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Fort Ticonderogaand the Battle of Hubbardton

Ticonderoga: Its Importance, Strengths, and Vulnerabilities

Ticonderoga, hyperbolically dubbed the "Gibraltar of the North," is a conspicuous, blunt promontory three-quarters of a mile long jutting out of Lake Champlain's western shore. At the base of its southwest shoulder a narrow mile-long gorge carries Lake George's waters into Champlain. At its highest point, the promontory is slightly more than seventy feet above the lake's water.

From across Lake Champlain, Mount Independence, about fifty feet high, protrudes into the lake toward Ticonderoga's southwest shoulder. The quarter-mile wide passage between the headlands is the gateway between upper and lower Champlain. Once through it, the way is open by water into the lake's narrow southern end, and from there up Wood Creek to within a few miles of the Hudson River. An alternative route to the river ran westward through the gorge into Lake George and southward down that lake to a point equally near the Hudson. Two miles northwest of Ticonderoga was Mount Hope, commanding the road that ran up the gorge to Lake George. A mile northwest of the promontory Sugar Loaf, renamed Mount Defiance, rises 750 feet above the water. Except where Ticonderoga had been cleared for fortification and fields of fire, the countryside in 1777 was thickly wooded, with only an occasional farmstead settled since the last colonial war.

The French built a star-shaped fort, with bastions, on Ticonderoga in 1755. When General Jeffrey Amherst attacked Fort Carillon four years later, its garrison retreated, blowing up large portions of the works. The British repaired the fort and renamed it Fort Ticonderoga, but they allowed it to fall into disrepair after the Peace of Paris ended the Seven Years' War in 1763. The disappearance of the Anglo-French frontier reduced the post's importance, and it was manned by a very small garrison. The opening of the American Revolution restored its significance, and its capture was an early American objective. Ethan Allen and his "Green Mountain Boys," accompanied by Benedict Arnold, seized the stronghold on May 10, 1775.

The Americans invested considerable effort and treasure enlarging and strengthening the defenses, repairing the original fort, extending the "French lines" that formed an arc across the promontory, and erecting a blockhouse to cover the lines' flanks and rear. Other blockhouses,

redoubts, and breastworks defended the northern and southern slopes. A barbette battery protected Mount Hope, dominating the outlet from Lake George, the sawmills powered by the outlet, and the road that lay between the lakes. A stream and swamps protected the rear of Mount Independence. Batteries, an eight-pointed star fort, and stone breastworks comprised Ticonderoga's defensive works. A boom of heavy logs, bound together by massive chains, closed the water passage at the lake's southern end. Behind the boom lay a bridge of boats. Water batteries on both shores covered the boom and bridge. Americans disagreed about many matters concerning their northern frontier, but they were virtually unanimous in assigning an exaggerated importance to Ticonderoga; their investments testified to that opinion.

Mount Defiance's ominous bulk loomed over Fort Ticonderoga and its satellites, and Polish-born engineer Thaddeus Kosciuszko—and perhaps John Trumbull—favored fortifying it. The latter, with Generals Arnold and Anthony Wayne, climbed the height in the summer of 1776. Some believed artillery on those heights would be able to threaten the fort itself; others disagreed.

Well-placed field pieces certainly could, however, seriously threaten to cut off retreat by water. No boats could safely lie at anchor off the American works. Equally important, occupation of the mountain would afford excellent observation of all troop activity within the works. Their possession by the enemy could adversely affect the defenders' morale in a period during which conventional wisdom placed an exaggerated value on the advantage possession of higher ground afforded.

In any case, the Americans, like the British and the French before them, did not incorporate the mountain into the defenses. That decision, given the scarcity of manpower, was inevitable. There were not enough men available in 1776 to erect and man additional works, and there were too few men present during the summer of 1777 to defend the works that were included in the system, much less Mount Defiance. Regardless of whether it was Horatio Gates or Philip Schuyler who made the decision not to fortify the mountain's summit, its occupation during General Burgoyne's operations and the resultant American evacuation provided fertile ground for later partisan recrimination that all parties exploited enthusiastically.[1]

Divining Burgoyne's Intentions

The Americans were woefully ill-prepared to thwart Burgoyne at Ticonderoga. The British commander had worried while in Montreal that his orders and plans were common knowledge. American intelligence collection in the old French town was so inept, however, that if indeed street gossip had made details of the campaign's plan public property, the agents failed miserably to profit from it. As a result, American generals and politicians still shared an uncertainty about what John Burgoyne and his army would do after leaving Montreal. General George Washington believed the British were too weak to advance down the Champlain-Hudson route to Albany. He and a majority in Congress expected Burgoyne to move southward by sea to join Sir William Howe. Schuyler believed Burgoyne would reverse Lord Jeffrey Amherst's 1760 route by ascending the St. Lawrence River, crossing Lake Ontario, and descending the Mohawk to Albany.

One American, General Gates, predicted that the British would "make the entire Conquest of the State of New York the first and main Object of this ensuing Campaign." He supported this analysis with a number of reasons: French and British military history, both longer-term and

more recent; the military geography of America; the stance of the Indians and the Tories; and the availability of provisions. On the basis of his analysis, Gates noted that the Americans were too weak on the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, and he feared that Washington's main army would be drawn into New Jersey. Gates also worried, with good reason, about the security of the Hudson Highlands, and that, if his concerns were well-grounded, Howe would have access to the sea. The general wanted the Congress to know his views, and he asked President John Hancock to bring them to the delegates' attention.[2]

Gates' analysis was not perfect, but it reflected a sound knowledge of strategic facts logically examined, and was more nearly prescient than those of his fellow generals.[3]

The American Defense of Ticonderoga?

