

Newsletter

Friends of the Bennington Battlefield

Summer 2018



Issue #3

“...a fair compliment for Hubbardton.” Gen. John Stark, 1777

NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS

The 2018 Season Offers Exciting New Activities!

On Tuesday, May 1, the Bennington Battlefield officially opened to the public, 7 days per week, 8AM to sunset for the 2018 season.

For the 2018 season, we have a few new irons in the fire! We are happy to announce new and upcoming improvements to facilities and programming.

Improved View Surrounding the Dragoon Breastworks- We have pruned back and cut down some of the trees to the north, and northeast of the Dragoon Breastworks, to get the landscape closer to its 1777 appearance.

Partially Recreated Breastworks- Through the work of volunteers, the Dragoon Breastworks on “Hessian Hill” is in the process of being recreated to give visitors a better sense of its location, and its significance in the turn of events during the Battle.

A Replica Cannon- An anonymous donor will be giving the site a replica cannon which we are in the process of acquiring. The plan is to position it near its 1777 location on “Hessian Hill”.

New display in the Information Building- An early 20th century view of the battlefield has been collected from a series of panorama postcards and is on display. Our information table has been improved; our docents have been equipped with a giant map of the battle in order to better guide you.



Panoramic photo in display room.



The re-created breastworks. Note the position of the flagpole.



Breastwork construction of logs.



Newly cleared areas of Nichols' approach.

Chicote Fills Vice President Vacancy

The vacancy for Vice President of the Friends Group, occasioned by Bob Hoar's becoming a docent for the Battlefield, has been filled by Marylou Chicote, Site Manager of the Bennington Battle Monument. The Friends are happy to have her on the slate of officers.

FRIENDS OF THE BENNINGTON BATTLEFIELD OFFICERS & OPRHP CONTACTS

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School Groups Visit the Battlefield

May 2018

"...to conduct educational programs, services and activities...for its members and especially for local schools and the public at large." - From the mission statement, Friends of the Bennington Battlefield

Students from Mount Anthony Union Middle School and Hoosick Falls Elementary School Visit the Battlefield

Seventh Grade students from Mount Anthony Union Middle School in Bennington, VT, and fourth grade students from Hoosick Falls Central School spent full-day field trips to the Battlefield on Friday, May 11, and Friday, May 18, respectively.

Seventh-graders engaged in living history activities and heard local historians explain the course of the Battle at three different locations: at the Bridge on Caretakers' Road; the "Tory Fort" on the other side of the Walloomsac; and at the top of the site, sometimes called "Hessian Hill", although few Hessians participated in the Battle.

They listened to Jonah Spivak describe the events at the Tory fort, while Bob Hoar covered the aspects of the Battle at the bridge. Re-enactor Peter Schaaphok gave a presentation on the Revolutionary soldier's equipment and battlefield tactics, marching the students in formation and demonstrated firing a flintlock musket. Phyllis Chapman and David Pitlyk demonstrated 18th century home cooking vs. camp cooking. In the afternoon, Phyllis showed the primitive, sometimes gruesome, battlefield medical practices with demonstrations of surgery, and the startling medicines used.



Peter Schaaphok gets his "troops" into formation.



Seventh graders assist in typical battlefield surgery-amputation.



Hoosick Falls 4th grade teacher Katie Brownell with students.



Cooking 18th century style.

Fourth grade students from Hoosick Falls also participated in cooking, making cornbread, butter, and hand-cranked ice cream. With Michelle Culver, a former Hoosick Falls 4th grade teacher, they made tricorne hats and tried on 18th century clothing. Peter Schaaphok demonstrated the musket with them also, and drilled them in field movements, which was put to use in an afternoon "Charge!" by the students on Hessian Hill, which was defended by "Hessians" with a mock cannon built by Mike Chapman, complete with ramrods and gun carriage.

Both trips were the result of well-planned coordination with teachers and the Friends, and funding from several sources. Special thanks to Katie Brownell, from Hoosick Falls, and Phil Holland from Bennington. Many thanks to all teachers for bringing their students, and for making local history "real" for their students.



