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HUBBARDTON BATTLEFIELD STATE HISTORIC SITE

One of the most successful rear guard actions in American history, the Battle of Hubbardton was the only Revolutionary War battle fought entirely in Vermont.

During the early morning hours of July 7, 1777, British General John Burgoyne's army met the resistance and bravery of Americans for the first time in the Battle of Hubbardton.

A massive British invasion from Canada chased the Continental Army from [Mount Independence](#) south to Hubbardton. The British strategy was to continue to New York and divide New England from the rest of the colonies.

The advancing British were seasoned Regulars. The Green Mountain Boys stayed behind to slow down the Redcoats so that the main force could retreat.

On a grassy hill, the scrappy New Englanders made their stand. While the British held the field and technically won the battle, their losses were so heavy that they gave up chasing the Americans to tend to their casualties.

The Battle of Hubbardton marked the beginning of the end for Burgoyne and his great plan.

On August 16 he suffered a stunning blow at the [Battle of Bennington](#). Soon after, Burgoyne wrote about the people of Vermont as "the most active and most rebellious race on the continent" and that they were "hanging like a gathering storm" on his left.

On October 17, 1777, after the battles of Saratoga, Burgoyne surrendered with his entire Army.



Military historians note that of all the Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields in the US, the Hubbardton Battlefield most resembles the period in which the battle took place.

THE BATTLE

During the early morning hours of July 7, 1777, one of the most successful rear guard actions in the annals of American history was fought in the green hills of Hubbardton. The Battle of Hubbardton was the only Revolutionary War battle that took place entirely on Vermont soil. In June of 1777 British Lieutenant General John Burgoyne's forces pressed southward from Canada on Lake Champlain, as part of Burgoyne's plan to split off New England from the rest of the American colonies.

As they closed in on Fort Ticonderoga and Mount Independence in Orwell, Vermont, American Major General Arthur St. Clair made the difficult decision to withdraw from these forts and save his troops for a future encounter. About 4,000 American soldiers left hurriedly under the cover of darkness the night of July 5 and 6. The main army, with Colonel Ebenezer Francis and a small protective guard to the rear, moved southeast along the very rough and narrow Mount Independence-Hubbardton military road.

When St. Clair and his exhausted men had marched over 20 miles, reaching the hills of Hubbardton, he transferred a number of soldiers from his main army to the rear guard. The main army would continue their southward retreat and the rear guard, now numbering 1,000 to 1,200 men, would protect them from the pursuing British.

Rear guards were a standard military security strategy to protect retreating troops. The mission of a rear guard is to delay the enemy in their pursuit, force the enemy to deploy all their forces in action with the rear guard, engage the enemy in such a way as to avoid close combat, and to withdraw safely as soon as possible.

Colonel Seth Warner led the expanded American rear guard. It consisted of his Green Mountain Boy Continental regiment and some militia; Colonel Francis leading a portion of his Massachusetts Continental regiment and selected units from other regiments; and Colonel Nathan Hale with his 2nd New Hampshire Continental Regiment and a number of sick and stragglers. The advancing British were seasoned Regulars, superior to the Americans in training, experience, and equipment. They consisted of Brigadier General Simon Fraser, one of Burgoyne's best line officers, and his elite Advance Corps; Major Robert Grant with his 24th Regiment of Foot; Major Alexander Lindsay leading the British light infantry; Major John Acland with the British grenadiers; and Major General Baron von Riedesel and his German Brunswick troops.

As darkness turned to dawn the sultry morning of July 7, Warner's rear guard was encamped in the vicinity of what is now called Monument Hill. The exhausted men were resting before continuing south to join St. Clair's troops at Castleton.

At 5:00 a.m. American pickets in the saddle near Sargent Hill, to the northwest of Monument Hill, spotted approaching British scouts. The pickets fired, and moved back to join their main body. By 6:30, as the first British soldiers reached Sucker Brook, the American delaying companies started firing-killing Major Grant and 21 others. Thus began the Battle of Hubbardton, the first time Burgoyne's army met the resistance and bravery of Americans in battle.

Some of the American rear guard moved to a strategic defensive location atop Monument Hill, which they had prepared the day before by cutting down trees so the tangle of outstretched branches faced the enemy. The British attacked the hill, but were repulsed and forced back to their former position.

The Americans returned to the hilltop and again the British attacked and were repulsed. The battle continued on as the British tried to encircle the Americans, who consolidated their position behind a brush fence on the east side of the road to Castleton. British General Fraser realized he needed reinforcements to win the battle and sent word to von Riedesel, following behind, to join him.