By mid-June, when Schuyler had his first concrete intelligence of Burgoyne's intentions from a captured British agent, the enemy was a few miles north of Crown Point at Bouquet River.[4] Fort Ticonderoga's new commander and the department commander now knew that Gates' analysis was correct: the British intended to retake Ticonderoga.

The fort's newest commander, Arthur St. Clair, reached his post on June 12. For the Scottish-born aristocrat and veteran of the Seven Years' War, it was not a happy occasion. On the thirteenth he wrote to General Schuyler that if the enemy attacked, "we are very ill prepared." St. Clair was being realistic. The fortifications were weaker than they had been during the previous autumn because the soldiers had burned the abatis for firewood. Stores were low, the pontoon bridge to Mount Independence was unfinished, and the garrison numbered only 2,089 infantrymen present and fit for duty, bolstered by 238 gunners.[5]

The American generals had options—every one of which would challenge their sagacity and moral courage. Because St. Clair had too few troops to man the works on both sides of Lake Champlain, James Wilkinson and General Schuyler discussed evacuating the sick, the garrison cannon, and all but 1,500 effectives to Fort George. Those men, with the light artillery, would defend the fort against a feint, but retreat if the enemy mounted a determined attack. According to Wilkinson, the general favored that idea, but contended that he could not abandon the fort without prior congressional approval.[6]

Abandoning the "Gibraltar of the North" without a fight was politically unthinkable. Yet, equally unthinkable for military reasons would be to make the garrison a forlorn hope, sacrificed to an exaggerated sense of the post's importance. The garrison had to be preserved at all costs to form a nucleus of future resistance. Between Ticonderoga and Albany there were only about 700 Continentals manning various old posts that were, during the summer of 1777, functioning as stockaded depots. If the fort's defenders failed to repel an attack, as was very likely, they must retire immediately while the retreat corridor remained open.[7]

When General Schuyler assembled St. Clair and Brigadier Generals Enoch Poor, John Paterson, and Alexis de Fermoy in a council on June 20, they faced desperate pressures and unpromising options. The department commander "requested the Council to take into consideration the state of this post, with respect to the number of troops necessary for its defence, the disposition of the troops, and mode of defence, the state of the fortifications, and the quantity of provisions that may be depended upon."

The result of those deliberations, constituting the Council's "most serious consideration,"

was ten points, delivered "clearly and unanimously of opinion." In those points the generals resolved that, although they did not have enough men to defend the entire works, they would hold Ticonderoga and Mount Independence as long as possible. But if, as was probable, they would have to evacuate one of those positions, they would concentrate on holding Mount Independence. Meanwhile, most stores would be moved to Mount Independence, and Jeduthan Baldwin's artificers would improve that post. Efforts would be made to strengthen the obstructions between lower and upper Lake Champlain, although they knew that doing so would require six weeks. If their men could not hold Mount Independence, everyone would retreat southward, employing the bateaux being collected and held in readiness. The Council concluded with the resolution to ask General Washington for reinforcements, knowing all too well that the commander-in-chief in Pennsylvania could not send them in time to repel the enemy.[8]

The Council, however, left some important questions unasked and, therefore, unresolved. How would troops driven from Ticonderoga reach Mount Independence, in the presence of an enemy possessing the former and able to interdict the floating bridge and the boom over which the men must withdraw? How could they preserve and load the bateaux, with the enemy in possession of both forts and capable of bringing the water gap between lower and upper Lake Champlain under effective fire? The generals had prepared a justification for doing what was inevitable—knowing that the inevitable would be unpalatable to General Washington and the members of the Continental Congress.

Having provided for a doomed defensive strategy, and anticipating the storm of opprobrium that would follow news that the "Gibraltar of the North" was no longer American, General Schuyler departed on June 22 to do what he could to improve logistics and plead for reinforcements. St. Clair remained at Ticonderoga to conduct the best defense he could.

Burgoyne Begins

While the commander of the American Northern Department and his subordinates wrestled with their problems, Burgoyne and his army at Crown Point prepared for what the British commanding general expected to be a major test. He attached great strategic and symbolic importance to retaking Ticonderoga. The fort blocked his route to Albany, and its hold on British perceptions rivaled that of the Americans'. The British had fought the French for possession of it during the final war for North American empire. Its earlier loss to the "Green Mountain Boys" was a bitter blow to British pride, and a bone in the throat of any commander who aspired to redeem imperial fortunes on the northern frontier. Restoring it to the empire would make heroes of Gentleman Johnny and his soldiers.

Burgoyne expected retaking the fort to be a heroic undertaking, the centerpiece of which would entail employing heavy artillery supporting siege operations. When he drafted his "Thoughts for Conducting the War from the Side of Canada," he assumed that "the enemy would be in great force at Ticonderoga." That assumption led to the decision to include heavy twelve- and twenty-pounders in the original artillery train.[9] He intended to conserve precious manpower by bombarding the Americans into submission from gunboats and land batteries. Burgoyne anticipated that the Americans valued the fort as highly as he did and would therefore fight to retain their prize. He also had a healthy respect for their ability to defend a fortified position.