Fourth-grade "cannoneers"



READERS' CORNER



The Right Reverend Robert McConnell Hatch served on the New Hampshire Bicentennial Commission and wrote *Major John Andre: A Gallant in Spy's Clothing* and *Thrust for Canada: The American Attempt on Quebec, 1775-1776*. His work on Bennington, *Storm on My Left: The Battle of Bennington*, has not been published. The exact date of the manuscript is not certain, but applicable comments have been inserted in the hopes of providing unobtrusive updates. *Storm on My Left* provides ample context for the events and figures that led to the battle before giving a gripping account of the battle itself. The latter is the focus of the first in a series of excerpts published with the consent of Louise Hatch Cass, daughter of the late author. (*This is the first of two installments.*)

Storm on My Left: The Battle of Bennington

By Robert McConnell Hatch

Part One

pp. 152-168

Stark had stationed his army two miles west of Bennington near Colonel Herrick's farmhouse. He and Warner were preparing to join Lincoln when Isaac Clark and Eleazer Edgerton, scouts in the service of the Vermont Council of Safety, reported an Indian war party near Cambridge. Stark detached Lieutenant Colonel William Gregg with 200 men to investigate. That night a woman patriot, whose activities would incur less suspicion than a man's, brought word that the Indians were the forerunners of a full-blown expedition with artillery. In the morning Stark went to Gregg's support and sent orders to Colonel Stafford to bring the Green Mountain Boys from Manchester.

Like Stark, Gregg was a Scotch-Irishman from Londonderry, New Hampshire. They were about the same age and were good friends. Gregg had joined the army in Cambridge while the British occupied Boston and later become muster-master for his regiment and a recruiting officer in the New York campaign. Now he was with Nichol's regiment.

He took the cart road that snaked beside the shallow, west-running Walloomsac River into New York State, crossed a bridge spanning Little White Creek and came to the deserted grist mill at Sancoick. Here he posted his men inside the mill and in the thickets that encroached on it and then bedded down for an uneasy night.

Early next day the enemy came into view on the road from Cambridge. Instead of an Indian war party, they were mostly Germans, advancing in even ranks, some in pale blue coats and big cocked hats, some in the topheavy caps of grenadiers, some in forest green and armed with rifles in scarlet slings.

Gregg did not tarry. His men got off a few shots and then took to the Bennington road. Baum watched them with contempt and would accuse them of firing from ambush "in their usual way" before taking flight, but their assignment was to reconnoiter, not to engage the enemy, and to report to General Stark.

Gregg hurried eastward until he met Stark's army about four miles west of Bennington. At Little White Creek Eleazer Edgerton, one of the scouts who had first reported the approach of the enemy and was said to be so hardy that he wore neither hat nor coat even in winter, recruited a few others and, after Gregg's troops had crossed, burned the bridge, completing the task under the guns of Baum's advance corps.

READERS' CORNER (Continued)

At Sancoick Baum scribbled a message to Burgoyne, using a flour barrel as a table. After describing the skirmish with Gregg's detachment and the delay of more than an hour while a new bridge was thrown across Little White Creek, he quoted five prisoners he had taken as agreeing that "from 1500 to 1800 men are in Bennington but are supposed to leave it on the next day, adding that "people are flocking in hourly, but want to be armed."¹

When Burgoyne received the message that night he hurried off a word of caution. "Should you find the enemy too strongly posted at Bennington, and maintaining such a countenance as may make an attack imprudent," he counseled Baum, "I wish you to take a post where you can maintain yourself till you receive an answer from me, and I will either support you in force or withdraw you."²

At Sancoick people were indeed "flocking in hourly." Many came from the immediate neighborhood. A Vermonter with Stark said that "the greater part of Dutch Hoosac was in the battle against us" but he spoke with a regional bias. There was a generous influx of New York Tories but others came from southwestern Vermont and the Berkshires and were to be recognized by former friends and neighbors serving in Stark's army. Some were spies who reported everything they saw. Unable to speak their language or tell friend from foe, Baum was easily taken in and was further misled by Skene, who said that all could be trusted.

The Hoosac Tories were led by Colonel Francis Pfister, who had served in the British Army under Lord Amherst. Now on half-pay, he lived as a country squire in a mansion he had built on the shores of the Hoosic. He was accompanied by Robert Leake, son of a former British commissary general and an avid Tory. Because of his military service Pfister was given command in Peters's corps.

Others in "Dutch Hoosac" were patriots, such as Colonel John Williams of White Creek. Like Pfister, a commissioned army officer on half-pay, he had been a surgeon's mate on a man-of-war and had since built up a flourishing practice and amassed farmlands and wealth. A member of the New York Provincial Congress, he had raised and financed his own militia regiment and had led it in the Battle of Fort Anne. He was now in close touch with the Vermont Council of Safety.

