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Benedict Arnold and The Battle of Saratoga

"...You Desired Me to Send Morgan and the Light Infantry, and Support Them With My Division."

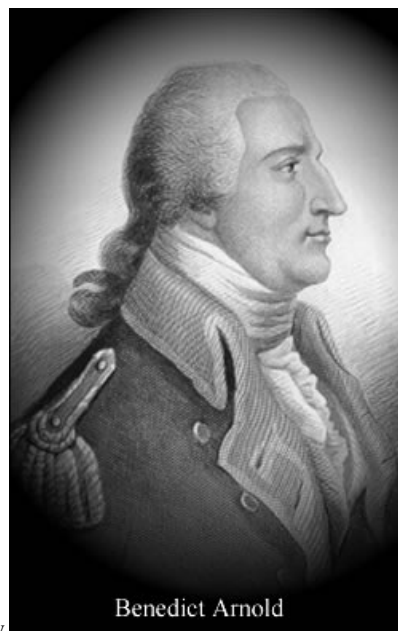
An examination of the role of Benedict Arnold during the Battle of Saratoga on September 19, 1777

by Mark Nichipor

Introduction

Did Benedict Arnold exercise field command on the battlefield of the American force at the battle on Freedman's Farm on September 19, 1777? Or was this a battle fought by Colonels and Brigadiers with little direction from higher up the chain of command? The historical fact is that Arnold's division was engaged that day, but where was Arnold?

In examining this very long standing controversy, I intend as much as possible to rely on the accounts of those individuals who were there on the field of battle or in camp near Saratoga in 1777. While a short paper such as this will not end the controversy, it



Benedict Arnold

Benedict Arnold

can assist the student of battle in exploring the various points of view.

"It is worthy to remark, that not a single general officer was on the field of battle the 19th September until evening when General Learned was ordered out...(1)." With these few words, American Colonel James Wilkinson would provoke a heated controversy that continues to this day. The individual at the center of the controversy was Benedict Arnold; and the controversy centers around his actions during the first battle of Saratoga on September 19, 1777. Did Arnold deserve as his aide Lt. Richard Verick said "all the credit of the action of the 19th...." (2). Many popular authors over the years have suggested so. In his classic book, War of the American Revolution, Christopher Ward (3) gives a dramatic account of Arnold leading his troops and having final victory snatched away by Gates' refusal to send reinforcements. Ward, along with Hoffman Nickerson in his Turning Point of the American Revolution (4) included detailed appendixes to their works supportive of Arnold personally commanding troops on the front line. Both are indebted to Isaac Arnold's (no relation) early biography of Arnold (5). Another historian, George Bancroft, wrote a multi volume history of the United States in 1837 and followed Wilkinson's suggestion that Arnold was not present on the battlefield(6). It is most curious, that both Ward and Nickerson relied heavily on secondary sources rather than the accounts of those who were present at the battle to prove their point.

Arnold's early role in the War

At the time of the battles of Saratoga, Benedict Arnold had already established a reputation of bravery and being in the thick of any action. His capture (with Ethan Allen) of Fort Ticonderoga, the epic march up the Kennebec river to Quebec and the naval engagement at Valcour Island were already legendary in the new country. Yet there was another decidedly less attractive side of Arnold. When relieved of command at Fort Ticonderoga, he threatened to take his ships and go over to the British. His fellow officers Hazen and Brown had brought charges against him in Canada. In addition, over \$55,000 out of \$66,671 entrusted to him for the Canadian army could not be accounted for (7). Passed over for promotion, as had so many other talented and deserving men, Arnold withdrew more than once in protest and like Achilles sulked in his tent. More than once he had tendered his resignation on the grounds his honor had been slighted.

On July 11, 1777 Arnold had again submitted his resignation to Congress. He had been passed over for promotion by the Continental Congress by men whom he felt were less senior and experienced than he. But there were still many members of Congress who felt Arnold deserved promotion. Following his actions as a volunteer during the British raid on Danbury Connecticut, Congress reversed its decision and promoted him to Major General dated May 3, 1777. Not satisfied, Arnold requested that his new commission be predated to make him senior to those men who had been promoted over him. This Congress, after a long debate and close vote, refused to do (8).

Feeling his honor yet again insulted, Arnold requested a leave of absence so he could threaten Congress with his resignation from the army. The commander of the American Northern Army, Philip Schuyler, requested that he stay; that his departure at this critical time would leave the army without a talented field officer (9). With his pride still smarting from his "treatment" by Congress, Arnold stayed.

