

## Using Primary Sources to Learn about the Battle of Hubbardton

Summer of 1777: The Road to Independence

The Battle of Hubbardton (Hubbardton, Vermont, July 7, 1777)

Answer the following questions using the information in the primary sources (pages 2 to 8). Sources have many levels of detail. Choose one, several, or all the primary sources, as fit your students. Sources may not provide answers to all the questions.

1. Who wrote the document?
2. When was the document written?
3. Was the writer present at the battle?
4. How many soldiers were at the battle?  
American \_\_\_\_\_ British \_\_\_\_\_ German \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who was wounded or killed during the battle?
6. List 2 details about the battle:  
☆  
  
☆
7. What is the author's opinion about the battle?
8. Why did the author write about the battle?
9. Do you think this is a true account of the battle? Why or why not? What is your opinion of the battle? Have you learned enough from these sources to decide?

**Selected Primary Sources**—choose one or more of these sources to answer the questions on page 1.

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Diary of Reverend Enos Hitchcock, chaplain in Continental Army  
(*Diary of Enos Hitchcock, D.D.* Rhode Island Historical Society, Vol. 7, No. 1, April, 1899.)

July 9, 1777

news of our main Body being at Castleton on Monday & of an Action there between Colo. Warners Regt & some Indians & Hessians – cloudy most of the Day

July 10, 1777

Major Livingston came in from our Army brings account of an Action between our rear guard & about 1400 Enemy, considerable loss both sides- also of Colo. Francis fall in the field...

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Journal of Col. Jeduthan Baldwin, chief engineer for Mount Independence  
(*Revolutionary Journal of Col. Jeduthan Baldwin, 1775-1778.* Ayer Company Publishers, 1995.)

July 7, 1777

in the morning a heavy fire in the rear for some time near an hour a heavy battle, but as the rear consisted of the feeble part of the army they, after an obstinate resistance were obliged to give way to superior numbers. the body of the army Marched to Rutland. died at Col. Meedses where we were Joined by a No. of Col. Warners Men & those that had been in action

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Excerpt of letter to Congress from General Arthur St. Clair, in command of Mount Independence, Fort Ticonderoga, and the Northern American Army  
(*Proceedings of a General Court Martial... for the Trial of Major General St. Clair, August 25, 1778.* Hall & Sellers, 1778.)

July 14, 1777

The body of the army reached Castle-Town the next evening, thirty miles from Ticonderoga, and twelve from Skeensborough; but the rear guard, under the command of Colonel Warner, which, with the stragglers and infirm, amounted to near 1200, stopped short of that place six miles, and were next morning attacked by a strong detachment the enemy had sent to hang upon our rear and retard our march. Two regiments of militia, who had left us the evening before, and halted about two miles from Colonel Warner, were immediately ordered to his assistance; but, to my great surprize, they marched directly down to me. At the same time I received information that the enemy were in possession of Skeensborough, and had cut off all our boats and armed vessels. This obliged me to change my route, that I might not be put betwixt two fires, and at the same time be able to bring off Colonel Warner, to whom I sent orders, if he found the enemy too strong, to retreat to Rutland, where he would find me to cover him, that place lying nearly at an equal distance from both. Before my orders reached him his party was dispersed, after having for a considerable time sustained a very warm engagement, in which the enemy suffered so much, that they pursued but a very small distance. Our loss I cannot ascertain, but believe it does not exceed 40 killed and

wounded. About 200 of the party have joined me at Rutland and since, but great numbers of them are still missing, and I suspect have got down into New-England by the way of No. Four. After a very fatiguing march of seven days, in which the army suffered much from bad weather and want of provision, I joined General Schuyler the 12<sup>th</sup> instant.

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Narrative of the Captivity & Sufferings of Ebenezer Fletcher, 16 year-old American soldier and fifer

(Printed 1813. Reprinted in: *Perspectives '76*. Regional Center for Educational Training, 1975.)

