

had stated. Having taken Ft. Ticonderoga without firing a shot in August, Burgoyne had suffered a terrible defeat outside Bennington, Vermont, in September, when militiamen under General Stark decimated a detachment of Hessians, which Burgoyne had sent to capture the cache of American supplies stored in that town. With his supply lines from Canada now broken, Burgoyne's army of more than 6,000 men had to reach their destination--Albany--as quickly as possible. With Howe concentrating his effort in Pennsylvania, the only hope lay, in Gen. Henry Clinton. Sir Henry sent a letter to Burgoyne on September 12 informing him that he intended to dispatch troops toward Albany soon, and since he had no other recourse, Burgoyne crossed the Hudson on September 13 and pressed forward against the Americans. The Americans dealt Burgoyne a disastrous blow on September 19 at a place known as Freeman's Farm, due largely to Daniel Morgan's riflemen and the audacity of the courageous American general, Benedict Arnold.

Burgoyne had suffered another costly defeat at Freeman's Farm on October 1, and his situation was now desperate. The Americans were heavily entrenched at Bemis Heights, and with reinforcements arriving almost daily, Gates had a force of nearly 10,000 behind his barricades, while Burgoyne's troops totaled at best 6,000. Unsure of the exact disposition or strength of the enemy, Burgoyne sent out a reconnaissance party on October 7, that was soundly trounced by Morgan's riflemen and other American troops. Arnold, who had urged attacking the enemy in force, had been confined to quarters by Gates, broke loose and gallantly rode from one scene of action to the other, ultimately receiving a wound while leading the attack on one of the British redoubts.

Burgoyne's Indian guides, long since having sensed disaster, deserted, and with increasing numbers of Hessians and other troops daily wandering off into the woods never to be seen again, reinforcements from Clinton now became critical. But they were not to come. Burgoyne informed Clinton that he could hold out until October 12. On the 10th, according to one British observer, his remaining force--virtually without food, their clothing in tatters, and morale disintegrated--"clamored for a retreat....But General Burgoyne...could not determine upon this course and lost everything by his loitering."

By the evening of October 13, it was clear to Burgoyne that he could not break the American defenses and that neither retreat nor an advance on Albany was possible. The next morning Burgoyne exchanged notes with Gates indicating his intent to surrender. Usually in a situation such as