

[Sons of Liberty](#) [Support the Cause](#) [Follow Us On Facebook](#)

Main Menu

[Home](#)
[George Washington](#)
[Biography](#)
[Battles](#)
[Life and Times](#)
[Washington's Guards](#)
[Revolution by Month](#)
[Founding Philosophy](#)
[Audio](#)
[FAQ](#)

Support the Cause

Help support our work to bring American history back into the classroom!



We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit, recognized by the IRS. Your donation may be tax deductible.

Search the Archives

er not found

I't find the server at
 er.amazon.com.

ie address for tyning errors

August 1777

Written by Andrew Stough



Search Free War Records

1) Simply enter their name. 2) Discover their war records now!

Editor's Note: This article was reprinted by Permission of the Gold Country Chapter No. 7 of the CSSAR and was slightly edited by the Sons of Liberty Chapter of the CSSAR

St. Leger returns to Canada; Battle of Bennington; Oriskany; Howe debarks.

Historically we seem to recall primarily the actions of Generals Washington and Howe during August of 1777. However, a much more important event was unfolding in the wilderness of upper New York State. British Officers John Burgoyne and Barry St. Leger with his Indian ally Joseph Brant and his warriors, were busily moving toward Albany. The actions of these three and the culmination of those actions would eventually lead to the important surrender of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga.

On the 6th of August General Nicholas Herkimer and 800 local militia were moving to reinforce Ft. Stanwix, besieged by St. Leger. Herkimer was ambushed at Oriskany, New York, by St. Leger's Redcoats and Brant's Indians, almost annihilating Herkimer's forward element. Resolutely, the remaining militia moved into the fray with Gen. Herkimer in the midst of it. After fierce and brutal hand-to-hand conflict the battle ended in a draw with approximately equal losses on both sides. Weakened by the losses at Oriskany and faced with the arrival of General Benedict Arnold with troops to reinforce Fort Stanwix, St. Leger and his Indian allies began a retreat back into Canada on August 22nd. Unfortunately, the brave and gallant General Herkimer lost a leg in the engagement and died later from what is described as a botched amputation of the leg.

(Editor's note: Click Here for more information on the Battle of Oriskany)

It appears that Burgoyne could have chosen a longer but more accessible route to Albany by returning to Ticonderoga then by road to Fort George, thence to Albany. Indians did not like to go by road, preferring wilderness trails for travel. Perhaps because of his Indian allies and guides, he elected to take the more direct route through the wilderness. The shorter but much more difficult route created a requirement to re-supply his army while enroute. He sent German General Frederich Baum to Bennington or the vicinity thereof to seize supplies, stores, guns or ammunition and horses to replace those too weakened to be of further service. He also wanted to either intimidate the population or win their allegiance to the King including their bearing arms against the Northern Army. On August 13th the expedition set forth.

On August 14th British General Howe's fleet was sighted off Cape Charles, Virginia, at the opening to Chesapeake Bay. The news was immediately relayed by courier to General Washington.

August 16th was a day of dismay for Burgoyne. General Baum, only three days into his expedition, was met near Bennington by General John Stark commanding local militia. In the ensuing battle Baum's force was almost annihilated. Colonel Breyman who belatedly had been sent to support Baum arrived too late for the battle and was also routed by Stark's forces.

Burgoyne learned of the battle at Oriskany and St Leger's subsequent retreat into Canada, ending any hope of a reinforcement from that quarter. Despite this setback, Burgoyne with his reduced force continued resolutely on through the wilderness toward Albany, in the expectation that he would be reinforced from New York. (Editor's note: for more information on Burgoyne and St. Leger click here.)

In England, Lord Germaine reluctantly accepted Howe's move on Philadelphia. Now his hope was that after Philadelphia's speedy capture that Howe would move north to support Clinton and Burgoyne in the move to isolate New England. In England this was seen as the primary and principal objective for the 1777 campaign. Clinton, who could have sent forces to support Burgoyne, was still sitting tight in New York with the thought that he did not have sufficient forces to move out of New York.

