

PROPERTY OF LIBRARY 3  
DIVISION OF CULTURAL  
RESOURCES, NARO

SARA.067 c.2  
CRBIC = 000787  
374/135738

PRELIMINARY DOCUMENTARY REPORT

ON

BENEDICT ARNOLD AT SARATOGA

by

John F. Luzader  
Park Historian  
Saratoga National Historical Park  
Stillwater, New York

October 27, 1958

PRELIMINARY DOCUMENTARY REPORT

ON

BENEDICT ARNOLD AT SARATOGA

by

John F. Luzader  
Park Historian  
Saratoga National Historical Park  
Stillwater, New York

October 27, 1958

The most dramatic member of the personae dramatis of Saratoga was Benedict Arnold. Contemporary and later writers agree that his wild ride onto the field in the midst of the Second Battle was an exciting event, and his wounding in the climatic assault on the Breymann Redoubt is commemorated by the unique and famous "boot monument". Interpretations of his role vary from attributing the salvation of the American Army to him to naming him, with Schuyler, the architect of Colonial victory in the north.

Visitor interest, piqued by Kenneth Roberts' Rabble at Arms, the boot monument, and the tragic drama of his life, frequently leads to detailed discussions of his role at Saratoga. In an effort to provide an accurate interpretation of that role in the defeat of General Burgoyne, the writer has undertaken the study that comprises this report.

The justification for submitting this report lies in the importance of Arnold to the park story and in the hope that the study and its review by members of the Regional and Washington Office staffs will result in an accurate lucid interpretation of Arnold's contribution to American victory at Saratoga.

## Prelude to the Battles

Benedict Arnold brought the American camp at Bemis Heights a reputation for military brilliance that was built on his participation in Ethan Allen's famous capture of Ticonderoga, the epic Kennebec Expedition, the Canadian campaign, Valcour Island, and the relief of Fort Stanwix. It was true that doubts had been cast upon his financial integrity, that he had displayed a certain contempt for civil authority, and that his personal dealings with other officers were sometimes unpleasant, especially if they disagreed with him. He had a deserved reputation for courage and a personal dynamism that made him a natural leader. His vanity, ambition, and financial irresponsibility were known to some, but the soldiery knew few of the details, and probably cared only that he could lead.

His career had been stormy and dramatic. Charges brought against him by Colonel Hazen and Colonel John Brown, Arnold's failure to give a satisfactory account of \$55,000 of the \$66,671 12/90 advanced him for the Canadian expedition, and his dissatisfaction over his precedence in rank as a major general resulted in a series of acrimonious exchanges with Congress, for whose authority he had less than a little respect.

He had tendered his resignation on July 11, 1777, on the ground that his honor had been violated. On the same day Congress received a letter from Washington requesting that Arnold be sent to command the Schuyler's militia and praising him as "active, judicious, and brave". Congress sent the letter to Arnold, and he asked that his resignation be suspended.

On August 5, Congress took up, again, the matter of Arnold's grievance concerning his rank on a motion to send a new commission, as major gen-

eral, dated February 19, 1777.<sup>1</sup> After three days of debate, the motion was defeated by a vote of sixteen to six. James Lowell of Massachusetts attributed the defeat of the motion to Arnold's recognized contempt for civil authority. John Adams and others felt out of patience with the "self-love" and what they felt to be the petty points of military precedence. John Adams' vote in opposition to the motion is noteworthy because he had been an early defender of Arnold. The vote may have been the product of the realization that Arnold's career had proved him a good soldier but a poor public servant.

Once in the north, Arnold's skill as a field commander again had an opportunity to demonstrate itself. Burgoyne was on his way toward Albany, the Americans had retreated after losing Ticonderoga, and Barry St. Leger had besieged Fort Stanwix. If the fort fell the chances that he would effect a junction with Burgoyne were too good for American interests. However, most of Schuyler's officers were opposed to reducing their army by sending a relief force up the Mohawk. It was a hazardous move, and the gravity of the situation was apparent in that Schuyler entertained the idea for audacity was not one of his traits. Arnold, alone, agreed that it was feasible, and he offered to lead a force to the relief. Schuyler, grateful for his support, appointed him to the command, and he set out on August 15. By a ruse through using the idiotic Von Host Schuyler, he convinced the besiegers of the fort that an immense force was on its way, and they fled in confused panic.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Journals of the Continental Congress, pp. 623-624.

2. Related in all standard works on the campaign.

On August 19, Horatio Gates succeeded Schuyler to the command of the northern troops. Arnold had been on friendly terms with both men, although his relations with Gates apparently were more intimate. One did not get very intimate with Schuyler unless one had the proper family connections. Gates had befriended Arnold in his troubles with Brown and Hazen and more particularly in connection with his altercation with the Hazen courts-martial. There is nothing to indicate that he had any reluctance to serve under Gates, who had many years experience as an officer in the British Army before his migration to Virginia in 1772.

#### First Battle of Saratoga

The American Army moved northward in an effort to find a defensive position that would limit the British utilization of bayonet charges and artillery. On September 12 they reached Bemis Heights where the road to Albany passed through a narrow defile between the hills and the Hudson River. There, under Kosciusko's direction, Gates ordered a defensive fortified line constructed that would force Burgoyne to either fight his way through the pass or to leave the road and move against the American position in the wooded hills. In either case, the fight would be on Gates' terms and under conditions that would preclude the effective use of massed charges and artillery. Although Roberts and some local writers gave Arnold credit for selecting and fortifying Bemis Heights, no evidence has been found supporting this conclusion. The position was selected by Gates, perhaps on Kosciusko's recommendation. <sup>3</sup>.

---

3. The location and character of the American fortified camp is discussed in detail in Charles W. Snell's research report, A Report on the American Fortified Camp and Bemis Heights, September 12 - October 8, 1777.

Arnold came within sight of the British, but after a skirmish retreated with a few prisoners.<sup>4</sup> Hoffman Nickerson relates that Arnold's force surprised a party of British, including some women gathering potatoes. Instead of taking them prisoners, the Americans killed them.<sup>5</sup> Because Captain Nickerson's book is not documented, the authority for this account is not cited.

The various sources that have been studied present different and sometimes conflicting accounts of Arnold's role in the First Battle of Saratoga, September 19, 1777. In an effort to present as complete a story as possible, the accounts will be noted and an attempt made to resolve at least some of the differences.

Arnold's division occupies the left wing of the American position on Bemis Heights. As of September 19, the division consisted of the following organizations: Brigadier General Enock Poor's Brigade of seven regiments and Brigadier General Ebenezer Learned's Brigade of four regiments. Colonel Daniel Morgan's Rifle Corps, composed of Morgan's Regiment Riflemen and Major Henry Dearborn's Light Infantry, was also located in the left wing and acted as part of Arnold's command; although its exact status had apparently not been determined by specific orders. The total strength of Arnold's division, including Morgan's Corps, was approximately 4033 men. Gates commanded the right wing, composed of Glover's, Nixon's, and Patterson's Brigades, with a total strength of about 5000 men.<sup>6</sup>

---

4. Wilkinson, James, Memoirs of My Own Times, Printed by Abraham Small, Philadelphia, 1816, 3 vols., Vol. I, p. 235.

5. Nickerson, Hoffman, The Turning Point of the Revolution, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1928, pp. 300-1.

6. Snell, C. W., A Report on the Numbers and Organization of Gates' Army, September 19, October 17, 1777, February 2, 1951.

Gates' selection of Bemis Heights for the American fortifications was predicated upon a defensive attitude. As he conceived it, his mission was to prevent Burgoyne's reaching Albany. To that end, he had chosen Bemis Heights as offering the best chance for a successful blocking of the invasion route. His strategy was defensive, and his plan for stopping Burgoyne called for Americans awaiting a British assault on the fortifications - an assault which Gates expected to be able to repel. <sup>7</sup>

There was much to comment this plan. Gates had a very imperfect knowledge of Burgoyne's strength. He also had, like most professional soldiers, a low opinion of the reliability of militiamen; except for Bennington, that opinion had been confirmed by the events at Hubbardton and Fort Anne. In fact, if Gates had needed anything to convince him that the militia was a hollow reed, the departure of the Vermont militia on September 18 in the face of the approaching enemy would have supplied that something. <sup>8</sup> Gates also had a great deal of faith in his fortifications, protected on the right by the high ground above the road to Albany and in the center and on the left by the ravines and heavy woods. The right was practically impregnable; and the delivery of a massed assault, supported by artillery, against the remainder of the line would be possible, but extremely difficult. Gates had the professional's reluctance to sacrifice manpower if the same end could be realized more economically.

---

7. (1) Wilkinson, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 246-7.

(2) Patterson, S. W., Horatio Gates, Defender of American Liberties Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1941, pp. 152-3.

(3) Nickerson, op. cit., pp. 306-308.

8. Wilkinson, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 248.

Arnold, on the other hand, has been credited with having a more aggressive concept of how Burgoyne's defeat would be accomplished. Apparently, Arnold believed that the wisest course of action would be to commit the American troops in the woods and fields north of the lines, preventing the British from contesting the American position. <sup>9</sup>

Arnold's idea possessed much tactical soundness. If the battle were joined in the woods and clearings, the British would be able to employ neither a massed, close-order attack nor artillery. Americans had also enjoyed more success in woods fighting than under other conditions. If the British should succeed in driving the Americans from the field, the latter could retire to their fortified line and still possess the capability of contesting Burgoyne's advance.

These differences were probably due, in part, to the personalities of two men; however, more basic was the fact that they represented the thinking of two officers whose fortes were different. Gates' skill lay in strategy, while Arnold was a tactician.

Burgoyne's advance toward the American lines posed a problem that had both strategic and tactical implications. This advance was made in a tri-columnar movement. One column, under Riedesel, continued along the road to exploit any opportunity that might develop on the American right. Another column, under Fraser, moved into the hills west of the river; and a center column, under Hamilton and accompanied by Burgoyne, moved between the right and the left columns. Upon a prearranged signal from a gun, the three columns were to move simultaneously against the Americans. It must

---

9. (1) Nickerson, op. cit., pp. 308, 307.

(2) Gates Papers, Library of Congress, ltr. Arnold to Gates, Sept. 22, 1777.



not be forgotten that the British objective was simply to drive the Americans from Bemis Heights so that the advance could be continued along the river and the road, to which Burgoyne was tied by his artillery, baggage train, and batteaux. Thus the problem had to be resolved whether to await an attack or move out and meet the enemy before he could assail the lines on Bemis Heights. If the battle were to be joined north of the lines, what troops would be committed, and what provision should be made to insure the defense of the fortified line and the blocking of the route to Albany?

Gates' answer to these questions was a partial acquiescence to Arnold's plan by committing Arnold's division to the fight while retaining the right wing in the fortifications.

When Burgoyne's center reached the Freeman Farm, about one mile north of Bemis Heights, Arnold, at Gates' command, ordered Morgan's Corp to meet the enemy.<sup>10</sup> These were followed by other regiments from the left wing of the American camp until Arnold's entire division was engaged on the Freeman Farm.<sup>11</sup>

These troops engaged the British center, and to a lesser degree, the right flank, until the arrival of enforcements from Riedesel's column forced the Americans to withdraw from the field to their own fortified line.<sup>12</sup>

Burgoyne had secured the field, but the first objective of the American strategy had been accomplished--the advance on Albany had been halted.

---

10. Gates Papers, Library of Congress, ltr., Arnold to Gates, September 22, 1777.

11. Ibid.

12. Wilkinson, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 245-6.

While there is no question concerning the part that his division played in the first battle, there is a wide area of disagreement concerning Arnold's personal role. The first question that arises is whether he personally led the troops and was present on the combat line. The second question concerns itself with whether he was prevented by Gates from delivering the "knock-out blow" that would have brought about Burgoyne's defeat on September 19. Because both are important in assessing Arnold's role at Saratoga, a considerable amount of time has been devoted to trying to resolve these problems.