On June 26—the day Burgoyne, Major General William Phillips, and Major General Friedrich von Riedesel, with their army's main column, reached Crown Point—Brigadier Simon

Fraser's advanced corps embarked toward Ticonderoga and landed at the mouth of Putnam's Creek on Lake Champlain's western side. Captain Alexander Fraser, with his Indians and Canadians, followed Otter Creek and joined the advanced corps. Gunboats followed to cover the advance parties.[10]

Because the Americans occupied both sides of the lake, Burgoyne divided his main force, posting British regiments on the west side and Germans on the east. The men were ordered to carry 100 rounds per man; if there was insufficient ammunition for that distribution, the supply would be divided equally among the units. The tents, knapsacks, blankets, provisions, and extra ammunition would be stored in the bateaux. All other baggage was to remain behind until ordered brought forward with the officers' tents and baggage. The British battalions would use seventeen boats, the Germans twenty-two. The previously-mentioned general order of the twenty-eighth directed what should be done with the baggage if it became necessary for the line regiments to move out suddenly, whether by water or land.[11]

On June 30, Burgoyne issued his most important preparatory orders: after naming the brigadiers and brigade majors for the day, and exhorting his men with the words earlier recorded ("THIS ARMY MUST NOT RETREAT"), he directed that an hour after dawn the next day, "Each Wing to form a Column of Batteaux.… The Right Wing keeping to the West Shore, the Left Wing the East…The Dragoons of Riedesel [to] form the Advanced Guard.…"[12]

The first day of July dawned clear and calm. The boats and bateaux almost covered the mile-wide passage between Crown Point and Ticonderoga. The regimental bands "contributed to make the Scene and passage extremely pleasant." The British disembarked about four miles above Ticonderoga and camped in line. The Germans, except for Lieutenant Colonel Heinrich Breymann's Jägers, which formed Fraser's reserve, and the dragoons, who guarded Burgoyne's gear, landed on the lake's eastern shore.[13] The soldiers spent the rest of the day clearing fields of fire in front of their camps and cutting roads of communication between the several brigade positions. Fraser's Corps remained at its post at Three Mile Point, a mile in advance of the British camps.

Early the next day General Phillips, with Fraser's Corps and General Hamilton's Brigade, advanced against Mount Hope, whose garrison prudently fired their works and fled to the old French lines, leaving the enemy in control of the portage to Lake George. Fraser's effort to cut off their retreat from Mount Hope failed. Phillips' men went into position less than 100 yards from the Americans, took cover, and opened fire. St. Clair believed that the British actions signaled the prelude to the hoped-for frontal assault and ordered his men to remain under cover and to hold their fire until the command to commence firing was given.

A British soldier, emboldened by the apparent American passivity, crawled toward to the American lines. James Wilkinson, whose lust for fame rivaled Benedict Arnold's, ordered a sergeant to shoot the bold Britisher. The sergeant dutifully obeyed. Assuming that his shot was the signal to open fire, the entire American line leapt to its feet and poured successive volleys in the direction of the enemy. The artillery zestfully joined in. When American officers finally restored fire discipline, the enemy had withdrawn a distance of 300 yards, leaving the sergeant's target lying on the ground. The Americans fired at least 3,000 musket balls and eight cannons at a 500-man force, killing one man and wounding two more—all at a range of but 100 yards. A burial party ventured out to dispose of the object of Wilkinson's attention, still lying uninjured and dead drunk on the field.

Other players in the day's drama also overindulged during July 2. Some Indians got drunk and ventured too close to the American lines. Lieutenant William Houghton of the 53rd Regiment received a wound trying "to bring them off;" one Indian was killed and another injured.[14] While that noisy business was in progress, von Riedesel's Germans moved to a stream behind Mount Independence, reaching there too late in the day to attack its fortifications.

Burgoyne's men spent a very busy third of July. Lieutenant Colonel Powell's Brigade replaced Hamilton's on Fraser's left at Mount Hope, and Hamilton's men returned to the main camp and prepared to advance the next morning.[15] Light artillery attached to Fraser and Powell rejoined their parent brigades. Burgoyne shifted von Gall's Brigade of von Riedesel's command to Fraser's former position at Three Mile Point on the Ticonderoga side of the lake, giving von Riedesel, in exchange, Alexander Fraser's Canadians, Indians, and Provincials; presumably, the exchange gave the baron a light infantry capability. The hospital remained at the point.[16]

Burgoyne cherished the common British article of faith that the rebels' ranks contained many men who were secretly loyal to their old allegiance. Eager to facilitate their joining him in their liberation, he included this injunction in the orders for July 3:

It is known that there are many men in the rebel Army who are well effected to the Cause of the King. Some have been compelled into the Service, others engaged only with a view of joining the King's Troops. The Savages are therefore cautioned against firing upon any single men or small parties that may be endeavouring to come over, and the Army in general will consider these men in a very different light from common Deserters, and treat them with all possible encouragement; and should it unfortunately happen that any Soldier of this Army should fall into the hands of the Enemy, it will be his Duty to let this order be known to the Enemy's Army.[17]

The effectiveness of this order is not reflected in the records of either army. But men did desert from the Northern Department, especially militiamen; British sources refer to accepting additions to Jessup's and Peters' Loyalist units. Much of the local population was indeed Tory in sympathies, and the general's policy probably did encourage men enrolled in the New York militia to join him.

During July 3, the armies engaged in a fitful artillery duel whose only significant result was the further depletion of the American magazine.