Two from the neighborhood are said to have gone to Bennington to warn of Baum's approach. Another is said to have shot a German officer at Cambridge, and still another to have helped Eleazer Edgerton demolish the bridge at Little White Creek. We know that Caleb Wright came with bullets he had made by melting down the weights of his grandfather clock and that a Baptist preacher who lived nearby turned up on the battlefield shouldering a musket. And there were surely others- as many as fifty or sixty perhaps, and there would have been more had not most of the region's patriots already joined Schuyler on the Hudson.

Convinced that most of the inhabitants were his friends, Baum left Sancoick and pursued Gregg along the cart road that toiled through the woods toward Bennington. On his right was the Walloomsac, screened off by thickets and swampland, and on his left the trees marched up a succession of steep little hills. Shafts of hot sunlight danced on the scarlet coats of Fraser's marksmen and turned the facings on the jaegers' jackets a bright blood-red. The Indians were resplendent in fresh war paint. The Canadians stepped smartly behind Charles de Lanaudiere. Only the Tories in drab homespun dimmed the splendor of Baum's command as it edged toward Stark's casually dressed militiamen.

1. Collections of the Vermont Historical Society, Vol. 1, pp. 200-1.

2. Ibid., p. 201.

READERS' CORNER

(cont.)

They met head-on near a bridge where the Walloomsac cut across the road and curved past a hillside on Baum's left. His corps was only half a mile behind Gregg but Stark had had time to deploy his men and prepare for battle. As the two armies appraised each other Baum was mindful of his prisoners' report that as many as 1800 rebels might have gathered in Bennington. He backed away, ordering his troops up a steep hill on his left where he halted and dug in.

Stark stationed his command on a much lower hill in plain view of the enemy. When he saw that they had no intention of risking an attack he sent out skirmishers who engaged Baum's Indians and killed two of their chiefs, and then he withdrew to a campsite west of Bennington. "I drew up my little army in order of battle," he would report, "but when the enemy hove in sight they halted on a very advantageous hill or piece of ground. I sent out small parties in their front to skirmish with them, which scheme had a good effect. They killed and wounded thirty of the enemy without any loss on our side, but the ground I was upon did (not) suit for a general action. I marched back about one mile and encamped."

Baum immediately sent to Burgoyne for reinforcements. He would hole up until they arrived. He had his men build a log breastwork on the hilltop and he stationed all his dragoons there, half of Fraser's marksmen and the Indians. He assigned them one of the three-pounders and a crew of Hesse-Hanau artillerymen. Mounted in an embrasure, the little cannon was pointed toward Bennington.

Baum assigned the fifty jaegers to the southeast slope where they could keep watch on the Walloomsac. He posted fifty grenadiers and some Tories three quarters of a mile down the road toward Sancoick as a rear guard. He stationed the Canadians in a cluster of log huts near the Walloomsac bridge and, supporting them, more Germans, the rest of the British marksmen and a Hesse-Hanau gun crew with the other three pounder. He consigned the camp followers to a hut near the Canadians.

He ordered Peters and Pfister with most of the Tories to defend an elevation south of the Walloomsac bridge, where they built a makeshift barricade by stuffing flax between fence rails and covering it with spadefuls of dirt. The core of his defense was the hilltop redoubt, and he took his place with his dragoons. [This is a contentious claim, as one source noted Baum never inspected this position and the Bach map, not available at the time to the author, locates his tent nearer the bridge. -Ed.].

Baum could not see his detachments from the hilltop. By dispersing his command he was inviting the enemy to attack piecemeal but he evidently assumed that each detachment could cope with its share of rebels. Moreover, Philip Skene was still telling him that most of the inhabitants were indeed his friends.

Baum's call for reinforcements reached Burgoyne that night. Through his aide-de-camp he asked Riedesel to order out Colonel Breymann with the German advance corps but Riedesel, who at this point wanted nothing more than to wash his hands of the whole affair, told Burgoyne to do it. Baum's position was untenable, he said, and he should be pulled back half way to the Hudson where he could more readily be supported.

READERS' CORNER

(cont.)

Heinrich Christoph Breymann was an exacting field officer who rode herd on his men. He had a propensity for dressing ranks. He took with him his grenadiers and a detail of light infantry and jaegers, totaling 642 officers and enlisted men. The grenadiers and jaegers were less encumbered. The former wore blue coats faced with black velvet, so cut as to not interfere with the speedy use of their rifles, and the jaegers, who were apt to be offspring of German foresters, were trained marksmen. Both units were led by Major Ferdinand von Barner. Breymann was also assigned two six-pounders manned by a gun-crew of the Hesse-Hanau artillery.