Philip Schuyler was one of the four original Major Generals commissioned by Congress on June 19, 1775. The Conway Cabal, which sought to displace General George Washington with General Horatio Gates, convinced Congress that Schuyler's steady retreat before Burgoyne's forces was unsatisfactory and that Schuyler should be replaced by Gates. A victory by Gates over Burgoyne would strengthen the Cabal's contention that Gates should become Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Due to these political machinations in Congress,

Schuyler on August 19th was replaced by Gates.

All contents Copyright 2007-2015 Revolutionary War Archives

General Horatio Gates, English born, had been an officer in the British Army. After leaving the army he purchased an estate in Virginia and took up residence. At the beginning of the War he offered his services to the patriot cause and was made a general in the Continental Army based on his previous experience, his current status as a resident, and his loyalty to Congress. As a result, he was favored by John Adams over Washington.



Revolutionary War Archives by Sons of Liberty, CASSAR is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

The Congress has since been criticized by historians and military critics alike for the removal of General Schuyler, believing that he was a victim of politics and had been justified in his retreat to a more suitable location for battle. Further, it was believed that Gates' subsequent victory over Burgoyne was more a result of the groundwork laid by Schuyler and the efforts of subordinate officers such as General Benedict Arnold than on Gates' leadership. Nevertheless, Gates was given full credit for the subsequent victory. Congress has also been criticized for usurping Washington's prestige and power by relieving a general of his command and appointing another without consulting the Commander-in-Chief.

On August 23rd, Washington started southward, camping that evening at Germantown, Pennsylvania (now a part of Philadelphia). On the 24th he paraded an augmented force of 16,000 men through Philadelphia, requiring over two hours for the army to pass. Washington hoped by this maneuver to impress the populace and reassure Congress of the strength and will of the Army. They camped that night at Darby and the next night at Naaman's Creek. The next day, August 26th, he moved forward with a small group to Wilmington, Delaware to better observe General Howe.

While Washington was moving south, Howe on August 25th was landing at Head of Elk (which presently appears to be known as Turkey Point and Elk Neck State Park), dispersing four companies of local militia in the process. He then rested several days allowing the men and horses to recuperate from the long sea voyage and to forage for fresh meat and particularly for fresh horses to replace the scarecrows that had survived the long sea voyage. His forces were met in part by loyalists bringing sheep for slaughter to feed the army. Meanwhile, his troops were successful in seizing several hundred head of cattle and very importantly, a like number of horses from the countryside.

On August 26th, Howe entered Elkton and seized many needed supplies which the rebels (Patriots) had failed to remove, although there had been sufficient warning and time for the locals to move anything which would be of use to General Howe.

In the beginning American objectors may have been called rabble, malcontents or other names that recognized them as Subjects of the Crown who only needed to be disciplined as disobedient children. After July 4th, 1776 they were more frequently referred to as rebels since the Crown did not concur in their statement of independence.

On August 28th, Howe divided his forces and began a march up both sides of the Elk River with plans to rejoin at a port below the Christina River. On the 29th he dispersed a body of rebel infantry. On the 30th he engaged a force of rebel cavalry.

There has been no mention of an American navy. It was once said "it was a navy that wasn't, but was." Over the years there had grown to be a substantial American merchant fleet, both coastal and on the high seas. In previous wars between England and France, American merchantmen had been armed and commissioned privateers to prey upon enemy merchantmen, a profession at which they had become quite successful. Now they turned their experience and efforts toward British ships thus gaining supplies of all kinds for the Continental Army and as an added incentive for their own enrichment. The Royal Navy saw them as a nuisance. British ship owners recognized their strength as insurance rates on cargo skyrocketed from seizures at sea and raids on land (even along the English coast) and raised the prices of imported goods for the average Briton which further dampened any popular sentiment for continuing a war in a far off wilderness full of malcontents and savage Indians. Even prior to September of 1775 when Washington authorized ships to proceed against British naval vessels in the vicinity of Boston both to harass and to obtain supplies, there had been independent attacks by American privateers to capture merchant vessels and seize their supplies to support the troops around Boston.

References: Christopher Ward's "War of the Revolution"; Marcus Cunliffe's "George Washington, Man and Monument", and Richard Ketchum's "Saratoga",

Free War Record Search

1) Simply enter their name. 2) View their war record online!

