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SUBJECT INDEX

Saratoga, New York

October 17, 1777

BURGOYNE SURRENDERS AT SARATOGA!

French Aid Coming to the States?

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

"Oh Fatal Ambition"

SARATOGA, NEW YORK October 17, 1777 - A British army of nearly 7,000 surrendered today to a combined force of American [militia](#) and Continental regulars. "The fortunes of war have made me your prisoner," said British [General John Burgoyne](#) as he handed over his sword to his American counterpart, Horatio Gates. "I shall always be ready to testify that it was through no fault of your excellency," Gates replied.



Burgoyne Surrenders

Saratoga could very well buy that help.

News of the momentous British defeat spread quickly through the colonies and fueled speculation that the French government would now seriously consider entering the conflict on the American side. For months, rumors have suggested that Louis XVI needed solid proof of the strength of the revolution before he would officially commit French military aid to the cause. The British defeat at

The end for Burgoyne and his army came on the heels of a long and arduous campaign that began with a stunning British victory at Ticonderoga. Burgoyne, known in the press as "Gentleman Johnny" began his sojourn in Canada. In an attempt to link forces with British General Howe traveling north from New York, Burgoyne sailed with his army down Lake Champlain, headed for Albany. They paused only to capture the formidable American fort at Ticonderoga.

British expectations were dashed, however, in [the American countryside](#). Burgoyne's

cumbersome retinue, which included 30 carts of Burgoyne's personal possessions, and several cases of champagne, was stymied by the dense New York forests.



► [Read more about General John Burgoyne](#)

By the time Burgoyne reached Freeman's Farm near Saratoga, American patriots were less cowed by Burgoyne's haughty pronouncements demanding their surrender, than they were of general fears of having an [invading army](#) in the neighborhood.

In fact, the American militia had been fully alerted to Burgoyne's presence, and, as one observer put it, "were out in droves." By the time the two battles of Saratoga were fought, American forces led by Gates and his able field general, [Benedict Arnold](#), outnumbered Burgoyne and his army by nearly 2 to 1.

Killed in the ensuing battle was Burgoyne's second-in-command, General Simon Fraser. A [witness](#) to Fraser's death heard him cry, "Oh fatal ambition," as life seeped out of him. He may have been speaking of the whole misguided campaign.

In Paris, it can be assumed that the American ambassador to Versailles, [Benjamin Franklin](#), will act immediately on word of this victory, and once again beg Louis for French aid. If that assistance is forthcoming, it is certain that the war will continue and spread—by means of the ancient enmities between Britain and France—to the far reaches of the globe.

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