Up to this time the performance of the American Northern Army had done little to inspire confidence in its leaders. Caught flat footed and unprepared, they had withdrawn from Fort Ticonderoga and Mount Independence and in the process lost most of their supplies. Aside from two rear guard actions fought by detached elements of the army at Fort Ann and Hubbardton, the army had withdrawn steadily in the face of Burgoyne's Crown forces (10). After that, Schuyler was forced to withdraw steadily from one defensive position after another.

Before the war, Schuyler was involved in the border dispute with New York and New Hampshire over Vermont. Therefore, there was much ill feelings amongst the New England troops within the army against him. On top of that, the constant retreating caused many within the army and Congress to lose all confidence in the man (11).

West of Albany, New York along the Mohawk river, a second British column under Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger had besieged Fort

Stanwix and was threatening to form a junction with Burgoyne. Arnold, alone among Schuyler's officers, suggested dividing the army and sending a force to relieve the Fort. Arnold was appointed commander and set out on August 15, 1777 (12). While carrying out this successful mission the command of the American army in the North had changed.

The Arrival of Gates

For well over a year Philip Schuyler and Horatio Gates and their partisans in Congress had fought each other over the command of the Northern Army. Now, due to the capture of Ticonderoga and the retreat of the army, Congress had recalled Schuyler (13). Gates, who was very popular with the New England troops, arrived to take command on August 19. "General Gates takes command of the Northern Army this day, which I think will put a new face upon our affairs," wrote Major Dearborn in his journal. Gates' first command was to move the entire army forward toward the enemy. He would "not wait to be attacked, but endeavor to turn the tables on my antagonist (14)." This forward movement, along with the victories at Fort Stanwix by Arnold and at Bennington by John Stark, restored the morale of the army, which was tired of running from the enemy.

Arnold had served under both Schuyler and Gates, and was friendly and cordial in his relations with the both of them. But Schuyler was aloof, especially to those who were not from the same social class as he. Gates on the other hand had defended Arnold during his troubles with Brown and Hazen, and the court martial that followed. Arnold and Gates had worked well together during the summer and fall of 1776 around Fort Ticonderoga and at the time of the Valcour Island battle. Despite what later writers contend, there was as yet no evidence of any conflict between Gates and Arnold

Arnold's Staff

One seed that would bear bitter fruit later was Arnold's decision to take in two members of Schuyler's staff for own his divisional staff, Richard Verick and Harry Livingston. Both young men were bitter enemies of Gates, and almost fanatical in their devotion to Schuyler. Both men's continued correspondence to Schuyler was filled with blind hatred towards Gates. On 5 October 1777, James Lovell was to warn Gates that, "I fear that sprightly gentleman (i.e., Arnold) will be duped, by an artful senior now disgraced (i.e., Schuyler), so as to become a tool for base purposes. I will do my best neither one nor the other shall distract from your reputation here, if they should basely attempt it. You ought not to suffer yourself to be embarrassed there a moment after discovery of plain intention in any man to do it (15)." Why Arnold made such a poor decision, and accepted these two men on his staff, is unknown. Verick and Livingston were bound to antagonize Gates. There can be no doubt, when reading their correspondence over two hundred years later, of the malice they felt for Gates. They held him responsible for the removal of Schuyler, their mentor, and enjoyed with relish any problem thrown in the way of the new commander. Nor can there be a doubt that both Verick and Livingston worked hard to cause a major confrontation within the army itself. As the British invaders marched towards them, the American chain of command would be bitterly divided by petty bickering.

American fortifications at Bemis Heights

On September 9, 1777 the American Northern Army reached the town of Stillwater New York. Schuyler had started to fortify a position near there on August 8, but retreated toward Albany after detaching Arnold to save Fort Stanwix instead. Having restored the army's morale in advancing to confront the enemy, Gates was planning to put his superior numbers in a good defensive position so that Burgoyne would be forced to attack him. Although Gates thought at first of making a stand at Stillwater, his engineering officer Tadeusz Kosciuszko advised against it. Instead, at Bemis Heights, a better position offered itself. The river road was pinned against the Hudson by a long series of Bluffs. Only a narrow strip of land bordered the Hudson river, which could be controlled by placing artillery on these bluffs overlooking the road. This effectively stopped any movement along the river or road. To the west of the bluffs were thick woods that would make any movement of an army with artillery and baggage very difficult (16). Burgoyne would have to muscle his way through the Americans here, or fall back toward Canada.