### Part 1

I, Ebenezer Fletcher, listed into the Continental Army, in Capt. Carr's Company, in Col. Nathan Hale's Regiment, as a fifer, and joined the Army at Ticonderoga, under the command of General St. Clair, in the Spring of 1777, at which place I was stationed till the retreat of the Army on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July following.

Having just recovered from the measles, and not being able to march with the main body, I fell in the rear. The morning after our retreat, orders came very early for the troops to refresh and be ready for marching. Some were eating, some were cooking, and all in a very unfit posture for battle. Just as the sun rose, there was a cry "The enemy are upon us." – Looking round I saw the enemy in line of battle. Orders came to lay down our packs and be ready for action. The fire instantly began. We were but few in number compared to the enemy. At the commencement of the battle, many of our party retreated back into the woods. Capt. Carr came up and says "My lads, advance, we shall beat them yet." A few of us followed him in view of the enemy. Every man was trying to secure himself behind girdled trees, which were standing on the place of action. I made my shelter for myself and discharged my piece. Having loaded again and taken aim, my piece missed fire. I brought the same a second time to my face: but before I had time to discharge it, I received a musket ball in the small of my back... My uncle Daniel Foster standing but little distance from me, I made out to crawl to him and spoke to him. He and another man lifted me and carried me back some distance and laid me down behind a large tree, where was another man crying out most bitterly with a grievous wound. By this time I had bled so freely, I was very weak and faint.

### Part 2

[Fletcher was wounded during the battle.]

[The British] soon came to me and pulled off my shoes, supposing me to be dead. I looked up and spoke, telling them I was their prisoner, and begged to be used well. "Damn you, says one, you deserve to be used well, don't you? What's such a young rebel as you fighting for?" One of these men was an officer, who appeared to be a pretty sort of a man. He spoke to the soldier, who had taken my shoes, and says, "Give back the shoes and help the man into camp."

Two Doctors came to my assistance. They raised me up and examined my back. One of them said, "My lad, you stood a narrow chance; had the ball gone in or out half its bigness, you must have been killed instantly." I asked him if he thought there was any prospect of getting well again. He answered, "There is some prospect."

Doctor Blacksom an under surgeon appeared to be very kind indeed; he was the one, who had the care of me: he never gave me any insulting or abusive language; he sometimes would say, "Well, my lad, think you'll be willing to list in the King's service if you should get well?" My answer was always **no**. The officers would flatter me to list in their service; telling me they were very sure to conquer the country, since they had got our strongest post. I told them I should not list.

[Soon after this, Fletcher escaped from the British and eventually returned to serve in the American army.]

And now, kind reader, wishing that you may forever remain ignorant of the real sufferings of the veteran soldier, from hunger and cold, from sickness and captive, I bid you a cordial adieu.

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Journal of Lieutenant Du Roi the Elder, lieutenant and adjutant, Duke of Brunswick, (*Journal of Du Roi the Elder*, University of Pennsylvania, 1911.)

In Camp at Skenesborough House, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 1777

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July the enemy was compelled through the perseverance and activity of our army to leave Ticonderoga. On this same day the right wing of the enemy was driven back beyond Skenesborough, and the left to Huberton...

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, Brig. Gen. Fraser at the head of a little more than half of the vanguard and without any artillery, (it had been impossible to take it along, although he had tried very hard) met 2000 rebels, which were in a very good position. Brig. Gen. Fraser attacked and whipped them. A great number of the best officers and 200 men of the enemy were killed, a greater number were wounded, and more than 200 men made prisoners.

Maj. Gen. v. Riedesel arrived at the right moment with his van-guard, consisting of the Yaeger company, and 80 men from the grenadier and chasseur battalions, to assist Brig. Gen Fraser. In a short time he won the honors of the battle for himself and his troops by his well defined orders and the courageous execution.

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Letter from a British Officer, collected by Thomas Anburey, British observer traveling with British Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne  
(original 1789. Found in *With Burgoyne from Quebec*. Macmillan of Canada, 1963.)

