

Primary Sources Battle of Bennington

Civilian
Simon Nelson

Nelson and his family had fled from Salem to "Sancoick [modern-day North Hoosick] close by the Dutch church" when

Suddenly word was brought us that the British army was coming that way. About a dozen Salem families were there [...]

Everything was packed up in haste and we were ready to start the next morning, the army being encamped this night at Cambridge. But James Moore came along and told us all to lay still and quiet in the houses, for the we would not be molested, whereas if we were found moving off all we had would be taken from us. So we concluded to stay. But early next morning all the Salem horses, thirteen in number, were sent a mile down the river, my brother Joseph and others taking them to keep them away from the British. But as ill luck would have it, a man driving away cattle was pursued by a party of Indians and Tories from Cambridge that morning. They followed him south to the Walloomscoick River without succeeding in taking him. Then giving over the pursuit they followed up the river to join the army at Sancoick and came thus directly upon our horses and seized the whole of them. Father applied to Skene for ours but ... [not recollected]. When the Indians passed back flying from Bennington Battle, I saw one of them riding by on one of our horses and I wished with all my heart he would stumble and throw the Indian and escape from him.

Father and I went out in the morning to salt the sheep. Running to the top of the knoll and looking toward the house I saw father entering it and the soldiers and the Indians all about the house and neighborhood like a swarm of bees. I had but one thought – to run and join Father. At first I passed through a party of Indians having no fears of them, having been used to the Stockbridge Indians before this. They patted me on the head saying "Poor little boy – Bostonian boy." I got into the house in safety. The soldiers were plundering it of whatever they could find. One of them told Father to open the oven door, in which was an oven-full of bread just baked. Father did so, but one of the officers said "Will you take the bread away from these children?" So they let it remain.

On the day of the battle we were ever and anon receiving reports at Sancoick, first that the rebels were beat, then that the Tories were beat, then again the rebels were getting the worst of it, and so it went first for one then for the other side.

Father and John Law happened to be among a party of Tories when they were taken prisoner together. They were thus prevented from gathering any of the plunder on the battlefield in which work some of our neighbors were quite successful. They were confined three or four days when Doctor John Williams passing by asked, "What are you doing there in that company?" on informing him of their misfortune, they were speedily released. Neighbor Simpson was quite diligent in gathering plunder. He moved his goods from home in an ox-sled, but had three full loads to bring back – knapsacks, carts, wagons, et cetera.

When all the discomfited British were retreating through Sancoick they destroyed all they could not take away. They knocked the hoops from a large quantity of flour in barrels. We durst not gather up any of this flour fearing poison had been scattered amongst it but the hogs fared sumptuously on it.

The "Dutch church" stood at an unknown location along the road to Cambridge but was abandoned in 1800 and torn down in 1825

Asa Fitch, *Their Own Voices: Oral Accounts of Early Settlers in Washington County, New York* Collected by Dr. ASA Fitch 1847-1878 Jeanne Winston Adler, ed., (Interlaken: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1983), pp. 62-65.

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Shipherd "Death of Col. Baume"

Esq. Shipherd says that William Robb of Peterborough N.H. was one of the men who carried Col. Baume off from the battle field at Bennington. Shipherd when a youth was neighbor to Capt Robb, and has often heard from him a minute relation of the circumstances. Robb was a private in Gen. Starks regiment. He and three others placed the wounded Hessian commander on a litter formed of a blanket with two poles tied to its sides. They carried him to a house which stood about where the Matthews house now stands. He spoke English, & talked with them on the way, & thanked them kindly for carrying him so carefully. The men felt a strong sympathy and attachment for the wounded Colonel, in consequence of his affable manners & discourse. What his wounds were Esq. Shipherd does not recollect [Glich says he was shot through the body.] but the men who carried him had no suspicions that his wounds were mortal or even dangerous. He was dressed in a most costly uniform, with a sword heavily mounted with gold; and they deposited him in the house, with all his accoutrements upon him. The next morning he was found dead in the house & stripped of every vestige of anything valuable. The men who carried him from the field hear'd of this with surprise and the deepest indignation; and were ever after open in expressing their belief that the wounded officer had been most foully dealt by – that he had been murdered for the sake of his clothes, sword, purse &c and it used to be said that the inhabitants of the house were in much better circumstances after this than they had ever been before. But there was such a crowd & so much confusion about the house & the neighborhood the night after the battle, that it was impossible to obtain any clue as to what had become of Baume's sword &c – and no formal investigation was therefore gone into.