During the fourth, Burgoyne moved his headquarters from his flagship *Royal George* to high ground behind Fraser's Corps, where German dragoons provided security.[18] More important, either Burgoyne or his artillery chief, Phillips, directed Lieutenant William Twiss to reconnoiter Mount Defiance, which a detail of light infantry occupied during the night. Twiss reported that the mountain had "the entire command of the works and buildings both of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, at a distance of about 1,400 yards from the latter, that the ground might be leveled so as to receive cannon, and that the road to convey them, though difficult, might be made practicable in as little as twenty-four hours."[19]

The engineer's estimates of the distances were too low. From the crest of Mount Defiance to the masonry fort is about 1,760 yards and to Mount Independence approximately 2,100 yards, an error of 360 and 600 yards, respectively. Because the maximum effective range of even the heaviest pieces did not exceed about 1,200 yards, cannon emplaced upon the summit could not seriously threaten the fortifications.[20] Burgoyne knew, however, that even if Twiss' estimates

were correct, the artillery threat would not be to the fort, but to the stronghold's communications, making it strategically untenable. "The hill also commanded, in reverse," he explained, "the bridge and communication, saw the exact situation of the vessels, nor could the enemy, during the day, make any material movement or preparation, without being discovered, and having their numbers counted."[21]

British artificers made a road up the mountain during July 4. Some 400 men detailed from the regiments constructed a battery for "light twenty-four pounders, and medium twelves" during the next day, working with such dispatch that the weapons could have been in place by July 6.[22]

The American (Non-)Defense

General St. Clair experienced a transitory period of optimism when 900 militiamen arrived. That they taxed his meager supplies tempered that brief glimmer of hope. Still, he continued to expect an assault on some part of his fortifications, in which case the reinforcements might be decisive. He could detect, however, no activity that revealed the point from which a massed attack might come.

During the morning of July 5, St. Clair noticed movement on Mount Defiance that dashed any optimism he still harbored. Standing with the omnipresent James Wilkinson, he watched the enemy's artillery initiative threaten his avenue of retreat and the survival of his garrison. In response, he quoted the eloquent lines from Joseph Addison's tragedy "Cato" that celebrated the Roman Republicans' last stand for popular liberty: "Tis not in mortals to command success. But we'll do more Sempronius, we'll deserve it."

The Scotsman needed all the stoicism he could summon. Saving his troops demanded immediate action. Calling a council of his commanders, he solicited opinions; they unanimously agreed to retreat as soon as darkness fell.[23]

The schooners *Revenge* and *Liberty*, the sloop *Enterprise*, and the galleys *Gates* and *Trumbull*, survivors of Arnold's 1776 lake fleet, lay at anchor in line behind the boom and bridge. Behind them were more than 200 bateaux and other craft that would transport invalids and stores up the lake to Skenesborough. The effectives were to rendezvous on the lake's eastern side and march by a road that ran behind Mount Independence southward to Hubbardton, thence to Castleton and west to Skenesborough. Ticonderoga's defenders maintained a continuous cannonade to cover the noise of preparations for withdrawal and to divert the enemy's attention.

But while it may have drowned the sounds of preparation, the firing also alerted the British that something was afoot with their American cousins. By the next morning, Fraser learned from deserters that the retreat was under way. General Roche de Fermoy's imprudent firing of the works on Mount Independence also announced to Burgoyne that his prey was preparing to escape.

Fraser's headquarters were on the west side of the lake, a mile and a half from the bridge to Independence. After learning from the deserters that the retreat had begun, he hurried to the bridge, which he found partially razed, with cannon aimed along its length. Four gunners "manned" the pieces, with orders to fire upon the enemy when they tried to cross the bridge, and then to retreat. But the artillerymen had raised their morale by attacking some spirits, and by the time Fraser's men approached they were too drunk to do anything but sleep. Compounding the farce, an Indian accidentally fired one of the cannon, which was elevated so high that the only damage was to the advanced party's nerves.

And so Ticonderoga's commandant and garrison fled. Burgoyne's army, with unexpected ease, had retaken the "Gibraltar of the North."

Recriminations

Ticonderoga's abandonment shocked military and political leaders unprepared for such a bloodless defeat. Ignorance of conditions in the North and of British intentions combined with political factionalism to nourish confusion and recrimination. No one was immune to the infection.

Even George Washington, for all his moral courage, was dismayed. The most recent intelligence from Schuyler's department had reached him at Middlebrook, New Jersey, on June 26. The report merely confirmed news that Burgoyne was indeed advancing. The commander-in-chief even believed that the British threat to Ticonderoga might be a feint to cover other, more dangerous objectives. Washington now realized that it was Horatio Gates who had been correct about Burgoyne's intentions, and that the British commander had already overcome his first major obstacle to descending the Hudson and uniting with Sir William Howe's command. In Washington's case, the fort's loss, while it shocked him, did not lead to paralysis. He moved his Grand Army closer to the Hudson Highlands, alerted the posts on the lower Hudson to be vigilant in expecting Howe to move upriver to cooperate with the army from Canada, and called upon the eastern states to send militia to reinforce Schuyler.[24]

Others reacted less moderately. Delegates to the Continental Congress and many soldiers believed that Ticonderoga's fall could have been due only to incompetence, cowardice, or treachery, and they indulged in that ancient blood sport of scapegoating. St. Clair and Schuyler were the obvious candidates for sacrifice.

St. Clair received censure from men who argued that "honor" required him to defend his post until surrounded and forced to capitulate. In the event, St. Clair's was in fact a brave decision, and one that conformed to the resolutions of General Schuyler's council of June 20: that the garrison should defend Ticonderoga and its dependencies as long as possible before retreating, consistent with preserving the garrison and stores.