Part 1

Camp as Skenesborough, July 12, 1777

...After we had remained some little time in the fort, orders came for the advanced corps to march in pursuit of the enemy, who, we were informed, had gone to Huberton, in order to harass their rear. We marched till one o'clock in a very hot and sultry day, over a continued succession of steep and woody hills; the distance I cannot ascertain, but we were marching very expeditiously from four in the morning to that time.

On our march we picked up several stragglers, from whom General Fraser learnt that the rearguard of the enemy was composed of chosen men, commanded by a Colonel Francis, who was reckoned one of their best officers.

During the time the advanced corps halted to refresh, General Riedesel came up, and after consulting with General Fraser, and making arrangements for continuing the pursuit, we marched forward again three miles nearer the enemy, to an advantageous situation, where we lay that night on our arms.

At three in the morning our march was renewed and about five we came up with the enemy, who were busily employed in cooking their provisions.

Major Grant, of the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment, who had the advanced guard, attacked their pickets, which were soon driven in to the main body. From this attack we lament the death of this very gallant and brave officer, who in all probability fell a victim to the great disadvantages we experience peculiar to this unfortunate contest, opposing expert riflemen. Upon his coming up with the enemy, he got upon the stump of a tree to reconnoiter, and had hardly given the men order to fire when he was struck by a rifle ball, fell off the tree, and never uttered another syllable.

## Part 2

Camp at Skenesborough, July 12, 1777

[During the battle]...The light infantry then formed, as well as the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment, the former of which suffered very much from the enemy's fire, particularly the companies of the 29<sup>th</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Regiments. The grenadiers were ordered to form to prevent the enemy's getting to the road that leads to Castletown, which they were endeavouring to do, and were repulsed, upon which they attempted their retreat by a very steep mountain to Pittsford. The grenadiers scrambled up an ascent which appeared most inaccessible, and gained the summit of the mountain before them; this threw them into great confusion, ... the men were obliged to sling their firelocks and climb up the side, sometimes resting their feet upon the branch of a tree, and sometimes on a piece of rock; had any been so unfortunate as to have missed his hold, he must inevitably [have] been dashed to pieces.

Although the grenadiers had gained the summit of this mountain, and the Americans had lost great numbers of their men, with their brave commander Colonel Francis, still they were far superior in numbers to the British, and the contest remained doubtful till the arrival of the Germans, when the Americans, whose numbers amounted to 2,000, fled on all sides; they were opposed by only 850 British, as it was near two hours before the Germans made their appearance...

Upon their arrival, we were apprehensive, by the noise we heard, that a reinforcement had been sent back from the main body of the American army for the support of their rearguard, for they began singing psalms on their advance, and at the same time kept up an incessant firing which totally decided the fate of the day; but even after the action was over, there were lurking parties hovering about the woods.

### Part 3

Camp at Skenesborough, July 12, 1777

During the battle the Americans were guilty of such a breach of all military rules as could not fail to exasperate our soldiers. The action was chiefly in woods, interspersed with a few open fields. Two companies of grenadiers, who were stationed in the skirts of the wood, close to one of these fields, to watch that the enemy did not outflank the 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment, observed a number of the Americans, to the amount of near sixty, coming across the field with their arms clubbed, which is always considered to be a surrender as prisoners of war. The grenadiers were restrained from firing, commanded to stand with their arms, and shew no intention of hostility: when the Americans had got within ten yards, they in an instant turned round their muskets, fired upon the grenadiers, and ran as fast as they could into the woods; their fire killed and wounded a great number of men, and those who escaped immediately pursued them, and gave no quarter...

After the action was over, and all firing had ceased for near two hours... a number of officers were collected to read the papers taken out of the pocket-book of Colonel Francis, when Captain Shrimpton, of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, who had the papers in his hand, jumped up and fell, exclaimed he was severely wounded; we all heard the ball whiz by us, and turning to the place from whence the report came, saw the smoke; as there was every reason to imagine the piece was fired from some tree, a party of men were instantly detached, but could find no person; the fellow, no doubt, as soon as he had fired, had slipped down and made his escape.

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Excerpt of letter from General John Burgoyne to Lord George Germain, British commander to British Secretary of State for America  
(*A State of the Expedition from Canada*. 1780.)

