

Saratoga 1777 LLC

Saratoga 1777 LLC is a wholly veteran owned and operated enterprise based in New York State. An independent feature film that honors the patriots who saved America's fight for independence. This film is made possible by today's patriots and veterans. There is an opportunity to fund a feature film:

Saratoga: The Turning Point

Visit us online: 1777.org. Follow us on social media: [@77TurningPoint](https://twitter.com/77TurningPoint).

Objective (What)

Saratoga 1777 LLC's – a wholly veteran owned and operated, New York based enterprise – primary objective is to develop, fund, and expertly produce a major feature film titled "Saratoga: The Turning Point" to compellingly bring the epic story of the decisive turning point of America's War for Independence and British Lieutenant General John Burgoyne's Campaign of 1777 to both domestic and international audiences. The project's talented leadership team is comprised of preeminent military historians; U.S. military veterans, and those who proudly hail from military families; veterans of the motion picture and entertainment industry; and, by individuals who grew up, were educated, lived, and worked in New York's Upper Hudson Valley. This vitally important story has surprisingly never been told on the "silver screen" as a major feature film and has only been briefly covered in educational documentaries such as "[Liberty](#)", the stirring PBS production that originally aired in the 1990's. Unfortunately, the stunning and consequential victory at Saratoga has seemingly been given "short shrift" over the years. Very arguably, the seminal victory of America's War for Independence at Yorktown would not have happened without the earlier, decisive victory at Saratoga. The goal is simple: to create a timeless, enduring, and evocative motion picture classic that rivals cinematic masterpieces such as "[Last of the Mohicans](#)", "[Dances with Wolves](#)", "[Glory](#)", "[The Patriot](#)", "[Saving Private Ryan](#)", "[Band of Brothers](#)", "[Dunkirk](#)", and "[The Darkest Hour](#)". The resounding success of Lin-Manuel Miranda's American musical [Hamilton](#) (based on [Ron Chernow's biography of Alexander Hamilton](#)) convincingly demonstrates that the topic of the American War for Independence and the American Revolution still commands wide appeal with diverse audiences.

Leadership Team (Who)

Managing Member/Producer: Mark O'Rourke, Esq. (U.S. Army Veteran)

Screenwriter: Robert "Bob" Burris

Historians:

- [James Kirby Martin, Ph.D.](#)
- [Col. \(Ret.\) Kevin J. Weddle, Ph.D.](#)

Communications/Marketing: [Five Towers Media](#) (formerly Spa City Digital)

Senior Advisors & Business Development:

- Justin Cerone
- Preston Hrisko, MBA
- Alex Johnson
- Bill Teator
- Patrick Toomey
- Matthew Walter, MBA
- Sonia Castellani

Leadership Team (Who)

Attorneys:

- Intellectual Property: [Carter Deluca & Farrell, LLP](#)
- Corporate Governance: [Farrell Frtiz, P.C.](#)
- Entertainment: [Wise Entertainment Law](#)

Accounting: [Scott Streitfeld, CPA](#)

Graphic Design:

- [Five Towers Media](#) (formerly Spa City Digital)
- Tess McAdam

Video Production:

- [32 Mile Productions](#)
- [Justin Cerone](#)
- [Five Towers Media](#) (formerly Spa City Digital)

Web Design: [Five Towers Media](#) (formerly Spa City Digital)

Timeline (When)

Bottom Line: It is the clear goal of this project to bring this feature film to the widest possible viewing audience – both domestically and internationally – prior to the 250th anniversary of the victory at Saratoga on October 27, 2027 (a multi-episode series is also planned).

2012 Founding of Saratoga Feature Film Project

2016 The U.S. Congress passed legislation to create a national commission to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American War for Independence. See: [America250.org](#)

2017 Project's leadership meeting with [History Department, U.S. Military Academy at West Point](#) and [James K. Martin, Ph.D., the 2017-18 Charles Boal Ewing Visiting Professor of Military History](#).

