

A BGES Revolutionary War Field University Program:
Saratoga: America's Decisive Victory
With Scott Patchan
September 11-14, 2024; from Malta, New York

In October 1777, events in North America took a decisive turn with the defeat and surrender of British forces under the command of Gen. Johnny Burgoyne at Saratoga. This capitulation of a major British army emboldened the French king, Louis XVI, to expand his war with the British to the North American continent for the first time since the ill-fated French and Indian War. King Louis XVI's alliance delivered land, naval, and economic resources essential to the colonists' efforts. The investment paid huge dividends four years later when a second major British army under Gen. Earl Cornwallis surrendered to combined American and French forces under the command of Gen. George Washington at Yorktown. We know the outcome, but how did the miracle at Saratoga unfold? Join us and find out.

The tour will focus on Burgoyne's strategy and decisions as the initially successful campaign begins with British victory at Fort Ticonderoga and Hubbardton. A variety of American commanders from a wide background contributed to the delaying and ultimately defeating the British at Saratoga. Rugged men such as Ebenezer Francis, Seth Warner, and John Stark fought at places like Hubbardton and Bennington, slowly wearing down the British army even in the face of defeat. Meanwhile, Horatio Gates was assembling an army at Saratoga containing men such as Benedict Arnold and Daniel Morgan with his Shenandoah Valley riflemen. Controversies emerged aplenty but, in the end, this disparate force managed to achieve one of the most crucial victories of the war.

On February 17, 2021, Len Riedel, Scott Patchan, and Gary Ecelbarger had an animated discussion about the Saratoga Campaign. Click [here](#) to watch that show.

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Wednesday, September 11, 2024

7:30 PM. Meet in the lobby of the Fairfield Inn in Malta, New York, to pick up your nametag and maps. You and your cohort will enjoy Scott's introductory discussion of the factors leading to Burgoyne's campaign and Lord Howe's response. You will get profiles of the key personalities and the critical questions that would bring the contending armies to this Hudson River showdown.

We will finish in time for you to have dinner on your own. The hotel is also on your own.

Thursday, September 12, 2024

8 AM. After arriving in Canada, Burgoyne moved with alacrity, much to the distress of the commanding general, Sir Guy Carlton. This morning's travel lands us at Crown Point a few miles above Fort Ticonderoga. Burgoyne's arrival here announced that this theater would be contended. Although today it is a ruin, Crown Point was a magnificent 18th-century fortress built to house the British Army during the French and Indian War. Perhaps Burgoyne thought the site would provide protection as he plotted his operations more than 20 years later.

Crown Point provides a grand location to talk about the preliminaries and how Lake Champlain had played in military operations to date. After the discussion we will move, like Burgoyne did, against Fort Ticonderoga, which at this point was commanded by Gen. Arthur St. Clair. Of the many fortifications in the Western Hemisphere, none is more impressive than Fort Ti. Here, during the French and Indian War, French forces stunned the British, inflicting a bloody defeat.

Fort Ticonderoga had a key vulnerability, that is its surrounding elevated terrain. As impressive as the fort was, Mounts Defiance and Independence controlled the fort, and it could not be held without also controlling these heights. You will see both.

This will wrap our day. Lunch is included, but dinner and the hotel are on your own.

Friday, September 13, 2024

8 AM. Burgoyne's early successes drove the Americans from Ticonderoga in two wings south. A naval flotilla headed south down Lake Champlain to East Bay, and a column marched toward Vermont (known then as the New Hampshire Grants). The rebels were under the command of Col. Ebenezer Francis, and they were pursued by British forces under the very capable Gen. Simon Fraser.

We will pick up that pursuit to Hubbardton, a lovely and unlikely field of conflict marked by pristine viewsheds that make it easier to see the fighting in your mind's eye. Hubbardton was a tactical defeat for the Americans, but it did buy time for other forces, which would bloody the British, to assemble.

From Hubbardton, we will skedaddle to Skenesborough Harbor at White Hall, where a ramshackle American fleet was defeated. The harbor worked well for Burgoyne, and he would occupy the site as a supply depot. Burgoyne made an important mistake here in that the occupation duties slowed his pursuit, allowing the Americans time to catch their breaths and plan for the next phase of operations.