Wilkinson, in his Memoirs, related the following concerning the presence of general officers on the battlefield:

It is worthy to remark, that not a single general officer was on the field of battle the 19th Sept. until the evening when General Learned was ordered out, about the same time Generals Gates and Arnold were in front of the center of the camp, listening to the peal of small arms, when Colonel M. Lewis deputy quartermaster general returned from the field, and being questioned by the General, he reported the indecisive progress of the action; at which Arnold exclaimed, "By God, I will soon put an end to it," and clapping spurs to his horse, galloped off at full speed; Colonel Lewis immediately observed to General Gates, "You had better order him back, the action is going well, he may by some rash do mischief," I was instantly despatched, overtook, and remanded Arnold to camp. <sup>13</sup>

In a letter to Washington, dated January 14, 1778, Robert R. Livingston wrote in behalf of his brother, Henry Brockholst Livingston, who had been Schuyler's aide and then Arnold's:

I take the liberty to inclose to your excellency an extract of a letter to him, written under General Arnold's direction,

---

13. Ibid.

by a gentleman of his family, he being unable to hold the pen himself. After a warm recommendation of his conduct, both in camp in camp and in the field, and giving him and his regiment a full share of the honor of the battle of the 19th of September (in which General Arnold, not being present, writes only from the reports of those who were)... 14

Henry Brockholst Livingston wrote to his idol, Schuyler, on September 23rd, that Arnold "is the Life and Soul of the Troops - Believe me, Sir, to him and to him alone is due the Honor of our late Victory. Whatever Share his Superiors may claim they are entitled to none." 15

Richard Varick wrote Schuyler on September 22d:

This I am certain of, that Arnold has all the Credit of the Action of the 19th, for he was ordering out troops to it, while the other (Gates) was in Dr. Patts tend back biting his Neighbors for which words had like to Ensur between him and Me and this I further know, that asked where the Troops were going, when Scanmills Batt. marched and upon being Answered, he declared no more should go, he would not suffer the Camp to be Exposed. Had Gates complied with Arnold's Repeated Desires, he would have gained a Genl. & complete Victory over the Enemy. But it is evident to Me, he never intended to fight Burgoyne Moving the Army to cast an (illegible) on Your Reputation, in hopes that Burgoyne would be frightened by his Movement from the South & North... 16

While giving Arnold all the credit for halting Burgoyne's advance neither Varick nor Livingston indicated whether Arnold was on the Battlefield or whether he directed the activities of his division from the vantage point of the camp on Bemis Heights.

In a letter written to Gates after the two generals had become alienated, Arnold said of his part in the action of September 19:

---

14. Wharton, F., Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, 6 vols, Washington, 1889, vol. II. p. 414.

15. Schuyler Papers, NYPL, ltr.. H. B. Livingston to Schuyler, Sept. 23, 1777.

16. Ibid, ltr. Varick to Schuyler, September 22, 1777.

On the 19th just when advice was received that the enemy were approaching, I took the liberty to give it as my Opinion that we ought to March out and attack them, you desired me to send Colonel Morgan and the light Infantry, and support them, I obeyed your Orders, and before the Action was over I found it necessary to send out the whole of my Division to Support the attack no other Troops were Engaged that day except Colonel Marshals Regt. of General Paterson's Brigade. 17

Here again, there was no mention of Arnold's personally appearing on the field. Because he was not the type of person to omit any commendatory reference to his activities, especially when engaged in an altercation, Arnold's failure to state that he was in the midst of the fighting carries particular weight. In the light of what is known about the man, if Arnold had participated in the fighting, one could have expected him to say so.

One source that has been cited to prove Arnold's presence on the field has been Philip Van Cortlandt's statement that while marching toward the British he received his orders from Arnold. 18 Whether he meant that he received his orders directly from Arnold or that the orders emanated from Arnold is not clear.

Among the original sources, one of the most specific concerning Arnold's presence on the field was Brigadier General Enoch Poor's statement, written on September 20:

Arnold rushed into the thickest of the fight with his usual recklessness, and at times acted like a madman, I did not see him once, but S. (probably Alexander Scamnil) told this morning that he did not seem inclined to lead alone, but as a prominent object among the enemy should present itself, he would seize the nearest rifle-gun and take deliberate aim. 19

---

17. Gates Papers, Library of Congress, ltr.. Arnold to Gates, Sept. 22, 1777.

18. Livingston Papers, NYPL.

19. Jared Sparks Collection, Widener Library, Harvard University.

Poor's statement is important enough to receive more than cursory notice. He did not state that he saw Arnold on the field, but related that he was on the basis of what he had been told by another.

On the other hand, Poor's relation with Arnold had not been mutually endearing. The former had been chairman of the court martial of Hazan and had sought Arnold's arrest for his conduct toward the court martial board. Apparently, Poor was not small-minded, and there is no evidence that he all-owed a personal animosity toward Arnold interfere with their relationship at Saratoga. In fact, they may have shared the same quarters in the John Neilson House, <sup>20</sup> and, as shall be noted, Poor was reported to have authored a petition begging Arnold to remain at Saratoga after his altercation with Gates.

The Reverend Mr. Smith, who served as a chaplain at Saratoga, is quoted in a secondary source as saying that Arnold commanded the troops during the First Battle of Saratoga. <sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, old Ezra Beul and John Neilson told Jared Sparks that: "Arnold was inactive, and took no part. In fact, there was no general officer in the action. At one time Beul says he saw Gen. Poor, with two or three other officers, quite in the rear of the American Army, and taking no part in the action. The fighting was chiefly under the eyes of Morgan, Scamnil and Cilby." <sup>22</sup>

---

20. Luzader, John F., Historic Building Survey, John Neilson House, Saratoga National Historical Park.

21. Guild, R. A., Chaplain Smith and the Baptists, Philadelphia, 1885, p. 209.

22. Jared Sparks Collection, Widener Library, Harvard University.

Sparks' visit occurred in 1830, and Beul's and John Neilson's memories were faulty, but probably no more so than Chaplain Smith's, neither could have been accused of a pro-Gates bias. Both took part in the battles, and Arnold, Poor, and Morgan were quartered on Neilson's farm.

Secondary sources disagree concerning Arnold's presence on the battle-line. Among the early historians who asserted that Arnold personally led his division into action was von Eelking who used Baron von Riedesel's journals and correspondence as source materials. However, an examination of Riedesel's writings does not reveal any statement to the effect that Arnold was in the fighting. His letter to the Duke of Brunswick, written from Albany on October 21, giving a detailed account of both battles and the capitulation, mentions no American officer except Gates. The correspondence that comprises the letter file of the Bancroft Collection in the New York Public Library contains no mention of Arnold. It may be that von Eelking based his opinion on materials that may exist in the Staatsarchiv at Wolfenbuttel or in the Staatsarchiv at Wiesbaden which have not yet been examined by American or English students. It is also worth remembering that von Eelking frequently took liberties in his editorship of Riedesel's writing that compromises the value of his work. 23

Charles Neilson, son of the pioneer owner of the farm on Bemis Heights, wrote in 1844 that:

- 
23. (1) Bancroft Collection of Riedesel Materials, NYPL.  
(2) von Eelking, Max, Memoirs, and Letters and Journals of Major General Riedesel, 2 vols, J. Munsell's, Albany, 1868, vol. I, p. 150.

...General Arnold, on a gray horse, and under full speed from the scene of action, rode up to General Gates, who was on the Heights at the time, setting upon his horse, and listening to the tremendous firing, and addressed him in the following laconic manner: "General Gates immediately replied, "You shall have them sir," and immediately ordered out General Learned's brigade; when Arnold again hurried back on a full gallop and the men after him in double quick time." 24

Neilson based his account largely upon family tradition; although in this instance he seems to have contradicted that source. His book contains a number of errors, and its reliance on verbal sources compromises its value.

Charles Botta's early History of the War of Independence states that, "Arnold exhibited upon this occasion all the impetuosity of his courage; he encouraged his men with voice and example."

Among the later historians who have contended that Arnold personally led his division into combat on September 19 is Hoffman Nickerson, whose The Turning Point of the Revolution has for a generation been the standard published study of the Burgoyne campaign. After describing the arrival of Riedesel at the Freeman Farm he continued:

At this moment the Americans were without the dashing leadership of Arnold, who had ridden back to ask for reinforcement. In answer to his request Gates had ordered out a whole brigade, that of Learned. Gates and Arnold were for the moment listening together to the sound of the firing, Arnold sitting on a gray horse, when Colonel Morgan Lewis, Gates' Quarter-master general, afterwards Governor of New York State, and still later a United States major-general, who rode in and reported the action still undecided. Whereat the vehement Arnold exclaimed, "By God! I'll soon put an end to it!" and spurred off at a gallop. Hardly had he done so, however, when Lewis said to Gates that the latter had better order him back, since the action was going well and Arnold by some rash act might do mischief. Gates, therefore, despatched Wilkinson, who overtook Arnold, and transmitted to him Gate's order to return to camp, which Arnold obeyed. 26

---

24. Neilson, Charles, An Original, Compiled, and Corrected Account of Burgoyne's Campaign, and the Memorable Battles of Bemis Heights, Sept. 19 and Oct. 7, 1777, J. Munsell, Albany, 1844; p. 148.

Thus Nickerson, while following Wilkinson's account, represents Arnold as having returned from the firing line.

In his readable two volume The War of the Revolution Christopher Ward gives a dramatic account of Arnold's role in the First Battle of Saratoga, crediting him with personally leading troops against the enemy and winning the battle, to be thwarted in delivering the knock-out blow by Gates. <sup>27</sup>

Ward relied upon standard secondary authorities and printed source material in the preparation of his book, and apparently did little basic research. The value of the work, in so far as the Saratoga campaign is concerned, is lessened by a number of errors, the most glaring of which is his account of Burgoyne's plan in which he ignored the basic documents contained in the Germain-Clinton-Howe-Burgoyne correspondence, concluding that "he (Burgoyne) did not expect Howe to send forces northward during the campaign to support him. He would have sufficient strength to reach Albany and to maintain himself there." <sup>28</sup>

Other writers have been almost evenly divided on the subject. John Fiske, Henry Carrington, and John W. Forteque have asserted that Arnold personally led the attack on the British on September 19. George Bancroft, Edward Channing, and Lynn Montross have contended that he did not. <sup>29</sup>

---

26. Nickerson, op. cit., p. 315.

27. Ward, Christopher, The War on the Revolution, 2 vols., MacMillan Co., N.Y., 1952, vol. II, pp. 506-512; 941-942.

28. Ibid., pp. 399-401.

29. (1) Fiske, John, The American Revolution, 2 vols, Boston, 1891, vol. I, p. 327.



Of the participants in the battle whose statements concerning Arnold's role have been studied, three, I. E., Wilkinson, Beul, and John Neilson asserted that he was not on the field. Varick and Henry B. Livingston gave him credit for winning the battle without stating that he personally led the troops. Two, I. E., Poor and Chaplain Smith, said that he was in the fighting. Arnold's letter describing his conduct during the action of the 19th makes no assertions concerning his presence on the field. Another contemporary, Robert Livingston, Henry's brother, asserted that Arnold was not on the field.

Wilkinson's testimony has been attacked on the basis of his subsequent career. While his Memoirs contain a considerable amount of material calculated to place the author in a favorable light, the details that he recorded concerning the Saratoga campaign stand up when compared with other accounts and in the light of careful research.