2018 Project retained James Kirby Martin, Ph.D. and Bob Burriss to oversee writing of feature film screenplay
Commencement of writing of feature film screenplay • Initial draft of feature film script completed • Project's leadership team convenes in Los Angeles, CA

2019 Completion of multiple script revisions • Screenplay completion • commission of comprehensive script appraisal necessary for formulation of film's budget • development of film's info and sizzle reels; initial development of project's website marketing materials • project welcomes author and distinguished historian Eric Schnitzer and U.S. Army Colonel (Ret.) Kevin J. Weddle, Ph.D. as senior project advisors and editors (all of whom will contribute to the writing of a companion mini-series titled *1777* focused on the entirety of Burgoyne's campaign of 1777).

2020 Commencement of comprehensive outreach to a wide spectrum of stakeholders in the public and private sectors; creation of high caliber finance team with deep reach into the Albany Capital and Saratoga regions, financial community in New York City and historical and political circles in Washington, DC; creation of advisory council (comprised of diverse stakeholder groups and organizations) • launch of sustained outreach campaign to civic, historical, military, heritage and key organizations – goal: secure endorsements and promote the project through concurrent events (e.g. *Rev250* in Boston, *USA250* in Philadelphia, the *Pennsylvania Semiquincentennial Commission*; the *United States Semiquincentennial Commission* – headed by the American Battlefield Trust – and the *U.S.A. 250th Commemoration Commission* in Washington, D.C.); commence long-term finance campaign to secure funding which targets high-net worth individuals and key investor circles;

establish “project advisory council” to keep key stakeholders connected to the feature film project in a meaningful and sustained way; initiate work on parallel mini-series.

- 2022** New York State enacts [legislation](#) titled the “NYS 250th Commemoration Act” (signed into law on February 24, 2022) to create a 21-member state commission to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American War for Independence. The commission is co-chaired by the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Commissioner of the Department of Education (or their designees) and includes the NYS Historian • Mark O’Rourke reaches buyout agreement for project (formerly known as Saratoga Spirit LLC) that he founded initially founded in 2012 • Project decisively retains [32 Mile Productions](#), [Five Towers Media](#) and [Justin Cerone](#) to comprehensively overhaul project’s marketing materials, website and social media channels • [Saratoga County, New York](#) announces the creation of a county commission to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga (see: [Saratoga250.com](#)) • Leadership of Saratoga Film Project (Saratoga 1777 LLC) meets with senior leadership of Saratoga County to discuss a promising film project.
- 2023** Comprehensive refresh of project’s marketing materials completed • Launch of project’s Fundraising Phase: host multiple events – for prospective investors – at: [The Adelphi Hotel](#) • [Canfield Casino](#) • [Saratoga National](#) in Saratoga Springs, NY.
- 2024** Fundraising Phase (sustained crowdfunding – focused on America’s 16.5 million veterans – and direct engagement with individuals of high net worth) • Secure endorsements from key stakeholders (e.g. academic institutions, civic and community organizations, historical societies, museums, etc...such as the Sons of the Revolution in New York, Daughters of the American Revolution and their “Pathway of the Patriots” initiative) • Cement desired stakeholder endorsements and accelerate fundraising campaign
- 2025** Sustained Fundraising Phase • Commencement of Production • Note: PBS will release [The American Revolution](#), a six-part, twelve-hour series on America’s fight for independence in 2025 (directed and executive produced by Ken Burns, written by Geoffrey C. Ward, and produced by Sarah Botstein, David Schmidt, Salimah El-Amin, and Ken Burns) - *The American Revolution* is slated for broadcast on PBS in 2025.
- 2026** Completion of Fundraising Phase • Production
- 2027** Production • Post-Production Marketing • Release & Premier of iconic motion picture feature film on or around October 17, 2027.