The column set forth after breakfast on August 15 in a soaking rain. Of all the units in Burgoyne's army only Baum's dragoons moved more ponderously than Breymann's grenadiers. They slogged out of camp, waded the Battenkill ford and slogged up the miry hills east of the Hudson. Stickler that he was for spit and polish, Breymann halted often to dress ranks. He was furthered delayed by an ammunition cart that overturned in mud that he called "bottomless."⁴

When the guide lost his bearings the soggy troops ground to a stop and could not continue until Von Barner had located someone more knowledgeable. Breymann sent word to Baum that he was on his way but he was still seven miles short of Cambridge when he bedded down for a wet night. Early next morning Philip Skene left the redoubt and galloped toward Sancoick to speed up Breymann's column.

Stark set up camp on high ground east of the Walloomsac hidden from the enemy by an intervening ridge. As soon as his men were stationed he and Warner called a council of the field officers and the leading members of the Council of Safety. Herrick and Nichols were present, and Stickney, Hobart, Brush and William Williams. Of the Berkshire officers, Simonds was there and probably John Ashley of Sheffield. Lieutenant Colonel Gregg may have been called in to describe his brush with the enemy.

The attack would be closely synchronized. Stark was responsible for the ground plan but others undoubtedly contributed, especially Warner, who knew every clearing, swamp and stretch of woods within a hawk's view of the Walloomsac. On the map it resembled the claws of an enormous crab reaching toward Baum's redoubt from opposite directions while the jaws swept up the outposts. One pincer would arc south of the Walloomsac, enter New York State, cross the river and the road to Sancoick and strike Baum from the southwest while the other, looping into New York State behind a thickly wooded ridge, would descend from the north. While a hundred troops demonstrated in full view of the redoubt to divert the enemy, two other detachments would be sent against the Tory breastwork on the enemy's right and the reserve would form into position on the road for a frontal attack.

It was agreed that Herrick would lead the left claw of the pincers and Nichols the right, and that Stickney and Hobart would envelop the enemy's right. Stark and Warner would lead the reserve down the road.

Herrick would take with him his Rangers and the Bennington militia, Nichols a portion of the New Hampshiremen, Stickney and Hobart more of the New Hampshiremen, and Stark and Warner the remaining New Hampshiremen, some Vermont troops and the Berkshire militia. As nearly as possible all would go into action at the same moment.

Stark hoped to give battle on the following day but by evening the sky had clouded over and the air turned moist. Next morning it was raining hard. The storm that pelted Breymann's relief column in the

4. Gentleman's Magazine, March 1778, p, 121.

READERS' CORNER (cont.)

Cambridge hills threatened Stark's gunpowder and immobilized his men, who squatted all day in brush lean-tos or loitered in sodden clusters, hunched and miserable. Scouts spied on Baum's troops and reported that they were improving their defenses. Stark was edgy. For him and his army it was a wasted day and no kindness to the nerves, and he was thankful to see the end of it. That night, with the rain still driving through his troops' lean-tos, he was confronted by Parson Allen.

Although it was past midnight when he completed the rainy trip from Pittsfield, Allen invaded Stark's quarters to tell him that the men from Berkshire had not come all the way to Bennington to be disappointed. Too often they had been called out to meet emergencies that had failed to develop, sometimes when there were crops to be harvested. Their patience had worn thin. Moreover, they had managed to keep their powder dry after slogging the night over muddy roads and they expected to use it. He informed Stark, "We, the people of Berkshire, have frequently been called upon to fight but have never been led against the enemy. We have now resolved, if you will not let us fight, never to turn out again."⁵

Stark asked him if he cared to give battle that very night.

At this the parson demurred.

"Then," Stark said, "if the Lord should once more give us sunshine, and I do not give you fighting enough, I will never ask you to come out again."

⁵ Edward Everett: "John Stark," p. 97.

END OF PART ONE: SEE FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER FOR CONCLUSION

THE BATTLE AND FAMILY HISTORIES

The following is a letter from Michael Kasler, the namesake of his ancestor, Johann Michael Kasler, who was a German soldier wounded at the Battle of Bennington. He shares with us his ancestor's story:

"My name is Michael Kasler. I live in Ohio and am named after my great-great-great-great-great grandfather, a German soldier who fought and was wounded at the Battle of Bennington. Johann Michael Kasler was a musketeer (private) in Captain Thomae's Company of the Brunswick Light Infantry Battalion von Barner, and I believe that he was one of a handful of men stationed at the "Chasseur's Post" during the Battle. His story has been passed down through my family for many generations, and my research has helped to prove that much of it is true.