Time was on the side of the Americans. Reinforcements would continue to come into their camp, which already outnumbered the invader's forces. While the British under Burgoyne were cut off from their from his supply line to Canada, Gates was near his supply base at Albany. Gates could afford to wait out the British who would soon have to retire to Canada or else be stranded in the American wilderness with winter coming on. Gates' entrenchments provided excellent cover for his militia, while his light troops would prevent the British from surprising him. Although not a dashing battlefield commander, Gates' plan took advantage of his superiorities while down playing those of Burgoyne's.

Within the fortified lines along Bemis Heights, Arnold commanded a division that protected the American left flank. The division consisted of General Poor's (1st, 2nd & 3rd New Hampshire and 2nd & 4th New York regiments and two militia regiments) and General Learned's (2nd, 8th, 9th Massachusetts and 1st Canadian regiments) brigades. Colonel Morgan's Light Corp (made up of his Rifle regiment and a Light Infantry battalion commanded by Major Dearborn) guarded the exposed ground west of the American lines outside the encampment. Although not included in Arnold's command in any official document, by posting the Light Corp on the left everyone in the army assumed they would be commanded by Arnold (17).

The First Battle of Saratoga, September 19, 1777

The early morning of September 19th was cold and foggy. As the morning mist lifted, scouts brought word to Gates that Burgoyne was moving forward toward the American works in three columns. General Fraser's column of elite British and Brunswick soldiers was moving to the west to outflank the American works. General Hamilton's column of four British regiments supported Fraser but marched toward the center of the American works. General Riedesel's Brunswick column was to advance along the river road and pin down Gate's right flank. Burgoyne appeared to have been hoping to either outflank the American works (as Gates' scouts and local guides had warned him) or draw the Americans into battle in the open where he felt his regulars could beat them.

"On the 19th, just when advice was received that the enemy were approaching," wrote Arnold to Gates on September 22, "I took the liberty to give you as my opinion that we ought to march out and attack them, (*italics mine*) you desired me to send Colonel Morgan and the Light Infantry, and support them, I obeyed your orders, and before the action was over I found it necessary to send out the whole of my division to support the attack no other troops were engaged that day except Colonel Marshall's regiment of General Patterson's brigade (18)."

As one would expect from any army command structure, the commanding general would digest any information that came to him, along with advice from his subordinates. According to Arnold himself, Gates ordered him to commit his light troops and support him with the remainder of the division.

Morgan's brigade advanced along a wide front searching for the enemy. Strung out in an extended skirmish line, Dearborn's Light Infantry held the left while the rifles, slightly ahead held of them held the right. First blood went to the rifles, about noon, when they ran into Hamilton's advanced piquette led by Major Forbes near Freeman's farm. Although they routed Forbes' command, the rifles then ran into Hamilton's deployed brigade. At the same time, Fraser detached two companies of the 24th regiment that hit them in the flank which scattered the riflemen. Also, Dearborn's Light Infantry had engaged the Canadian volunteers and Captain Fraser's British Marksmen company (19).

To support the light troops the Americans then committed the remainder of Poor's brigade. But they were sent out in a piecemeal fashion. The 1st New Hampshire regiment blundered forward into the gap between the rifles and the light infantry. Lt. Blake of that regiment wrote about the initial fighting,

"about 12 o'clock the First New Hampshire regiment marched out to meet the enemy. We met them about one mile from our encampment, where the engagement began very closely and continued about 20 minutes, in which time we lost so many men, and received no reinforcements, that we were obliged to retreat, but before we got to the encampment we met two regiments (2nd and 3rd New Hampshire regiments) coming out as a reinforcement, when we returned and renewed the attack which continued very warm until dark..." (20)

By three o'clock, both the 2nd and 3rd New York regiments had also arrived on the field. Further reinforcements were sent out later in the afternoon as the fighting grew. While the majority of the American forces engaged the British center column under Hamilton and Burgoyne, Dearborn and Lattimore's militia regiment skirmished against Fraser's troops (21). Leading the 2nd New York regiment to support Dearborn was Colonel Philip van Courtland:

"On the forenoon of the 19th of September, the enemy were discovered towards our left, and the action commenced first with Colonel Morgan's riflemen and reinforced by regiments, one after another, as the enemy also reinforced until the battle became very general, although conducted by the Colonels until about two o'clock. My regiment was ordered to march on, keeping to the left in order to oppose their right, and engage if I found it necessary, and if I did, that regiment commanded by Colonel Livingston (i.e. 4th New York regiment) who had joined me but two days before, should reinforce 'em: this was given me first by General Poor on my parade; and as I was marching also, by General Arnold (22 van Courtland)."

