The Battle of Saratoga (Freeman’s Farm)

Date: Friday, September 19, 1777

Weather: 52`F, cloudy

Location: Saratoga County, New York

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Great Britain | The US Colonies |
| Belligerents | Brunswick\_wolfenbuttel, Great Britain, Hesse-Hanau | United States |
| Commanders | General John Burgoyne | Benedict Arnold |
| Casualties | Force: 7200Killed: 140Wounded 370Captured: 390 | Force: 9000Killed: 60Wounded: 260Captured: 0 |

**Overview:**

In December General Burgoyne concerted with the British ministry a plan for the campaign of 1777. A large force under his command was to go to Albany by way of Lakes Champlain and George, while another body, under Sir Henry Clinton, advanced up the Hudson. Simultaneously, Colonel Barry St. Leger was to make a diversion, by way of Oswego, on the Mohawk river. In pursuance of this plan, Burgoyne, in June began his advance with one of the best-equipped armies that had ever left the shores of England.

Proceeding up Lake Champlain, he easily forced the evacuation of Crown Point, Ticonderoga, and Fort Anne. But, instead of availing himself of the water-carriage of Lake George, at the head of which there was a direct road to Fort Edward, he advanced upon that work by land, consuming three weeks in cutting a road through the woods and building bridges over swamps. This gave time for Schuyler to gather the yeomanry together, and for Washington to re-enforce that general with troops, under Morgan, from the southern department. Burgoyne also lost valuable time and received a fatal check by his disastrous attack on Bennington.

At length, finding his progress stopped by the entrenchments of Gates at Bemus's heights, nine miles south of Saratoga (Schuylerville), he endeavored to extricate himself from his perilous position by fighting.

**Battle:**

About 4 miles from Saratoga, on the afternoon of the 19th September, a sharp encounter took place between part of the English right wing, under Burgoyne himself, and a strong body of the enemy, under Gates and Arnold.

The conflict lasted till sunset. The British remained masters of the field. But the loss on each side was nearly equal (from 500 to 600 men) and the spirits of the Americans were greatly raised by having withstood the best regular troops of the English army.

Burgoyne now halted again, and strengthened his position by field works and redoubts. And the Americans also improved their defenses. The two armies remained nearly within cannon-shot of each other for a considerable time, during which Burgoyne was anxiously looking for intelligence of the promised expedition from New York, which, according to the original plan, ought by this time to have been approaching Albany from the south.

At last, a messenger from Clinton made his way with great difficulty, to Burgoyne's camp and brought the information that Clinton was on his way up the Hudson to attack the American forts which barred the passage up that river to Albany.

Burgoyne had overestimated his resources and in the very beginning of October found difficulty and distress pressing him hard. The Indians and Canadians began to desert him. While, on the other hand, Gate's army was continually reinforced by fresh bodies of the militia.

An expeditionary force was detached by the Americans, which made a bold, though unsuccessful, attempt to retake Ticonderoga. And finding the number and spirit of the enemy to increase daily, and his own stores of provision to diminish, Burgoyne determined on attacking the Americans in front of him, and by dislodging them from their position, to gain the means of moving upon Albany, or at least of relieving his troops from the straitened position in which they were cooped up.

Burgoyne's force was now reduced to less than 6,000 men. The right of his camp was on some high ground a little to the west of the river, thence his entrenchments extended along the lower ground to the bank of the Hudson, the line of their front being nearly at a right angle with the course of the stream.

The lines were fortified with redoubts and field-works, and on a height on the flank of the extreme right a strong redoubt was reared, and entrenchments, in a horse-shoe form, thrown up. The Hessians, under Colonel Breyman, were stationed here, forming a flank defense to Burgoyne's main army. The numerical force of the Americans was now greater than the British, even in regular troops, and the numbers of the militia and volunteers which had joined Gates and Arnold were greater still.

General Lincoln, with 2,000 New England troops, had reached the American camp on the 29th of September. Gates gave him the command of the right wing, and took in person the command of the left wing, which was composed of two brigades under Generals Poor and Leonard, of Colonel Morgan's rifle corps, and part of the fresh New England Militia.

The whole of the American lines had been ably fortified under the direction of the celebrated Polish General Kosciusko, who was now serving as a volunteer in Gates' army. The right of the American position, that is to say, the part of it nearest to the river, was too strong to be assailed with any prospect of success and Burgoyne therefore determined to endeavor to force their left.

For this purpose he formed a column of 1,500 regular troops, with two twelve-pounders, two howitzers, and six six-pounders. He headed this in person, having Generals Phillips, Reidesel, and Frazer under him. The enemy's force immediately in front of his lines was so strong that he dared not weaken the troops who guarded them, by detaching any more to strengthen his column of attack.