Budget (How)

- \$100 to \$125 million to be raised between 2023-2025 (crowd funding by America’s veterans & patriots and investment from individuals of high net worth)

Website / Social Media

- Web: [1777.org](#)
- Social Media: @77TurningPoint

Project References

- Private Placement Memorandum (PPM) • Script Executive Summary • Project Executive Summary • Film Marketing Deck or Pitchbook • Project Website • Info & Sizzle Reels • Biographies of Project Leadership Team • Project Marketing Materials • Project Advisory Council

Additional Information (Where)

- It is the intent to film this movie in New York's Adirondack Mountains and Upper Hudson Valley as close as possible to the original historical sites where the underlying events took place in the summer and autumn of 1777; and, to fully leverage the [NYS Film Production Tax Credit \(FPTC\)](#). The iconic film, "*The Last of the Mohicans*" (based on [James Fenimore Cooper's acclaimed 1826 novel](#)) which was released in 1992, was largely filmed in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina despite the fact that the history the novel is based on, occurred entirely in upstate New York (in the Hudson and Mohawk valleys and the Adirondack Mountains). It is imperative that a film about the Battle of Saratoga be authentically filmed in upstate New York – principally in the Adirondacks and upper Hudson Valley – during the autumn. Notably, the NYS Legislature and New York Governor Kathy Hochul recently approved the NYS FPTC at the \$700 million level through 2034. See [NYS Museum](#) for resources.

Associated Project

- **Companion Multi-Episode Series Planned:** 1777- a compelling six-to-ten-part multi-episode series, focused on the entirety of General John Burgoyne's Campaign of 1777 - is planned as a companion project and creative parallel to the feature film. This series will provide a comprehensive overview of the key figures in both the American and British ranks, as well as the many significant events associated with the American War for Independence that transpired in 1777 including: the launch of Burgoyne's campaign from Quebec • the fall of Forts Ticonderoga, Anne, and Edward • the Battle of Bennington (which occurred in Walloomsac in Rensselaer County, NY) • St. Leger's Siege of Fort Stanwix and the Battle of Oriskany • the Battles of Saratoga (Freemans Farm and Bemus Heights) • Gen. Howe's capture of Philadelphia, the Continental Capital • the sacking of Forts Clinton and Montgomery by Gen. Clinton and the burning of Kingston, New York's first Capitol • the first national American Thanksgiving (observed on December 18, 1777 to commemorate the providential victory at Saratoga) • Franklin's successful diplomacy in France following the victory at Saratoga (that directly led to the signing of the Franco-American *Treaty of Amity and Commerce* and the *Treaty of Alliance* on February 6, 1778 in Paris) • the culminating American victory at Yorktown.
- **Semiquincentennial:** The 250th Anniversary of the American War for Independence (also known as the [U.S. Semiquincentennial](#)) is a much-anticipated historical period that will be prominently observed in a number of U.S. states including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina (and perhaps, in Canada, France, Poland and beyond) between the years of 2025-2033. This project will seek to leverage many of the historical milestones associated with this commemorative period to heighten and maximize interest in this feature film and mini-series project.

Why?

- **ROI:** The annual economic boost from the dynamic Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC) and the vintage Saratoga Race Course (America's oldest thoroughbred racetrack) spans the exciting seasonal period of Memorial Day to Labor Day. However, the success of this feature film (and associated mini-series) can keep a sustained focus on the entire Albany Capital-Saratoga region from Labor Day

to late October given that the two battles that comprise the Battle of Saratoga occurred during these bucolic months when the region's foliage is at its brilliant peak. This timely project offers the area's diverse stakeholders, in the public and private sectors, an opportunity for close collaboration which will be necessary for the commemoration of this vitally important historical period.

