

SARATOGA STAFF RIDE



NOTE CARDS

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Preface

Welcome to the second edition of the USMA History Department Saratoga Staff Ride Cards. These cards were originally developed to aid instruction in the history of the military art here at West Point. We make these cards available to support staff rides and historical tours of the historic Revolutionary War battlefield at Saratoga by local military organizations.

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Please note that this version of the cards *does not currently include any maps or illustrations*. We hope to add them to future editions. If you require those maps and illustrations please contact the Staff Ride Coordinator, Department of History, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY 10998. (914) 938-4003. The Staff Ride Coordinator can also assist you in planning your staff ride and direct you to the best preliminary study materials.

In planning and executing your staff ride, we strongly encourage you to follow the guidelines contained in William G. Robertson's *The Staff Ride*, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army), 1987. [CMH Pub 70-21, Supt. of Docs. no.: D114.2:r43] This document is also available on-line at: <http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/outreach/staffrides/how2.html>

Visitor's Center

Introduction

Scheme Of Maneuver/Time Schedule

Visitor's Center

Wright's Loop

Freeman's farm overlook

Bemis Heights

Nielson Farm

River fortification

Chatfield farm - reconnaissance/ counter-recon fight

Barber Wheatfield

Balcarre's Redoubt

Breyman's Redoubt

Great Redoubt

Safety Brief

Watch for bikers

Walk at all times .

Stay off of walls and cannons.

No smoking.

Remove all trash.

**What was warfare like at the tactical level in 1777?
for Infantry?**

Brown Bess

characteristics

smooth-bore musket

3'8" long

14" bayonet

1 oz projectile

limitations

short range 70m - width of deadly ground that must be crossed in order to close with enemy

inaccuracy

2-3 rpm

smoke

wind blows powder from pan,

broken flints

damp powder - daily inspections by company commanders

1 in 12 shots misfires

30 round basic load

firing drill

12 step drill

misfires, multiple loading, etc.

employment

battle largely fought in European fashion

unaimed, platoon volley fire at close range

linear tactics to maximize firepower

bayonet - 1 in 3 American troops

Pennsylvania rifle (not in museum)

light infantry

types

employment

characteristics

long range accuracy

limitations

slow rate of fire

no bayonet

compare to European rifle of Jägers

greased patch rather than hammer

higher rate of fire

longer

point out spontoon for Non-commissioned officers by exit

For Cavalry?

almost non-existent at Saratoga, but mention anyway

pistol

saber/sword

employment

For Artillery?

Siege artillery (inside between 3lber and entrance to theater)

point of out mortar and siege guns

Artillery (outside by the howitzer and field guns)

characteristics

shell weigh

smoothbore

rate of fire about same as musket

range and projectiles for 6lb

ball 1000m

grape 400m

canister 400m

howitzer and mortar only guns that fire exploding shells

limitations

smoke

accuracy, no BOT

hired teamsters to move guns

tactical employment

cannon

3lb

field guns

howitzer

Burgoyne - how was your artillery organized and equipped?

138 guns in British force

16 24lbs

2 light 24lb

10 heavy 12lb

8 med 12lb

1 light 12lb

26 light 6lb

8 6in howitzers

6 5 1/2 in mortars

46 smaller mortars

organized into reserve batteries for each wing

need average 4 horses each to make mobile

most left behind at Ticonderoga, only 39 brought south to Saratoga

What were the tactics of the day?

How did you command and control your forces?

What was a soldier's life like? (inside by three uniforms display)

life consumed by musket drill, marching, and sustainment tasks

Continental: Tell us about yourself!

16-50 years

best paid soldier in world at \$6 2/3 dollars/month, but rarely paid, rampant

inflation, paper money

pay = 1 days wage for laborer

furnished most of his own clothing

ample rations on paper, but rarely delivered

American Militia Man: Tell us about yourself!

universal obligation

varies by state

varied weapons, uniforms, state of training

elected officers

Tory Militia Man: Tell us about yourself!