### Part 1

Skenesborough, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1777

Brigadier General Fraser continued his pursuit to Castletown till one o'clock, having marched in a very hot day from four o'clock in the morning till that time. Some stragglers of the enemy were picked up, from whom the Brigadier learned that their rear guard was composed of chosen men, and commanded by Colonel Francis, one of their best officers. During the time that the men were refreshing, Major General Riedesel came up, and arrangements for continuing the pursuit having been concerted, Brigadier Fraser moved forward again, and during the night lay upon his arms, in an advantageous situation, three miles nearer the enemy.

At three in the morning he renewed his march, and about five his advanced scouts discovered the enemy's centries, who fired their pieces and joined the main body. The Brigadier observing a commanding ground to the left of his light infantry, immediately ordered it to be possessed by that corps; and a considerable body of the enemy attempting the same, they met. The enemy were driven back to their original post; the advanced guard under Major Grant was by this time engaged, and the grenadiers were advanced to sustain them, and to prevent the right flank from being turned. The Brigadier remained on the left, where the enemy long defended themselves by the aid of logs and trees, and after being repulsed, and prevented getting to the Castletown

road by the grenadiers, they rallied, and renewed the action; and upon a second repulse, attempted their retreat by Pitsford Mountain.... At this critical moment General Riedesel, who had pressed on, upon hearing the firing, arrived with the foremost of his columns, viz. the chasseurs company and eighty grenadiers and light infantry. His judgment immediately pointed to him the course to take...

## Part 2

Skenesborough, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1777

[After the Germans arrived, the enemy] fled on all sides, leaving dead upon the field Colonel Francis and many other officers, with upwards of 200 men; above 600 were wounded, most of whom perished in the woods, attempting to get off, and one colonel, seven captains, ten subalterns, and 210 men were made prisoners; above 200 stand of arms were also taken.

The number of the enemy before the engagement amounted to 2000 men. The British detachment under Brigadier General Fraser (the parties left the day before at Ticonderoga not having been able to join) consisted only of 850 fighting men.

The bare relation of so signal an action is sufficient for its praise. Should the attack against such inequality of numbers, before the German brigade came up, seem to require explanation, it is to be considered that the enemy might have escaped by delay; that the advanced guard on a sudden found themselves too near the enemy to avoid action without retreating; and that Brigadier Fraser had supposed the German troops to be very near. The difference of time in their arrival was merely accidental. The Germans pushed for a share in the glory, and they arrived in time to obtain it. I have only to add, that the exertions of Brigadier Fraser on this day were but a continuance of that uniform intelligence, activity and bravery, which distinguish his character upon all occasions, and entitle him to be recommended, in the most particular manner, to his Majesty's favour.

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Account of the battle, Private Joseph Bird, American soldier  
(No date. Henry Hall, "Sketches of Outstanding Events in Vermont's Early History," unpublished manuscript, Vermont Historical Society Library, ca. 1870.)

Mon. Morning, I was boiling chocolate, and carried it down the road, coming in from Mount Independence; when one of our men jumped up, and cocked his gun to fire, they didn't let him fire. Then I turned to see what he was going to shoot at and I saw the enemy, aforming about 15 rods from us...

We were ordered to form, on the East side of the log fence. When we had got over the fence, the rise of land shut out the British from our sight. We saw them attack our right... Capt. Stone, went forward, and from the rail fence, East of the garden, next to the Selleck house, on the west side of the Crown Point Road, removed the three top rails, for seven or eight lengths, so that we could have a better chance at them. We drove them back twice, by cutting them down so fast. We didn't leave log fence or charge them. The action began on our right, which soon gave way. They couldn't drive us from the fence, until they charged us. I was near the center, opposite the west road, under Col. Francis. Hale commanded our right...

We fought, before they drove us till I had fired nearly 20 cartridges.  
[The Americans started to retreat across a field.]

When I got over [a hedge], I took a tree and waited for them to come within shot. We fought through the woods, all the way to the ridge of Pittsford Mountain, popping away from behind trees.