

# Simon Fraser of Balnain

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**Simon Fraser** (1729 – 7 October 1777) was a British general during the American War of Independence who was killed in the Battle of Bemis Heights during the Saratoga Campaign by Timothy Murphy, an American rifleman.

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## Early life and military service

Simon was a younger son of Hugh Fraser of Balnain, in the Highlands, by his wife, a daughter of Fraser of Forgie.<sup>[1]</sup>

He fought with the Dutch army at Siege of Bergen-op-Zoom in 1747, and joined the British Army as a Lieutenant in 1755.<sup>[1]</sup>

Fraser went to Canada with the British forces in the French and Indian War and took part in the Siege of Louisbourg.<sup>[1]</sup> He was promoted to Captain before taking part in the Battle of Quebec in 1759.<sup>[1]</sup> At that battle, he was in James Wolfe's boat crossing the St Lawrence. It was his reply, in French through the fog, that enabled the party to sneak ashore before ascending to the Plains of Abraham.

Fraser served in Germany, Ireland, and Gibraltar between wars. In 1768, he became the Lt. Colonel of the 24th Regiment of Foot.<sup>[1]</sup>

## American War of Independence

In 1776, the 24th was transferred to Quebec in response to the American invasion, and Governor Guy Carleton

**Simon Fraser**



General Simon Fraser

<b>Born</b>	1729 <div>Balnain, Inverness-shire</div>
<b>Died</b>	7 October 1777 (aged 47–48) <div>Saratoga, New York</div>
<b>Buried at</b>	Saratoga, New York
<b>Allegiance</b>	<span><span><span></span></span><span> </span></span> Kingdom of Great Britain
<b>Service/branch</b>	<span><span><span></span></span><span> </span></span> British Army
<b>Rank</b>	Brigadier-General
<b>Battles/wars</b>	American Revolutionary War
	War of the Austrian Succession
	French and Indian War

promoted him to Brigadier General.<sup>[1]</sup> When John Burgoyne organized his Saratoga campaign in 1777, Fraser was chosen to command the advance unit.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Ticonderoga

At the start of the campaign, the advance corps had about 1,000 men. Besides his own 24th Regiment of Foot, he had the grenadier battalion, the light infantry battalion, and a company of marksmen, along with some Canadian militia and First Nations auxiliaries. Fraser's command was in the vanguard during the taking of Fort Ticonderoga, and Fraser helped dislodge the retreating Americans.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Hubbardton

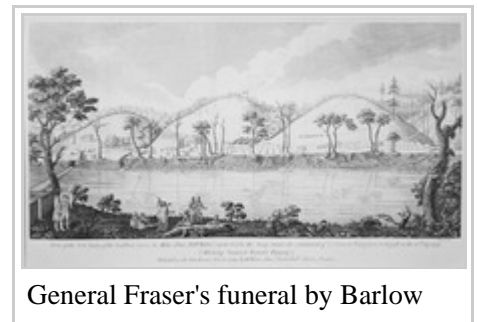
On July 7, 1777, Fraser's corps caught up with the American rear guard at the town of Hubbardton in the New Hampshire Grants (now Vermont). At the Battle of Hubbardton in a sharp skirmish he drove off the enemy but with the loss of many men.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Freeman's Farm

At the Freeman's farm on 19 September he commanded the right wing and led four companies in a successful attack on Daniel Morgan's riflemen.<sup>[1]</sup>

## Bemis Heights

Early in the Battle of Bemis Heights on October 7, 1777, Fraser fell to rifle fire from a rifleman named Timothy Murphy.<sup>[1]</sup> Benedict Arnold, the opposing commander, specifically ordered Fraser to be targeted, as he was vigorously directing and supporting his troops. He was carried to a nearby house and placed in the care of Baroness Riedesel, where he died that evening.<sup>[1]</sup> He was reportedly buried in a nearby redoubt, but the exact location is uncertain. In her diary, the Baroness noted that he was "...buried at six o'clock in the evening, on a hill, which was a sort of redoubt."<sup>[2]</sup>



General Fraser's funeral by Barlow

The depiction by the artist Barlow showing Fraser's interment on the redoubt as reported by Baroness Riedesel. Barlow shows two coffins in transport—the second likely that of Sir Francis Clerke (1748–1777), 7th Baronet, the aide-de-camp to General John Burgoyne, who was also shot and killed instantly by Timothy Murphy ('the fourth shot') as Clerke rode upon the field shortly after Fraser's wounding.

Fraser's passing is noted by a memorial plaque in the Saratoga Battlefield National Park.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Portrayal in Historical Fiction

Fraser is a character in Diana Gabaldon's historical fiction novel *An Echo in the Bone* in which she portrays him as a kinsman to several of the major characters in the book, most notably Jamie Fraser, who is fighting on the side of the revolutionaries and William Ransom, Jamie's son, who is fighting for the British under Simon Fraser's command. The book diverts from the historical events when Gabaldon uses a request by Horatio Gates as an excuse for three main characters, Jamie and Clair and Jamie's nephew Ian Murray, to return to Scotland under the auspices of escorting Fraser's disinterred body back to his homeland.<sup>[4]</sup>

## See also

- 29th Regiment of Foot

## References

### Citations

- Simon Fraser at Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10123?docPos=5>)
- Ellet, Elizabeth Fries. *Revolutionary Women in the War for American Independence: A One-volume Revised Edition*. 1998, Greenwood Publishing Group. Page 211, ISBN 0-275-96263-6
- <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=8746>
- Gabaldon, Diana (2009). *An Echo in the Bone*. New York: The Delacourt Press. pp. 479–658. ISBN 978-0-385-34245-2.

### Further reading

- Luzader, John F. (1958), *Documentary Study of the Death and Burial of General Simon Fraser*; Stillwater, New York: Saratoga National Historical Park.

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