- o Saratoga's storied slogan is "**Health, History, Horses**". The approaching commemorative period offers the Albany Capital-Saratoga region an opportunity to substantially improve upon how the area's rich history – which notably included horses well before the existence of the Saratoga Race Course – is presented and celebrated. One of the better-known nicknames for the storied Saratoga Race Course is the "Graveyard of Champions" due to the fact that over the past one hundred years, several champion thoroughbreds and triple-crown winners encountered crushing and unexpected defeats in the Spa City including: Man o' War (1919); Gallant Fox (1930); Secretariat (1973); Rachel Alexandra (2009); and, American Pharoah (2015). In hindsight, these spectacular upsets were seemingly foreshadowed by an earlier debacle! This historical harbinger and horseman was British Lieutenant General John Burgoyne. Burgoyne – a pioneer in the early development of light cavalry who led the effort to introduce this formidable capability into the British Army – experienced an unexpected and crushing defeat when his vaunted army (part of the world's best trained and equipped) was forced to surrender (remarkably, the first time the British Army was forced to surrender in its storied history) to the fledgling American Army, at Saratoga on October 17, 1777. This incredible story is simply one that needs to be powerfully presented to the widest possible audience.
- **Risk:** The main risk is that Saratoga and the surrounding upstate region will forgo the opportunity to fully embrace this promising feature film project (and for such to ultimately not be completed and brought to the viewing public). To do nothing and to not expertly leverage – with an eye towards maximum and sustained local and regional ROI – this important commemorative period and promising film project would simply be a missed opportunity.
 - o **Autumn Tourism:** Saratoga should remain a singular destination once the lights at SPAC go dark and the Saratoga Race Course's Grandstand grows silent after Labor Day. The sublimely beautiful autumn months of September and October should absolutely draw substantial numbers of visitors to the [Saratoga National Historical Park](#) and surrounding points of interest in upstate New York, Vermont, and Quebec (including: Bennington Battlefield in Rensselaer County • Forts Crowne Point and Ticonderoga in Essex County • Forts Anne and Edward in Washington County • Oriskany Battlefield and Fort Stanwix National Monument in Oneida County • Fort Dayton in Herkimer County • Fort Montgomery in Orange County • Fort Clinton in Rockland County • Fort Oswego in Oswego County) in the same fashion that destinations such as Boston's Freedom Trail (Boston Massacre Site; Bunker Hill Monument; etc...); Concord's Minute Man National Historical Park; Lexington Battle Green (Lexington Common National Historical Park); Fredericksburg; Gettysburg; Monticello; Mount Vernon; and, Yorktown command sustained interest. There is absolutely no reason that Saratoga's hotels, restaurants and charming downtown shops should not be filled to capacity with history-minded tourists during these nostalgic months which are punctuated by several of the most venerable anniversaries in our nation's history.
 - o **Victory at Saratoga:** The date October 17, 1777 (Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga) should be as well-known as: "The Shot Heard Round the World" at Concord, MA (April 19, 1775) • Signing of *The Declaration of Independence* (August 2, 1776) • Victory at Yorktown (October 19, 1781) • *U.S. Constitution's completion* (September 17, 1787) and ratification (June 21, 1788) • Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863) • Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863) • Appomattox Day of the U.S. Civil War (April 9, 1865) • Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) • D-Day (June 6, 1944) • V-E Day (May 8, 1945) • V-J Day (August 15, 1945) • U.S. Moon Landing (July 20, 1969) • September 11, 2001.