Neither Varick nor Henry B. Livingston were impartial observers. They were strongly attached to Philip Schuyler and they loathed Gates as Schuyler's displacer. Their statements have been cited to prove Arnold's presence at the head of his troops. However, as has been noted, they credited Arnold with the conduct of the battle and said nothing about his leading the attack.

The strongest evidence that is offered that Arnold actively led the charge is General Poor's statement, although he was basing his statement

- 
- (2) Carrington, H.B., Battles of the American Revolution, NY, 1886, p. 342-4.
  - (3) Fortesque, John W., A History of the British Army, 14 vols, MacMillan Co., NY, 1899-1930, vol. III, pp. 234-236.
  - (4) Bancroft, George, History of the United States, 10 vols, Boston, 1837-1874, vol. IX, p. 410.
  - (5) Channing, Edward, A History of the United States, 6 vols, Harpers, NY, 1906-1925, vol. III, pp. 276-278.

on hearsay. The strongest evidence to the contrary is Robert Livingston's assertion that Arnold did not lead the troops. However, he also was repeating what he had been told, presumably by his brother, Henry Brockholst.

Romantic conceptions concerning the functions of a military commander have dictated that he personally lead his troops into battle, inspiring them by his presence and courage. The fact that Gates remained at his headquarters has frequently been cited proof of his cowardice, ignoring the fact that Washington, whose bravery is never questioned, followed the same presence. Without laboring the point, it is well to remember that an army commander is charged with total direction of his forces, and he must be located at a point from which that direction can be executed and where his subordinate commander can contact him. Once a general officer commits himself to the front line, his perspective is reduced to that of the platoon or company officer, his accessibility is limited, and his power of direction is lost.

Burgoyne's personal involvement in the combat severely limited his effectiveness as an army commander, and the lack of tactical flexibility under which his army operated at Saratoga was due, in part, to this factor.

While there were occasions where general officers found it wise and necessary to physically lead or rally their troops, the same principles obtained, although the division and brigade commander might be closer to the firing line than their commander.

It is clear that Arnold operated in a command capacity. The direction of his division emanated from him through his brigade commanders to the regiments. The fact that the division was not committed as a body,

---

(6) Montross, Lynn, Rag, Tag and Bobtail, The Story of the Continental Army, Harpers, NY, 1950, pp. 235-237.

but by brigade or regiment, argues against Arnold's having led it against the enemy. Nor was it likely that he would have personally led the division unaccompanied by his subordinates.

On the basis of the evidence studied, the writer does not believe that Arnold personally led his division against Burgoyne during the First Battle of Saratoga. He may, possibly, have been near the firing line during a part of the battle, although the preponderance of evidence indicates the contrary, and it is certain that he was in the camp at Bemis Heights during a part of the action.

Varick and Livingston believed that Arnold deserved all of the credit for the action of September 19. As far as they were concerned, his direction was solely responsible for halting Burgoyne's advance, and only Gates' incompetence and jealousy prevented Arnold's turning the battle into a complete defeat for the British. Their judgement has been accepted and enlarged upon by later writers.

William L. Stone quoted from the Diary of Captain Wakefield as follows:

Arnold was not only the hero of the field, but he had won the admiration of the whole army. There was not a man, officer or private who participated in the battle, or who witnessed the conflict who did believe that if Gates had sent reinforcements, as Arnold again and again begged him to do, he would have utterly routed the whole British army. So general was this belief, and so damaging to Gates, that as an excuse to save himself from reproaches coming from every side he gave out as the reason that the store of powder and ball in the camp was exhausted, and that the supplies of ammunition from Albany had not arrived. No one could dispute this, yet no one believed it. 30

Fortesque, in his History of the British Army, asserted that: "Had Gates sent to Arnold the reinforcements for which he asked, Arnold must

---

30. Stone, William L., Visits to the Saratoga Battle-Grounds, 1780-1880, Joel Munsell's Sons, Albany, 1895, p. 153.

certainly have broken the British center." 31 Lassing, in the same vein, declares, "Had he (Arnold) been seconded by his commander, and strengthened by reinforcement...he would doubtless have secured a complete victory. But for Arnold, on that eventful day, Burgoyne would doubtless have marched into Albany at the autumnal equinox a victor." 32

These remarks imply that Arnold was refused reinforcements, apparently from the right wing of the American lines where approximately 5,000 men were posted. While no contemporary documentation has been found to support this, it has gained wide acceptance. If Gates did refuse to reinforce Arnold from this quarter he could have pled sound strategic reasons. The key to the selection of Bemis Heights for the American fortified line was the narrow defile through which the road passed in the vicinity of Bemis' Tavern. 33 Gates did not know the exact disposition nor numbers of Burgoyne's forces.

However, he probably knew that von Riedesel's column was on road to exploit any advantage that might take place. To have uncovered the right and committed the troops on the Freeman Farm would have invited a flanking movement that would have breached the American right, and Burgoyne could have moved his entire force past Bemis Heights before Gates would have collapsed. So, if Gates did refuse Arnold's demands in this matter, he deserved credit, rather than the opprobrium that was bestowed.

---

31. Fortesque, op. cit., vol. III, p. 233.

32. Lassing, Benson J., Life of General Schuyler, Vol. II, p. 348.

33. See above p. 4.

The evidence that has been studied indicates that Arnold, acting under Gates' command, functioned in the normal capacity of a division commander. That the Americans succeeded in stopping Burgoyne was due, in large part, to his skillful efforts. However, he was executing a tactical implementation of Gates' Strategy, and to assert that the degree of success that the Americans experienced was due to his single-handed exertions and that only Gates' jealous incompetence prevented Arnold's effecting a crushing victory is not supported by fact.

#### The Arnold-Gates Controversy

The seventeen day interim between the First and Second Battle of Saratoga witnessed the preparation of both armies for a decisive contest. It also witnessed the development of a violent and potentially tragic conflict between Gates and Arnold. The story is at once dramatic and saddening, and the details, which will be related and studied, are anything but pleasant.

The generals apparently were on good terms during and immediately following the battle of September 19. There may have been, and probably were, minor occasions for irritation, but there is nothing to indicate any rupture in their relations.

The first instance of a serious disagreement arose out of Gates' failure to specifically mention Arnold and his division in the report submitted to Congress concerning the action of September 19. In as much as the only troops committed during that battle were from Arnold's division, the omission is difficult to explain, and Gates undertook no explanation. The reason may have been that, viewing the battle from a strategic perspective, he felt that those troops who manned the line and

prevented the advance along the road were as worthy of commendation as those who were committed on the Freeman Farm. Both had performed their delegated duty. Hence, in Gates' thinking the credit would go to the entire army, not to one element of it. Whatever the reasons or excuses, Arnold was furious. He was always sensitive to the kind of publicity he received, and not to be mentioned in a dispatch in a manner that recognized his contribution was a slight upon his honor.

Just how Arnold learned that Gates' report to Congress did not mention his name is not clear. He may have heard it from some member of the commanding general's staff, or, perhaps Varick and Livingston had informed him in such a manner that represented the matter as an intentional slight. Livingston told Schuyler that Arnold's reaction was immediate and violent. In a letter of September 23, Livingston gave the following account:

...I am much distressed at Gen. Arnold's determination to retire from the Army at this important Crisis.-His presence was never more necessary He is the Life and Soul of the Troops - Believe me, Sir, To him & to him alone is due the Honor of our late Victory. - Whatever Share his Superiors may claim they are entitled to None----. He enjoys the Confidence & Affection of Officers & Soldiers. - The would, to a Man, follow him to Conquest or Death --- His absence will dishearten them to such a degree, as to render them of but little service --- The difference between him & Mr. G---- has arisen to too great a height to admit a Compromise. I have, for some time past observed the great Coolness, & in many instances, even disrespect with which Gen. Arnold has been treated Head Qr. --- His Proposals have been rejected with marks of Indignity --- His own orders have frequently been contravened - and himself set in a ridiculous Light by those of the Commander in Chief --- His remonstrances, on thos Occasions, have been termed presumptuous --- In short he has picketed man Insults, for the Sake of his Country, which a man of less Pride would have resented. - The repeated Indignities he received at length raised his Spirit, & determined him again to remonstrate --- He waited on Mr. G---- in Person last Evening --- Matters were altercated in a very high Strain --- Both were warm --- the latter rather passionate & very assuming.....<sup>34</sup>

---

34. Schuyler Papers, NYPL, ltr. H.B. to Schuyler, Sept. 23, 1777.

Relations between the two generals were strained still further by a general order regularizing the status of Morgan's Corp. Technically an independent command, and dispatched as such to the Northern Department by Washington, this unit had been located on the left wing of the American camp. Arnold had considered the coy an integral part of his division, and it apparently functioned as such on September 19. The General Order of September 22 placed the Corp on a definitely independent status, with its commander responsible directly to the Commanding General, and read as follows:

Colonel Morgan's corps not being attached to any brigade or division of the army, he is to make returns and reports to head quarters only; from whence alone he is to receive orders.<sup>35</sup>

Gates was acting quite within his prerogatives as commanding general but Arnold agreed with Varick and Livingston that the general order was a studied insult to him, and he stormed into Gates' quarters where a heated argument ensued. Apparently Arnold stated his position in extreme terms and Gates replied with sarcasm, of which he had more than average command. <sup>36</sup> Arnold, beside himself with rage, retired to his quarters and wrote his commander a lengthy letter.

After reviewing his role in the action of the 19th, he continued:

...I have been informed that in the Returns transmitted to Congress of the killed and wounded in the action the Troops were Mentioned as a Detachment from the Army, and in the Orders of this day I observe it is mentioned that Col. Morgan's Corps not being in any Brigade or Division of this Army are to make Returns and

---

35. Quoted in Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 254.

36. Ibid.

reports only to head Quarters, from whence they are alone to receive Orders --- Altho it is notorious to the whole Army they have been in and done duty with my Division for some time past. --- When I mentioned these matters to you this day, you were pleased to say in Contradiction to your repeated Orders you did not know I was a Major Genl or have any Command in the Army --- I have ever supposed a Major General's command of Four Thousand Men, a Proper Division and no Detachment when composed of two Brigades formin one wing of the Army and that the General and Troops if guilty of misconduct or cowardly behavior in time of Action were justly Chargeable as a Division and that if on the other hand they behave with Spirit and Firmness in Action they were Instly(sic) entitled to the applause Due to a Brave Division not Detachment of the Army, had my Division behaved ill, the other Divisions of the Army would have thought it extremely hard to have been Aminable (sic) for their Conduct - I mentioned these matters as I wish Justice done to their Division, as well as particular Regiments or Persons --- From what reason I know not (as I am Conscious of no Offense or neglect of Duty) but I have lately Observed little or no attention to any Proposals I have thought it my Duty to make for the Publick Service, and when a measure, I have proposed has been agreed to. It has been immediately contradicted, I have been received with the greatest coolness at Head Quarters, and often huffed in Such a manner as must mortify Person with less Pride than I have and in my Station in the Army --- You said you expected General Lincoln in a day or two when I should have no command of Division, that you thought me of little Consequence to the Army, and that you would with all your heart give me a pass to have it whenever I thought proper, As I find your observations very just that I am not, or that you wish me of little Consequence in the Army, and as I have the Interest and Safety of my Country at heart I wish to be where I can be of the most Service to Her --- I therefor as soon as General Lincoln has arrived has to request your Pass to Philade, with my two Aids de Camp and their Servants, where I propose to Join General Washington, and may possibly have it in my Power to serve my Country altho I am thought of no Consequence in this Department. --- 37

I am with due respect  
Sir you Hbl Serv't  
B Arnold

Honble Major Genl Gates

---

37. Gates Papers, Library of Congress, ltr. Arnold to Gates, Sept. 22, 1777.



The letter indicates that the argument that had occurred in Gates' quarters covered the whole area of differences between the two men. Apparently in the heat of the exchange Gates had informed Arnold that he would replace the latter when Lincoln arrived. Perhaps Arnold had threatened to leave, and Gates had taken him up on it.