Although the decision was consistent with his own council's resolution, Schuyler himself was quick to condemn St. Clair's decision to evacuate Ticonderoga. His anger stemmed from the fact that St. Clair issued his evacuation decision without explicit orders or the department commander's approval. St. Clair, of course, had no immediate access to Schuyler's headquarters. An effort to communicate with Schuyler to solicit his approval for a withdrawal to save his men would have required, under the best of circumstances, four or five days. Such a luxury of time St. Clair did not possess. Once the guns on Mount Defiance interdicted the retreat route (another day at most) Ticonderoga and Mount Independence would have been isolated, their garrisons taken prisoner.[25]

Members of Washington's staff also excoriated St. Clair for abandoning a citadel in which so much hope and so many resources had been invested. Alexander Hamilton, whose opinions of his own military talents were not modest, wrote to John Jay on July 13. "The stroke at Ticonderoga is heavy, unexpected and unaccountable," seethed the future Secretary of the Treasury. "If the place was untenable why was it not discovered to be so before the Continent has been put to such amazing expence [sic] in furnishing it with means of defence. If it was not untenable, what, in the name of common sense could have induced the evacuation? I wish to

suspend my judgment on the matter; but certainly present appearances speak to either the most abandoned cowardice or treachery."[26] Hamilton was not criticizing Schuyler, his future father-in-law; St. Clair was his target. Benedict Arnold, never loath to fault colleagues in disfavor, also denounced St. Clair, declaring that "some person must be sacrificed to an injured country." Even some members of St. Clair's command joined the chorus and hinted at cowardice or treachery.

The Continental Congress, where the people's tribunes carried the burdens of government, was the theater in which ultimate judgment played out. Here, Schuyler's congressional foes were unsparing in their condemnation, some stooping to speculate about that general's loyalty. He, in turn, blamed that home of egalitarian malcontent, New England, averring that if its states had complied with requests for reinforcements, Ticonderoga would still be in American hands. (Schuyler conveniently ignored the fact that most of the men New England raised for the Northern Department had, at Washington's direction, been diverted to the lower Hudson and New Jersey.) Of the reinforcements Schuyler did receive, his disparagement was vehement. But he assured General Washington on July 18 that he would soldier on, in spite of the "malice of my enemies."[27] Having regained command of the Northern Department, the general refused to share the responsibility for its failures.

Throughout July, while Burgoyne's army advanced and Schuyler, in spite of his querulous correspondence, did as much as an American general could do under prevailing conditions, Congress wrestled with problems inherent in maintaining civil control without the benefit of adequate machinery of government. One of its earliest and more constructive acts was to respond affirmatively to Washington's July 10 recommendation that it direct Benedict Arnold to collect militia from New England and New York to reinforce Schuyler. On the same day, however, Arnold—furious at well-founded congressional suspicions of financial malfeasance and having been passed over for promotion during the previous February—submitted his resignation from the Continental Army.[28]

The delegates heard Washington's letter read during the eleventh of July session and, officially ignorant of Arnold's letter of resignation, ordered him to report to Washington's headquarters, where on July 12 he heard Washington reiterate his wishes that Arnold join Schuyler.[29] Arnold asked Congress to suspend his resignation, and he joined Schuyler's forces in the North.

Castigated on every hand and abandoned by men who should have defended him, St. Clair asked Washington to convene a court-martial, and that Arnold, who had vehemently censured him, be excluded from sitting on the court.[30] Cleared in 1778, St. Clair continued to serve in subordinate assignments throughout the war.[31] Schuyler, the other target of vituperation, also sought vindication. A court-martial, with General Benjamin Lincoln presiding, convened at Fredericksburg, New York, on October 1, 1778. Found not guilty of "Neglect of Duty," Schuyler resigned from the Army and served in Congress.[32] Neither man merited the opprobrium he suffered for the loss of Ticonderoga.

The Americans Withdraw…

One Scot, St. Clair, left Ticonderoga to face censure; to another, Simon Fraser, fell the honor of sending an express messenger to his commander shortly after dawn on July 6, reporting

that the citadel was again British. His brigade, supported by German grenadiers and light infantry, immediately took up the pursuit of the American effectives as they retreated toward Hubbardton in the Hampshire Grants. General Burgoyne, "knowing how safely I could trust that officer's conduct," concentrated on marshaling his forces to exploit the initiative gained by his first victory.[33]

Leaving the British 62nd Regiment at Mount Independence and the German Regiment Prinz Friedrich [Regiment Erb Prinz] at Ticonderoga under the command of Brigadier James Hamilton, Burgoyne took the rest of his army and its flotilla up the southern end of the lake to Skenesborough.[34]

Dazed, weary, grumbling Americans sweated and cursed through the oppressive heat along the rutted military trace that served as a road to Hubbardton, where it joined an older, less-primitive road leading to Castleton. Maintaining march discipline, always difficult during a retreat, was made especially so by green, three-month militia regiments, two of which had arrived at Ticonderoga only two days before the evacuation. The inexperienced and frightened men, who wanted more than anything else to get as far away as quickly as their legs would carry them, repeatedly broke ranks. By constantly riding along the column St. Clair and his staff succeeded in imposing a degree of order. In that state, two Continental and four militia regiments proceeded, with Colonel Ebenezer Francis' 11th Massachusetts forming the rearguard.[35]

When about three miles from Hubbardton, St. Clair received an exaggerated report that a combined loyalist-Indian party occupied the settlement. He pressed on and found that the raiders, about fifty in number, had left in the direction of Castleton with several captives. The women and children had fled, leaving the village deserted. The raiders' presence posed a problem that he could not resolve until he knew more than he did when he reached Hubbardton. He realized that the raiders had not come from Ticonderoga; perhaps they came from farther north. If so, were they part of an advanced corps, with regular troops behind them? That would create a situation that the Americans were not prepared to deal with, one possibly more dangerous than a pursuit from Ticonderoga. For more than an hour St. Clair waited for Colonel Francis to bring up the rearguard. But stragglers slowed Francis' march, and he halted near where St. Clair had learned about the raid on Hubbardton.[36]