British Soldier: Tell us about yourself!

long service

aged 16-40

drawn from dregs and underclass

harsh discipline

experienced in North America

uniformed for European warfare, but modified in Canada

Hessian Soldier: Tell us about yourself!

Why were you here?

George's manpower shortage

small German state's run rent-an-army

rushed overseas

How are you equipped and what was your life like?

poorly equipped especially. footwear and uniforms

uniforms not adapted to America

dragoons dismounted for lack of horses, but still wear long boots, spurs,

leather breeches, long gauntlets, plumed hats, and drag sabers

Burgoyne's QM: What was military medicine like in that day?

primitive

homeopathic remedies
blood letting
amputation
no antiseptics & anesthesia
widespread disease

Terrain model

point out major features
roads
forests
next destination and topic

Browse and buy time

Wright's Loop

Distribute Freeman's Farm Map

Evaluate Burgoyne's options after Bennington? What was his rationale for the course of action he chose?

- retreat - unacceptable

- move down east side of river, cross at Albany

 - rejected because of fear of more difficult river crossing operation at Albany

- cross river, move down west side:

 - easier crossing, but severs LOC with Canada

- What were the implications of that decision?

 - now fully committed to reaching Albany before Winter

What did the British know their enemy?

expects main American force to block main road alongside river

1 Sep American deserter tells Burgoyne 14000 Americans await him to South

British foraging party blunders into American ambush, lose 14 men

The big question is where?

intelligence gap

On 18 Sep von Riedesel's troops reached this position and saw at least four American regiments at Bemis and on flood plain.

look at American position

How would you attack it?

American deserter also warns of American positions vic. Bemis Heights

Next destination and topic

Freeman's Farm Overlook

What options did Burgoyne have now?

Where is the American flank? What are their inland dispositions?

Burgoyne: What did you decide?

is this an attack, a reconnaissance in force, or a movement to contact?

**Emphasize this ground is not part of the battlefield. Close to route taken by Fraser's column.
Tree lines, shapes and size of clearings different. Road net not the same.**

Farm has 10-12 acres of cleared ground

Freeman

settled area in 1776

150 acres 50-60 cleared, method leaves stumps etc.

9 kids

loyalist, brother a patriot

12 year old son in Loyalist unit at time

farm devastated, later burnt by Americans , no compensation except 200 acres in

Canada for his service to crown

whole family except three kids die of small pox next winter

What is the tactical significance of the ground before you?

How did the British organize themselves for advance?

Left - von Riedesel, baggage and artillery along river. 4 German regiments, 47th British regiment with trains (3160 men)

Center - MG James Hamilton with 1840 British ((9,20,21 62 regiments) and 6x 6lbers

Right - Brig. Gen. Simon Fraser 2830 (Prussia light infantry, genadiers, 24th regiment) and 4x 3lbers, 4x 6lbers

small parties of Indians and loyalists cover flank

Burgoyne moves with center

significance of honor of right of line determine positioning

columns mutually supporting but out of sight of each other

Burgoyne: Describe the progress of your attack up to the time you made contact.

19 Sep thick fog and rain that morning

begin movement about 0800

movement through woods and along trails in column

Center column reaches Freeman's farm

1200hrs British halt vicinity of the farm. Intended to give Fraser time to come on line with other columns. All to resume advance upon hearing a signal cannon fired.

Pickets sent forward to provide security

mission not given to a single unit - implication

men selected for detail, guard mount, then posted as individual sentinels at regular interval

also reaction force formed in same manner

Gates: What do you know about the British advance?

has good intelligence on British location and disposition from scouts and deserters

Evaluate the options available to Gates at this juncture

Gates: What was your original intent?

plan is to entrench and await British attack. No faith in ability of militia to fight open battle. Legacy of Long Island and other recent battles.

Arnold: What did you think of Gates' plan?

wants to advance, find, and fight British in woods. Can't let British and their artillery get set up to attack American positions.

Arnold convinces Gates. Leads out his troops

Morgan, Learned&Poor: Where are your troops?

