

**THE BURGOYNE CAMPAIGN:
BEMIS HEIGHTS, SEPT'R 19TH AND
OCT'R 7TH, 1777. HAUVER
ISLAND AND ITS FORTIFICATIONS**

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H. C. MAINE

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THE BURGoyNE CAMPAIGN.

BEMIS HEIGHTS,

SEPT'R 19TH AND OCT'R 7TH, 1777.

HAUVER ISLAND AND ITS FORTIFICATIONS.

BY H. C. MAINE, A. M.,

(Of the Troy Whig.)

Illustrated with Pen Drawings by Buckland.

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PREFACE.

A desire to search out and record in some permanent form the history of the occupation by an American army in 1777, of Hauever and Van Schaick's islands, at the sprouts of the Mohawk, gave rise to these pages. The remains of fortifications on Hauever island, are undoubtedly the best preserved of any relics of the revolutionary struggle. A study of the history of these interesting remains opened to the whole history of Burgoyne's campaign and preceding events in the Champlain, St. Lawrence and Hudson valleys. In connection with the historical record, the writer sought to preserve by art, accurate representations of historic localities as they appear to-day. On account of the great cost of illustration, the difficulties were considerable. Happily there fell into the writer's hands, the circular of a Boston house, the Photo-Electrotype Company, announcing a new discovery by which the art of illustration was rendered comparatively inexpensive. The method was tested and the illustrations of these pages are the result. They have defects, nevertheless they are faithful and accurate, having been reproduced with the greatest fidelity from original sketches by H. Buckland. We trust they may add to the knowledge of the localities now so interesting, and may guide our readers to a more complete understanding of the operations of the two armies engaged in the valley of the upper Hudson. For valuable aid and encouragement in the preparation of these brief pages, we are greatly indebted to Hon. James Forsyth, B. H. Hall, Dr. C. C. Schuyler, grand-nephew of Gen. Philip Schuyler, and H. Buckland, the artist. The principal object of these pages is to briefly describe the two great battles on the field of Bemis Heights, which finally decided the fate of Burgoyne's army in 1777.

Troy, N. Y., Sept. 19, 1877.

H. C. M.

BURGOYNE'S FIRST EXPEDITION IN 1776.

TO a good understanding of the two great events on Bemis Heights, September 19 and October 7, 1777, a brief review of preceding operations in the north is necessary. After the first collision at Lexington, April 19, 1775, it was the intention of the patriots to seize and hold the gateway to Canada, and if possible induce that province to join in the struggle for liberty. By the aid of the provincial assembly of Connecticut, Ethan Allen and Seth Warner, of the New Hampshire grants, (now Vermont), Col. Easton of Pittsfield, Mass., accompanied by Benedict Arnold, of New Haven, Conn., as a volunteer, seized Ticonderoga on the 10th of May, 1775 and the fortress of Crown Point on the 12th. Both were strong. Crown Point was fortified by the French in 1731, and afterwards strengthened by the English. Ticonderoga was fortified by the French in 1755. The continental congress elected George Washington commander-in-chief on the 15th of June, 1775, and appointed Artemus Ward, Charles Lee, Philip Schuyler, and Israel Putnam major generals, Horatio Gates adjutant general, and Seth Pomeroy, Richard Montgomery, David Wooster, William Heath, Joseph Spencer, John Thomas, John Sullivan and Nathaniel Greene brigadier generals.

After precious time had been wasted Gen. Schuyler and Gen. Montgomery set out for the conquest of Canada. St. John's was besieged near the close of August, 1775, by

Montgomery, General Schuyler* retiring to Ticonderoga on account of severe illness. On the 25th of September Col. Ethan Allen was captured in an ill-starred expedition from St. John's against Montreal, and was sent to England in irons. St. John's fell on the 3d of November and Montgomery soon after entered Montreal in triumph. He pushed on to Quebec, arriving December 5th, having joined Col. Arnold who had arrived November 9th, and for a time had invested the city with about a thousand men, having made a terrible march of thirty-two days from Cambridge through the wilderness of the Kennebec and Chaudiere rivers. In Arnold's expedition, Capt. Daniel Morgan of Virginia, who was afterwards so conspicuous at Bemis Heights, commanded a body of riflemen. Quebec was immediately besieged and an assault was made December 31st, when Arnold was wounded and Montgomery killed.

For his gallant service Arnold was made a brigadier general. Quebec was defended by Sir Guy Carleton, governor of the province, and a brave, humane and skillful general. Arnold became chief in command of the defeated army and hopelessly continued the siege of Quebec, his troops enduring a rigorous winter. He was relieved April 1st, 1776, by Gen. Wooster, Arnold assuming command at

* General Philip Schuyler was born at Albany on the 23d of November, 1733. His grandfather, Peter Schuyler, was mayor of Albany and commander of the northern militia in 1690. His father, John Schuyler, married Cornelia Van Cortland, and Philip was their eldest son. He inherited the vast estate of his father, by the custom of primogeniture, but generously shared his wealth with his brothers and sisters. Young Schuyler commanded a company under Sir William Johnson at Lake George in 1756. He became a favorite of Lord Howe, and when that officer fell before Ticonderoga in 1758, Col. Schuyler conveyed his remains to Albany. After the peace of 1763 he was active in the civil government of New York. In the Colonial Assembly of New York, he was a powerful opponent of the aggressions of Great Britain. He was elected to the Continental Congress which assembled in May 1775, and was appointed a Major General on June 15th following. He was placed in command of the army in Northern New York and an expedition to Canada. After most eminent service in which he performed wonders in spite of the factious opposition of John Adams and a powerful New England influence, he was superseded in the command of the northern army on the 19th of August, 1777. After the constitution was formed he was elected a senator with Rufus King, and subsequently in place of Aaron Burr in 1797. He died in Albany, November 15th, 1804, aged 71 years. His daughter Elizabeth was the wife of Alexander Hamilton.

