


A soldier in a dark uniform and hat is mounted on a brown horse, pointing a revolver forward. The scene is set against a hazy, golden-brown background with falling dust or rain. The soldier's uniform has orange epaulettes and a sash. The horse is equipped with a saddle and harness.

BUNKER HILL TO WWI

GREAT BATTLES FOR BOYS

A line of soldiers on horseback is shown in a battle scene. They are wearing various types of headgear, including hats and plumes. The scene is filled with dust and smoke, suggesting a chaotic battle environment. An American flag is visible on the right side of the line.

AMERICAN

JOE GIORELLO
WITH
SIBELLA GIORELLO

Bunker Hill to World War I

Great Battles for Boys
EXCERPT

by
Joe Giorello

Great Battles for Boys: Bunker Hill to WWI

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Note from the Author

Great men make great sacrifices in the battle for freedom.

You'll see that in these battles. These brave warriors teach us about courage and determination, especially when the odds are stacked against them. I hope you'll follow the links at the end of each chapter and discover even more books and movies—although most of the movies were made in Hollywood, so they're not the literal truth. After reading this book, you'll know the difference.

I really like hearing from you. So if you have any questions or want to suggest another battle for a future book, contact me on my web page, www.greatbattlesforboys.com, or check in on the Great Battles page on Facebook: facebook.com/greatbattles. And be sure to check out all the other books in the Great Battles for Boys series.

But above all, remember: "Freedom isn't free."

—Joe Giorello

Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Note from the Author](#)

[**The Battle of Bunker Hill**](#)

[**The Battle of Saratoga**](#)

[More Books in the Great Battles for Boys Series](#)

The Battle of Bunker Hill

June 17, 1775

“Don’t fire until you see the whites of their eyes.”



WAY BACK IN the 1770s, America was a colony that belonged to Great Britain. But not everyone liked that arrangement. Basically, Americans had no rights of their own, only what the British gave them. Angry colonists started demanding, “No taxation without representation.”

What did they mean?

King George III of Great Britain was forcing the American colonists to pay huge taxes, even though these colonists had nobody representing them in British Parliament. So even if these taxes were totally unfair, the colonists had no way to stop the British from taking their money. They had taxation, but no representation in Parliament.

By the summer of 1775, this problem had grown so serious that British soldiers stationed in America had to put down some colonial skirmishes, particularly in the towns of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. Those colonists were getting really mad because the taxes were only getting worse and the British army was treating the Americans like servants. The British soldiers were called "Redcoats" because they wore bright red uniforms.

King George believed that his Redcoats could stop these skirmishes, and the American rebellion would go away.



King George III

Just the opposite happened.

Colonists started forming groups so they could fight the British more effectively. On the night of June 16, 1775, under cover of darkness, a man named Israel Putnam and 1,200 other colonists snuck toward Bunker Hill. This hill was the highest point above Boston Harbor, where the British navy anchored its ships. The colonists planned to fire on the Redcoats and drive the British from their city.

Maybe it was because they were creeping through the dark, trying to avoid detection, or maybe somebody got lost, but most of the colonists completely missed Bunker Hill! Instead, they wound up on nearby Breed's Hill. That hill sits in front of Bunker Hill, also facing the water of Boston Harbor. So it wasn't a total disaster.

Throughout the night, these rebel colonists worked under the direction of Colonel William Prescott. They set up military positions and dug a breastwork—that's a fort made of dirt and whatever else might be available. This particular breastwork was made of tree limbs, rocks, and hogsheads—which weren't actually hog's heads, but the nickname for large wooden casks that held wine and beer.

The next morning, when the sun rose in the east, a British officer stationed on the warship *HMS Lively* gazed up at Breed's Hill. There were all those American rebels. The officer sounded the alarm.



Colonial soldiers defending earthworks, Battle of Bunker Hill

The *Lively* fired first, followed by the *HMS Somerset* where an officer ordered all the ship's guns, or cannons, to fire along with all the batteries on nearby Copp's Hill. These first volleys were hit-or-miss, partly because the Americans had staked out the high ground above the harbor.

But chaos came next.

Many of the colonists were part of local militias but didn't have much formal training. Other men were farmers and tradesmen. But

here was this rag-tag volunteer force exchanging fire with what was then the world's most powerful army—the Redcoats!

One American private later described their situation:

“... fatigued by our Labour, having no sleep the night before, very little to eat, no drink but rum, the danger we were in made us think there was treachery, and that we were brought there to be all slain.”