The points of disagreement seem to have been concentrated on the omission of specific mention of Arnold and his division in the report to Congress and the General order concerning the chain of command as it concerned Morgan's Coy. On the surface neither of them would seem sufficiently important to have brought on so violent a quarrel, except that Arnold interpreted them as personal affronts. A professional soldier, Gates would have considered Arnold's manner and language insubordinate; and to a professional insubordination was something that could not be suffered, from whatever source.

For some reason, Arnold also felt that his counsels have not received the attention to which he believed they were entitled. In brief, he was a hurt and angry man, and some villainry was afoot that was aimed at depriving him of his honor.

Arnold's letter reached Gates late in the evening of the twenty-second and replied the next morning:

Sir

I did not receive your Letter until I was going into Bed last Night. The permission you request for yourself and Aids de Camp to go to Philade is Inclosed. <sup>38</sup>

Gates then addressed the following to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress:

---

38. Gates Papers, New York Historical Society, ltr. Gates to Arnôld, Sept. 23, 1777.

23 Sept. 1777

Sir,

Major General Arnold having desired Permission for Himself and Aids de Camp to go to Philadelphia, I have Granted his Request. His reasons for Asking to leave the Army at this Time shall with my Answers be transmitted to your Excellency. I am sir <sup>39</sup>

&c.

HG,  
23<sup>d</sup> Sept 1777

His Excellency  
presd<sup>t</sup> of Cong<sup>s</sup>

This note was sent to Arnold, and he, now angrier than ever, returned it with the following reply:

Camp Stillwater Sept. 23<sup>d</sup> 1777

Sir,

When I wrote you yesterday I thought myself Intitled to an answer, and that you would at least have condescended to acquaint me with the reasons which had induced you to treat me with affront and indignity, in a publick manner, which I mentioned and which has been observed by many Gentlemen of the Army, I am conscious of none but if I have been guilty of any Crimes deserving such treatment I wish to have them pointed out that I may have an Opportunity of Vindicating my conduct I know no reason for your Conduct unless I have been traduced by some designing Villain -----

I requested a Permission for myself and aids to go to Philadelphia instead of which you have sent me a Letter to the Hon<sup>ble</sup> John Hancock Esq<sup>r</sup> which I have returned if you have any letters for that Gentleman which you think proper to send sealed. I will take charge of them. I once more request your Permission for myself and Aids to Pass to Philadelphia. <sup>40</sup>

I am  
Sir  
Your Obed<sup>t</sup> Hble Serv  
B Arnold

Hon<sup>ble</sup> Major Genl Gates

---

39. Gates Papers, Library of Congress, ltr. Gates to Hancock, Sept. 23, 1777.

40. Ibid., ltr. Arnold to Gates, Sept. 23, 1777.

With all of the other problems that were inherent in his position, Gates must have come to feel a greater degree of irritation than is reflected in his reply to Arnold's letters. He replied to Arnold almost immediately:

Head Qre 23<sup>d</sup> Sep<sup>r</sup> 1777

Sir,

You wrote me nothing last Night but waht had been sufficiently altercated between us in the Evening. I then gave such Answers to all your Objections as I think were Satisfactory. I know not what you mean by Insult or Indignity. I made you such replys only, as I conceived proper. As to the Opened Letter, I sent you to M<sup>r</sup> Hancock it was the civilest method I could devise of acquainting Congress with your leaving the Army - & is to all intents & purposes as full a Pass as can be desired - I sent it unsealed, as being the more complaisant to you and is what is commonly done upon such Occasions, that not being so agreeable to you as a common Pass, I send you one Inclosed.<sup>41</sup>

I am Sir.

(Hon<sup>ble</sup> General Arnold)

In the meantime, Schuyler was being kept informed of the progress of the breakdown of the relations between Arnold and Gates by his proteges, Varick and Henry B. Livingston. Their devotion to Schuyler and hatred of Gates made them active partisans of Arnold, and they noted the controversy with unsealed pleasure without any apparent consideration except that Gates should be discredited. Their letters tell almost as much about their role in the affair as about the events themselves.

On September 22, Richard Varick wrote Schuyler that:

...I am sorry for my Country Sake to give you the following Intelligence, Which I beg You to keep Inter Mos. - "Matters between Genl. Gates and Arnold are got to such a Pitch, That I have the fullest Assurance, Arnold quit the Department in a Day or two.-"

---

41. Ibid, ltr. Gates to Arnold, Sept. 23, 1777.

Gates has actu ally not treated him with Common Civility & politeness for these several Days past, I think I gave You a Hint of It in my first Letter.- Since which he has been insufferably rude.- He seems to be piqued, that Arnold's Division has the Honor of beating the Enemy on the 19th.- In Consequence of which he has this Day declared in Genl. Orders, that Morgans Corps & the light Infantry under Major Dearbourn, belong to His Brigade or Division, & are subject to No Orders but those from Head Qtrs. Altho' a few days since he ordered Arnold to add them to one of the Brigades in his Division.- Matters came so high, that Arnold told him he would not suffer the Treatment & asked Gates' Pass to Philadelphia & Gates said he would give It with all his heart.-

Arnold wrote him a Letter this Eveng. asking a pass for himself & Suite to Philadelphia, as the Letter was delivered between 8 & 9 he has not an Answer.- "He further told Arnold, he should not have a Division long."

This I am certain of, that Arnold has all the Credit of the Action on the 19th, for he was ordering out troops to It, while the other was in Dr. Potts tent backbiting his Neighbors for which words had like to Ensue between him & Me & this I further know, that he Asked where the Troops were going, when Scannells Batt. marched & upon being Answered, he declared no more should go, he would not suffer the Camp to be Exposed.- Had Gates complied with Arnold's Repeated Desired, he would have gained a Genl. & compleat Victory over the Enemy.- But it is evident to Me, he never intended to fight Burgoyne, till Arnold, urged, begged & entreated him to do It.- Nay, he meant by Moving the Army to cast an (illegible) on Your Reputation, in hopes that Burgoyne would be frightened by his Movement from the South & North.- This is my firm Belief, If I do him Injustice, it arises from an Opinion founded on Mistaken Notions of his Character.

I apprehend much that a certain person, whose Conduct much be-speaks the Character I form of a Sycophant, & who affects great Friendship for You, has no small share in attempting to injure Your Reputation when Set in Competition with Genl. Gates' & Is at Bottom of the Dispute between Arnold & Gates.-

...I apprehend if Arnold leaves us, we shant Move unless the Enemy run up the River,- He had the full Confidence of the Troops & they would fight gallantly under him.- If he quits I will not stay longer unless I can probably soon see Saratoga.<sup>42</sup>

In his letter of September 23, referred to on page 9, Henry B. Livingston informed Schuyler:

..The Reason of the present disagreement between two old Cronies, is simply this - Arnold is your Friend ----- I shall attend the General down- Chagrining as it may be for me to leave the Army, at a time when an Opportunity is offering for every young Fellow to

---

42. Schuyler Papers, NYPL, ltr. Varick to Schuyler, Sept. 22, 1777.

distinguish himself, I can no longer submit to the Command of a Man whom I abhor from my very Soul --- His Conduct is disgusting to every One, but his Flatterers & Dependents, among who profess to be your Friends --- A Cloud is gathering & may e'er long burst on his Head --- 43

The parts that Varick and Livingston played in the break-down of relations between the generals seem to have interesting and important overtones. Their devotion to Schuyler and loathing of Gates and all his works are obvious enough from the language of their letters. Less obvious, but apparent, is their role in the controversy.

Both men were very pleased that Arnold was angry with Gates, and they reported the details of the arguments to Schuyler with patent satisfaction. They hoped that Gates would be discredited and Schuyler vindicated as a result of Gates' failure to exercise effective command. In their minds the vindication of their patron was more important than defeating Burgoyne. Neither man seemed to have had any appreciation of the military implications of the quarrel and the jeopardy in which it could place American interests.

Their determination, expressed in their letters to Schuyler, to leave the Northern Department because of their personal relations with their commander, while too common in the Continental Army, was scarcely consistent with either sound military practice or disinterested devotion to the revolutionary cause.

Varick, who revealed more of himself because he wrote more frequently, seemed to have conceived of himself as an agent for Schuyler, rather than as muster-master for the army - witness his statement that he would leave the army "unless I can probably soon see Saratoga (Schuyler's estate at that

---

43. Ibid, ltr. Livingston to Schuyler, Sept. 23, 1777.

place)". According to his own account, he had exchanged heated words with Gates over the latter's attitude toward him.<sup>44</sup> Nor did Varick's attitude develop subsequent to the estrangement between Gates and Arnold. It was apparent from the date of the former's arrival, and he was soon writing Schuyler a steady stream of criticism of every move that Gates made. He carried his loyalty to Schuyler to the point where he stole a letter to Gates, copied it, and sent the copy to Schuyler.<sup>45</sup>

Livingston's letters carried the same refrain, and as early as September 11, he wrote to Schuyler: "Should You be under the necessity of going to the Southward, sooner than You expected, I shall be glad to be advised of it, my intention joining this Army being only to act as a Volunteer, with Gen. Arnold until something is done or you may want me ---" <sup>46</sup> His position as commander of the 4th New York Regiment of Brigadier Enoch Poor's Brigade apparently rested so lightly with him that he felt no compunctions against departing in the face of an invading army. What his relation with Poor were is not clear because he never revealed his opinions on that score in his letters.

With the muster-master and a regimental commander publicly critical of everything being done, one may imagine the deleterious effect on discipline and morale. However, contemporary sources indicate that, except among some of the New York officers, the rank and file of the army was no more critical of their commander than troops normally were and are. In fact, although

---

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., ltr. Livingston to Schuyler, Sept. 11, 1777.

Arnold was popular enough, the New England troops preferred Gates to Schuyler, and seem to have had no particular feelings toward the quarrel strong enough to commit to writing. 47

Any attempt to determine whether and to what degree Livingston and Varick aggravated the quarrel is attended with difficulties. One may read the correspondence of the two men and agree with Flexner who wrote: "Livingston and Varick stoked Arnold's resentment. Gates, they explained, was treating him with "disrespect" and being "unsufferably rude" because he was piqued that "Arnold's division had had the honor of beating the enemy." 48

According to Livingston, Gates suspected that Arnold's mind had been "poisoned" by some of the staff, probably Livingston. In a letter to Schuyler of September 26, he wrote:

I find myself under the necessity of returning to Albany, & merely to satisfy the Caprice & Jealousy of a certain great Person ---- It has been several times insinuated by the Commander in Chief to Genl. Arnold, that his mind had been poisoned & Prejudiced by some of his Family - And I have been pointed out as the Person, who had this Undue Influence over him. 49

- 
47. In an effort to determine the reaction of the troops to the controversy; the memoirs, diaries, etc. that are in the microfilm library at Saratoga were examined. Few pertinent references were found, and there was no evidence of widespread lack of confidence in Gates' leadership. In fact to the contrary, faith in him was common. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Gates had an obvious and sincere interest in his troops' welfare and a common touch that was rare among general officers. The average soldiers admired Arnold's audacity and responded to his personal dynamism, but they felt they were in good hands under Gates.
48. Flexner, James T., The Traitor and the Spy, Harcourt, Brace & Co., NY, 1953, p. 175.
49. Schuyler Papers, ltr. Livingston to Schuyler, September 26, 1777.