"Lt. Col. Baum commanded the German forces during the battle, which consisted of Brunswick Dragoons, Hesse-Hanau Artillery, Canadians, Indians, Tories, and British troops. There were initially no members of the Light Infantry Battalion von Barner assigned to Baum, but on August 11, 1777, Captain Dommès arrived with around sixty reinforcements, all from von Barner. Of these sixty soldiers, most were Jaegers who were then positioned near the bridge. The remaining 15 – 20 were musketeers, and were assigned to the Chasseur's Post. Muster rolls conclusively show that my ancestor was a musketeer, not a Jaeger, and I believe that it is reasonable to conclude that he was one of those sent to the Chasseur's Post.

(cont.)

THE BATTLE AND FAMILY HISTORIES (cont.)

“On the day of the battle, militiamen from Col. Samuel Herrick's Rangers stormed the dragoon redoubt at the top of the hill. Among them was the company commanded by Captain Ebenezer Allen, a cousin to Ethan and Ira Allen. After the dragoons had been chased away from the hilltop, it is known that many of the militiamen combed the area looking for bounty and potential prisoners.

“According to the story printed in Hemenway's Vermont Historical Gazetteer, my ancestor was shot in the leg at some point during the battle, and was then shot in the chest at close range by an unknown militiaman who wanted to “finish him off”. He somehow survived, and was found and cared for by Peter Howe, a member of Captain Ebenezer Allen's Company of Herrick's Rangers. Peter Howe, and other unknown militiamen, carried my ancestor to a hospital which supposedly had been set up at the headquarters of Col. Herrick. There, he was successfully treated by Dr. Jacob Ruebach, a surgeon in Col. Herrick's regiment.

“After my ancestor recovered, he was evidently employed as an “apprentice” to an innkeeper near Bennington who was also the Captain of the local militia. It is not known who this Captain was. It was a common practice after the battle for captured German soldiers to work for the local residents, but more as indentured servant than as apprentices. Many were guaranteed their freedom after three years.

“According to a letter from one of my ancestor's great-granddaughters during the 1920s, and also as told in Hemenway's Vermont Historical Gazetteer, it was during this time that my ancestor was asked to identify the man who had shot him in the chest during the battle. After identifying him, the Captain evidently told that man to leave town immediately or else receive the beech seal, which was flogging with beech rods. It is assumed that he left town!

“My ancestor's name is found in the 1781 – 1784 tax records for West Stockbridge, Mass, where he also was situated during the 1790 census. He married Susanna Minkler, the daughter of John and Sophia Minkler, who had been residents of West Stockbridge since before the Revolution began. In the late 1780s, my ancestor purchased land in South Hero, Vermont from Ebenezer Allen, and then moved there in the 1790s. The rest of his life was spent in northern Vermont and then upstate New York. It is believed that he died near Fort Covington, New York, in the 1830s.

“My ancestor's oldest son, Kelion Kasler, migrated to Ohio in 1818, and began the branch of the family of which I am a member. Kelion married Mandana Pember, whose father, Andrew Pember, was also a Vermont militiaman who is said to also have fought at the Battle of Bennington. Before they all moved to Ohio, Kelion and Mandana lived in Plattsburg, New York next to her two brothers, Ethan Allen Pember and Ira Allen Pember.

“After my ancestor died, his widow moved to Ohio and lived with Kelion and Mandana. Peter Howe also lived in the area, and it is documented that in the 1840s, the old Vermont militiaman visited with Mandana, the widow of the German soldier he had rescued from the battlefield. Approximately twenty years ago, I was asked to speak at a DAR event memorializing the daughter of Peter Howe, who is buried near where I live. It was most likely the first time that our two families had met since Peter Howe visited with Susanna Kasler, my great-great-great-great-grandmother, over 170 years ago.

“I continue to research my ancestor's life both during and after the battle. Last summer, I visited the Bennington Battlefield and found the Chasseur's Post where my great-great-great-great-grandfather was positioned during the Battle. It is very likely that prior to then, the last time a member of my family had stood in that spot was on that fateful day 240 years earlier, during the Battle of Bennington.”