But the colonists' passion made up for their lack of discipline—these men *really* wanted the British army out of Boston. As the battle on Breed's Hill raged on, the citizens of Boston climbed onto their roofs to watch the fight. It wasn't pretty. British cannons were literally blowing off limbs and even heads of the rebel fighters.

American Colonel William Prescott saw another problem. The colonial position on Breed's Hill allowed the British to flank them on both sides. So Prescott ordered another breastwork built down the east side of the hill, to the peninsula along the Mystic River. Prescott also sent another regiment with two cannons to build a fort on Bunker Hill, to stop the British advance.



BUNKER HILL.

By one o'clock that afternoon, the Redcoats managed to land at the bottom of Breed's Hill. More British troops landed on the banks of the Mystic River. But that second extended breastwork hindered the Redcoats. And around three o'clock, American Colonel John Stark arrived with reinforcements.

Stark told his men to form three separate firing lines. He then walked out fifty yards from the battle's front and drove a stake into the ground. He ordered his men not to fire before the British troops reached that marker. His exact words might have been: "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."

Back then, British soldiers were taught to march forward in three orderly rows. So the first line came, ordered forward by British General Howe.

When the first Redcoats reached that stake in the ground, Stark ordered, "Fire!"

The British line was slaughtered.

Then the second line approached. Stark waited until the soldiers reached that stake in the ground, then called out, "Fire!"

Another slaughter.

The third line of Redcoats marched forward—and met the same fate.

It didn't help the British that the terrain had tall grass that hid stone walls and ditches. Some of the soldiers were tripping forward. But their worst problem was tactical. The British were using six-pound cannons—but only had twelve-pound shot. That meant, the cannonballs were the wrong size for the cannons!

Meanwhile, the Americans delivered a near-continuous volley of fire.

When British General Howe reorganized his troops for a third assault, he wisely shifted his infantry into deep columns instead of those orderly rows that exposed every man in the line.

The Americans kept firing but soon ran out of ammunition. At that point, the colonists decided to "retreat in order"—that's a

military term for when an army keeps firing as it leaves a battlefield, protecting its rear guard and its other troops.

In the end, the British took Breed's Hill.

But what had they gained?

One grassy hill above Boston Harbor. Their losses were so much bigger. More than 1,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded in this battle. That was almost forty percent of their forces in the area.

The Americans suffered, too, with about 450 men killed or wounded. But to the rebels, the Battle of Bunker (Breed's) Hill was a victory. One ragged band of ordinary men had taken on the world's most powerful army—and probably would've won if they hadn't run out of ammunition.

At that point, The Revolutionary War was on. Many more fights lay ahead as Americans fought for their independence from their British king.

WHO FOUGHT?



The British Army was a big reason why the colonists were paying such high taxes.

Before the Revolutionary War, the British had fought in something called the French and Indian War (1754–1763). In that war, England fought France, mostly in areas around Canada and the New England colonies. Eventually, King George III signed a

treaty that ended the French and Indian war, but all that fighting had created massive debts for England. Wars are expensive. King George decided that the American colonists should help pay off that debt with higher taxes and other official acts. The colonists disagreed.

They started boycotting British goods. They also formed groups that opposed all things British. Even colonists who were former British soldiers and who had fought in the French and Indian War didn't agree with King George.

Samuel Whittemore, for instance, was born in England and came to North America in 1745 as a captain in the Dragoons (light cavalry) of the British Army. After the French and Indian War, Whittemore settled in Massachusetts.

But Whittemore didn't pledge life-long loyalty to King George.

On April 19, 1775, British troops were making their way back to Boston after fighting with American rebels in Lexington and Concord. Whittemore—now 80 years old—hid behind a nearby stone wall and loaded his musket. He ambushed the Redcoats, killing one. He then drew his dueling pistols, killing another soldier and mortally wounding a third. Whittemore fired another shot, but a British detachment reached his position and shot Whittemore in the face as the old man drew his sword.

The British soldiers bayoneted Whittemore thirteen times and left him for dead.

When colonial militiamen found the old man, he was trying to load his musket.

Miraculously, Samuel Whittemore continued to fight for the American colonies in the Revolutionary War.

He later died of natural causes, at age 98.