- **Course Correction and “Brass Ring”:** This feature film project offers New York an opportunity to dramatically improve the way that it champions its rich history, particularly the consequential period of the Revolutionary War. Notably, more Revolutionary War battles were fought on New York soil than in any other state. Yet, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia have simply done a much better job over the decades in celebrating their state’s respective roles in this most consequential period. Those who genuinely care about the greater Albany Capital-Saratoga region, New York State, the Revolutionary War, and, freedom itself, should firmly seize this “brass ring” to ensure that the clear vision of this feature film project is brought to timely fruition.
 - The approaching 250th commemorative period and this feature film project offer a real opportunity for New York to correct the above-mentioned long-standing trend. New York State’s [*“Path Through History”*](#) (of which, the Revolutionary War is established as 1 of 13 major themes) initiative and beloved “I LOVE NY” programs are commendable and well-coordinated efforts, but much more must be done to highlight the crucial role that the Empire State played in assuring the success of the Revolutionary War. In 2016, New York reportedly welcomed 239 million total visitors who spent \$65 billion, activity that generated a statewide impact of \$100 billion for a third consecutive year. Tourism is viewed as the state’s fourth largest employer, supporting more than 914,000 jobs annually.
 - In March 2017, the *Times Union* reported that the Broadway hit musical *Hamilton* may have helped to spark a fifty-eight percent increase in visitors to the *Saratoga National Historical Park* in 2016. In 2015, the park attracted 65,010 visitors while in 2016, this number surged to 102,808, the first time that the 100,000 mark was exceeded since 2007. In contrast, Adams County, Pennsylvania where Gettysburg (the decisive turning point of the American Civil War) is located, attracts 3 million visitors per year; whereas 1.5 million visit Fredericksburg, VA annually; and, 180,000 annually visit the American Revolution Museum and the Yorktown Victory Center in Virginia. This much is clear: New York’s *Path Through History* must better illuminate why tourists should visit Saratoga (the decisive turning point of the American War for Independence) and the state’s other AWFI points of interest, particularly as the 250th commemorative period rapidly comes into view.
- **“Did you know?”**
 - ...that Saratoga was the first truly strategic American victory of the war and was the first time that the American Army possessed overwhelming numerical superiority over the enemy?
 - ...that the Saratoga marked the first time that the British Army was forced to surrender in its storied history?
 - ...that the stunning victory at Saratoga is featured as one of the eight brilliant oil-on-canvas paintings in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol (four of which depict scenes from the American Revolution)? Early American artist John Trumbull completed this work – titled “Surrender of General Burgoyne” – in December 1821. It was exhibited in New York City in early 1822 and later, placed in the U.S. Capitol in 1826.
 - ...that Trumbull’s iconic painting of the *Surrender at Saratoga* that is displayed in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol later appeared on a U.S. postage stamp in 1994?
 - ...Saratoga saved an imperiled revolution when the nation’s two largest cities – New York and Philadelphia – were under occupation?
 - ...Saratoga was a tie when the American Army was surprisingly integrated and included 400 African Americans and was supported by Native American from the Oneida and Tuscarora Nations – America’s first allies – as well the Mohican, Munsee, Wappinger tribes that comprised the Stockbridge Militia from Massachusetts?

- o ...Saratoga ultimately became the war's turning point as it enabled Benjamin Franklin to forge a desperately needed alliance with the French crown and very consequentially made the colonial conflict a world war?
- o ...Saratoga changes the young nation's destiny in its struggle against the tyranny of the world's most powerful empire?
- o ...Burgoyne's surrender prompted America to observe its first national day of solemn thanksgiving and praise – to Almighty God – for the providential victory at Saratoga?
- o ...that the Battle of Saratoga is widely considered to be one of the most consequential battles in both western civilization and world history?
- **“Next Big Thing”:** The 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga (2027) and this promising feature film project (and associated mini-series) are indeed “the next big thing” for the booming Albany Capital-Saratoga Region in New York's bucolic Upper Hudson Valley which have been, in many respects, impressively transformed over the last decade plus. Iconic events such as the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga and this exciting feature film project are truly rare milestones that offer a unique window of opportunity that should be fully embraced by both the public and private sectors. The following are some of the area's recent and upcoming notable moments:
 - o Opening of [Saratoga National Golf Club](#) (2001)
 - o 100th anniversary of [Skidmore College](#) (2003)
 - o Renovation of [Fasig-Tipton's Humphrey S. Finney Sales Pavilion](#) (2010)
 - o Opening of new [Saratoga Lake Bridge](#) – \$10.8 mm project to replace 85-year-old steel truss bridge on Route 9P (2011)
 - o [Saratoga Bowtie Criterion Cinemas Movie Theater](#) grand opening (2012-13)
 - o 150th anniversary of [Saratoga Race Course](#) – the nation's oldest thoroughbred racetrack (2013)
 - o Release of the critically acclaimed movie [“12 Years a Slave”](#) which focused on the life of Saratoga resident Solomon Northrup (2013)
 - o Triple Crown Winner [American Pharoah upset by Keen Ice](#) at the Saratoga Race Course – massive national focus on Saratoga (2015)
 - o 50th anniversary of [Saratoga Performing Arts Center](#) (2016)
 - o Restoration of [Congress Park's Canfield Casino](#) (a National Historic Landmark that houses the Saratoga Springs History Museum – built in 1870) by John Morrissey, a former professional heavyweight boxing champion and founder of the Saratoga Race Course) (2016-18)
 - o Saratoga Springs named 11th “Best Small City in the Nation” (1,268 ranked cities) and the “Top Small City in New York” by *WalletHub* (2016)
 - o Saratoga Springs named the “Most Beautiful Town in New York State” by *Culture Trip* (2017)
 - o [The Adelphi Hotel](#) – Saratoga's crown jewel – reopened after \$55 million renovation (2017)
 - o [Gideon Putnam Hotel](#) – located in [Saratoga State Park](#) – reopened after extensive renovations (2018)
 - o 10th anniversary of groundbreaking of Fab 8, [GlobalFoundries'](#) \$15 billion computer chip factory that now employs 3,000 (2019)
 - o [150th Travers Stakes](#) Saratoga Race Course (2019)
 - o 140th anniversary of the [Fort Orange Club](#), Albany, NY (2020)
 - o 40th anniversary of the [writing of Journey's hit song “Faithfully”](#) – which *Classic Rock* called the greatest power ballad ever recorded – at the [Saratoga Performing Arts Center](#), Saratoga Springs, NY in 1982 (2022)
 - o 170th anniversary of the [invention of the potato chip or “Saratoga Chip”](#) in Saratoga in 1853 (2023)
 - o 130th anniversary of the [invention of the Club Sandwich](#) in Saratoga in 1894 (2024)
 - o 140th anniversary of the [death of U.S. Grant](#), 18th U.S. President and General-in-Chief of the Armies of the United States in Wilton, NY (2025)
 - o 100th anniversary of [Proctors Theater](#), Schenectady, NY (2026)