Colonel van Courtland, thinking the 4th New York was supporting him, joined up with the light infantry. The 4th New York instead wandered off to their right and joined Morgan. Of the two militia regiments, Cook's appears to have joined Dearborn while Lattimore's moved to the right (23). For the remainder of the afternoon, the American right pounded Hamilton's brigade in a back and forth battle around the farm. Isolated by ravines, hills and woods, Fraser guarded Hamilton's right flank and skirmished against the remaining Americans closer to him. Fraser did send reinforcements to Hamilton during the day (i.e. Brunswick Jagers, Chasseurs and possibly some companies of Light Infantry) (24). No orders appear to have come from Burgoyne, who stayed with Hamilton and occupied himself rallying stray fugitives from the fight. In addition to the Brigades of Poor and Learned, an additional reinforcement also reached the battle line. Major William Hull, of the 8th Massachusetts regiment was doing duty with the piquettes in front of the American encampment. Hull is usually remembered today as the elderly commander who surrendered Detroit to the British in 1812. Completely forgotten is the first class service he gave as a young combat officer during the Revolution.

According to Hull's memoirs:

"...General Arnold rode to the ground which was occupied by the guard of Major Hull. He called the officers around him, and inquired what number of men was at that post. He was informed that it consisted of the guard of two hundred and fifty men, and two regiments. General Arnold then said, that three hundred volunteers, to be commanded by a field officer, must immediately reinforce the troops which were engaged....As none of the field officers offered their services, Major Hull observed to him, that he commanded the guard on that day... but if he could be excused from duty, he would be happy to command the detachment. General Arnold replied, that he would excuse him, and directed the colonels of the two regiments to call for three hundred volunteers and a suitable number of captains and subalterns to command them. In a few moments,

the number required was paraded and formed into four companies, with officers assigned to them. We at once commenced our march to the center of the engagement. Major Hull was directed to receive his orders from General Poor of the New Hampshire, who commanded the troops then closely engaged with the enemy (25)."

As darkness descended on the battlefield, Hamilton's brigade of four British regiments appeared to be almost overwhelmed by the superior American numbers. General Reidesel, commanding the Brunswick troops on the left flank detached part of his force that now arrived to take the Americans in the flank. In addition, Fraser's grenadiers had stopped Learned's brigade (who were committed very late in the day) before they could deploy into action (26). Both sides had had enough by now and disengaged. Although Burgoyne claimed a victory, his forces had suffered twice the losses the Americans had. And Gates' army still barred the way towards Albany.

The controversy

The question arises, does anyone on the field confirm or deny the presence of Arnold on the firing line? And if not, where was he that day?

Most writers have followed the lead of Arnold's two orderlies Verick and Livingston in assigning credit for the strategy and battle to Arnold. Most of these same writers usually disparage Wilkinson's statements (already quoted) due to his moral deficiencies later in life. Left unsaid is the fact that both Livingston and Verick were not unprejudiced observers. Both men continued a long correspondence to Schuyler that was filled with unbridled hate towards Gates. They would be most reluctant to give any credit to Gates and therefore motivated to attribute any major successes to someone else within the army. Perhaps this accounts for their journal entries describing the heroics of Arnold that day.

Verick, although muster master of the army considered his higher duty to Schuyler. In this he once went so far as to steal a letter from Gates, copy it and sent it to Schuyler. In another letter dated September 22, 1777 to Schuyler (27), Verick would write about Arnold's role in the battle:

"This I am certain of, that Arnold has all the credit of the action on the 19th, for he was ordering out troops to it, while the other was in Doctor Potts tent backbiting his neighbors for which words had like to ensure between him and me and this I further know, that he asked where the troops were going, when Scammell's battalion marched and upon being answered, he declared no more should go, he would not suffer the camp to be exposed. -Had Gates complied with Arnold's repeated desired (sic), he would have gained a general and complete victory over the enemy. -But it is evident to me, he never intended to fight Burgoyne, till Arnold, urged, begged and entreated him to do it..."