Left - Morgan's troops (500)

Center - Learned's Brigade

Right - Poor's Brigades moves in column towards farm

Morgan: You made the initial contact. Describe what happened.

1230 contact between Morgan's riflemen and British pickets. Americans penetrate pickets line and blunder into main body. American riflemen recoil back to friendly wood line.

Morgan's riflemen extract high toll of British officers. Without Indians, no real countermeasure except the few German light troops.

Poor: What happened next?

Poor's Brigade arrives and lines stabilize.

Hamilton: How did you and your troops respond?

Hour long firefight before British push Americans back.

British regiments deployed as follows

21st on right

62nd in center

20th on left

9th in reserve

Arnold & Learned: What do you do?

Arnold leads Learned's brigade in attempt to exploit gap between right and center British columns. Drawn into main fight.

4 hour seesaw across field

British outnumbered 2x1 - 8200 British troops (half Germans vs 7-10,000

Americans with about 5,000 actually engaged

loss and recapture of British artillery throughout fight

Phillips: What are you doing?

critical moment Phillips got four more cannon up, used grape to disrupt

Americans reforming in tree line, keeps them beyond musket range

Riedesel: What are you and your troops up to while this is going on?

Riedesel hears fighting but gets no information from Burgoyne, send liaison officer who returns with orders to secure trains with hasty defense and march Regiment plus to guns. Emerged from woods on flank of Poor's brigade. Came on line and attacked at a run. Problem with fratricide.

Arnold what are you doing in the meantime?

von Riedesel's attack comes when Arnold not on the field. Americans essentially leaderless at crucial moment.

He had gone back to Bemis to collect more troops.

Gates fears over commitment of American troops.

Gates: why did you withhold reinforcements?

How does this engagement end?

About dusk American's nearly out of ammunition and hard pressed. Retreat back to Bemis
. No pursuit.

Burgoyne: What were the results of this battle?

British believed they were outnumbered three to one. Artillery key to British success.
intense fight

1/3 of British force lost without compensation

245 KIA, 444 WIA British casualties =689

3 of 4 center regiments take better than 50% casualties.

Hard luck 24th Regiment

62 Regiment left with 60 effectives of about 275

one British artillery battery from 48 to 12 effectives

British troops slept in field that night, eventually will build Balcarre's Redoubt on site

Gates: What condition was your army in after this battle?

American 65 KIA, 218 WIA, 38 MIA = 321

American troops exhausted and nearly out of ammo, but British don't know

What were your possible course of action?

Gates believes Burgoyne killed

Arnold: What did you want to do?

planned to resume attack next day

Next morning:

heavy fog next morning accentuates fears on both sides

both armies send details out to bury dead and collect wounded.

Participant comments on battle:

British officer Thomas Anbury, 24th Regiment, in his journal “The courage and obstinacy with which the Americans fought were the astonishment of everyone, and we now become fully convinced they are not the contemptible enemy we had hitherto imagined them...”

Anbury “I am fearful the real advantages resulting from this hard fought battle will rest on that of the Americans, our army being so much weakened by this engagement as not to be of sufficient strength to venture forth and improve the victory which may, in the end, put a stop to our intended expedition; the only apparent benefit gained is that we kept possession of the ground where the engagement began.”

Dearborn’s diary veteran Continental Army officer, MAJ commanding Continental light infantry attached to Morgan- “on this day has been fought one of the greatest battles that ever was fought in America and I trust we have convinced the British butchers that the cowardly Yankees can and when there is a call for it will, fight.”

Next destination and topic

Nielson Farm (Bemis Heights)

Issue Map

Who was Nielson?

a Sgt. in Albany militia fights in battle

his house is the only structure remaining from time of battle

tell walkers to take a peak inside

What is the tactical significance of this piece of ground?

What about the dominating terrain to the West?

@1500m away, within heavy artillery range

eventually incorporated into American line

Gates: How and why did you chose this position?