Esq. S. supposes that Baume's remains are still reposing where they were interred somewhere near the Matthews house; but this I think is improbable, or the exact spot would be well known & much resorted to.

Asa Fitch, *Notes for a history of Washington County, N.Y.* 7 vols., vol. 4, # 801. Call No. Mss Col NYGB 18065. New York Public Library, New York, NY.

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Visit of Jared Sparks to Bennington Battlefield, 13 October 1826

Ms Sparks 141e, MS Sparks 28. Houghton Library, Harvard University

Oct. 13th - Bennington
Left Albany last night at 11 o'clock in the stage, rode through a rainy night, and arrived at Bennington this morning. My object was to visit the ground on which Stark fought the Hessians on the 16th of August, 1777, one of the best fought and most decisive battles of the revolution and one of the most important in its consequences. Mr Baldwin had given me a letter to Mr Hiland Hall, a lawyer of Bennington, which I delivered; and Mr Hall immediately offered to accompany me to the battle ground, about six miles from the town of Bennington. We called on Judge ~~Henry~~ ^{Henry}, who lived in the neighborhood of the spot, and who visited the scene the day after the battle, being then fifteen years old. His recollections were very strong on the subject, as he had often been on the ground, and conversed with a great many persons who were in the battle. On returning to Judge Henry's we found then Gov. Galusha, of Shaftsbury, who was himself in the battle, and commanded a company of militia from Shaftsbury, six miles distant. The following is the result of my examination and inquiries, in regard to the immediate events of the battle.
When it was known that Braum was approaching, Stark marched from Bennington to meet him, sending Colonel Gregg with a small party in advance to reconnoitre. Gregg first encountered the enemy at a place called St Boicks, or Brinslaers Mill, on

the Nollbomsack creek, near its junction with the Boosick River, and immediately retreated, & met Starke three miles in the rear. The army being then in a valley, on the right margin of the creek, Starke drew back about a mile to the summit of a hill, and formed his men in a line extending across the road, his left wing reaching nearly to the creek, being thus posted in a very advantageous position to meet the enemy. He had one iron fieldpiece badly mounted, which was placed in the road, but no use was at any time made of it. This was on the evening of the 14th. The Hefrians in the mean time had advanced about two miles from St Coicks, where they halted.

An engagement was expected by the Americans on the next, but as it was rainy, and the Hefrians remained at their post, nothing more occurred than a few slight skirmishes between small advanced parties. It was evident, however, that Baum did not intend to make an attack till he should receive the reinforcements for which he had sent, for he employed himself all the fifteenth in throwing up a redoubt, and fortifying himself as well as he could. The ground he had chosen for that purpose was selected with great judgment, and was the best in the vicinity. It was at the top of a hill, very steep on all sides but the north-west, covered with woods, and washed by the creek on its eastern base. His encampment was on the highest point, and the fortification he threw up covered but a small area, and

was composed wholly of the trunks and branches of trees which were cut on the spot, & rudely put together. He had two field pieces of brass, one of which was retained within this fortification, and the other was stationed more than four hundred yards distant, on an elevated & commanding point near the foot of the hill where it could act upon the bridge below, and up the valley on the opposite side of the creek.

The Tories and British, under the command of Colonel Fester, were posted more than half a mile to the southeast of Baum, and on the opposite side of the creek. Here they threw up a wooden breast work on a portion of land, somewhat elevated above the level of the creek, but much less so, than the Hessian encampment, precipitous in their rear, but a little ascending in their front & right flank.

The Indians were encamped in the woods, on the hills to the rear of the Hessians.