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Exploring the Unique Topics of History

THE CELEBRATION OF BATTLE DAY IN BENNINGTON: A Long History Phyllis Chapman

There are certain auspicious events among people that call for the establishment of annual formal celebrations and civic festivities. After the Declaration of Independence had been accepted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, John Adams wrote his wife, Abigail, "I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival...solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more." However--he believed the date should have been set for July 2nd, when the Congress declared independence, not the 4th, when the text of the document was approved and signed. Preference aside, his prediction of celebratory activities proved correct, and continues to this day. The formal observance in Bristol, Rhode Island of Independence Day, "The Military, Civic and Firemen's Parade", (its official title), is one of the oldest continuing celebrations since its founding in 1785.

Other countries have their national patriotic celebrations. "Bastille Day", which the French actually call "The 14th of July" (Le 14 Juillet) was first celebrated the year after the event--(the storming of the prison in 1789.) The 1790 celebrations featured Gen. Lafayette swearing fealty to the new Constitution, a Mass conducted by Tallyrand, and even the King and Queen present, with their young heir, the Dauphin, swearing to uphold the new Constitution! The four day event featured parades, banquets, and people running nude through the streets to demonstrate their new-found freedom. Presumably, Adams would not have condoned the latter.

Unfortunately, the following July 14th, 1791, the French Guard fired upon protesters in the same spot, killing 50, and the King and Queen were executed two years later. The resurrection of the holiday came in 1880, favoring the spirit of the 1790 celebration over the distressing circumstances of other July 14ths.

Great Britain's Guy Fawkes' Day has been celebrated in one form or another since 1606, the year after the failure of the Gunpowder Plot. A Catholic dissident group attempted to blow up the House of Parliament, when King James I would be present for the opening session. Some of the perpetrators, including Guy Fawkes, were convicted of treason and executed by drawing and quartering. The King declared November 5, the anniversary of the foiled attempt, a "national day of thanksgiving" the following year, and the celebration, known as "Guy Fawkes Day" or "Bonfire Night" has been observed ever since, usually with bonfires, and burning of Guy Fawkes effigies, or any other current politician or celebrity in bad odor with the public. The original anti-Catholic sentiment and celebration of drawing and quartering is, thankfully, a thing of the past.

"Battle Day", or "Battle Weekend", which celebrates the victory of American militia over the British and German forces at the Battle of Bennington on August 16, 1777, doesn't command much attention beyond Vermont and the surrounding towns. The Battle was strategically important, which is more universally noted across the country, albeit among history buffs. It was a morale-booster for the fledgling nation, in that ordinary citizens defeated the strongest army on the planet, and its consequences can be directly linked to Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga, almost two months to the day later. Locals and historians often refer to it as "the turning point before the turning point." So, it is interesting to note that in a nation that does not generally devote holidays to battle anniversaries, Battle Day has been, for the most part, celebrated *every single year*, beginning with year following the event, 1778!

The year 1777 was an important one for Vermont; in addition to the success of the Battle, the state declared itself as an independent state (in the global sense), repudiating any prior claims from New York, and established a democratic, republican government with its own Constitution, which, among other things, abolished slavery and allowed for fairly liberal voting requirements. August 16th, is an appropriate date for Vermont to celebrate independence on two fronts.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES (cont.)

But, it is the *Battle* that takes precedence in the festivities. The Vermont Historical Society records suggest that the holiday was celebrated with exercises and parades near the site where the Bennington Monument stands today in 1778, the very next year after the victory. From early accounts, the survivors of the Battle, and their descendants, took leading roles in marking the event publicly. The observance may have included a procession from there to the Old First Church (not the one of today), speakers, and undoubtedly a liberal number of toasts drunk in tribute to the day.

T.D. Seymour Bassett, a historian with the Vermont Historical Society, wrote of that first celebration, "...orators pointed out that the setback to Burgoyne's German dragoons on their side trip to seize munitions broke the spirit of the invaders in 1777 and led to American victory and independence" and added "...for the first ten years, Battle Day 'was the busiest day in the year' in Bennington. Youths would find an old barn to burn, and volunteer firemen paraded in full uniform." In the years between 1795 and 1841, Battle Day celebrations were held in Shaftsbury, Pownal, Dorset, Manchester, and on the Battlefield itself, in Hoosick.

The 10th anniversary of the Battle was an especially large event, beginning with guns firing 14 times at sunrise- one for each of the original 13 colonies, and one for the independent Republic of Vermont. Businesses closed for the day, and people from miles around came to the festivities. The parade included "Captain Robinson's Cavalry" and "Captain Safford's Light Infantry." The noted printer, Anthony Haswell, delivered an oration. Considering that he eventually became one of a handful of people arrested and jailed under President Adam's Alien and Sedition Acts, it must have been quite a speech.

