

= Battle of Fort Anne =

The Battle of Fort Anne , fought on July 8 , 1777 , was an engagement between Continental Army forces in retreat from Fort Ticonderoga and forward elements of John Burgoyne 's much larger British army that had driven them from Ticonderoga , early in the Saratoga campaign of the American Revolutionary War .

Burgoyne , surprised by the American withdrawal from Fort Ticonderoga , hurried as many of his troops as possible forward in pursuit of the retreating Americans . The main body of the American forces had departed Fort Independence down the road to Hubbardton , and a smaller body of troops , accompanying the sick , wounded , and camp followers that had also evacuated the fort , had sailed up Lake Champlain to Skenesboro , moving from there overland to Fort Edward . This group , which included about 600 men under arms , paused at Fort Anne , where a smaller advance company from Burgoyne 's army caught up to them . The British , clearly outnumbered , sent for reinforcements . The Americans decided to attack while they had the numerical advantage , and succeeded in nearly surrounding the British position about three quarters of a mile (1 km) north of the fort . The Americans retreated back to the fort when war whoops indicated the arrival of British reinforcements . While this was a ruse (the reinforcements were a single officer) , it saved the British force from probable capture . More of Burgoyne 's army soon came down the road , forcing the Americans to retreat from Fort Anne to Fort Edward .

It has been claimed that a flag was flown at Fort Anne that may have been the first instance of a flag consisting of stars and stripes ; this claim is supposedly false .

= = Background = =

On the night of July 5 ? 6 , the Continental Army forces occupying Fort Ticonderoga were ordered to evacuate the fort by General Arthur St. Clair , following the approach of General John Burgoyne 's 8 @, @ 000 @-@ man army . Burgoyne 's men had placed a gun battery on top of Mount Defiance , overlooking the fort , and the American avenues of retreat were at risk of being cut off .

Most of the American forces left Ticonderoga and the surrounding defense works via Fort Independence and the road to Hubbardton . About 600 men under Colonel Pierse Long , most of them from New Hampshire , sailed up the lake in a flotilla consisting of 5 armed galleys and over 200 smaller transport vessels . These vessels were loaded with as many of the sick from the fort as they could take , stores and supplies , and armaments . Believing the log boom and pontoon bridge placed between Ticonderoga and Mount Independence to be sufficient to delay the British pursuit , Long began to sail up the lake toward Skenesboro , the southernmost navigable point on the lake , at a leisurely pace .

= = Pursuit = =

The British , however , were hardly slowed down by the water defenses . Burgoyne , once he learned of the American withdrawal on the morning of July 6 , ordered the defenses to be taken down . With well @-@ placed gunfire , the bridge and boom were eliminated as obstacles in the space of 30 minutes . At this point Burgoyne , breaking with rigid military discipline , ordered troops to follow southward as rapidly as possible , instead of remaining in formation , while he sailed southward in pursuit . Assisted by favorable winds , he was within three miles (4 @.@ 8 km) of Skenesboro by the end of July 6 , where the Americans , who arrived only two hours earlier , had a small stockade fort . In an attempt to surround the position , Burgoyne landed about 200 men from the 9th , 20th , and 21st regiments , commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Hill , at a point south of Skenesboro with the objective of cutting off the road to Fort Anne .

The Americans were in the process of portaging around the falls at Skenesboro to Wood Creek when Burgoyne 's boats arrived and opened fire . Enterprise , Liberty , and Gates were destroyed by the Americans , and two ships , Trumbull and Revenge , were forced to surrender . In the process many of the American supplies were either destroyed or abandoned to the British . The Americans

retreated toward Fort Anne in disarray , but not before starting a fire that eventually engulfed most of the structures at Skenesboro . When they reached Fort Anne they were met by 400 New York militia under Henry van Rensselaer , that had been sent by General Philip Schuyler from Fort Edward after he received news of the retreat from Ticonderoga .

The British pursuers under Hill , when they finally reached the road , captured more American supplies , sick and wounded , and camp followers that trailed behind the main body , and moved south until they were about one mile (1 @. @ 6 km) from Fort Anne . Here they encountered an American reconnaissance party numbering about 170 under Captain James Gray ; in the ensuing skirmish one American was killed and three more wounded before the Americans retreated to the fort .

= = Battle = =

On the morning of July 8 , a supposed American deserter , who was really a spy , informed Hill that the fort was occupied by nearly 1 @, @ 000 demoralized troops . Opting not to attack the numerically superior force , Hill sent a message back to Burgoyne outlining the situation . Burgoyne ordered the 20th and 21st regiments to quick @- @ march toward Fort Anne in support , but poor weather hampered their movement , and they did not arrive until after the battle . The " deserter " returned to Fort Anne and reported on the British position and troop strength .

Long , seeing how few British soldiers were following him , decided to attack their position . Moving as stealthily as possible , his force tried to surround the British while they were still on the road . However , Hill 's men heard the rebel movements on their flanks and retreated to a higher position , abandoning some wounded men , who were eventually captured by the Americans . When the Americans opened fire , it was " a heavy and well @- @ directed fire " , according to one British officer . The battle lasted for more than 2 hours , until both sides were nearly out of ammunition , and the British were virtually surrounded by Americans . The sound of Indian war whoops from the north prompted the Americans to retreat , and they retired to the fort with their wounded , including Van Rensselaer , who had taken a shot in the hip .

As it turned out , there were no Indians , but only a single British officer , John Money of the 9th regiment , Burgoyne 's deputy quartermaster . He had been leading a group of Indians , but when they seemed reluctant to fight the Americans , Money became impatient and ran ahead of them ; it was his war cries that brought an end to the battle .

= = Aftermath = =

Back at the fort the Americans held a brief council . From a woman that the British had freed , they heard that 2 @, @ 000 or more British troops under the command of General Phillips were rapidly advancing . Long 's men , as they were nearly out of ammunition , withdrew toward Fort Edward , burning the stockaded fort . Both sides claimed victory in the battle , since the British had successfully stood their ground , and the Americans had very nearly forced them to surrender . Any American claim for victory was tempered by the fact that the force they had defeated was clearly the vanguard of a much larger British force .

A British officer recovered some regimental banners either during this engagement , or following the American retreat from Fort Anne . It is widely claimed that one of the flags captured was a new design of American flag with thirteen red and white stripes and a constellation of stars , representing the earliest known use of the stars and stripes motif . However , this story is likely untrue , as the time needed for news of the flag design approved by Congress to travel , followed by construction of such a flag and then its delivery to such a remote location render the story implausible , and the flags known to have been recovered bear no resemblance whatsoever to the United States flag .