Purpose - defend landward side of river positions

selected by Gate's engineer Kosciuszko

issue of foreign officers

about 9,000 troops

Describe the position

18th century field fortifications

influence of Vauban

construction techniques

log walls and trench

gabion

cheaux de frise

rampart

redoubts

manpower and resource intensive to build and maintain

not a continuous line, many gaps, point out positions in white on map

Gate's headquarters and supply dump centrally located

position strengthened after 19 Sep . Note positions in black on map

22 guns in position. Most oriented on river, only four face west

American logistics drawn from Albany via road. About 30mi shorter than Burgoyne's lines

What do you think of the siting of his position?

Given a similar mission, how would you best defend this ground?

Given the conditions of 1777, was this an assailable position?

How would you assault it today?

Arnold & Gates: How were you two getting along after Freeman's Farm?

Gates' report to Congress on Freeman's farm slighted Arnold's role in the battle,

Arnold confronts Gates on 21 Sep.

Arnold relieved, now excess general with nothing to do

How would you have dealt with Arnold?

Next destination and topic

River Fortifications

Does this ground alter your assessment of Gates's position?

Gates: what was the purpose of this position?

Task - prevent movement south along river and road

This is Gates' main effort throughout the battle

most direct route for Burgoyne

secures Gate's line of retreat

How is it defended?

Manned by 3 bdes

Nixon's Brigade half astride road, half on bluffs

Paterson's and Glover's on line tied into Poor's

What problems does this position pose for British attackers?

For the American defenders?

Now that they've seen it from both enemy and friendly sides, what do you think of it?

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

Would you attack it? How?

Next destination and topic

Chatfield Farm

What are Burgoyne's options after Freeman's Farm?

Burgoyne: What do you decide and why?

Burgoyne opts to wait for Clinton's attack
strengthen and improve his positions
builds three redoubts
sends several messengers to Clinton saying he'll be without rations after 22 Oct

What were the implications of this period of relative inactivity?

Changing numbers
American militia streams in
Gates reorganized command, strengthening his positions on the flood plain, now two bdes
2 bdes operate against Br LOCs
1 Bde on east side of Hudson to block escape
Burgoyne's QM: How did this affect your logistical situation?
British have trouble finding food. Go on reduced rations. 1 lb meat and 1 bread
British army has trouble with securing work parties, finding forage etc.
strains Gates logistics

Most of the remaining Indians leave in large numbers as situation stabilizes. No plunder. Burgoyne loses the benefit of their forage and intelligence work.

Loyalists and Canadians also leave in large numbers.

Meanwhile: 18 SEP American brigade sized raid on British at Ticonderoga takes fort and destroys supplies etc. Briefly cuts Burgoyne off - DEEP BATTLE

What is the tactical significance of this piece of ground?

American position 2/3 of mile away not visible

middle ravine as linear obstacle

Morgan & Dearborn: What went on here?

How did the opposing armies provide for their reconnaissance and security needs during this lull?

How were pickets organized and operated?

British kept on edge, little rest, worn down.

Anbury after Freeman's farm "beyond the ground where we defeated our enemy, all is hostile and dangerous in an alarming degree"

nightly raids and firefights. British believe it is a deliberate American plan to disrupt their rest and work.

Wolves eating dead keep British awake and at REDCON I all night for a few nights. Feared to be a American deception plan, until reconnaissance finds out truth

after a night of drinking, several militiamen decided to capture a British picket not far from here. Dressed as officers, these men surround, surprise and capture group of British troops.

One night American moved 3lb cannon so close to Balcarres Redoubt that its wadding strikes the redoubt's walls when cannon opened fire next morning

Next destination and topic

Barber's Wheatfield

Issue Map

If they were denied reconnaissance, what British know?

They are outnumbered

No news of other invasion forces

Very little intelligence about American position

sustainment situation grim

supplies would be exhausted 22 Oct

winter coming

What were their options then?

Burgoyne: What did you propose to do?

4 Oct Council of war Burgoyne wanted to secure trains with small force - 800 men and envelop American left. dissuaded by lack of terrain and enemy disposition intelligence, belief 4 days required to envelope would expose trains to attack

Riedesel and Fraser: What did you think of Burgoyne's idea?

