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Battle of Saratoga

September 19- October 17, 1777

The Battle of Saratoga, and the minor skirmishes associated with it, were a crucial part to the War of Independence. The nearly month long campaign pitted American troops, under the command of Horatio Gates, against British troops, under the command of General John Burgoyne. The end result shifted the momentum of the war towards the American side and convinced the French to declare war on the British Empire.

In early 1777, prior to Saratoga, the British were finalizing plans for an invasion of upper New York (and subsequently Albany) from Canada. The second phase to the invasion would call for General Henry Clinton to lead his army up the Hudson, and meet Burgoyne in Albany.¹ General Burgoyne, the mastermind behind the plan, was given command of the invasion force.² The British met early success in their push through the Lake Champlain Valley, capturing Fort Ticonderoga.³ The British would control the Fort for the remainder of the war.

¹ "The American Revolution-Battle of Saratoga," *TheAmericanRevolution.org*, accessed February 17, 2010, http://www.theamericanrevolution.org/battles/bat_sara.asp

² "The Battle of Saratoga", *Battle1777.Saratoga.org*, accessed February 17, 2010, <http://battle1777.saratoga.org/>

³ Ibid.,

The first battle of Saratoga took place at the abandoned farm of loyalist John Freeman.⁴ The main body of General Burgoyne's army was attacked by an American contingent. The battle lasted for three hours without any side gaining ground. It wasn't until Hessian reinforcements arrived that the Americans decide to retreat. Although the British were able to secure the farm, their attempts to move towards Albany were blocked.⁵

The next engagement between the British and Americans occurred on October 7th. The British attempted to attack the American left flank but were consistently repelled by American columns and their line began to break.⁶ Benedict Arnold led two separate cavalry charges during the battle. First he led an attack on the British center, which was controlled by German troops. His attack forced the Germans to retreat. His second attack came as the main British force had retreated back to their positions around Freemans Farm. Arnold's attack was made against a German entrenchment. The Americans continued to pressure the British entrenched near the farm and forced them to withdraw after dark.⁷

The defeat of the British by the Americans at Saratoga was a major turning point in the American Revolution. Along with shifting the momentum, the American victory prompted France to declare war on the British and enter in on the side of the Americans. The effect of the battle on the British was substantial. Their loss "signaled to the European powers that the rebels were capable of defeating the English on their own."⁸ This gave the nations of Europe the perception that the British Empire were now in a weaker and more vulnerable state. This is one reason why the French entered into the war, hoping to capitalize on the situation.

⁴ Ibid.,

⁵ Ibid.,

⁶ "The American Revolution-Battle of Saratoga"

⁷ Ibid.,

⁸ The Battle of Saratoga-Archiving Early America, "*EarlyAmerica.com*", accessed February 17, 2010, <http://www.earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/maps/saratogamap/>