What persuaded Gates to credit Livingston with this influence, if he did has not been discovered. Knowing, as he must have, the young colonel's hatred, Gates may have suspected that he was agitating the quarrel. Then too, Gates may have had proof or evidence upon which to base his belief that he never committed to writing. Arnold was certainly on very intimate terms with the young officers, and he probably listened to their criticisms of Gates, especially after the General's relations became strained. He may have permitted what they said to influence him after his initial irritation with Gates, and they may have played upon his wounded pride in such a manner that what began as a disagreement over relatively minor matters grew out of perspective into an estrangement beyond healing. There may be evidence sufficient to suppose that they were factors in promoting the controversy, but that evidence falls short of proof.

Schuyler's attitude is worth noting. While one might wish to believe that he disavowed any effort to sow discord within the American command, there is no evidence to indicate that he made any effort to dissuade his partisans from engaging in petty faultfinding and harassing of the commander. Neither did he seem to discourage them in their glee at the eruption of a feud between Arnold and Gates. It would have been to his credit to have reminded them of their duties to the army and the cause for which it was fighting. But Schuyler was a wounded, embittered man, his dislike for Gates was longstanding, and he would have had to risen above himself to have forgotten his own hurt in the interest of the common cause. This he could not do.

---



While Arnold had seconded Schuyler's plan for the relief of Fort Stanwix, there is nothing to indicate that the men were intimate before the Battles of Saratoga, nor that he held Arnold in any special esteem before that time. They had been on good terms, but Schuyler was not one with whom men became intimate unless they enjoyed a social position somewhat beyond that which had been attained by Arnold.

In his letter to Gates of September 23, Arnold had suggested that he was being "traded by some designing Villian-----." 50 Schuyler's correspondents believed that someone was influenceing Gates against Arnold. While no names were given, there may be reason to believe that they had reference to James Wilkinson, Gates' deputy general. Certainly Wilkinson's presumptuous issuance of a general order on September 9, attaching the New York Militia to Glover's brigade after Arnold had attached them to Poor's had been the occasion of a minor incident in which Gates had defended his subordinate against Arnold's wrath.

Wilkinson had been on good terms with Arnold, and they had been the last men to leave Canada when the Americans retreated from Quebec. However, the two had several traits in common, and one of these was a thirst for glory. Somewhat inflated with his importance, Wilkinson sometimes embarrassed his superior by his bumptiousness. Gates had a good opinion of his aide's abilities, which were better than his character, and he defended him when he got in beyond his depth.

Wilkinson's Memoirs, written long after he was estranged from Gates, do not furnish any information that would suggest that he played any signi-

---

50. Gates Papers, Library of Congress, ltr. Arnold to Gates, Sept. 23, 1777.

ficant role in the controversy. Neither do Gates' papers contain reference to Wilkinson's influence, and no other contemporary sources that have been studied throw light upon the subject.

Arnold's decision to leave, amde on the spur of the moment and in anger, was seconded by Varick and Livingston. They appeared to have believed, even to hope, that Arnold's departure would result in an American defeat that would vindicate Schuyler and result in Gates' disgrace. However, a change in attitude began to appear in a letter that Livingston wrote to Schuyler on September 24:

Genl Arnold's Intention to quit this department is made public, and has caused great uneasiness among the Soldiers - To indure him to stay - General Poor proposed an Address from the General Officers & colonels of his division, returning him thanks for his past Service and particularly for his conduct during the late Action and requesting his Stay --- The Address was framed, and consented to by Poor's Officers --- Those of Genl Learned refused --- They acquiesced in the propriety of the measure, but were afraid of giving umbrage to General G---- A paltry Reason for Officers of rank to allege in excuse for not doing their duty ----- As this Method has failed - I see no other way left to bring about a reconciliation, but by the Interpretation of the General Officers --- -- This has been proposed to Lincoln -- He is anxious for Arnold's S Stay and will push the matter --- I hope he may succeed as I think it an Affair of too much moment to be neglected. Though it must be a mortifying Situation for any Gentleman of Spirit to submit to the petulant humors of any Man, be his rank ever so high --- 51

It may have been that cooler counsels had begun to be heard, and there were those within the American command mature enough to realize that the quarrel was a serious matter, that all of the wrong was not on one side, and that a reconciliation was desirable. According to Livingston, the first effort was directed simply at persuading Arnold to change his mind and apparently to submit to Gates' authority as commanding general.

---

51. Schuyler Papers, ltr. Livingston to Schuyler, Sept. 24, 1777.

The text of this petition is not quoted, and the writer has been able to find no copy or quotation of it. In fact, neither Poor nor any of the other officers left any reference to the petition in any correspondence, diary, or memoir that has been studied.<sup>52</sup> The only reference found has been the letter quoted above.

Concerning the efforts of the general officers present to effect a reconciliation, Livingston wrote Schuyler on the twenty-fifth:

I mentioned in Letter, Yesterday that I was in hopes the General Officers would take some measures to prevent Genl. Arnold's leaving the Army --- When the matter was hushed, some thro' jealousy, others for fear of offending Gates, declined having anything to do in the in the dispute --- They all wish him to stay - but are too pusillanimous to declare their sentiments - There the matter rests --- Some indeed were weak enough to propose that Arnold should make concession and thus bring about a compromise --- His Spirit distains any thing of the kind --- He seems more determined than ever, & I fear will too soon put his resolution into Execution ---<sup>53</sup>

The last portion of the quotation is significant. Arnold would not entertain for one moment the idea of a compromise based upon any concession on his part. Although what he considered acceptable as a basis for a reconciliation is not spelled out, it appears that he required Gates' total submission to Arnold's contentions and his full admission of guilt and fault.

Some of the officers concerned in the effort to effect a reconciliation apparently believed Schuyler's friends were a source of trouble and undertook to relieve the tension by removing at least one of them. In his letter

---

52. All of the papers of contemporaries that are available have been studied in connection with this matter.

53. Ibid., ltr. Livingston to Schuyler, Sept. 25, 1777.

to Schuyler of September 26, Varick wrote:

As to the subject of Dispute between the gentlemen mentioned in yours, the inclosed from Major Livingston will inform you further. It seems that it is a Heart Sore to your success or that our Major should live with Arnold he has thrown out in an unmanly manner, that Arnold's Mind was poisoned by some of those about him, here I feel myself touched Altho' the person alluded to in Mine of (I think) the 19th ... Who affects great Friendship for You, was polite enough to tell Major Chester, Livingston's Antagonist, that the first step toward an accomodation, will be to get rid of Livingston.---This Arnold was informed of but disdains so ignoble an act. ---Livingston has too much Regard for his Country to remain, when by Sacrificing his own Pleasure he may possibly promote Its Wealth.--- This However, is but ostentation; As I conceive the Hint to be intended (by Gates friend) for me also; I shall avoid as much as possible going to Arnold's, least I may be the Ostensible Cause of Dispute. --- Livingston will go down to Morrow.--- And if there is no possibility of an Action by Saturday or Sunday I shall follow him. Tho it would give me more pleasure, if I can see Saratoga First.- This pleasure I fancy I should have this Day enjoyed, if Genl. Gates had either furnished Arnold with troops or on the 19th or permitted us to go out on the 20...<sup>54</sup>

Livingston's letter to Schuyler of September 26, gave the following account of this phase of the reconciliation effort:

It gives me pleasure to assure you that Genl. Arnold intends to stay ---When the Genl Officers found him determined to go, they thought it necessary to take some measures to induce his continuance with the Army --- They have accordingly wrote him a letter, (signed by all but Lincoln) requesting him not to quit the Service at this critical moment --- He has consented - tho' no accomodation has taken place ---

I find myself under the necessity of returning to Albany, & merely to satisfy the Caprice & jealousy of a certain great person. --- It has been several times insinuated by the Commander in chief to Genl. Arnold, that his mind had been poisoned & prejudiced by some of his family - And I have been pointed out as the person, who had this undue influence over him --- Arnold has always made proper replies on these occasions, & despised the Reflection --- But since the last Rupture, another Attempt has been made, in a low, indirect manner to

---

54. Ibid., ltr. Varick to Schuyler, September 25, 1777.

have me turned from Genl. Arnold's Family --- Major Chester, (who, by the bye is an impertinent Pedant) attempted to bring about a reconciliation --- For this purpose he consulted with the Dep: A Genl - And in the course of their conversations, was told that some overtures were necessary on Arnold's Side --- That Genl. Gates was jealous of me; & thought I had influenced Arnold's conduct --- that of course it was necessary to get rid of me to open a way for an accommodation --- When this was told to Arnold, he could scarcely contain himself & desired Chester to return for Answer - that his judgement had never been influenced by any Man & that he would not sacrifice a Friend to please the "Face of Clay" --- Arnold told me what had passed & insisted on my remaining with him --- As I find this cannot be done consistent with the Harmony of these two Gentlemen, I shall leave the Camp tomorrow --- I purposed to have set off today --- but Arnold insisted on my staying at least this day least it should appear like a concession on his part --- I shall take no pains to cure any one of their jealousies - but let their own feelings punish them --- 55

If Livingston's account was accurate, the general officers succeeded in persuading Arnold to remain, apparently hoping that a reconciliation could be arranged. Arnold, while agreeing to remain, refused to make any concessions that would represent a retreat from the position that he had assumed in his argument with Gates. According to Livingston, what was apparently another letter was addressed to Arnold by the generals, although no other contemporary reference to such a letter has been found.

Those interested in the reconciliation effort apparently believed that a basic cause of the friction between Gates and Arnold was Livingston's presence and influence and that his departure was requisite to a resolution of the general's disagreement.

Why Varick was not likewise named as well as Livingston is not clear, and the former seemed somewhat exercised because he was not so honored. Perhaps the officers involved in the attempted approachment knew more about the

---

55. Ibid., ltr. Livingston to Schuyler, Sept. 26, 1777.

character and activities of the two men and believed that Livingston was the more destructive of harmony.

For his part, Varick determined to partake in the honors, and wrote Schuyler on the 26th:

...I told Arnold this Mornng. I should leave Camp soon on that Account.- As Livingston does not leave Camp, till to Morrow, I believe We shall go in Company, unless I hear that something is in Agitation soon.- I am rather too great a Check on the Director Genl. & some of his associates, too staunch Friends to Gates to live with... 56

Just how Arnold felt about the threatened departure of Schuyler's partisans is not revealed beyond Livingston's statement; however, the same source may give a clue to what was the basic cause of his reluctance to seem him leave - a fear that it would be interpreted as a concession on Arnold's part.

In the meantime, the command situation remained in a very uneasy state with Arnold in camp, smarting under Gates' refusal to meet his terms. While Gates had relieved Arnold of the command of the left, a letter that Varick wrote Schuyler on September 24 indicates that Arnold refused to recognize such a transfer of command, for he informed Schuyler:

This Day Arnold observed Lincoln giving some Directions in his Division, He applied to him to know whether Gates had given Orders about It, was answered in the Negative; he told him that he (Arnold) tho't Lincoln's Division is Commnd. lay on the Right & that the left belonged to him & Gates ought to be in the Center, he requests Lincoln to Mention this to Gates & have It fixed. Arnold is determined not to suffer any one to Interfere in his Division & says it will be certain Death, to any Officer, who does, in Action If it be not settled before,- That Gates can't refuse him his Commnd. & he will not yield It Now as the Enemy are expected --- from this Declaration & to

---

56. Ibid., ltr. Varick to Schuyler, September 26, 1777.

thwart Gates' wish to have none but such as will Crouch to him  
& his Humours, in Camp, he will Remain, if I am not seriously  
Mistaken.--- 57

If Varick was accurate, this event was somewhat curious. Gates had informed Arnold that he would be replaced. Arnold knew that Gates could do so, and that he was present withing the Camp at the Commander's sufferance. The only explanation that would seem logical was that Arnold believed that Gates would not dare to transfer the command, and that he could successfully defy the commanding general.