- o 150th anniversary of opening of [The Adelphi Hotel](#) in 1877 (2027)
- o 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga – September 19, 1777, October 7, 1777 & October 17, 1777 (2027)
- **“Turning Point Day” – Proposed Blueprint to Commemorate the Victory at Saratoga: every October 17th:**
 - o “Turning Point Day” should be held annually in Saratoga and beyond to rival Patriot’s Day which Maine and Massachusetts annually observe on April 20 as a civic holiday to commemorate the Battles of Lexington and Concord, and the Battle of Menotomy (the first battles of the American Revolutionary War). Similarly, why the heck doesn’t the state of New York, Saratoga County, and the City of Saratoga Springs celebrate October 17, 1777 as “Turning Point Day” or “Victory Day”?
 - o church bells should be rung on this day throughout the City of Saratoga Springs and Saratoga County to give thanks for this providential victory
 - o fireworks should illuminate Saratoga’s evening sky and cannons fired at the Saratoga National Historical Park and Saratoga State Park
 - o black-tie dinners and other tasteful observances should be held in the City of Saratoga Springs and throughout Saratoga County
 - o an annual 10-mile road-race should be held from Saratoga National Historical Park or Saratoga Surrender site to the downtown of Saratoga Springs
 - o schools, businesses and the citizenry throughout Saratoga should pause to solemnly observe a moment of silence (and recite the “Pledge of Allegiance”) to remember the patriots that gave their lives at Saratoga in the autumn of 1777.
 - o area school children should write essays – perhaps as part of contests held in conjunction with area newspapers – to examine the significance of the victory at Saratoga.
 - o restaurants throughout Saratoga County should observe a “Victory Week” and feature period meals in honor of the bravery and sacrifice at Saratoga
 - o area leaf-peeping, apple orchard, and vineyard tourism should be seamlessly incorporated into this annual celebration (during September/October)
 - o NYS Military Museum – located in Saratoga Springs, NY – will hopefully have exhibits and programs during these months.
- **“SAVE THE DATE!”:** A dinner and special evening in Saratoga – to formally launch the project’s capital campaign – will be scheduled at the Adelphi Hotel. Notably, this timely occasion will bring together the project’s Leadership Team, a keynote speaker, preeminent military historians, civic and community leaders from the local, state and federal levels and diverse, key stakeholders from the public and private sectors who are resolutely committed to commemorating the 250th anniversary of the victory at Saratoga and to robustly supporting this feature film project. The overriding focus will be to selectively invite those individuals and organizations who have expressed a strong interest in supporting this promising project in a meaningful and sustained way.