Despite the motivation of his loyalty to Schuyler, many historians continue to use Verick's analysis as an assessment of the battle. Another point that seems to be overlooked is that nowhere does Verick state that Arnold personally led out his division or that he was with it in the field. In his statement that Arnold "was ordering out troops to it" Verick does not confirm that Arnold was in the field, nor that he was personally leading his troops. Furthermore, Arnold, in his letters to Gates on September 22 and 23, never complained of Gates withholding reinforcements. Had there been any truth in Verick's remarks, Arnold would have been the first to remark on them. After Morgan's command was engaged, the entire Brigades of Poor and Learned were sent out as reinforcements (28). So there does not appear to be any evidence that Arnold was denied reinforcements.

Wilkinson's memoirs, aside from a youthful delight at crediting himself with being the start of any positive action, is generally reliable. No matter his later transgressions or perfidy, his early service during the war is that of a dedicated, but self centered young officer fighting for his country. His statement that "not a single general officer was on the field" is what started the controversy. Yet many writers tend to omit his writings as unreliable, while treating Verick's as credible.

What did the battalion commanders say about the fighting? Although Dearborn made no mention of Arnold in his journal, he did write in his narrative (published in 1815) that during the second battle on October 7, "I saw no General Officers in either of the actions, except General Arnold and General Poor (29)." Because Dearborn had two accounts of the battles, one written at the time and the other in 1815, many authors have confused the two accounts.

No account by Colonel Scammell of the 2nd New Hampshire regiment has come to light. Nowhere is Arnold mentioned in Lieutenant Blake's account of the opening stages of the battle. Blake also confirms that there were no field officers in the opening stages to direct troops. Dearborn confirms this when he states the 1st New Hampshire had engaged the enemy and been defeated before he could support them. The initial attacks were piecemeal in nature against an unseen enemy by individual regimental commanders. Colonel van Courtlandt's account has been used by some authors to prove Arnold was on the front lines. But a careful reading could also suggest otherwise. Poor and Arnold appear to be giving orders within the camp.

Hull's account is very interesting as Arnold is once again not on the front line in the midst of the battle, but carefully gathering reinforcements and sending them forward. "Major Hull was directed to receive his orders from General Poor of the New Hampshire, who commanded the troops then closely engaged with the enemy." Once again, General Poor is seen directing his brigade in the main fight against Hamilton's British line around Freeman's farm.

Few enlisted men's accounts of the fighting have survived. In the files of Saratoga National Historical Park is an account by a Sergeant Armstrong who served in the Light Infantry. He does not mention Arnold commanding this force (30). In the Jared Sparks collection at

Harvard University there is a letter that is variously attributed to either General Learned or Poor. "Arnold," the writer states, "rushed onto the thickest part of the field with his usual recklessness, and at times acted like a madman. I did not see him once, but S (ed Alexander Scammell?) told me this morning that he did not seem inclined to lead alone, but as a prominent object among the enemy showed itself, he would seize the nearest rifle-gun and take deliberate aim (31)." Interestingly, the author of this letter dated 20 September 1777 does not state he personally saw Arnold on the battlefield, but rather what others told him later. Nor is it a positive confirmation of the command ability of a field officer who appears to be much more interested in acting as a common foot soldier.

Robert R. Livingston wrote in January 1778 to Washington on behalf of his brother; who was Arnold's aide as well as commanding officer of the 4th New York:

"I take the liberty to enclose to your excellency an extract of a letter to him, written under General Arnold's direction, by a gentleman of his family, he being unable to hold the pen himself. After a warm recommendation of his conduct, both in camp and in the field, and giving him and his regiment a full share of the honor of the battle of the 19th of September (in which General Arnold, not being present, writes only from the reports of those who were)...(32) "

Livingston's statement is very definitive regarding Arnold "not being present." This is of especial interest in that no one has accused Livingston of being disloyal to Arnold. However, Robert Livingston was not involved in the battle, and, like Poor's statement, relies on hearsay.