Montreal. Wooster was in turn relieved by Gen. Thomas, who arrived at Quebec May 1. He made an unsuccessful attempt to take the city on May 3d, and on May 6th was driven from Quebec by the arrival of British ships and reinforcements from England under Gens. Burgoyne and Riedesel. Gen. Thomas retreated to the mouth of the Sorel, the outlet of Lake Champlain. He was prostrated by small-pox, and carried to Chambly, where he died June 2d, 1776. Gen. John Sullivan then took command of the little army, June 5 and, threw up fortifications at the mouth of the Sorel. Part of Sullivan's force was defeated at Three Rivers, by the British advance under General Frazer. The Americans were commanded by Thompson and Wayne. On the 14th of June, Sullivan on the approach of the British fleet retreated to Chambly, and being joined by Arnold, from Montreal, retreated thence to St. John's, soon after to Isle Aux Noix, and early in June, 1776, to Crown Point. In order to fully understand this disastrous ending of the American invasion of Canada, let us briefly glance at the British plans and operations in that province.

During the winter of 1775 and 1776 the British ministry had prepared to drive the Americans from Canada and retake Crown Point and Ticonderoga. For this purpose and to reinforce the British army in America, the British government, in the face of strenuous opposition in Parliament by Chatham, Burke, the Duke of Richmond and others, concluded treaties with the Prince of Hesse Darmstadt, (treaty dated January 5th, 1776,) the duke of Brunswick, (treaty dated January 9, 1776,) and the landgrave of Hesse Cassel, (treaty dated January 15, 1776,) for the hire of 17,300 men for service in America. These troops were mostly forced from their homes and impressed into service, being first shut up in fortresses and subjected to the severest discipline. They were loaded down with the heaviest arms and accoutrements. One of their drums captured at Bennington, now in the hall of the Massachusetts senate, weighs twenty pounds. Their guns were very heavy and their swords of enormous size and weight. Stedman the historian, and a staff officer of Cornwallis, said that the hats

and swords of the German soldiers weighed very nearly as much as the whole equipment of one of the English, and that the worst British regiment could easily march two miles to their one. The canteens of the Germans held a gallon, and when full weighed ten or twelve pounds. Their caps had a heavy brass front with the legend, *nunquam retrorsum* (never backward). Many of these men were seized while at church, and most of them were excellent citizens. Many deserted in Europe, and after reaching America. Some of our best citizens were descended from these Germans, who were bought to be shot in America. They were the best disciplined men in the British army. It is related by Major General Heath, of the American army, in his memoirs, that at the battle of Brandywine, the Hessian grenadiers, after crossing Chad's ford, "halted at the foot of the hill, below the Americans, under a warm fire, and with great deliberation changed their hats (undress) for their heavy brass caps, and then ascended the hill, from which the Americans were obliged to retire." For these men the German princes were paid a subsidy, and seven pounds four shillings and four pence sterling for each soldier, and as much more for every one killed.

The first division of these troops, Brunswickers, destined for Canada, embarked at Stade, March 17, 1776. They were commanded by Major General Friedrich Adolph Riedesel, an honorable gentleman and brave and skillful officer. Under him were Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Baum, (killed at Bennington, August 16, 1777), Colonel Johann Friedrich Breyman, (killed at Bemis Heights, October 7, 1777), Colonel Johann Friedrich Specht, Lieutenant Colonel Praetorius, Lieutenant Colonel Gustav von Ehrenkrock, Colonel Wilhelm von Speth, and other brave officers. The Brunswickers numbered about 4,000. The command sailed under convoy from Spithead, April 4, 1776. Gen. John Burgoyne, who had witnessed the battle of Bunker Hill, and subsequently returned to England, followed the next day with Gen. William Phillips. Riedesel's troops arrived at Quebec about the first of May, Gens. Burgoyne and Phillips arriving about the same time. This army joined Carleton,

who was commander-in-chief and after defeating the Americans at Three Rivers drove them out of Canada. Gen. Carleton proceeded with part of his forces to Chambly and St. John's. At the latter place he built a fleet, consuming the entire summer.



WASHINGTON, FROM STUART'S PAINTING.

In response to repeated requests by Gen. Schuyler to aid the army in Canada, congress on the 17th of May voted to send an experienced general to Canada. Without consulting Washington, Congress directed him to send Gen. Horatio Gates* to command in Canada. He was given absolute power of appointment and removal of all officers of the army operating in Canada by simply notifying the changes to Congress for their approval. John Adams who was chairman of the board of war believed in Gates above

* Gen. Horatio Gates was a trained British soldier, the son of an English clergyman. He was born in Essex, England, in 1728. He entered the army at an early age and was sent to America to fight against the French and Indians. He was wounded in the unfortunate expedition under Braddock. After peace with France he settled in Virginia. At the commencement of the revolution he tendered his services to Congress and was chosen Adjutant General. He assisted Washington in the discipline of the forces at Cambridge in 1775. He was a good tactician, but that is about all that can be said in his favor. He profited by the labor of others. With Adams' friendship and his own presumption he achieved a considerable reputation at one time, but lost it all by plotting against Washington, and by utter failure in the south.