5 OCT Council of War Riedesel and Fraser recommend withdrawal to secure position to await Clinton.

Burgoyne: What did you eventually decide?

would not countenance retreat. Decides to mount reconnaissance next day to determine whether American left was assailable. If it were he would attack that very day. If not, he would fall back to Batten Hill on the 11th.

What happened here?

Execution of Burgoyne's reconnaissance:

1500 man force with 2 12lb, 6 6lb, 2 howitzers

all best British officers move with column

last rum issue 1030 move out thereafter somewhere between 1100-1200

Late departure allows withdrawal under cover of night.

British drive Americans pickets from Barber's wheatfield.

The British halted on northern end of wheatfield why?

forms on line and rests. Line about 1500 m long from wood line on east to hill of west

Balcarres: where are you and your troops?

24th regiment, Grenadier battalion, and most British artillery on British left on small hilltop.

von Riedesel: where are you and your troops?

in center with some of his artillery

Fraser: where are you and your troops?

Light infantry on right

Foraging party goes to collect unharvested wheat

Burgoyne and officers climb to roof of farm house to look ahead and discuss next move

Gates: How did you respond to this threat?

See opportunity and launches counterstroke.

1.5 hours later, American attack strikes British left.

Morgan, Learned&Poor: What were your roles in this attack?

Left - Morgan to high ground

flanks Br on east and strikes LI, who give way

Center - Brig. Gen. Ebenezer Learned's brigade

assaults British center.

Right - Brig. Gen. Enoch Poor's brigade

about 1430hrs Cilly's NH troops of Poor's Brigade strike and rout Br Gren Bn under MAJ Awkland. Took three charges into grapeshot Awkland wounded and spared by Gate's aid, MAJ Wilkenson. Sent back to Gates, spends rest of day debating colonist's cause.

American attack drives in both British flanks

Gates: Where were you while all this is going on?

remains at Bemis.

Was that the best place for him to be?

Who's coordinating this attack then?

Without orders, Arnold rides up and takes control.

What do you think of Arnold's initiative and insubordination?

TenBoek: What role did you and your troops play?

3000 NY militia under Brig. Gen. Ten Broeck follows

British waiver then routed by Ten Broeck's militia as it strikes the British left.

Unplanned attack

Fraser, Balcarres & Burgoyne: How do you respond to this threat?

Fraser attempts to rally 24th regiment as rearguard and shot in process.

Timothy Murphy, PA rifleman under Morgan hits Fraser and Burgoyne's ADC with 3 shots at 300 yds. Marker. Some British say this precipitated retreat.

Balcarres and Burgoyne rally Br troops at redoubts.

Ferocious American pursuit forces British back to redoubts

Whole fight takes about 30 minutes

14,000 American troops, 9,000 engaged, 150 casualties

British 198 KIA, 232 WIA, 443 MIA = 873

Next destination and topic

Balcarres Redoubt

What is the tactical significance of this piece of ground?

Balcarres: Tell us about your position here.

named after Maj. Alexander Lindsay, 6th Earl of Balcarres, commander of British Light Infantry Battalion.

Purpose - blocks possible avenue of approach toward British trains on river plain below Great Redoubt.

Construction

technically not a redoubt

brushwood and log construction, 12 ft high

cleared fields of fire out to 250m

2 cannon

What do you think of the siting of his position?

Given a similar mission, how would you best defend this ground?

Learned & Poor: How did you end up here? How did you attack this position?

between 1500-1600hrs American troops pursuing British withdrawing from Barber's Wheatfield reach area

axis of each assault slips farther to the west into gap between Balcarres and Breyman's redoubts. Unintentionally finds a seam.

American officers have little command and control at this point

Arnold: How did you wind up here? What did you do?

Arnold organizes and leads 3 separate assaults, all without success

Arnold thought to be mad, blood lust up

How would you assault it today?