BOOKS

Rush Revere and the First Patriots: Time Travel Adventures with Exceptional Americans by Rush Limbaugh

Woods Runner by Gary Paulsen

Patriots by Gregory T. Edgar

The Battle of Bunker Hill: An Interactive History Adventure by Michael Burgan, a choose-your-adventure story.

INTERNET

History.com offers some re-enactments of Bunker Hill, with information about leaders and heroes of the Revolutionary War:

history.com/topics/battle-of-bunker-hill

MOVIES

America: Her People, Her Stories. The Battle of Bunker Hill (DVD)

The Patriot (2000)

The Battle of Saratoga

September 19 – October 7, 1777



Major General John “Gentleman Johnnie” Burgoyne
September 19 and October 7, 1777

THE BATTLE OF Saratoga wasn't one battle—it was a whole series of conflicts. But the battle's final outcome changed the entire Revolutionary War.

General John Burgoyne was among Britain's most influential leaders. He was nicknamed "Gentleman Johnny" because he liked to throw parties between battles. But with the Revolutionary War going on for two years, Burgoyne wasn't having much fun.

He was determined to end this fight—by crushing the rebellious colonists.

Burgoyne's plan was to divide the colonial rebel armies. Britain could gain control of the northern colonies, then Burgoyne believed all the southern colonies would surrender. So Burgoyne and his men planned to advance into the northern colonies from Canada, marching down the Hudson Valley to the city of Albany, New York. From Albany, Burgoyne's forces would join up with more British soldiers and rout the Americans.

Burgoyne also wanted to meet in Albany because that town had a lot of Tories—or colonists who were still loyal to Britain—as well as Iroquois and Mohawk Indians. During the French and Indian War, the Native American tribes had fought alongside the British. Burgoyne expected them to join the British for this battle, too.

The general's first target was Fort Ticonderoga. This fort sat on the banks of Lake Champlain, a gigantic lake in New York State. After scouting the area, the British Army discovered there was an unoccupied mountain that overlooked the fort. Burgoyne ordered his troops to haul cannons up the mountainside. In battle, it's always good to have the high ground—like the colonists on hills above Boston Harbor.

Inside Fort Ticonderoga, the rebel Americans saw these British soldiers moving the guns to high ground. They knew the fort was going to become indefensible, so they abandoned their position and fled into the woods.

Burgoyne took this retreat as a sign of victory.

He wrote to an English lord in London:

"I have the honor to inform your Lordship that the enemy [were] dislodged from Ticonderoga and Mount Independent, on

the 6th instant, and . . . left with the loss of 128 pieces of cannon, all their armed vessels and bateaux [boats], the greatest part of their baggage and ammunition, provision and military stores . . .”

Sure sounded impressive, didn't it?

But Burgoyne went on to make a really bad mistake. Instead of using boats to cross Lake Champlain and surprise the Americans on the other side of the water, Burgoyne tried to chase the rebels over land. With 7,500 men, forty-two cannons, and a supply train that included hundreds of carts, the British struggled through thick woods and hilly terrain. Plus, the colonists figured out clever ways to slow the Redcoats even further. For instance, they cut down trees and used them to block the trails. They also initiated skirmishes with Burgoyne's vanguard—the lead soldiers—holding back the rest of the British forces.

Burgoyne's progress slowed to one mile a day. Finally, realizing the enemy was winning, Burgoyne sent some Indians ahead to scout the territory.

The Indians came across a cabin with two women inside: an elderly widow named Mrs. McNeill and a pretty girl named Jane McCrea. The Indians started quarreling with each other. They were arguing over which woman would bring the most money for a ransom—the old woman or the beautiful girl? The Indian who lost that argument shot and scalped Jane McCrea. The rest of them delivered old Mrs. McNeil to the British camp.



The Death of Jane McCrea by John Vanderlyn (1804)

The old woman was, naturally, very upset. She also happened to be the cousin of a powerful British General, Simon Frasier. She told her cousin her terrifying tale. Frasier was outraged. He complained to Burgoyne and demanded justice.

Burgoyne ordered the Indians to be hanged.

The leader of the Indians told Burgoyne that if anything happened to his scouts, the entire tribe would desert the British forces.

Burgoyne was so desperate to wipe out the American rebels, he pardoned the Indians.

That was his second big mistake.

News spread throughout the colonies about Jane McCrea's murder and scalping—and about how the British didn't punish the

Indians who committed this terrible crime. But as usually happens with these kinds of retellings, the story grew. Soon people were saying that Burgoyne's plan was to unleash wild Indians on helpless colonists—they would all be scalped and killed.