As Burgoyne pushed south, we will talk about a brief action at Fort Anne and then continue onward to Fort Edward. Here we will visit the grave and discuss the tragic story of Jane McCrea. Her murder at the hands of the British and their Native American allies angered and inspired the colonists to renew their resistance throughout the North American continent.

We will finish the day at Fort George. Lunch is included, but dinner and the hotel are on your own.

Saturday, September 14, 2024

8 AM. Our last day will bring us to the same culmination that the British experienced at Saratoga. Revolutionary War battles are not of the same scale as many later wars, but a more significant field cannot be found anywhere in America. The first stop is at Bennington, where we will have followed the route of German mercenaries under the command of Col. Frederich von Baum. While looking for food, they ran into Americans under the command of Gen. John Stark and were routed—a great success for the Americans who were showing a stiffening spine.

Finally, we will reach Saratoga, where we will spend the remainder of our day. Here two independent but mutually supportive operations took place: the battle of Freeman’s Farm on September 19 and the battle of Bemis Heights on October 7. In the former fight, General Gates fended off a British effort to encircle Bemis Heights, and in the later, perhaps the most tragic figure of the American Revolution, Benedict Arnold, in combination with Gen. Daniel Morgan, delivered a decisive assault that breached the British lines and resulted in a decisive American victory that compelled Burgoyne’s surrender.

After visiting the surrender site, we will return to our hotel—our mission completed. This is perhaps the most important study of the Revolutionary War period.

Lunch is included, but if you stay the night, dinner and the hotel are on your own.

About the Faculty

Scott Patchan is a graduate of James Madison University and the author of eight books’ his latest is [*George Washington in the French and Indian War*](#). He authored six featured battle campaigns for *Blue and Gray Magazine’s* “The General’s Tour” and countless articles for other magazines and journals. Scott is a much sought-after tour guide for both Civil War and Revolutionary War sites from New York to Georgia. He brings a “boots-on-the-ground” approach to studying combat and strives to bring his students to seldom-seen spots that shed an illuminating light on events as they unfolded. People love his energetic and dynamic style. Scott is a member of the Board of Directors for the Blue and Gray Education Society.

Hotel Information

The headquarters hotel is the Fairfield Inn and Suites, 101 Saratoga Village Blvd., Malta, New York. Ask for the Blue and Gray Education block. The rate is \$159 plus tax. Cutoff date for the block is August 11, 2024. Call 518-899-6900 for reservations.

Transportation

The servicing airport is Albany, New York. It is approximately 20 miles north to Malta. Malta is easily accessed by I-87. Amtrak has a train that stops in Saratoga Springs, which is 9 miles from Malta.

Recommended Reading

You will be provided with maps upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program. These books are available online.

Douglas R. Cubbison: [*Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign: His Papers*](#)

Robert Dunkerly: [*An Explorer's Guide America's Revolutionary War*](#)

Michael P. Gabriel: [*The Battle of Bennington: Soldiers and Civilians*](#)

Richard Ketchum: [*Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War*](#)

Eric Schnitzer and Don Troiani: [*Don Trolani's Campaign to Saratoga—1777: The Turning Point of the Revolutionary War in Paintings, Artifacts, and Historical Narrative*](#)

Bruce M. Venter: [*The Battle of Hubbardton: The Rear Guard Action that Saved America*](#)

Kevin Weddle: [*The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution*](#)

Registration Form
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Name (s):

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes three lunches, maps, the academic program, support of a professional historian, a tour director, and transportation. We also will provide snacks and cold bottled water.

_____ Registration \$795

_____ Current BGES member \$725

_____ I am not a member but would like to join so that I can get the member's rate or I am a member who is past due to renew. Please accept my donation of \$ _____ (must be \$75 or more, which is tax deductible).

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$300 per person plus full payment for any memberships. Total enclosed is \$ _____.

_____ I will pay the balance due before the event.

_____ Check enclosed.

Charge my (circle one) MC VISA AMEXP Discover \$ _____

Exp: _____ CVV: _____

Signature:

Mail to BGES Seminars, PO Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531, or fax credit cards to 434-432-0596. You may also register online at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.