The general might have delayed longer, waiting for Francis to join the column, but he could not restrain the militiamen. He moved toward small-but-important Castleton, where roads leading to Connecticut and the Hudson met. Prudently concerned to keep his force from fragmenting, he left Colonel Nathan Hale's 2nd New Hampshire Regiment and Colonel Seth Warner's battalion of "Green Mountain Boys," about one-third of his force, under the latter's command, with orders to await and take command of the rearguard when it arrived, and then to rejoin the main column.[37]

Francis arrived with his rearguard and more than 100 stragglers in mid-afternoon. Excluding the stragglers, Warner now commanded about 953 officers and men, of whom only about 520 were in good condition. Of those, only his own battalion was fit to march immediately: the New Hampshiremen were too tired, after a day's march that had covered twenty-four miles, to move on; the rearguard was less fatigued, but it too needed rest; and the stragglers included sick, feeble, and demoralized men who had reached the limit of endurance. The colonel could not hope to start toward Castleton until after the men had rested and eaten, which would require the rest of the day.[38]

There was another important reason for staying where he was until morning: his assignment was to protect the rear of the main column, delay pursuit and, if necessary, engage the enemy long enough to give the main column time either to escape or to assume an effective defensive posture. Athwart the military road along which pursuit from Ticonderoga would come and six miles from Castleton, the site he occupied was suitable for both defense and bivouac. Of the options available that evening, remaining at Hubbardton was the best.[39]

Having decided to spend the night, Warner arrayed his composite force, deploying the 2nd New Hampshire and the stragglers along Sucker Brook and astride the road from Mount Independence. The 11th Massachusetts moved up Zion Hill slightly northward to a position on a ridge dominating the road from Crown Point. He posted his own battalion on the slope behind the New Hampshiremen to function as a tactical reserve. The Americans were in position to react to a hostile advance along either of the two possible routes.

The key to the position was John Sellick's farm at the intersection of the road from Mount Independence and the one to Castleton. Sellick's was a typical frontier farm, with a field fence of logs and felled trees, stumps, and brush. Warner's and Hale's men spent the late afternoon and what energy they could marshal improving the field's northern and western boundaries. Concerned about Indian and loyalist raiders, Warner posted pickets around his position's perimeter. Because he did not expect the enemy's pursuit column to march so rapidly as to pose an immediate threat, he did not post any patrols on the road from Mount Independence—a fateful decision, as events would prove. The exhausted Americans, certain that they had done what they could to secure their bivouac, bedded down for a chilly, uncomfortable night.

About two miles south of the rearguard, Colonel Benjamin Bellows and two militia regiments encamped along the road. Other troops were scattered between them and Castleton, which the main body occupied. St. Clair's column was in what was apparently a reasonably secure state. The fifty raiders had vacated the settlement as his force approached. The three-unit rearguard occupied a tenable position. Bellows' militia and the troops along the road should provide communications between the rearguard and the main force.

...But Not Far Enough

Seth Warner's men were unaware, as they slept that night, that Fraser's Advanced Corps was only three miles away. Three miles behind them, von Riedesel's infantry, Jägers, and grenadiers camped. Their combined strength was approximately 1,950 men: 850 British and 1,100 Germans. With an energy that gave the lie to fond American illusions about European lack of initiative, the combined German and British column started toward Hubbardton at three o'clock in the morning. As Fraser approached the sleeping camp, Indian and provincial scouts reconnoitered along the road and through the woods to test the American perimeter security. The 24th, Fraser's own regiment with Major Robert Grant commanding, followed by Lord Balcarres' light infantry and Major John Dyke Acland's grenadiers, advanced along the road. Brigadier Fraser accompanied the light infantry, the best position from which to control his column.[40]

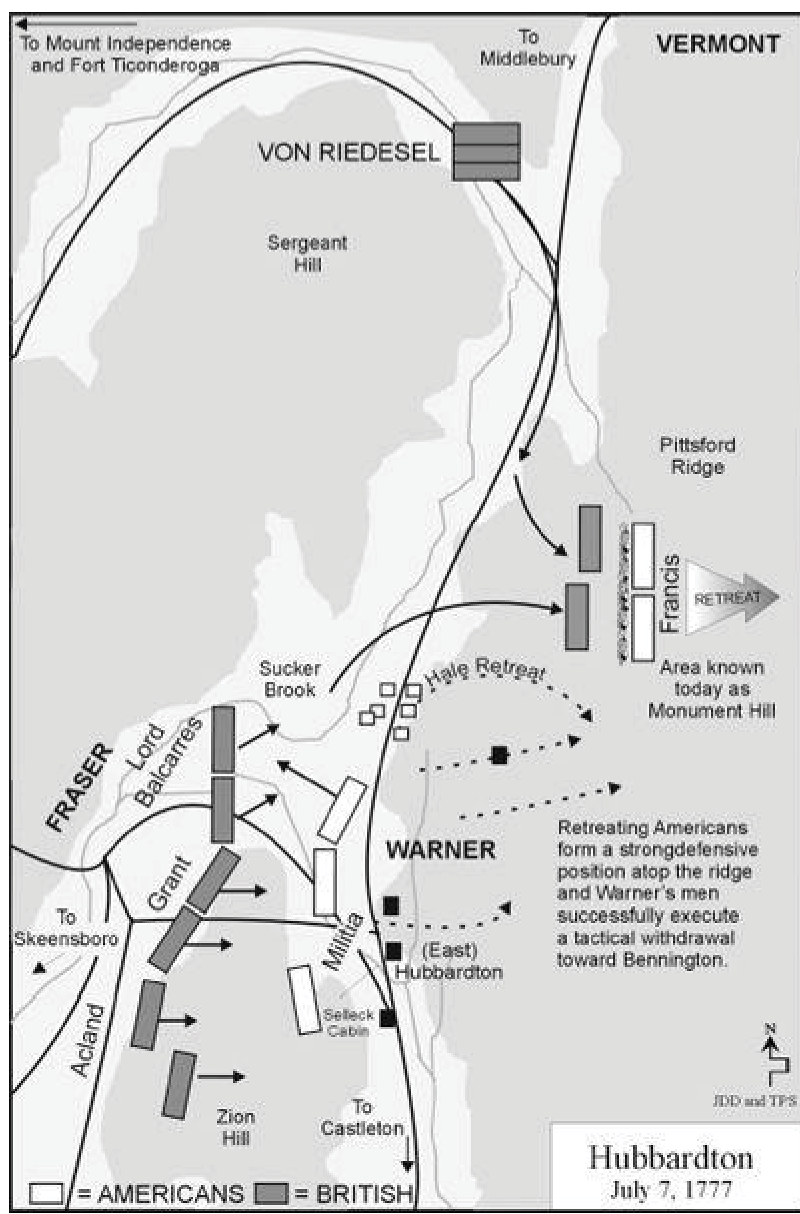
The brigadier surveyed the broad valley below from a knob west of the road. A mile and a half away, rugged, stony Zion Hill dominated the scene. As he watched, musket fire signaled contact between the 24th Regiment's vanguard and American pickets. The regiment's lead company deployed from column into line and into the underbrush on the fringe of Sellick's field.