Specifics regarding celebration programs varied. A wolf hunt was a centerpiece of the ceremonies in 1796. The year 1799 marked a particularly large celebration, and at least 16 toasts were drunk- salutes such as "The United States of America- May they never exchange the Eagle for a Crown" and to "the brave General Stark." Two celebrations took place in 1821; the larger being in White Creek, NY, where it was said people from Bennington, Shaftsbury and Pownal in Vermont, joined inhabitants of White Creek, Hoosick, Cambridge, and Jackson, NY. The procession, led by Capt. Henry Robinson and Captain Fort was said to have over fifteen hundred men in line.

The first mention of a re-enactment is in 1789, when a "sham fight" took place, with Capt. Robinson's Troop of Horse, Captain Safford's Light Infantry, and two companies of Rangers. Later, in 1802, the sham fight took place near the Battlefield, and attracted people from area towns. It is worth noting that even by this time, many *survivors* of the Battle were still on hand to join in the holiday- who were noted as the "silver greys." Organizers of the event tried to convince the distinguished "Silver Grey", Gen. John Stark, to attend in 1809; he politely declined, citing age and infirmity. To those who remarked that they wanted their sons to see the famed soldier in person, he replied, "...those of you who have seen me can tell them, that I never was worth much for a show, and certainly cannot be worth their seeing now." His letter closed with his famous salute, "Live free or die; Death is not the greatest of evils." (The state of New Hampshire's motto today.)

Women participated in a special event in the 1826 celebration; a group of 100 young ladies and gentlemen took tea together on the banks of the Walloomsac in Bennington. During the orations of the 1832 program, twenty-four young ladies were robed to represent each of the states. It must have been a pretty tableau.

Politics generally were a presence; in 1840, Democrats and Whigs held gatherings on the occasion, once serving food to participants (or potential voters?) on a table said to be 75 rods in length. The following year, Temperance advocates held a mass meeting which drew a large crowd, and, presumably, featured no toasts at all!

Far from losing steam as the Battle became a part of a more distant past, momentum increased during the 19th century, largely through the efforts of Hiland Hall. Hall was born in 1795, nearly a quarter-century after the Battle, but held a strong conviction of the significance of the victory, and that a permanent structure or marker should be built in commemoration of the Battle. That Monument stands today where so many of the annual celebrations took place beginning in 1778.

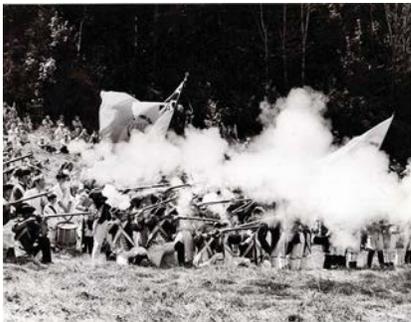
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES (cont.)



The Battle Day Parade in Bennington, 1877.



Grand arch at the four corners, built for the 1877 celebration.



An undated photo of a Battle Weekend re-enactment.



Re-enactors still doing their part for Battle Weekend.

Of course, the years 1876 and 1877 were celebrated in grand style; Centennial events were numerous throughout the country, with the first World's Fair held in Philadelphia. The Bennington Battle Monument Association, originally formed in 1853, was re-incorporated in 1876. In a talk for the Bennington Historical Society in September, 2017, Phil Holland detailed some of the exercises for the Centennial of the Battle in 1877; the celebration lasted a week, with over 30,000 people in attendance, and President Rutherford B. Hayes as one of the featured speakers in a tent that could accommodate 12,000 people!

Battle Day/Weekend remains a big deal today, marked by a parade and free admission to the Battle Monument. The Friends of the Bennington Battlefield, aided by the Sons of the Revolution and the Daughters of the Revolution, hold a short, commemorative ceremony at the top of "Hessian Hill" on the New York State Bennington Battlefield Historic Site. The early evening program includes cannon salutes, speakers, and wreath-laying at the map marker by SAR and DAR Chapters from New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. It is held on the 16th of August, regardless of the day of the week.

Initiative and interest in celebrating the Battle has not abated in 200+ years, and actually seems to be increasing. Which prompts the question: Why has one battle been so consistently celebrated for so long, among a relatively small population in a rural area? Each person will have his/her own impressions; however, a few points seem central to our commitment to preserve the memory and continue to celebrate the achievement of ordinary citizens so long ago.