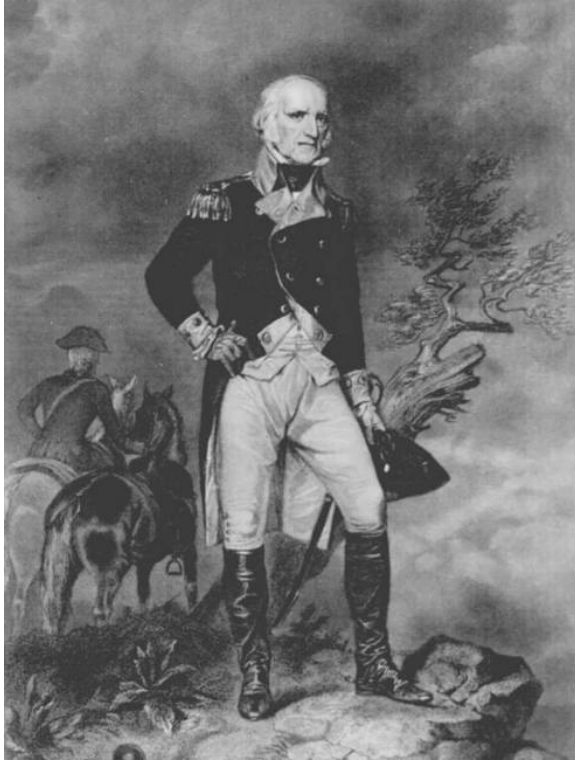
That rumor even fired up some Tories. Now they were angry enough at the British army to join the rebel cause. From old men to young boys, Americans started picking up their muskets, swords, and rifles. Soon, the colonial force almost doubled in size, from about 9,000 to 15,000 men.

On the other side, the British army was *losing* men. Troop numbers fell from 7,200 to 6,000 soldiers. And the Redcoats were suffering from severe food shortages. American farmers started destroying their crops and scattering their livestock so that the British wouldn't have anything to eat.

Burgoyne, hoping to replenish his troops and his supplies, sent Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Baum and 700 soldiers to an area near Lake Champlain. It's a huge lake that sits between the Green Mountains of Vermont and the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Baum's force was an odd mix of British soldiers, German mercenaries, Tories, and Indians. To make things even more confusing, Baum didn't speak English. So to talk to his troops, he had to rely on an interpreter.

Baum soon learned that the Americans were planning to chase his forces through the forests around Lake Champlain. Baum asked Burgoyne for reinforcements. The general told him he was sending several hundred German mercenaries to help.

American General John Stark—the same colonist who fought at Bunker Hill—gathered 1,500 men to pursue Baum. And they collected men along the way as news travelled about the scalping of Jane McCrea. The American rebels finally caught up to Baum.



American General John Stark

But Baum was expecting those German reinforcements from Burgoyne—he thought that’s who these guys were!

Stark’s men surrounded Baum’s forces. When the first shots were fired, the Indians took off. They felt no loyalty to the British force. Then Stark made a flanking maneuver that drove Baum’s men into a tight center. He launched the main attack. Baum was shot and killed.

The British force fell apart.

But then—guess who showed up?

Those German mercenaries!

These men tried to form ranks and fire volleys at the Americans. But the colonial Green Mountain Boys—a New Hampshire militia—hid behind trees and picked off the Germans.



Green Mountain Rangers, 1776

The German leader soon realized he was losing men. He asked his drummer boy to beat out a “slow roll,” which was the international signal to request a truce. The problem was, amid the thick black smoke of gunpowder, the blasts of gunfire, and the dense forest, the Americans didn’t hear the drummer boy. They continued to fight.

In the end, the British lost 207 men. Another 700 were captured, along with four cannons.

The Americans only lost thirty men, although another forty were wounded.

But Burgoyne received even more alarming news. His fellow British officer, General Howe, who fought at Bunker Hill, had captured the American rebel capital of Philadelphia—but that meant Howe wouldn't come help Burgoyne—he had to hold onto Philadelphia. That left only one other nearby British general—Henry Clinton—but he *also* refused to come help Burgoyne. Clinton was afraid the masterful American General George Washington would retake the New York territory that Clinton had just captured. And Clinton was right.

Washington decided it was time to strike—Burgoyne.