Such was the posture of affairs on the morning of the sixteenth of August. Starke perceived the design of the Hessian commander to wait for reinforcements, and resolved to attack him immediately. The two armies were about two miles apart. The American general divided his forces into three parties. One on the right, under command of Colonel Nichols was ordered to march in a circuitous route, sheltering himself behind the high hills, that ~~they~~ ^{they} he might be concealed from the view of the

enemy, till he should come upon the rear of the encampment. Colonel Herrick, who commanded the party on the left, had the same orders, and the distances to be marched over by each was so arranged, that they should arrive as nearly as possible at the same time. Starke commanded the middle division in person, and it was planned that the attack should begin at the Tory battery by him, when it should be known by the firing that it had commenced on the Heffians by the two divisions from the right & left.

This scheme was carried completely into execution. Herrick's division had to march from four to six miles, and ford the river twice, and Nichols's nearly the same distance. They met as had been predicted, and commenced the attack together on the rear of the Heffian redoubt. Starke had arrived ~~longer~~^{near} the Tory battery some minutes before, but he halted, out of the reach of the muskets, and a scattered fire only was carried on by advanced parties. But when the signal of attack was heard from the hill, he rushed with great impetuosity upon the Tories, and after a short, but severe conflict, he drove them from their breastwork, & pursued them across the creek to an open plain, at the foot of the hill on which Heffian had encamped. Almost at the same moment, the Heffians appeared running in all directions through the woods above, & hotly pursued by the Americans, who, at the first onset had forced

them from their fortification. The greatest number was killed during this flight in the woods. The greater portion of them at length found their way to the plain, where Starke is pursuing the Tories, and where the prisoners were chiefly taken.

The action, however, did not cease. Stragglers were escaping through the woods, and such Americans, as were not wanted to guard the prisoners, pursued them, killing some & taking others, till ^{nearly} dusk. At this time the advanced party in the pursuit, at the head of which was Colonel Herrick, had proceeded as far as St Boicks, when Breyman's reinforcements were discovered rapidly advancing.

Herrick and his men fell back, till a sufficient number of those in the rear had collected together to make a stand. They then formed in front of Breyman's line on the margin of a wood, and began firing. The superior force of the enemy compelled them again to retreat, which was done in good order, and with a constant firing. At this moment Colonel Warner came up, with his detachment of Continental troops, just arrived from Manchester. The enemy's line was then drawn out from the creek on his ~~left~~ ^{right} across the road to a wood on his left. Warner attacked the left with his fresh troops attached the left, and Starke with those who had been fighting Baum & the

tonies, and a few others, ^{the militia} who had come in near the close of the action, maintained the contest on the enemy's right. The American forces ^{were} continually increased, by the coming in of those, who had been scattered in pursuing the enemy. The action continued warmly, till it was quite dark, when the enemy retreated, & the Americans remained on the ground. Bryan had to brass field pieces, which were both taken, as well as the two mentioned above. There was perhaps as much hard fighting in this engagement, as the other; many of the enemy, and some Americans, were killed, but it is not known what proportion of the whole number. That the enemy retreated before the Americans is evident, from the circumstance of both their cannon being taken.

The Indians fled at the beginning of the action, nor can I learn that any were seen during the whole day. They foresaw, that the issue must be fatal, & they took care to desert their friends the moment, they found them needing their aid. An Indian chief was shot in a skirmish, or as it is said by some persons concealed behind a house, the day before the battle, and to revenge his death they burnt the house.

Governor Galusha tells me, that the left wing of Bryan's line, which was engaged with Harner, beat a parley in the midst of the action; but the Americans, ignorant of military affairs, did not understand this

signal, & paid no regard to it; otherwise this
wing would probably have surrendered.

Baum was mortally wounded in
the first part of the engagement, near the
fortification. He was carried to a house
in the neighborhood, where he died the
next morning, & I was shown his grave
a few yards from the margin of the Molloom-
sack creek. No eternal mark now indi-
cates the spot. It is overgrown with high
grass and weeds.