Feature Film Script Summary

by Robert Burris

An opening montage of animation, graphics, and archival material familiarizes the audience with the harsh reality that it is truly the darkest hour --the American Revolution is on the verge of collapse and the flame of liberty close to being extinguished just a year after the signing of *The Declaration of Independence*. We cut to Benjamin Franklin and French diplomat Vergennes arguing over France’s involvement in the war. Vergennes needs a major victory to convince the French King to act. As Franklin assures him such a victory is imminent, we cut to the humiliating fall of Fort Ticonderoga and British General John Burgoyne arrogantly watching the colonists flee as his invading force pursues them.

We meet Daniel Morgan and his rugged group of riflemen, including Timothy Murphy. These able outdoorsmen are armed with a new type of weapon--the fabled Pennsylvania long rifle that is far more

accurate and deadly than British muskets. Morgan exhorts his men: with their modern rifles, and revolutionary guerilla war tactics adopted from Indian warfare, they represent the best hope of turning back the invasion. Members of Congress argue over whether to promote the politically connected Horatio Gates or the daring but reckless Benedict Arnold to serve under Washington and stop Burgoyne's advance. They acknowledge Arnold's immense value as a fighter, but ultimately choose Gates.

As Burgoyne pushes south, he discovers the advance is not as easy as he expected. The thick forest, stifling humidity, rain, and unfamiliar terrain are enemies as well--not to mention the constant harassment of American snipers. Hungry for information, Burgoyne enlists a party of Indian allies to scout ahead--however, the mission goes horribly wrong when settler Jane McCrae, who the Indians were to escort to safety, is instead killed and scalped. Burgoyne is furious, the last thing he needs is a martyr to rally the colonists. When he berates the Indians they react by abandoning him--leaving his glacially-moving army now without valuable eyes and ears. Those closest to Burgoyne, including his mistress Gwen and his trusted commander Von Riedesel, advise holding off on the advance until adequate support and intelligence can be gathered. The haughty Burgoyne makes it clear that retreat is not an option. The Americans prepare for attack, but an explosive argument between the defensive-minded Gates and the aggressive Arnold threatens to shatter the unity of American forces.

Even after Burgoyne receives the news that the support he is counting will not be coming, he insists on moving forward--a rout at Bennington does little to dissuade him, nor does the fact that his troops are tired and hungry. At the same time, unbeknownst to Burgoyne, the colonists' force has dramatically increased, inspired by the massacre of Jane McCrae, the Americans finally hold numerical superiority. At Freeman's farm, the two armies collide in a spectacular battle, driving the British back. Undeterred, Burgoyne launches a second assault. In one of the most pivotal moments in American history, American snipers take the unheard-of action of killing a British general, Benedict Arnold is a bold leader who nearly dies in the effort, the American common man rises to the occasion, and the British are delivered a stunning defeat.

As Burgoyne surrenders to Gates, he has to accept that the unthinkable has happened: his elite forces have been beaten by the "rabble" he despises, and the tide of the American Revolution has inextricably turned in favor of the colonists.

Historical Background

by Mark O'Rourke

Following the disastrous defeats at Quebec in December 1775 and the Battle of Long Island in late August 1776 which left New York City occupied for the remainder of the American War for Independence, the American Revolution was on the verge of collapse and the flame of liberty, close to being extinguished, just a year after the signing of *The Declaration of Independence*. The British plan to crush the failing rebellion was simple: to seize control of the entirety of the Champlain and Hudson valleys in order to completely cut-off the hotbed of New England – the very head of the snake – from the rest of the disloyal colonies.

