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MOUNT INDEPENDENCE

VERMONT




Mount Independence



In 1776, General Philip Schuyler identified this peninsula together with the old French fort across the narrows as the critical choke point for preventing the British from invading from the north. From July 1776 to July 1777, thousands of Americans garrisoned this site and Fort Ticonderoga. Just as construction of new artillery batteries was beginning here, news arrived that the continental congress declared independence. On July 28, 1776, Colonel Arthur St. Clair, the American brigade commander, read the Declaration of Independence to the assembled soldiers. After that day, East Point or Rattlesnake Hill, as this strategic height of land had been called, became known as Mount Independence. In July 1777, Burgoyne's British army forced the American troops to abandon this position. After the American evacuation, the British Army garrisoned the mount and continued work on the buildings and fortifications until November 1777 following the defeat of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga. The British rearguard burned all of the structures, abandoned the site and retreated to Canada.

Mount Independence is designated a National Historic Landmark. The site is covered by several miles of hiking trails that wind past the remnants of batteries, blockhouses, hospital, barracks, and other archaeological remnants of this once-bustling fort complex. In the Visitor Center Museum, the story of military life atop the Mount is told in exhibits featuring many of the artifacts recovered during archaeological digs.

The four trails pass through nearly four hundred acres of pasture and woodlands with vistas overlooking Lake Champlain and the surrounding countryside. Each of the trails is color-coded, but if you don't pay careful attention, you can easily miss a turn and head-off in the wrong direction.



Exploring Mount Independence

As you explore the site, try to imagine a very different landscape during the fateful years 1776-1777. Today, Mount Independence is covered with trees and empty of structures of human habitation. During the American Revolution, the mount was a bare promontory on which all the trees had been cut. For sixteen months, it was alive with activity. Thousands of soldiers constructed fortifications and buildings with desperate haste. They lived in tents, huts and barracks, coped with miserable weather and disease, and prepared to meet the enemy. During the Revolutionary War, hundreds of soldiers from America, Britain and Germany died here from combat wounds, disease, poor diet and exposure. These dead lie in unmarked graves. Please remember their sacrifice by respecting the site. Do not search for artifacts or degrade the site. Enjoy the historical and natural beauty of this place. Leave it in the same condition for future visitors. Four marked trails lead you to the primary sites. A brochure is available to help you learn about the history of the site.

The Fort on Mount Independence – In the summer of 1776, atop this rugged hill along the shore of Lake Champlain, American troops began building this fort complex to guard against a British attack from Canada. The troops named it Mount Independence in honor of the Declaration of Independence.

Unlike Fort Ticonderoga across the lake, the fort mainly consisted of huts and houses. A large shore battery and a horseshoe-shaped battery were completed. A picket fort was under construction.



As expected, the British did lead a counterattack in 1776. But thanks to delays caused by a fleet of naval ships under the command of Benedict Arnold and the combined impressive sight of Mount

Independence and Fort Ticonderoga, British General Guy Carleton retreated to Canada, abandoning an attempted invasion that year. The very next year, 1777, the opposite would occur.

Many American troops went home the winter of 1776-1777, reducing the force from 12,000 to just 2,500. Those remaining spent a horrible winter at Mount Independence. Many were sickly and a number froze to death.

In the spring of 1777, a few troops returned but not enough to properly garrison the forts. On July 5th, they evacuated the site when British General John Burgoyne's forces numbering about 8,000 began a penetration of the area.

The evacuation was triggered by the astonishing placement of cannon on Mount Defiance. Fort Ticonderoga and Mount Independence were supposedly easy targets from the top of Mount Defiance.

As the Americans retreated, the British pursued them down the old military road, but were halted at Hubbard ton.



The Red Trail — Several trails at Mount Independence connect well-preserved remains of the Revolutionary War fortification. The trails pass through nearly four hundred acres of pasture and woodlands with vistas overlooking Lake Champlain and the surrounding countryside. Each of the trails are color-coded, but if you don't pay careful attention, you can easily get off on the wrong colored trail. For a short visit, the red trail, which is just a little over a half-mile, is recommended.

The Red Trail passes a line of remains that indicate the foundation site of a hospital. Begun in April 1777, the hospital had a capacity of about 600. It was a two-floor, frame building of sawed planks, rather than blocks or logs. All of the hospital patients were evacuated during the American retreat on July 5 and 6, 1777, with the exception of four who were too sick to be moved.

The trail also passes a well-preserved, three-sided stone foundation, possibly an officer's quarters. Near the middle of the trail, there is a strategic lookout from a ledge that towers over Lake Champlain. The lookout is almost directly across from Mount Defiance. The LaChute River from Lake George and Fort Ticonderoga are clearly visible in the distance.

At the base of Mount Defiance is Route 22 and train tracks that are used by Amtrak trains from New York City to Montreal. The area is very quiet, except for the [whistle of an occasional passing train](#).



On the return from the lookout, you will pass a gravestone that is somewhat curious. The date on the stone is 1760, but historians believe it was placed in the 1800's.

Enroute to Fort Ticonderoga, NY



Norton's Farm. Behind the farm, you can see the area where the old military road once crossed Lake Champlain. Fort Ticonderoga is on the right; Mount Defiance is in the distance; to the left is Mount Independence.

Carillon Battlefield. The battlefield is where the French and the British battled for control of Fort Ticonderoga during the French and Indian War. Most of the markers and memorials in the battlefield pertain to the French and Indian War but some pertain to the Revolutionary War.



Through this place passed General Henry Knox in the Winter of 1775 -1776 to deliver to General George Washington at Cambridge the train of artillery from Fort Ticonderoga used to force the British Army to evacuate Boston.

Erected by the State of New York during the sesquential of the American Revolution.

This marker has a map on it that shows the route taken by General Knox when he carried artillery from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston. The route includes Fort George, Fort Edward, Saratoga, Halfmoon, Albany, Kinderhook, Claverack, Nobletown and finally Cambridge.

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