Major Grant opened the attack, and the entire column engaged.

The light infantry company obliqued to the left of the battalion companies toward what would later be called Monument Hill. From that point, the regiment would sweep the valley below. But the field's key to success was Zion Hill, possession of which would seal the American escape route. Fraser sent the necessary orders to Lord Balcarres and Major Acland, sent couriers to General von Riedesel, and hurried to join the light infantry as it moved to the left of Grant's battalion companies.[41]

The men of Nathan Hale's 2nd New Hampshire had gathered in small groups around their fires preparing and eating their breakfast when the 24th Regiment attacked, turning the bivouac into a churning mass of panicked confusion. A few men rallied and returned fire from behind felled trees, but the majority fled into the forest; their commander became a prisoner. Major Grant's six companies mopped up the futile resistance and pursued those in flight through the woods for about 300 yards, when a volley from Warner's Green Mountain Battalion stopped them in their tracks and killed Major Grant. Meeting stout resistance, and with their commanding officer down, the men of the 24th took cover and returned a desultory fire.[42]

Colonel Warner had intended to march for Castleton after first light, and his men may have been forming when the New Hampshiremen came under attack. The intensity of the fire told him that it was too late to move out. Saving St. Clair's main column required immediate, determined resistance by the rearguard. And so Warner rushed his men into the woods and across the military road to stop the British before they cleared Sucker Run. Their almost point-blank volley into the battalion company's ranks was the Americans' first act of effective resistance.[43]



To Mount Independence and Fort Ticonderoga
To Middlebury
VERMONT
VON RIEDESEL
Sergeant Hill
Pittsford Ridge
Francis
RETREAT
Area known today as Monument Hill
Sucker Brook
Hale Retreat
FRASER
Lord Balcarres
WARNER
Retreating Americans form a strongdefensive position atop the ridge and Warner's men successfully execute a tactical withdrawal toward Bennington.
Grant
To Skeensboro
Militia
(East) Hubbardton
Selleck Cabin
Acland
Zion Hill
To Castleton
N
JDD and TPS
Hubbardton
July 7, 1777
= AMERICANS
= BRITISH

With Warner at Sellick's cabin was Colonel Ebenezer Francis, who had sent his adjutant, Captain Moses Greenleaf, to form the 11th Massachusetts, preparatory to marching to Castleton. When he and Warner heard the increasing crescendo of battle he dashed to join his regiment, formed it in column, ordered the men to load and prime their muskets, and marched them southward until they sighted the British light infantry approaching the crest of Monument Hill. The 11th deployed to the right, formed a line, double-timed toward the enemy, and opened a withering fire. Balcarres' lead elements, the light infantry of the 29th and 34th regiments, reeled back with heavy losses, and the entire battalion retreated to the base of the hill.[44]

Francis, momentarily gratified by the local success of having driven the enemy off the hill, regrouped along the crest behind a stone fence. Warner reformed his battalion to Francis' left across the military road, setting the stage for the battle's second phase.

Surprises on Both Sides

Lord Balcarres and his officers rallied his light infantry and advanced slowly up the hill from which Francis had driven them. The 24th moved through the woods immediately to the earl's right. Out of sight of the troops on Monument Hill, Major John Acland's battalion of grenadiers approached Zion Hill in a move intended to turn the American left and interdict an American retreat via the road to Castleton. Two of Acland's battalion's companies deployed to make contact with the 24th Regiment and prevent an attack on its flank. The move brought them into the open field between Zion Hill and the military road.

The erupting fire alerted Warner to the fact that the grenadiers intended to turn his flank by occupying the hill.[45] The American commander immediately deployed part of his Green Mountain Battalion to Zion Hill, which until then had not figured in his defensive plans. The Vermonters resorted to a ruse that outraged the grenadiers: they clubbed their muskets, i.e., shouldered them in the reverse with the butts up, a universally recognized signal of the intention to surrender, and when they stepped within range of their enemy, presented their pieces and opened fire.