Washington ordered Daniel Morgan, Benedict Arnold, and 1,000 riflemen to join the American troops heading for Saratoga, New York. Led by American General Horatio Gates, these troops began digging earthworks on a Saratoga farm that belonged to a British loyalist named John Freeman.



Artist's drawing of the Battle of Saratoga

The British sent 2,000 soldiers to slip around the Americans' left flank. The Redcoats hoped to seize a hill overlooking the rebel trenches.

American Benedict Arnold wanted to attack the British on open ground. But Gates refused and ordered the colonial troops to wait in the trenches while the British approached.

This situation set up the first battle of Saratoga—also known as The Battle of Freeman's Farm. It took place on September 19, 1777.

As the Redcoats advanced, American Daniel Morgan and 500 sharpshooters began picking off the British officers. The British light infantry used a bayonet charge to push back the Americans. Arnold then ordered out two regiments to stop the British, but the colonists couldn't overcome the powerful Redcoats.

So the British gained control of the field.

But they suffered some 600 casualties, about twice as many as the Americans.

The Americans then moved south and set up defenses at a place called Bemis Heights. More colonial militia men arrived, expanding the colonial force.

On October 7, Burgoyne ordered his troops to advance all along the American line.

Benedict Arnold rode back to Gates and begged for reinforcements. But Gates again refused Arnold's request. He even ordered Arnold confined to headquarters! (Arnold was a bit of a hot-head).

The Redcoats, helped by German mercenaries, managed to push back the Americans. But still, more bad news came to Burgoyne. His communications had been cut off, and most of his supply ships had been captured by American forces on the coast.

Burgoyne refused to surrender. He attacked again.

Gates, however, was slow to retaliate. And now Benedict Arnold refused to obey any longer. Jumping on his horse, Arnold led a charge straight into the British center.



Benedict Arnold at the Battle of Saratoga

Daniel Morgan called for his best rifleman, Tim Murphy, to shoot the battle's leading field officer, British General Simon Frasier. And in fact, a rifle bullet killed Frasier, although historians dispute who shot it. As soon as the general went down, the British line broke.

Arnold then led the Americans into the right wing of the British forces. Arnold was shot in the leg, but the Americans forced Burgoyne to retreat. They also pursued the Redcoats for several days, until Burgoyne realized his army was surrounded with nowhere to go.

On October 17, 1777, "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne officially surrendered to the Americans.

The Battle of Saratoga was over.

The American rebels had won.

“It was a glorious sight,” declared one militiaman, “to see the haughty Brittons march out and surrender their arms to an army which but a little before they despised and called paltroons.”

News of the British surrender reached London. It shocked that proud nation. How could a bunch of untrained Americans take down the world’s most powerful army?

Even worse for England, now the French wanted to take advantage of this military miracle—France also declared war on England! The French would become a crucial ally in the American Revolution.

And historians would later say that the turning point in this war for independence was the Battle of Saratoga.



Surrender of General Burgoyne by John Trumbull, 1822. Burgoyne in red, Gates in Blue, Daniel Webster in white.

Do you think the artist was saying something about red, white, and blue?

WHO FOUGHT?



That's where some of the trouble began.

In 1779, Arnold made a secret deal to give the British control of West Point. Yes—he was turning his back on his country. But Arnold's traitorous plan was exposed before he could carry it out. Arnold then switched sides—and joined the British Army as a brigadier general.

Benedict Arnold became a Red Coat.

Today, calling someone "Benedict Arnold" means he's a traitor.

But if Arnold had never betrayed his fellow Americans, his courage on the battlefield would've placed him among the greatest American fighters of all time.

BOOKS

The Notorious Benedict Arnold by Steve Sheinkin

The Battle of Saratoga (We the People) by Don Nardo

INTERNET

In 1864, a minister recorded the words and images of six Revolutionary War soldiers, each veteran more than 100 years old. At that time, the United States was embroiled in the Civil War.

You can read the stories and see pictures of these veterans, some of whom fought in The Battles of Saratoga:

earlyamerica.com/review/2012_summer_fall/last-men-of-revolution.html

One man from Daniel Morgan's rifle regiment wrote a first-person account of The Battle of Saratoga:

earlyamerica.com/review/2004_summer_fall/saratoga.htm

Check out the original map of the Battle of Saratoga:

earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/maps/saratogamap/enlargement.html

Get the rest of the book at GreatBattlesForBoys.Com and Amazon!

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