Next destination and topic

Breyman's Redoubt

von Breymann: Tell us about your position here.

named after Col. Heinrich Christoph Breyman commander of Brunswick Grenadier Battalion. Nasty reputation. Sabers one and shoots another of his soldiers when they try to run in the fight.

Purpose - blocks possible avenue of approach toward British trains on river plain below Great Redoubt. Protects flank of Balcarres

Construction

technically not a redoubt

log palisade

200m long

200 defenders

Canadian cabins

Are this position and Balcarres mutually supporting?

What do you think of the siting of his position?

Given a similar mission, how would you best defend this ground?

How would you assault it today?

Learned& Poor: How did you end up here? How did you attack this position?

Arnold: How did you wind up here? What did you do?

Arnold attempts to slip to northwest flank of Balcarres,
encounters Canadian cabins
repulsed in first assault then takes them
with 30 troops slips in while Learned, Poor and large number of militia assault front

Prussian troops - put yourself in their shoes

hear fighting in wheatfield
hear fighting at Balcarres
sudden attack from two directions late in day

Breyman: What happened to you during this attack? fraggd

Prussian: What happened next?

break and run back to Great Redoubt

Arnold: What happened to you during this attack?

wounded in leg unavailable to exploit success

What can we learn from Arnold's leadership in this engagement?

Learned& Poor: What were your options and what did you chose to do after carrying this position?

No pursuit, getting dark, American troops disorganized and exhausted

It was Learned's intention to withdraw to Bemis Heights

Gates: What did you think of this plan?

orders redoubt be held, despite

Burgoyne: What were the implications of the loss of these position?

Note the difficulty of organized withdrawal to great redoubt

Why not abandon Balcarres?

Next destination and topic

Great Redoubt

What is the tactical significance of this piece of ground?

ravine

domination of flood plain below

Burgoyne: How and why did you chose this position?

Gates:

Why did you chose not to attack this position?

What options did you have after your defeat on 7 Oct?

Burgoyne: Why did you chose as you did?

2100 9 OCT Burgoyne abandons Great Redoubt leaving 500 sick and wounded as well as large amount of stores

refuse along retreat route. 12lb cannon found buried.

Gates: How did your react to this development?

Gates sends 1300 Mass militia to block Burgoyne's retreat at Saratoga

10 OCT Gates main body closed in on Burgoyne. Americans begin bombardment.

What is the Convention? How was it arrived at?

1000 14 OCT Burgoyne seeks terms

at 15 OCT cease fire 6,000 British versus 20,000 Americans

17 OCT Convention

repudiated by Congress

What does this tell us about negotiating capitulations?

Convention Army Soldier: Can you tell us what happened next?

British enlisted POWS for remained of war

British officer paroles and exchanges

So who should get credit for the American victory? The British loss?

So what is the legacy of this Battle?

For Revolution?

foreign recognition of the US

16 Feb 78 Louis XVI told of victory, next day recognized US

raised American morale

shook British confidence

secured Hudson and northern colonies

catapults Gates to great prominence

West Point Commander

commander Army in South later in the war

Arnold feels slighted in aftermath, sews seeds of his later treason 1781

For American military thought?

For the Regular vs militia debate?

As soldiers, leaders and warfighters, what are the major lesson's you can take away from this staff ride?

Questions?

Suggested Role Playing Assignments

American	British
General George Washington	Lieutenant General John Burgoyne
General Horatio Gates	General Sir Henry Clinton
General Benedict Arnold	Brigadier General Simon Fraser
Colonel Daniel Morgan	Brigadier General James Hamilton
Colonel Ebenezer Learned	Major General William Phillips
General Enoch Poor	General, the Baron, Adolf von Riedesel
Colonel Ten Broeck	Major Alexander Lindsey, 6th Earl of Balcarres
Major Henry Dearborn	The British soldier
Miss Jane McCrae	The Native American
The militia man	The Tory militia man
The Continental Soldier	Lieutenant Colonel Heinz Christoph von Breyman
	Baroness von Riedesel
	Convention Army soldier
	Hessian soldier
	Burgoyne's quartermaster

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