In the late summer and early autumn of 1777, during one of the darkest hours of the war, with freedom itself in the balance, wave after wave of citizen soldiers – close to 11,000 plus – answered the urgent call and steadily streamed in from the “four corners” to fortify the outmatched American Army that was dug in at Bemus Heights above the Hudson River in a desperate, defensive effort to stop General John Burgoyne's determined advance to Albany. In doing so, these intrepid patriots nearly tripled the size of Gen. Horatio Gate's Northern Command – to a total of force of 17,000 plus – in less than six weeks. This seminal moment marked the first time in the American War for Independence that the American Army possessed overwhelming numerical superiority over the enemy on the field of battle. Most crucially, this surprising surge allowed the forces under Gen. Gates to completely surround and lay total siege to the invading army, which forced Burgoyne's shocking surrender at Saratoga on October 17, 1777.

What prompted this surprising surge of citizen-soldiers? Why did they answer the urgent call to head to the Upper Hudson Valley in time to stop Gen. Burgoyne and keep America's fight for independence alive? The answer is not simple but it lies in the events that occurred in the eighteen months that unfolded prior to the

fierce fighting at Freeman's Farm in September 1777. The die was cast following the disastrous American defeats at Quebec (December 31, 1775) and Long Island (August 27, 1776); the ensuing British occupation of New York City; the launch of Burgoyne's massive campaign from Montreal on June 20, 1777; the fateful Fall of Fort Ticonderoga on July 6, 1777; the massacre of Jane McCrea on July 27, 1777; Burgoyne's consequential crossing of the Hudson on September 13, 1777; and, General William Howe's campaign to capture the Continental Capital of Philadelphia in September 1777. Massive numbers of citizen soldiers (affiliated with militias) – more than 11,000 – from upstate New York and New England answered the call to head towards the Upper Hudson Valley in the late summer of 1777. These patriots no doubt had heard Thomas Paine's urgent call to arms in *The American Crisis* that was first published on December 19, 1776:

“These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and sunshine patriot will, at this moment, shrink from the service to his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.”

After the stunning American victory at Saratoga on October 17, 1777, the Continental Congress resolved that the states should observe a national day of thanksgiving to commemorate the surrender of General Burgoyne's army. On November 30, 1777, George Washington, the commander-in-chief of all Continental forces, issued General Orders designating December 18, 1777 – a day that was also observed by all thirteen states – “for solemn thanksgiving and praise” to almighty God for the providential victory at Saratoga.

Importantly, the seismic victory at Saratoga proved to be the decisive turning point of the Revolutionary War as it enabled Benjamin Franklin to finally persuade the French crown to militarily support the American cause. Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, coupled with the prior American victories at Fort Stanwix and Bennington, led directly to the alliances between the United States and France as well as with the Netherlands which ultimately financed much of the new nation's debts.

On December 6, 1777, Charles Gravier, comte de Vergennes, the French Foreign Minister, agreed to the American request for a military alliance in the wake of the victory at Saratoga. The Franco-American *Treaty of Amity and Commerce* and the *Treaty of Alliance* were signed in Paris on February 6, 1778 by Comte de Vergennes and an American delegation comprised of Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee, and Silas Deane. Both treaties were ultimately approved by King Louis XVI in early March 1778. Most notably, on March 13, 1778, the French minister in London informed King George III that France recognized the United States as an independent and sovereign nation. On March 17, 1778, England declared war on France, an act which made the American War for Independence a world war. On May 4, 1778, the Continental Congress ratified the *Treaty of Alliance* with France, prompting additional military and financial assistance. On November 13, 1779, Spain declared war against England as well.

When General Charles Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, more than half of General George Washington's total force strength was comprised of French ground (led by Marshal Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau) and naval support (under the command of François Joseph Paul, comte de Grasse). This strategic support was made possible solely by the decisive victory at Saratoga four years earlier on October 17, 1777. Less than two years later, the American Revolutionary War was formally ended with the signing of *The Treaty of Paris* on September 3, 1783.

Saratoga is rightfully and widely viewed as one of the most consequential battles in western civilization as this unexpected victory rescued a revolution that was on the verge of collapse. Without this convincing triumph in the early autumn of 1777, America's “great experiment” in self-government would not have happened and world history, would have taken a very different course.