The command structure was firmed up on the following day by the issuance of a general order assigning the command of the right wing to Lincoln and placing the left directly under Gates. 58

While Arnold remained in Camp and efforts were being made to bring about a reconciliation, Arnold, as if determined to exhibit his complete contempt for authority, bestowed a fifty dollar reward upon a soldier who had killed an Indian during the retreat from Fort Edward. This was in direct violation of policy, and Gates reprimanded him. Arnold seized upon the event to aggravate the quarrel, but Gates dropped the subject by accepting Arnold's explanation that he had been in temporary command at the time the reward was earned. 59

After Arnold decided to remain in Camp the situation remained potentially explosive, but relatively quiet. Arnold was ignored in so far as

---

57. Ibid., ltr. Varick to Schuyler, September 24, 1777.

58. Wilkinson, op. cit., p. 261.

59. Gates Papers, Library of Congress, ltr. Arnold to Gates, Sept. 27, 1777.

staff decisions were concerned, and he, in spite of his threats, exercised no command function, although he continued to make proposals that were ignored.

The controversy did credit to neither man. Arnold was pathologically sensitive concerning his honor and toward any criticism. His violent temper got out of control, and he behaved toward Gates in a manner that he would not have tolerated had their roles been reversed. Gates, while acting quite within his prerogatives as commanding general, might have been more considerate of Arnold's feeling.

Something has already been noted of Varick's and Livingston's roles in aggravating the quarrel. While, the evidence falls short of being conclusive, the writer believes that these two Schuyler proteges played upon Arnold's vanity, encouraged him in thinking that he had been slighted and insulted, and without apparent restraint from Schuyler, did all that they could to promote a rupture between the generals. They had hoped, and their correspondence with Schuyler reflects such a hope, that others would be drawn into the quarrel on Arnold's side to the end that Gates would be discredited. If they, and possibly Wilkinson, had stepped out of the scene, the two antagonists might have resolved their differences, rather than permitting themselves to become alienated over minor matters.

#### The Second Battle

While Gates and Arnold were involved in their controversy the British and Americans were facing one another, constructing fortifications, and marshalling their strength for the next battle. The American force was

---



being swollen by enforcements from the area militias, supplies were being collected and distributed, and decisions were being made.

Gates was faced with the choice between attacking Burgoyne, as some of his officers wished, or waiting for the British to make the next move. On the other side of the Middle Ravine Burgoyne had to decide whether to retreat or try to drive the Americans off Bemis Heights in order to advance.

Time was on Gates' side. The invader was short on rations, his supply line was long and in jeopardy, and winter was approaching. With every day the disparity between the relative strength of the armies increased. Burgoyne must do something to break the impasse.

On October 4, Burgoyne summoned Generals Fraser, Phillips, and von Riedesel to headquarters for a council of war. At that meeting Burgoyne proposed that, except for 800 men assigned as camp guards, the entire army would be committed to an attack on the American left and rear. Von Reidesel gave the following account of this proposal in his report to the Duke of Brunswick:

Den 4ten October zog der General Burgoyne ein Conseil zusammen, bestehend aus General Phillips, Major und Brigadier Fraser, und fragte um Rath, was in der Sache zu thun sei? proponierend, ob wir nicht der Feind durch eine Detour in seiner linken Flanke tourniren und im Rücken attackiren könnten? Da wir aber bei einer solchen Bewegung uns wenigstens 3 Tage ganzlich vom Wasser eloinniren müssten, so requirten wir alle Bagage und Provision zu verlieren, und dann gar nichts zu essen zu haben, weil nicht zu vermuthen stände, dass 2 Battalions den Vallon und das Ufer am Wasser 3 Tage defendiren könnten. Bei dieser Gelegenheit unterfind ich mich die Gefahr unserer Situation, wie Beilage anzeigen, vorzustellen, und auf die baldigste Retraite nach Ft. Edward zu dringen zumal wegen die wenigen Proviant der baldigen Ankunft des General Clinton. Immer aber von Hoffnung gehahet blieben wir stehen, und wurde fest gesetzt, den 7ten October eine Reconnaissance gegen den linken

---

fiendlichen Flügel vorzunehmen, und fände man alsdann solchen inattaquable, auf die Retraite ze denken.

Translation:

On the 4th of October General Burgoyne called a council of war, consisting of General Phillips, myself, and Brigadier Fraser, and asked us our advice on what should be done in this affair, proposing whether we could not by a roundabout way turn the enemy on his left flank and attack the rear. As by such a movement, however, we would have to remove ourselves from the water at least three whole days, we would risk losing all of the batteaux and provisions, and then have nothing at all to live on, because it wasn't to be expected that two battalions could defend the riverbank. On this occasion I attempted to present the danger of our situation, as the enclosure may show, and to urge a retreat to Ft. Edward as soon as possible, especially on account of the only slight possibility of the early arrival of General Clinton. However, we waited, nourished by hope and it was decided on the 7th of October to undertake a reconnaissance against the left wing of the enemy, and if it was found to be unattackable, to consider retreat. <sup>60</sup>

General Burgoyne, persuaded that he could not retreat and that Albany could be reached only by driving the Americans off Bemis Heights, undertook, in accordance with the plan decided upon, to flank the American camp.

Former Park Historian Charles E. Shedd, Jr., in an excellent study of the British general's objective, has set down the facts concerning what was attempted on October 7. <sup>61</sup> From Mr. Shedd's study, it is clear that the British hoped to seize a position west of the camp, infiltrate it, and drive the Americans from the heights.

Arnold, without command status, found himself excluded from the preparations for battle as Gates ordered Morgan to meet the enemy, followed by Dearborn, and Learned's and Poor's brigades. Wilkinson related that

---

60. Letter from Reidesel to the Duke of Brunswick, Oct. 21, 1777, Bancroft Collection, NYPL.

61. Shedd, Charles E., Jr., Burgoyne's Objective in the Second Battle of Saratoga, October 7, 1777, December 15, 1952.

"in the progress of the engagement he rode about the camp betraying great agitation and wrath..." 62

The American interception in the fields of the Barber Farm succeeded in preventing Burgoyne from achieving his objective, and the battle was joined. Both commanders committed additional troops, and it became clear that the climatic battle was being fought.

Under the weight of the American charge the right flank of the attacking force began to give way, and its commander, Brigadier Fraser, was mortally attempting to rally his men. 63

Poor's brigade attacked the British left and Hamilton, unable to resist the vigor of the charge, began to withdraw toward the fortification now called the Balcarres Redoubt.

Sometime after Learned's brigade was committed against the enemy's center, composed of German troops under von Riedesel, the most dramatic event of the day occurred. Arnold, without warning and without command, dashed onto the field and joined Learned's brigade as it struggled to drive back the stubbornly resisting Germans.

Contemporary sources fail to indicate the time of Arnold's appearance, either by reference to the clock or to the stage of the fighting. Wilkinson related the following concerning the event:

---

62. Wilkinson, op. cit., vol. I, p. 273.

63. Luzader, John F., Documentary Study of the Death and Burial of General Simon Fraser, May 1, 1958, pp. 23-33.

...at length he was found on the field of battle exercising command, but not by the order or permission of General Gates. His conduct was exceedingly rash and intermperate; and he exposed himself with great folly and temerity, at the time we were engaged front to front with the Germans...<sup>64</sup>

Nearly every writer on the Saratoga campaign has repeated, in one form or another, the story of Arnold's ride onto the field in the midst of the battle. However, one of the participants in the action, Major Henry Dearborn, commander of Morgan's light infantry, related that: "As usual the light troops advanced and received orders from General Arnold to file to the left and ascend the eminence and then advance to meet any part of the enemy that might be moving in that direction."<sup>65</sup>

The two accounts thus differ radically concerning whether Arnold took an immediate hand in the activity of the day or injected himself into the scene after the fighting had developed. Wilkinson's account seems to receive support from what is known of the events that preceded the second battle, i.e., that Arnold had been relieved of his command. If Arnold was thus without command, it would seem strange that he would have been permitted to give, within the camp, the initial orders for the attack on the British; unless, of course, he acted without authority, and forced Gates into fighting a pitched battle, which in the absence of support from other sources, seems unlikely. It could be that Dearborn, writing in 1815, had some lapses of memory, and was confusing the first and second battles. Of

---

64. Wilkinson, op. cit., vol. I, p. 273.

65. Dearborn, Henry, A Narrative of the Saratoga Campaign, Fort Ticonderoga Library.

course the same could be said of Wilkinson. However, the latter apparently prepared his work from very full notes made soon after the event, while Dearborn's Journal is not detailed and does not explicitly support his statement concerning Arnold's early exercise of command. While Wilkinson was unsavory enough to arouse suspicion, his account of the battles stands up well when compared with other, more respectable sources.

Another participant, Samuel Woodruff, a staunch admirer of Arnold, related in 1827 that:

Having introduced the name of Arnold, it may be proper to note here that although he had no regular command that day, he volunteered his services, was early on the ground and in the hottest part of the struggle at the redoubts. 66

These representative statements of contemporaries are typical of the disagreement that exists in all sources referring to Arnold, however, Dearborn is the only one that has been studied that states that Arnold functioned in a command capacity from the beginning of the action on October 7.

As has been noted, secondary sources all relate, with variations, the story of Arnold's wild ride onto the field in the midst of the battle. Isaac Arnold wrote that, unable to restrain himself as the sounds of combat became louder, Arnold turned to his aide-de-camp and cried, "No man shall keep me in my tent to-day. If I am without command, I will fight in the ranks; but the soldiers, God bless them, will follow my lead. Come on-victory or death." 67

---

66. Stone, Visits to Saratoga Battle-Grounds, p. 226.

67. Arnold, Isaac, Benedict Arnold, Chicago, 1882, p. 198.

An effort to determine at what stage in the battle Arnold appeared on the field has not resulted in any conclusive proof. Contemporary accounts are silent on the subject, and a variety of times may be inferred, depending upon how one interprets the information. This writer is inclined to believe that Arnold joined the fight after the initial American assault forced the British right to withdraw, at about the time, or shortly after, Fraser was mortally wounded while attempting to effect a rally. This belief is based upon a close study of former Park Historian Charles W. Snell's Troop Movement Map, October 7, 1777, and upon the time factors that appear inherent in action of this type. However, on the basis of what has been discovered by research accomplished, no definite statement can be made.

All of the sources, original and secondary, that relate the story of Arnold's appearance agree that he joined Learned's brigade, a part of the division that had formerly been Arnold's, who were facing Riedesel's Germans, the British center. <sup>68</sup>

Some writers have stated that his presence in connection with this brigade was especially effective because the command included Connecticut troops who were old neighbors of Arnold's, namely Latimore's Regiment of Connecticut Militia. <sup>69</sup> This was not likely to have been the case because Latimore's unit was a part of Poor's brigade. <sup>70</sup>

---

68. Map, Troop Movement Map, October 7, 1777, NHP-SAR 2015, Jan. 24, 1951.

69. Decker, Malcolm, Benedict Arnold, Son of the Havens, Wm. Abbott Tarrytown, NY, 1932, p. 265.

70. Emmett Collection, New York Public Library, Em 4339.

It would be interesting to have the impressions of the soldiers who witnessed Arnold's ride onto the field; however, few of the diaries and letters of the common soldier have survived or been located. Yet, one may put himself in the soldier's place and imagine the surprise that would be experienced at seeing a division commander in the lines. The soldier no doubt realized that the General had been relieved; but seeing him assume command, he probably supposed that the situation had changed and Arnold was again in command of his old division. On the other hand, a battle was being fought, Arnold ranked any man on the field, and this was no time to unduly concerned with the actions of the brass.