Colonel Fester, who commanded
the Tories, was also mortally wounded. He
was buried with Baum. Pity cannot but
weep at the gallant German's fate; - To be
killed fighting foreign battles in a foreign
land, to be buried in the same grave with
a Tory; - it was a hard fate. Fester was a
British Colonel on half pay. He lived in
Woodstock, a few miles from the place of his
grave. He joined the army but a short
time before the action. His house was
pointed out to me as I passed it on my
way from Albany.

A better place could hardly be
found for a depot of provisions for an army.
than Bennington. It is surrounded by
mountains, and can only be approached
from the west by two passes, the one tem-
pted by Baum, and another about
four miles to the south, through which the
road leads from Woodstock to Bennington.

It was at first doubtful which route would be taken; and therefore Starke kept ~~was~~ back that he might be prepared for either. Had Baum taken the south pass, he would have followed up the Hoosie river from St. Louis, instead of the Walloon Lake Creek. The passage chosen by Baum was the easiest of access, because Bennington can only be approached through the other by ascending a hill, which proceeds quite across the valley, & which would give very great advantage to an opposing enemy. The next nearest pass into the Bennington valley is twelve 14 miles above, where the Batten Hill runs through the mountain, in Arlington, but this is so narrow, and overhung with precipices, that no army would attempt it, that afforded the least opportunity.

Baum's encampment where the main engagement took place, is six miles from Bennington, and in the town of White Creek, at that time Cambridge. The first breast-work was in Hoosie; and the second battle was first within the line of that town.

No one can estimate the particulars with the minuteness I have done, without being struck with the great judgment, power, & military skill of Starke, & planning and managing the whole enterprise. Nor should Baum pass without praise. He did all that could be done, fortified himself in the best position, and fought bravely. Why he separated the Tories so far from him is not easy to say. He placed them in the most exposed

situation, and where it was impossible they should not be cut off, in case of any serious attack. Their post formed a kind of out work to his, but under such circumstances as cut off all communication, and all assistance, except of the field piece stationed to command the bridge. The Americans were somewhat annoyed by this, when they attacked the Tory breastwork, but not so as to check them in any degree. It is quite clear, that Bacon intended his Tory friends, rather than his own dependants, should be sacrificed in maintaining a defense. In truth, these same friends had deceived him into his present snare, and it was but just that they should stand the test of their own declarations, and expose themselves in the front to an enemy, whom they had represented as few in numbers, & contemptible in spirit.

Mr Hall & myself have made an accurate drawing of Starke's Battle, with the distances stated by Judge Henry, who has always lived in the vicinity of the scene of action.

In the above description I have paid no regard to the numbers engaged on either side; these are to be ascertained from official documents. The points upon which I have touched are principally those, which have been misstated by historians.

See also the accompanying map is MS Sparks 28, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

A copy of the map of the "Battle of Bennington, Aug. 16, 1777" drawn by Hiland Hall for Jared Sparks is in the Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/gm71005309/>

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Civilian

Ezra Stiles, President of Yale University

The date is 22 August 1777.

22. . . A Letter circular from the Pres^t of the State of Vermont dated 16 Inst., viz. last Sat^y at Bennington, advises, that at that Time a Battle was fight^d there between our forces under Gen. Starks & the Enemy—we repulsed them & took 4 or 500. The En^y. re-enforced, & the Engag^t renewed with Vigor. Call earnestly for the Help of the Militia. The good Lord send us Victory, or sanctify all Disappointments.

Exp^t of Ebullition of Æther with Solution of silver in Aqua-fortis.

23. . . This Aft. at V^b came in News of Gn. Starks' Victory in a Battle about 5 M. fr. Bennington last Saturday—It was printed & dispersed here by sunset.

The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Franklin B. Dexter, ed., 3 vols., (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1901), vol. 2, p. 200.

The print mentioned by Stiles is reproduced in the appendix to this report.

While visiting Portsmouth, New Hampshire Stiles on 28 January 1778, "Breakfasted with Gen. Starks (at Rev. Dr Havens) who gave me an acc^o of the Battle of Bennington." Unfortunately he does not record the account in his diary.

The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Franklin B. Dexter, ed., 3 vols., (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1901), vol. 2, p. 245.

