they should take him to camp, to be shot for deserting. They also said we girls had got to go with them too, for we were traitors, showing a deserter the road for him to escape. [...]

The poor Hessian George Hundertmark was taken back to the camp, where he was shot for desertion. See § 976 & Burgoyne's Orderly Book Aug. 24.

Asa Fitch, *Notes for a history of Washington County, N.Y.* 7 vols., vol. 3, # 740, Call No. Mss Col NYGB 18065. New York Public Library, New York, NY.

Hundertmark was a German so-called "von Scheiter" recruit serving in the 9th Regiment of Foot. A transcript of his trial at William Duer's house near Fort Miller, on 24 August 1777, in British National Archives, WO 71, made by Eric Schnitzer is here:

http://www.62ndregiment.org/Private_Georg_Hundertmark_CM_9th%20Regt.pdf