The defenders of Bennington were not professional soldiers, but militia from Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York. They faced highly trained, disciplined troops feared just about anywhere on earth. Yet they prevailed. Stark's tactical excellence was crucial, indeed, as was the resolve his men felt in protecting *their* homes, families, livestock and crops from the invaders. It was *personal*, not fighting for abstract, political motives, or as hired mercenaries. The determination to protect their own was doubly rewarded in their success.

The 4th of July, Memorial Day, and Labor Day are all opportunities for Americans to have the day off, picnic and celebrate with friends and family, and take a moment to reflect upon freedom and those who fought so that we could enjoy it. Battle Day, however, is our own; a reminder that even a small town in a rural area played an important part of the broad sweep of history. Bennington exemplifies many concepts Americans love: the success of the underdog, the devotion to home, family and community, and the accomplishments possible when people work together in a common cause. For two centuries, these values have remained constant—perhaps celebrating this Battle has served as an annual reminder that times may change, but what really matters, doesn't.

Whatever the reason, it appears that Battle Day is here to stay.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUMMER 2018

Tour of the Battlefield

Thursday, June 14, 1:00 PM: Bennington Battlefield, RT-67, Hoosick Falls, NY

Tour the three main areas of interest in the first engagement of the battle. A mix of walking and driving is required.

Trophies and Loot: After the Battle of Bennington

Saturday, June 16, 11:00 AM: Bennington Battlefield, RT-67, Hoosick Falls, NY

Professor Michael Gabriel will deliver a presentation on the idea of plunder, how it fits into the Revolution as a whole, and the Battle of Bennington specifically. An open fire cooking demonstration will follow.

Father's Day

Sunday, June 17, 11:00 AM-3:00 PM: Bennington Battlefield RT-67, Hoosick Falls, NY

Join us for hourly tours from 11 to 3. A great way to celebrate Father's Day and fit into your schedule.

Book Discussion

Wednesday, June 20, 6:00 PM: Brown's Walloomsac Taproom, 50 Factory Hill Rd, Hoosick Falls, NY 12090

This month the group is reading *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* by Barbara Graymont. New members welcome.

Hiking Battle Loop Trail

Thursday, June 21, 1:00 PM: Bennington Battlefield NY RT-67, Hoosick Falls, NY

Join us for a mile long hike along Battle Loop Trail.

Movie (non-historical)

Friday, June 22, 6:00 PM: Barnett House, 30 Caretakers Road, Hoosick Falls, NY

Join us for a free public screening of a movie, just for fun! Guests may bring snacks and camp chairs.

Tour of the Battlefield

Thursday, June 28, 1:00 PM: Bennington Battlefield, RT-67, Hoosick Falls, NY

Tour the three main areas of interest in the first engagement of the battle. A mix of walking and driving is required.



Servicemen from the US Naval College visiting the Battlefield.

Revolutionary Games

Friday, July 13, 6:00 PM: 30 Caretakers Road, Hoosick Falls, NY Join us for an evening of games set during the Revolutionary War.

Dining with Warner & Wasmus: Cooking Demonstration

Saturday, July 14, 1:00 PM: Bennington Battlefield NY RT-67, Hoosick, NY

See an interpretation of a meal shared by the victors and vanquished of the battle.

Tour of the Battlefield

Sunday, July 15, 1:00 PM: Bennington Battlefield NY RT-67, Hoosick, NY

Tour the three main areas of interest in the first engagement of the battle. A mix of walking and driving is required.

Tour of the Battlefield

Thursday, July 19, 11:00 AM: Bennington Battlefield NY RT-67, Hoosick, NY

Tour the threeT main areas of interest in the first engagement of the battle. A mix of walking and driving is required.

In-depth: The Dragoon Redoubt

Friday, July 20, 4:00 PM: Bennington Battlefield NY RT-67, Hoosick, NY

This focused tour will give visitors a detailed look at the area of the Dragoon Redoubt on "Hessian Hill."

Hiking Battle Loop

Tour of the Battlefield

Monday, July 23, 1:00 PM: Bennington Battlefield NY RT-67, Hoosick, NY.

Join us for a one mile hike on the battlefiel

Commemoration of the Battle Ceremony

Thursday, August 16, 7 PM: Bennington Battlefield, RT-67, Hoosick Falls, NY This annual event, always held on August 16, commemorates the soldiers and the Battle with cannon salutes, readings of accounts of the Battle, and laying of wreaths at the relief map.



Friends President Peter Schaaphok at the Commemoration Ceremony.