Arnold's activities after he joined the troops are shrouded in uncertainty. No contemporary account gives any detail concerning where he went, what he did, and the sequence of events. Not is this strange; the individual soldier's perspective was limited to his immediate vision, and he was busy enough to preclude any effort to follow the wild career of any general. Secondary sources relate how he dashed from place to place, that he struck a company officer with his sword without realizing it, and was the immediate cause of the break in the German line and the retreat that followed. 71

Whatever Arnold may have done, the Germans, their right uncovered by the withdrawal of Fraser's command, and their left exposed by Hamilton's retreat, and faced by Learned's men, led by Arnold, withdrew, joining their fellows in the fortifications on the Freeman Farm.

---

71. 1. Descker, op. cit., pp. 265-268.  
2. Nickerson, op. cit., p. 362.

A part of Learned's brigade, with Arnold, joined other elements from Poor's brigade in attacking the British strong point, the Balcarres Redoubt. According to Anburey:

...the Americans stormed with great fury the post of the light infantry, under the command of Lord Balcarres, rushing close to the lines, under a severe fire of grape-shot, and small arms. This post was defended with great spirit, and the enemy, led on by General Arnold, as gallantly assaulted the works; but on the General's being wounded, the enemy were repulsed, which was not till after dark. 72

In a letter to Lord Germaine, dated October 20, 1777, Burgoyne wrote of this attack:

The troops had scarcely entered the camp when it was stormed with great fury, the enemy rushing to the lines under a severe fire of grape-shot and small arms. The post of the light infantry, under Lord Balcarres assisted by some of the line, which threw themselves by order into the trench, was defended with great spirit, and the enemy led on by General Arnold was finally repulsed... 73

Hoyt wrote concerning the attack:

These elevations were occupied by Lord Balcarres' light infantry after their retreat from the first position... the battle of the 7th of October, and here; towards the close of the day, Arnold with Poor's and Patterson's brigades, made his desperate attack, and was repulsed, and he, with his horse, entangled in the surrounding abattis, from which, with the utmost difficulty, he extricated himself while under a heavy fire of grape and cannister from the British batteries. 74

---

72. Anburey, op. cit., p. 261.

73. Germaine Papers, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Saratoga Microfilm, No. 20.

74. Stone, Visits to Saratoga Battle-Grounds, p. 195.



In his Story of Old Saratoga, Brandow related:

The British in retreating to their defense were hotly pursued through the woods by the Americans, who assailed the front and entire right flank of Fraser's camp...He [Arnold] drove the enemy through and beyond the abatis at the point of the bayonet and then made desperate attempts to scale the works, but was finally beaten off with loss. This place proved to be a veritable "bloody angle" to the Americans, because in assaulting the redoubt they found themselves exposed to the fire of a strong battery shotted with grape and cannister, and with little shelter to themselves save stumps and brush... 75

In the The Turning Point of the Revolution, Nickerson related:

Arnold and the Americans already engaged, following the fugitives, arrived opposite Balcarres' post and promptly attacked. Although without artillery they pressed forward through a heavy fire both of musketry and of grapeshot from the British cannon... Under his leadership [Arnold's] the abatis in front of Balcarres' line was stormed and a determined attack made upon the breast-works themselves. Nevertheless their strength, together with the fact that Balcarres' light infantry had been reinforced by the survivors of the reconnoitering detachment, brought the assault to a stand. 76

The assault of the Balcarres Redoubt had been a spontaneous move, without prior arrangement or plan. Arnold and the units he led merely pursued the enemy into their refuge, and, acting upon impulse, stormed it repeatedly. Their charge was costly and futile, and beyond occupying the energies of the defenders, something that could have been done with equal effect and fewer losses, contributed nothing to the outcome of the battle. In fact, the position was so strong that there was little likelihood that the Americans would have been able to carry it, even if their

---

75. Brandow, John H., The Story of Old Saratoga, Albany, 1919, p. 147.

76. Nickerson, op. cit., p. 366.

forces had been fresh and more numerous. This particular fortification was probably five hundred yards long with walls that may have been twelve to fourteen feet high, built of logs covered with earth. The front was protected by an abattis; and a portion lay on a ridge, adding several feet to the total height of the redoubt. <sup>77</sup> According to William C. Wilkinson, the fortification mounted eight cannon, and Riedesel said that it was garrisoned with 1500 men. <sup>78</sup>

That the Americans knew something about the position from reconnaissance is indicated by a letter from Varick to Schuyler, dated September 25, which described the redoubt as "a work of 12 or 14 feet high..." <sup>79</sup> Thus the attack on the Balcarres Redoubt was not the result of sound tactical thinking. Souder, and apparently what would have been done if Arnold and the men had not been carried away by the impetus of the movement, would have been the pinning down of the troops in the redoubt while an assault would be made against weaker portions of the line.

Such a tactic was being employed against the right anchor of the British fortified line, the position now called the Breymann Redoubt for Lieutenant Colonel Fredrich Breymann, who commanded there.

While the major portion of the American effort was being expended against the Balcarres Redoubt some troops of Learned's brigade and Morgan's

- 
77. 1. Snell, Charles W., A Report on the Balcarres and Breymann Redoubts, Feb. 2, 1949.  
2. Ehrich, Robert, Progress Report, Archeological Program, Saratoga National Historical Park, pp. 28-32.
78. 1. Map, The Encampment and Position of the Army under Lt. General Burgoyne at Sword's House and Freeman's Farm on Hudson's River near Stillwater, 1777.  
2. Riedesel, Journal.
79. Schuyler Papers, ltr. Varick to Schuyler, Sept. 25, 1777.

Corp were preparing to attack the fortification held by Breymann and some two hundred men who had not been committed to repel the Americans at the former site. Intervisual with the Balcarres' fortification, Breymenn's was about two hundred yards long, constructed of logs laid horizontally, supported by upright pickets. The walls were about seven or eight feet high, with an opening about ten inches wide at a suitable height to permit the discharge of small arms. In the center was a sally port, with a traverse in the rear. Two embrasures on the right shielded a like number of cannons. 80

Between the two redoubts were two small works, probably log houses, manned by Canadian provincial troops.

Thus, the right anchor of the Burgoyne line, inherently weaker than its neighbor, and so located as to provide a field of fire into the right and rear of the British camp, was a sound objective, whose seizure would materially affect the outcome of the action. Its value had not escaped the attention of various of the American officers, and preparations were being made for its envelopment and capture.

Wilkinson tells the story of the capture of this point as follows:

I then proceeded to the scene of renewed action, which embraced Burgoyne's right flank defence, and extending to his left, crossed a hollow covered with wood, about 40 rods to the entrenchment of the light infantry; the roar of cannon and small arms at this juncture was sublime, between the enemy behind their works, and our troops entirely exposed, or partially sheltered by trees, stumps, or hollows, at various distances not exceeding 120 yards. This right flank defence of the enemy, occupied by the German corps of Breymann, consisted of a breast-work of rails piled horizontally

---

80. 1. Snell, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.  
2. Ehrich, *op. cit.*

between perpendicular pickets, driven into the earth, formed en potence to the rest of his line, and extended about 250 yards across an open field, and was covered on the right by a battery of two guns. The interval from the left to the British light infantry was committed to the defense of the provincialists, who occupied a couple of log cabins. The Germans were encamped behind the rail breast-work, and the ground in front of it inclined in a very gentle slope for about 120 yards, when it sunk abruptly; our troops had formed a line under this declivity, and covered breast high were warmly engaged with the Germans. From this position, about sunset, I perceived Brigadier-general Learned advancing towards the enemy with his brigade, in open column, I think with Colonel Brooks, who commanded it, near the General when I rode up to him; on saluting the brave old soldier, he inquired, "where can I put in with most advantage." I had particularly examined the ground between the left of the Germans and the light infantry, occupied by the provincialists, from whence I had observed a slack fire; I therefore recommended to General Learned to incline to his right, and attack at that point: he did so with great gallantry; the provincialists abandoned their position and fled; the German flank was by this means uncovered; they were assaulted vigorously, overturned in five minutes, and retreated in disorder, leaving their gallant commander, Lieutenant-colonel Breymann, dead on the field. By dislodging this corps, the whole British encampment was laid open to us; but the extreme darkness of the night, the fatigue of the men, and the disorder incident to undisciplined troops after so desultory an action, put it out of our power to improve the advantage; and in the course of the night General Burgoyne broke up his camp, and retired to his original position, which he had fortified behind the great ravine. <sup>81</sup>

Recalling Arnold's role in the attack on the Breymann Redoubt, Wilkinson related:

...soon after this incident he finding himself on our right, dashed to the left through the fire of the two lines and escaped unhurt; he then turned to the right of the enemy, as I was informed by that excellent officer, Colonel Butler, and collecting 15 or 20 riflemen threw himself with his party into the rear of the enemy, just as they gave way, where his leg was broke, and his horse killed under him; but whether by our fire or that of the enemy, as they fled from us, has never been ascertained. <sup>82</sup>

---

81. Wilkinson, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 271-272.

82. Ibid., p. 273.

Rufus Putnam, who commanded a Massachusetts regiment during the engagement and was a participant in the attack, wrote:

Storming of the works of the German reserve on the 7th of October 1777.

The facts are as follows, in the front of these works was a clear open field bounded by a wood at a distance of about 120 yards. In the skirt of this wood I was posted with the 5th and 6th regiments of Massachusetts - the right and left of these works were partly covered by this wood and the rear by a thick wood. The moment orders were given to Storm, I moved rapidly across the open field & entered the works in front, I believe the same moment that the troops of Learned's Brigade (in which Jackson's regiment was) entered on the left and rear. I immediately formed the two regiments under my command & moved out of these woods [works] (which were not enclosed in the rear) into the woods toward the enemies enclosed redoubt on the right of their main encampment. 83

Henry Dearborn recalled the attack in the following words:

...Our troops pursued, and after dislodging those who occupied their outworks, Gen'l Poor with his brigade advanced to the main works of Frasers Camp, while Arnold with the light troops and several of the Regts of the line, assaulted the German intrenched camp (which was on the right of Frasers') and carried it with the loss of but few men not exceeding 20. The camp with the tents and baggage and a considerable number of prisoners fell into our hands. This was a few minutes after sunset. The assault was commenced by the advance of Arnold with about 200 men through a cops (sic) of wood which covered the Enemies (sic) right, the appearance of Arnold on the right was the signal for us advance and assault the front. The whole was executed in the most spirited and prompt manner and as soon as the Enemy had given us one fire, he fell back from his works to his line of tents, and as we entered he gave way and retreated in confusion. When Arnold entered on the right he ordered the Enemy to lay down their arms. A platoon fired upon him, killed his horse and wounded the Gen'l in the same leg that was shattered at Quebec. His horse fell upon the other leg, and as we entered at the same moment, seeing his situation, I assisted in extricating him from it by removing his horse. I asked him if he was badly wounded. He replied, in the same leg and wished the ball had passed his heart. 84

---

83. Putnam, Rufus, Memoirs of Rufus Putnam, Rowena Buell ed., Boston, 1903, p. 67.

84. Dearborn, op. cit.

Thus Dearborn's account differs substantially from all others of the action. He makes no mention of Arnold's participating in the attack on the Balcarres Redoubt, indicating that General Poor commanded there. In fact, he fixed the launching of the assault on that position as simultaneous with, or perhaps subsequent to the attack on Breyman.

The explanation may lie in the fact that Dearborn, like Wilkinson, wrote more than three decades after the event; but, unlike Wilkinson, the internal evidence does not indicate that the narrative was based upon a very full set of contemporaneous notes.