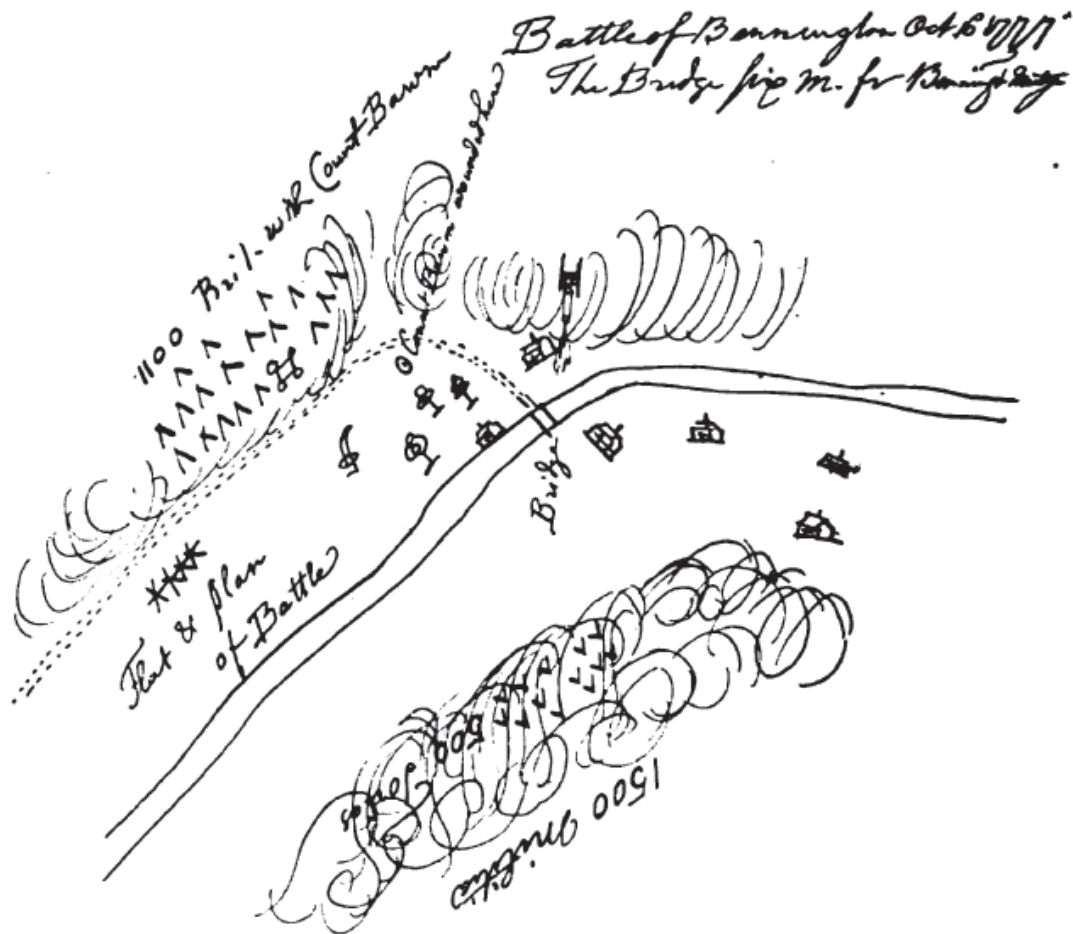
Primary Sources Battle of Bennington

Civilian

Ezra Stiles, President of Yale University

The date is 13 September 1786.

13. Visited the Place of Bennington Battle Oct. 16 1777 above 150 or 200 R. West fr. N.W. Corner of Bennington & saw the



Grave of Count Bawm in the S.W. corner of Shaftsbury near the House where we dined. Rode 5 m. to Bennington.

The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Franklin B. Dexter, ed., 3 vols., (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1901), vol. 3, p. 242.