There remains three other sources that are neither first person nor secondary but are still important. Chaplain Smith, who served in Nixon's Brigade during the battle is often quoted as saying Arnold commanded the troops. He was recorded as saying, "A warm battle was fought between General Burgoyne's army and one division of our army commanded by General Arnold (33)." Nixon's Brigade was not involved in the fighting on September 19, so he is possibly repeating camp gossip (34). His account was not published until 1885, well after the participants had died and the controversy was well under way.

William L. Stone, in his *Visits to the Saratoga Battlefield*, quotes a Captain E. Wakefield from Massachusetts who was then serving with Dearborn's Light Infantry battalion (35). Once again this source comes up many years later and may be an old man remembering with advantages, deeds done in his youth. Wakefield recorded many conversations that would have been impossible for him to hear and records actions that never happened: way.

"I shall never forget the opening scene of the first day's conflict. The riflemen and light infantry were ordered to clear the woods of the Indians. Arnold rode up, and with his sword pointing to the enemy emerging from the woods into an opening partially cleared, covered with stumps and fallen timber, addressing Morgan, he said, "Colonel Morgan, you and I have seen too many redskins to be deceived by that garb of paint and feathers; they are asses in Lions' skins, Canadians and Tories; let your riflemen cure them of their borrowed plumes." This account is seriously at odds with Armstrong's account, who was also serving with the Light Infantry. Nor does it match the known movements of those troops in the field. An examination of the book *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolution* failed to locate a Captain E. Wakefield. There were two privates of that name who both served in Militia regiments that saw service near the end of the campaign at the time of the surrender (36).

The early American historian Jared Sparks, visited the battlefield in 1830 and interviewed Ezra Beul, a "local veteran" of the battles and John Neilson in whose house Arnold, Poor and Morgan made their headquarters. Both men told Spark's that:

"Arnold was inactive, and took no part. In fact, there was no general officer in the action. At one time Beul says he saw General Poor, with two or three other officers, quite in the rear of the American army, and taking no part in the action. The fighting was chiefly under the eyes of Morgan, Scammell and Cilly (38)."

John Neilson's son Charles would later write a long, rambling account of the campaign based on local oral traditions.(39) Unlike his father, who was there at the time of the battle, Charles places Arnold on the front lines within the battle leading his regiments.

I have not used any British or German accounts, simply because they repeated what was told to them after the surrender or as prisoners. Because they were informed that it was elements of Arnold's division that faced them they almost all report that they fought Arnold. Clearly, they fought his division, it is unclear if they actually saw Arnold in the field.

Conclusions

After reviewing the contemporary evidence of those who took part in the fighting what can we conclude? Was Arnold, like Ward and Nickerson suggest, personally active on the front lines leading the regiments of his division and directing troop movements? All sources agreed that the troops of the left wing of Gates' army were engaged in the major fighting that day. Wilkinson makes the statement that Arnold was not on the field. He is supported by the statements of John Neilson and Ezra Beull. Chaplin Smith, Captain Wakefield and possibly Brigadier General Poor on the other hand state that Arnold was on the field. Except for Poor (if that is who it is) all of these statements were recorded many years after the event. The credibility of the statements of Wakefield, Beull & both Neilsons is questionable. Chaplin Smith was not an eye witness, and may be reporting camp gossip or knowing that Arnold's Division was involved assumed he was with them. Poor's account appears at first glance to be the most supportive statement of Arnold's involvement. But a careful reading suggests that Poor is recording what others saw.

Dearborn, Livingston, van Courtlant and Hull suggest that Arnold was not on the front lines directing the battle. Both Hull and Courtlandt received orders from Arnold either within or near the American lines. Robert Livingston reported what others told him but supports Wilkinson's statement. Dearborn's journal makes no mention of Arnold; and his later narrative speaks of Arnold only at the second battle on October 7. Blake, van Courtlant and Dearborn suggest that the battle was a piecemeal series of engagements by battalion commanders with little overall leadership. If this is true, then Colonel Morgan and Brigadier Poor deserve more credit than past historians have given them.

The statements of those individuals involved in the fighting do not support the contention of Ward and Nickerson. Arnold did not appear dashing along the front line personally leading regiments. The main battle against Hamilton's center column appears to have been conducted by first Colonel Morgan and later Brigadier Poor. Nor does there appear to be any attempt to withhold reinforcements from Arnold. Not only were Morgan's and Poor's brigades committed, but so too were Learned's brigade and even the advanced pickets. Arnold's presence along the front line in the fighting is not confirmed by his commanders. This begs the question, where was Arnold?