Turning to contemporary British and German accounts, we find that Burgoyne wrote:

...unhappily the intrenchments of the German reserve, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Breyman, who was killed, were carried and although ordered to be recovered, they were never so, and the enemy by that misfortune, gained an opening on our right rear. The night put an end to the action. <sup>85</sup>

Riedesel reported that while the Balcarres Position was still under attack an assault carried the Breyman Redoubt. He wrote his sovereign:

...Zugl<sup>u</sup>cher Zeit attaquirte derselbe das Retranchment vom Oberstlieut. Breyman, welches sich lange heilt, da aber dieser todtgeschossen wurde, und der Fiend ihm im R<sup>u</sup>cken kam, so emportirte der Fiend das Retranchment and bekam Zelte and Equipage. Der grossest Theil der Leute aber ist gerettet worden. Der Oberst. Lieut. v. Spath der mit 40 Mann dem Oberstlieut Breyman secundiren wollte, wurde in die Nacht f<sup>u</sup>r seine Person mit 10 Mann umringt, und gefangen genommen, and damit h<sup>o</sup>rte diese ungl<sup>u</sup>ckliche Affair auf.

Translation:

---

85. Burgoyne, op. cit., Appendix XIV, p. II.

...at the same time the latter attacked the entrenchment of Colonel Breymann, which was held for a long time, but the latter was shot dead, and the enemy came in at the rear, in that manner the enemy captured the entrenchment, tents, and equipment. The larger part of the men, however, was saved. Colonel von Speth, who wanted to help Colonel Breymann, with forty men, was himself surrounded in the night by ten men and taken prisoner, and with that this unfortunate affair was ended.<sup>86</sup>

In his Memoirs the Baron recalled:

Another body at the same time attacked the embankments of Breymann's division in front and on the left flank. The grenadiers composing this corps fought bravely, but being only two hundred strong, and their commander-the chivalric Breymann-beign shot dead, they were compelled to retreat. This latter misfortune was owing to the fact that the Canadian companies, belonging to the reconnoitering expedition, were absent from their place by the side of this corps, part of them being in the great redoubt, and the others not having returned to their position. Had they been in their places it would have been impossible to surround the left flank of Breymann.<sup>87</sup>

Captain Georg Pausch of the Hess-Hanau Artiller wrote:

In this confused retreat, all made for our camp and our lines. The entrenchment of Breymann was furiously assailed; the camp set fire and burned...<sup>88</sup>

Later accounts embellished the story of the storming of the Breymann Redoubt with stilted conversations and an account of how Arnold interposed to spare the life of a young grenadier who was about to kill him.

A reconstruction of the story of the attack on Breymann is not entirely devoid of difficulty. The evidence that has been studied indicates that while Arnold was involved in the effort to take the Balcarres Redoubt a decision was made to attack the Breymann fortification. The early portion

---

86. Bancroft Collection, ltr. Riedesel to Duke of Brunswick, Oct. 21, 1777.

87. Riedesel, Frederick, Memoirs, Vol. I, p. 164.

88. Pausch, Georg, Journal, p. 172.

of this effort was directed toward pinning the troops in the redoubt to their position while the Canadians on Breyman's left were driven from the cabins that they were occupying. As soon as the latter were driven out, a two way assault was launched-one body, apparently the larger hit the front of the fortification somewhat left of center; another party, composed of elements from Learned's brigade, went around the left flank of the redoubt and into the rear. It was to the latter that Arnold attached himself when he rode from in front of the Balcarres Redoubt. It should be remembered that pressure continued to be exercised on the latter position, apparently under Poor's direction, and that Arnold simply left those troops to join the forces attacking Breyman.

The carrying of the Breyman Redoubt did not pose any particularly difficult problem. The attackers included units from Learned's brigade, the 5th and 6th Massachusetts Regiments, Morgan's riflemen, including Dearborn's light infantry, and probably other troops that had become separated from their commands during the course of the action. Opposing them were the two hundred men who remained in the fortification, and there is some indication that these were preparing to withdraw even before the attack was launched.

#### Conclusion

As was noted in the beginning of this study, this is a preliminary rather than a definitive report of the research that has been undertaken. There are undoubtedly other primary sources that the writer has not had an opportunity to examine, and it is hoped that those who review this material will be able to advise him concerning the possibility of such sources.

---



Because an evaluation of Arnold's role in the Battles of Saratoga was one of the objectives of this report, an effort to accomplish that will be made; although the writer is aware that subsequent research and study may modify or revise that evaluation.

Most writers on Saratoga have followed the lead of Richard Varick and Henry B. Livingston in crediting Arnold with the defeat of Burgoyne. This writer is not in complete agreement with that interpretation. On the basis of the materials that he has studied, he believes that there is substantial doubt that Arnold did any more during the first battle than to carry out Gate's orders, as Arnold's letter indicates. In fact, the battles gave evidence of slight overall direction by anyone. It was an engagement directed by brigade and regimental commanders, and was fought in a piece-meal fashion, without any general strategy beyond Gates' determination to keep the route to Albany closed to Burgoyne. No effort was made to keep von Riedesel from moving off the river road against the American right flank on the Freeman Farm, and the colonial effort was somewhat dissipated by Dearborn's and Cilley's failure to deliver their troops against the main British effort. On the basis of what seems to be the preponderance of evidence, Arnold was not active on the field, perhaps because Gates forbade his being for fear that Arnold would overcommit the troops in a costly and futile attack that would defeat Gates' ends.

The Arnold-Gates controversy did little credit to anyone involved, and Arnold, knowingly or otherwise, lent himself to a mutinous activity that might easily have been disastrous.

---

When one considers the second battle, the evidence is more confused and less easily interpreted. It may have been that Arnold's appearance on the field supplied the impetus that Learned's troops needed to drive the Germans into retreat, as Nickerson states. However, even this is subject to question. The retreat of Fraser's men on the right and Hamilton's brigade on the left had exposed both flanks of the German, and there was nothing for them to do but withdraw. There is also the possibility that Arnold appeared after the retreat began, rather than before. That is just one of the questions left unanswered by the research.

As for the assault on the Balcarres Redoubt, it was futile and costly, with the Americans realizing nothing from their effort. The enemy remained strong at that point, and if the Breymann Redoubt had not fallen, could have held their position as long as strategic considerations justified.

The fall of the Breymann Redoubt was, of course, the climax of the battle. Its fall opened the British fortified camp to fire into the right and rear, rendering Burgoyne's position untenable. The evidence, although inconclusive, seems to indicate that Arnold had no part in deciding that the redoubt should be attempted. He apparently joined the attack either just prior to its launching or after it was under way, and the latter seems more probable.

It may be that Arnold's presence and leadership on the field during the second battle turned the tide. However, it seems appropriate to invoke the old Scottish judicial rendition, "not proved."

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

- Anburey, Thomas, Travels Through the Interior Parts of America, Houghton Mifflin Company, Cambridge, 1923, 2 vols.
- Bancroft Collection of Riedesel Materials, New York Public Library
- Boardman, Oliver, Journal of Oliver Boardman of Middleton, 1777, Hartford, 1899.
- Burgoyne, John, The State of the Expedition from Canada, printed for J. Almon, London, 1780.
- Cross, Ralph, The Journal of Ralph Cross, of Newburyport, who commanded The Essex Regiment at the surrender of Burgoyne in 1777. From the original manuscript. Published in Historical Magazine, January, 1870, vol. 17.
- Dearborn, Henry, A Narrative of the Saratoga Campaign, Fort Ticonderoga Library.
- Dearborn, Henry, Journal, Boston, 1823.
- Emmett Collection, NYPL.
- Gates Papers, Library of Congress.
- Gates Papers, NYPL.
- Germaine Papers, William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Mich.
- Glover, John, Memoir, edited by Wm. P. Upham, Historical Collections of the Essex Institute, Salem, Mass., 1864.
- Jared Sparks Collection, Widener Library, Harvard University.
- Livingston Papers, NYPL.
- Pausch, Georg, Journal of Captain Pausch, Translated by Wm. L. Stone, Munsell's Sons, Albany, 1886.
- Putnam, Rufus, Memoirs of Rufus Putnam, edited by Rowena Buell, Boston, 1903.
- Riedesel, Friedrich, Leben und Wirken des Herzoglich Braunschweigschen General-lieutenants Friedrich Adolph Riedesel, edited by Max von Eeliking, Leipzig, 1856, 3 vols.

U. S. Congress, Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, edited from the Original Records, Library of Congress, U. S. Government Printing Office, 1904-37, 34 vols.

Varick Papers, NYPL.

Warren, Benjamin, "Diary of Captain Benjamin Warren", edited by David E. Alexander, Journal of American History, 1909, vol. 3.

Wilkinson, James, Memoirs of My Own Times, printed by Abraham Small, Philadelphia, 1816, 3 vols.

#### Secondary Sources

Arnold, Isaac, "Arnold at Saratoga", Magazine of American History, May 1879, vol. 3.

Arnold, Isaac, The Life of Benedict Arnold, Jansen, McClurg, and Company, Chicago, 1880.

Bancroft, George, History of the United States, Boston, 1837-74, 10 vols.

Botta, Charles, History of the War of Independence of the United States of America, L. Candee, New Haven, 1842, translated from Italian by Geo. Otis, 2 vols.

Bowen, Francis, Life of Benjamin Lincoln, Major-General in the Army of the Revolution, Chas. C. Little, & James Brown, Boston, 1847.

Brandow, John H., The Story of Old Saratoga, Albany, 1918.

Carrington, Henry B., Battles of the American Revolution, 1775-1781, A. S. Barnes, Chicago, 1876.

Channing, Edward, A History of the United States, Harpers, New York, 1906-25, 6 vols.

Decker, Malcolm, Benedict Arnold, Son of the Havens, Wm. Abbatt, Tarrytown, 1932.

Fiske, John, The American Revolution, Boston, 1891, 2 vols.

Fortesque, John W., A History of the British Army, Macmillan Co., New York, 1899-1930, 14 vols.

Flexner, James T., The Traitor and the Spy, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1953.

- Fuller, J. F. C., Decisive Battles of the U. S. A., Harper Bros., New York, 1942.
- Graham, James, The Life of General Daniel Morgan of the Virginia Line of the Army of the United States, Derby and Jackson, New York, 1859.
- Lossing, Benson, Life of General Schuyler, Harper Bros., New York, 3 vols.
- Montross, Lynn, Rag, Tag and Bobtail, The Story of the Continental Army, Harpers, New York, 1950.
- Nickerson, Hoffman, The Turning Point of the Revolution, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1928.
- Patterson, S. W., Horatio Gates, Defender of American Liberties, Columbia University Press, New York, 1941.
- Sherwin, Oscar, Benedict Arnold, Patriot and Traitor, Century Company, New York, 1931.
- Stevens, John A., "Benedict Arnold and His Apologist", Magazine of American History, March, 1880, vol. 4.
- Ward, Christopher, The War of the Revolution, Macmillan Company, New York, 1952, 2 vols.

#### Documentary Studies

- Ehrich, Robert, Progress Report, Archeological Program, Saratoga National Historical Park, 1941.
- Luzader, John F., Documentary Study of the Death and Burial of General Simon Fraser, May, 1958.
- Luzader, John F., Historic Building Survey, John Neilson House, Part I, Saratoga National Historical Park.
- Shedd, Charles E., Burgoyne Objective in the Second Battle of Saratoga October 7, 1777, December 15, 1952.
- Snell, Charles W., A Report of the Balcarres and Breymann Redoubts, Feb. 2, 1949.
- Snell, Charles W., A Report on the American Fortified Camp at Bemis Heights, September 12, October 8, 1777.

Maps

Troops Movement Map, October 7, 1777, NHP, SAR 2015, Jan. 24, 1951.

The Encampment and Position of the Army under Lt. General Burgoyne at Sword's House and Freeman's Farm on Hudson's River near Stillwater, 1777.