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Civilian
Joseph Younglove

My brother, JOSEPH YOUNGLOVE was born in the year 1743 in the State of New Jersey where he received good education. He was a sensible and sprightly man. At the age of 21 he married AZUBAH SKINNER, a pious and amiable young woman by occupation. He was a farmer and remained in New Jersey until the year 1772, when he removed with his father's family to Cambridge, Albany County, New York where he purchased a tract of land and began building and improving on it; though shortly after he began his improvements the Revolutionary War commenced. My brother lived four miles west of the town of Cambridge and ten miles east of Saratoga.

In the year 1777, Burgoyne came on with a large army and descended the Hudson River to the mouth of the Battenkill, a stream that puts into the Hudson on the east side two miles above Saratoga. At that place, Burgoyne ordered Colonel Baum to take command of 600 men and pursue the road leading up Battenkill and through the town of Cambridge to Bennington and capture the American stores at that place, and all the horses that were to be found to remount his Cavalry, having lost a great many of their horses while on their march from Canada.

Skeen ordered them to give their guns to two men that were walking without, to put the family in that house, pointing to one to turn the stock in such a field consider themselves prisoners of war and conduct themselves accordingly. As Gov. Skeen turned from them, they shoved their guns under an old house and proceeded to place the family and stock according to Skein's orders.

British sentinels were placed in front of the house and the family, men, women and children had to compose themselves the best way they could: trusting Providence for the event. In the dead of night, my brother and Mr. Manley discovered an open way through the back part of the house, through which they conducted the family unperceived by the sentinels and secured them as best they could in the woods. They then got their horses and tied them near the family, then got their guns, went to their cattle, got hold of the one which had on the bell and tied a cloth round the clapper, and turned them out into the woods. The cattle started for their home. My brother and Mr. Manley put the women and children on the horses and returned to their home without seeing any of the enemy. This was about the 10th of August, 1777.

The Battle of Bennington was fought on the 16th of August, 1777. My brother and Manley tarried at home with the family and could hear the battle raging, ... being only 10 miles distant from my brother's house; but they did not know how it terminated until the second night after the battle. My father, then being 60 years old, ventured ... in a dark night, through the woods along a small path, to find out what had become of his son Joseph and family. He got there about midnight and found them all well and gave them an account of the battle, about which they all had a great rejoicing.

My brother at this time had a young man living with him by the name of John Manley, who was a brother of our valiant Captain Manley who captured the first British ship in the American Revolution. My brother and Mr. Manley, having heard that Burgoyne had reached Saratoga ten miles west of his house, and that Col. Baum was to pass through Cambridge, four miles east of his house, believed it was time to remove the family farther from the enemy. Accordingly, they concealed the most valuable of their effects in the woods, put the women and children on horses and shouldered their guns, driving their cattle before them. When they got to the big road in Cambridge they fell in with the rear of Col. Baum's army, composed of British, Hessians, Canadians, Tories and Indians. Gov. Skeen, discovering my brother and Mr. Manley with their guns ordered them to be brought before him and inquired their business. My brother replied that his intention was to remove his family and stock to a safer situation.

My brother then removed his family to Mapletown, four miles west of Bennington, where they remained until after the capture of Burgoyne, after which they returned home. My brother was a warm friend to the cause of liberty and did all in his power to support it. When the War of the Revolution was happily closed, he gave his attention to the cultivation of his farm. He was a Justice of the Peace in the county in which he lived and also filled other useful offices. He lived to raise five children, two sons and three daughters. Aaron, Cornelius, Elizabeth, Hannah and Polly, all respectable. His oldest son Aaron Younglove, acted for several years as a member of the Legislature and was also a member of the Senate in the State of New York. My brother was a kind husband, a tender father and a good and friendly neighbor. He died May 30, 1810, at about 70 years of age. respected by all that knew him and was buried at the Steeple Meeting House in Cambridge by the side of his father. Thus ends the narrative of JOSEPH YOUNGLOVE. February 13, 1844.

See also the accounts of John, Samuel and David Younglove in this appendix.

Samuel Younglove, *Revolutionary War Experiences of the Sons of Isaiah Younglove* Jacqueline Baker Humphrey, ed., (Cocoa Beach, 1988), pp. 21- 23.