British grenadiers, trying to keep the rear guard from retreating southward, scrambled up the rugged Pittsford Ridge mountain, well to the east beyond the fence, and formed a human barrier across the road and up the mountain. By 8:30 a.m. von Riedesel's Brunswickers had arrived, with a band playing loudly and soldiers singing hymns. They attacked the American northern flank, which was just about to trap the British on their left. In the fierce fighting on the mountain

Colonel Francis was killed. The rest of the American rear guard withdrew as best as they could over Pittsford Ridge. There was occasional gunfire along the ridge for some time, but by 8:45 a.m. the battle was over.

The American rear guard had successfully accomplished its mission. It fully deployed the pursuing British, delaying them long enough so St. Clair and his main army could safely retreat southward. These soldiers also skillfully disengaged from their enemy, fighting the British to a near standstill, and avoiding further American casualties and pursuit. The British held the field after the fighting was over and in technical terms won the battle, but their losses were so heavy that General Fraser gave up chasing St. Clair and his army. Instead, the British stayed at Hubbardton for several days to care for the wounded and to bury their own dead. They left the American dead on the field, and brought the wounded and prisoners north to Mount Independence and Fort Ticonderoga.

The Battle of Hubbardton involved approximately 2,130 troops-1,000 to 1,200 Americans, 850 British, and 180 Germans. It resulted in the deaths of 41 American, 50 British, and 10 German soldiers. Of the 244 wounded 96 were American, 134 British, and 14 German. The British took 234 American prisoners. Total casualties, including prisoners, were roughly 27 percent of all participating troops.

This battle was the beginning of the end for Burgoyne and his great military plan. On August 16 he suffered a stunning blow when Brigadier General John Stark led American forces to defeat two detachments of Burgoyne's army sent to capture much needed supplies at the American arsenal in Bennington, Vermont. Soon after the Battle of Bennington Burgoyne wrote about the people of Vermont as "the most active and most rebellious race on the continent" and that they were hanging "like a gathering storm" on his left. On October 17, 1777, after the battles of Saratoga, he surrendered with his entire Army.

The full history of the Hubbardton Battle is skillfully retold in the book by Colonel John Williams, *The Battle of Hubbardton, The American Rebels Stem the Tide*.

THE HISTORIC SITEER

After the British removed from the battlefield to Mount Independence and Ticonderoga, some local residents who had fled their homes came back to Hubbardton and buried the American dead. Others collected arms left on the field. In September 1777 the Vermont Council of Safety issued an order to deliver any arms and accoutrements recovered from the Hubbardton battlefield, for which the bearers would be paid.

The battlefield returned to farm use in peacetime and a house was built near where the monument would be placed. A local commission erected the battle monument in 1859. In 1937 the Vermont legislature created the Hubbardton Battlefield Commission, which began purchasing battlefield land. The Board of Historic Sites, created by the legislature in 1947, took over the duties of the commission and developed the property as one of the first Vermont State Historic Sites. The beautifully preserved battlefield is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Military historians note that of all the Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields in the United States, the Hubbardton Battlefield is the most evocative of the period in which the battle took place.

VISITORS CENTER

The Visitors Center, constructed in 1970, houses a museum and public amenities. The interpretive exhibit with period artifacts places the battle in its Revolutionary War context. A large, three-dimensional fiber optic map with accompanying narration provides a vivid account of the progress of the battle. Also on display is a diorama by Vermont artist Paul V. Winters showing the early stages of the battle. The site offers special events throughout the season, including an annual Revolutionary War encampment in early July, and educational programs.

THE MONUMENT

Public recognition of the historic Hubbardton Battlefield began as far back as 1859 when the citizens of Hubbardton and vicinity erected the large monument of Vermont marble just south of the present entrance gate. In 1875 it was enclosed by a handsome cast iron fence, paid for by funding from the Vermont legislature.



The monument, one of the oldest Revolutionary War battle monuments in the country, is in the area where the American rear guard made its strongest effort and where some have thought Colonel Francis was buried. The British respected the leadership qualities and bravery Warner and Francis showed during the conflict. Von Riedesel, a veteran of many European campaigns, especially admired these youthful American officers. When Francis' body was found after the battle, von Riedesel personally saw to it that this gallant officer received a Christian burial, with full military honors rendered by a detachment from the Brunswick troops.