Warner's ploy, deviously clever though it was, failed to halt the grenadiers, who slung their muskets and clawed their way up Zion's rocky slope, grabbing bushes and trees as they pulled themselves to the summit. During the fight for Zion Hill a musket ball struck the grenadier commander in the thigh. A small guard remained with him while the rest of his men rushed down the reverse slope toward Warner's left flank and the road to Castleton.

It was at this time in the battle that the American commander executed a maneuver worthy of a professional officer schooled in 18th-century tactics.[46] Warner, his left flank dangerously hanging in the air, refused it by curving it into the rear and anchoring it in the corner of a log fence on the east side of the Castleton road south of John Sellick's house. He now occupied a very strong position that the grenadiers could reach only by traversing open fields, exposed to fire from behind cover. The skill with which Warner controlled his men—retreating in the presence of an attacking enemy, halting when he gained favorable ground, refusing his flank, and then resuming the fight—was a remarkable achievement.

Remarkable also were the events unfolding on the American right, where Colonel Francis faced the 24th Regiment and Balcarres' light infantry. Fraser was confident that, once his troops gained Monument Hill's crest, disciplined British skill with the bayonet would prevail. The dense woods made maintaining a properly-dressed line impossible, but the officers kept their

men advancing under effective control, firing and reloading as they drew near the American line.

Francis now courageously resorted to an unexpected tactic: he led his men from behind their cover in a counterattack that confronted their enemies in the woods halfway down the hill, where they fired at close range at individual targets. Francis made himself conspicuous as he encouraged his men, and a ball shattered his right arm. The counterattack caught the British completely by surprise, and in spite of their officers' desperate efforts, the light infantrymen recoiled and staggered down the slope, carrying the 24th on their right with them. Lord Balcarres received a superficial shoulder wound while trying to rally his men.[47]

Simon Fraser's well-conceived twin offensive had failed. Warner and Francis had executed difficult and dangerous maneuvers that would have challenged better-trained and more-experienced soldiers. They and their men displayed a disciplined courage that was rarely, if ever, surpassed during the War for Independence. In what only could have come as a grave shock to Fraser, he found himself in battle not with a retreating, inexperienced enemy, but with a foe that seemed stronger near the end of the fight than before the engagement began—an opponent encouraged by unexpected success against brave, professionally-led Regulars. The brigadier's last hope lay with Freiherr von Riedesel's Germans. The aide Fraser sent back found von Riedesel with his advance party on the same knob from which Fraser had first reconnoitered the field.

When the German general surveyed the scene of action, the American lines inscribed a half-moon in which Warner's Vermonters occupied an arc from a point across the Castleton road from Sellick's cabin, thence in front of the house to the end of a stone wall; Francis' 11th Massachusetts manned the rest of the line, a position to which he had skillfully withdrawn after repelling the second light infantry attack. Studying the scene through his Fernglass, von Riedesel watched the distant puffs of smoke and small human figures that told the experienced combat veteran that the Americans were adopting Fraser's turning movement in reverse by driving back his left.[48]

His reaction to what he saw was as swift as his assessment of the tactical situation. He ordered Captain Carl von Geyso's Jäger company to double-time to support Balcarres' light infantry. Captain Maximillian Christoph Ludwig von Schottelius led his grenadier company farther left into the battle line, where he could turn southward along Monument Hill's crest and fall upon the American right and rear. For added psychological effect, the Jägers' band of hautboys and Waldhorns played their riflemen into battle. The general sent a courier back to Oberstlieutenant [Colonel] Heinrich von Breymann with orders to bring up the more than 900 men of the German main column.[49]

Fraser, apparently unaware that the Germans were going into action, made another desperate bid for victory. He knew that the grenadiers from Zion Hill had gained the road to Castleton and were moving northward against the American left flank. He therefore ordered the 24th Regiment and the light infantry to fix bayonets and charge up Monument Hill for the third time. This time, he ordered that neither enemy fire nor difficult terrain were to prevent them from engaging the Americans, using their bayonets against a foe against whom that weapon was almost always effective.[50]

But before the tired, much-mauled soldiers could mount their charge, an alien sound reached American and British ears. To the accompaniment of their band, lusty voices sang old German hymns—probably "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" and possibly "Herr Gott, dich loben

wir, regier." The Brunswickers of von Riedesel had arrived. When they stepped within effective range of Francis' line, the Germans fired volleys by platoons, advancing slowly in close order as they overlapped the American right. The 11th Massachusetts fell back in disorder onto the plateau to the right side of the road to Castleton, where their colonel rallied them behind a log fence.[51]

Across the plateau and out of range of the Massachusetts muskets, the combined British and German regiments and the Jägers and light infantrymen dressed ranks, preparatory for a charge. Hoping a preemptive strike would abort that charge, Francis led his men back across the plateau in a desperate gamble that cost him his life. At the same time German grenadiers advanced along the Castleton Road toward the American right. Overwhelmed, the brave men of the 11th Massachusetts finally broke and fled into the woods.[52] Seth Warner, fighting on the American left and facing British grenadiers advancing from the south, watched as his right wing vanished into thin air. Realizing the battle was over, he ordered the Vermonters to fall back. The men evaporated into the wilderness, with directions to reform at Rutland.

By 8:45 in the morning the Battle of Hubbardton was over. The vicious, closely-fought, and bloody fight, which had lasted slightly more than two hours, served as a testament to the bravery of both Americans and Europeans. It also bore witness to the especially effective leadership of Seth Warner and Ebenezer Francis.