Following his suggestion to Gates, Arnold was ordered to commit the Light troops of Morgan's Corps to locate the enemy. He was then to support them with his division. This Arnold did. Elements of his division continued to arrive on the battlefield throughout the day. We can guess that Arnold must have also have given them careful suggestions of where the fighting was and who to report to.

Hull and van Courtlant suggest that Arnold was near the American works, or out by the advanced pickets. Throughout the action Arnold did a fine job of carrying out his superior's orders. Reinforcements continued to arrive throughout the battle against Fraser's and Hamilton's British columns. Gates maintained a healthy reserve to man the works as well as repulse another British attack elsewhere should it develop. But the actual placement of troops on the front line and how the battle was fought was in the hands of junior officers like Poor, Morgan and Dearborn.

Was Arnold himself deliberately held back, out of the actual fighting? Possibly. Most secondary authors say so. Gates, although a good administrator and organizer was a most timid battlefield commander who might panic in a crisis. He must have remembered Arnold as a headstrong junior officer that lost the entire American fleet to Carleton in 1776 at Valcour Island. Because of this Gates wanted to keep Arnold close to home, to prevent him doing anything rash. There is also a suggestion that a Canadian/Loyalist/Indian scouting party had probed within the American lines by Patterson's brigade. In a short, sharp fight the enemy were chased out (40). If true, this explains the role of Marshall's battalion (which was thanked in Gates' general orders after the fight). Gates already knew that he was fighting a major portion of Burgoyne's army on his left flank; now here were reports of fighting on the right flank also. Gates held his headstrong divisional commander, as well as the entire right wing of the Army out of the fight because of this possible threat. Perhaps Arnold, not allowed on the front line, contented himself with observing from a distance and sending in what units he could.

Romantic images aside, a commander on the front lines cannot be as effective as the commander a distance away who can view the entire battle. Burgoyne, although commander of the entire Army, placed himself with Hamilton's troops. Not only did he appear to have forgotten that both Reidesel and Fraser were left without orders (Reidesel's last minute reinforcement of Hamilton was on his own initiative) but left others to carry on as best they could. Arnold by staying back out of the actual fight was able to feed in elements of his division as needed while also maintaining contact with Gates. Unlike Burgoyne, Arnold was certainly better informed of the overall picture of what was happening all along the front. Therefore though there is strong evidence erasing the image of the blazing figure on horseback in the thick of battle, Arnold illustrated a maturity in battlefield command, and certainly fought a better battle than did Burgoyne, and undoubtedly did assist in the American victory in the Battle of Saratoga.

Notes

1. Wilkinson, James. *Memoirs of My Own Times* Philadelphia, Pa., 1816, 3 volumes, pp 245-6.
2. Schuyler Papers, New York Public Library September 22, 1777
3. Ward, Christopher. *The War of the revolution*. Macmillan Co., New York, 1952, 2 volumes.
4. Nickerson, Hoffman. *The Turning Point of the Revolution*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1923.
5. Arnold, Issac. "Arnold at Saratoga" *Magazine of American History*, May, 1879.
6. Bancroft, George. *History of the United States*. Boston, 1837-74, 10 volumes.
7. Luzader, John. *Preliminary Documentary Report on Benedict Arnold At Saratoga*. Saratoga National Historical Park, October 27, 1958, page 2. Higginbotham, Don. *The War of the American Independence*. Northeastern University press, 1983 ed., pp 402-3
8. Rossie, Johnathan G. *The Politics of Command in the American Revolution*. Syracuse University Press, 1975, p. 169. See also: *The Journals of the Continental Congress* pp. 623-24.
9. Gerlach, Don R. *Proud Patriot* Syracuse University Press, 1987, p. 269. Luzader p. 3.
10. Rossie, p. 16. But the entire chapter is required reading in understanding the feud between Gates and Schuyler for command of the

Northern Army.

11 Muller, H. N. and Donch, David. "The Path Not Taken." Fort Ticonderoga Bulletin, #13, 1973.

12. Gerlach p. 289.

13. Rossie p. 164

14. Ibid p. 166

15. Ibid p. 166

Dearborn, H. Journal Boston, 1823

16. The River battery wayside at Saratoga NHP makes this very clear.

17. Snell, Charles. A Report on the Numbers and organization of Gate's Army, September 19, and October 7, 1777. Saratoga NHP Library, Feb. 2, 1951

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