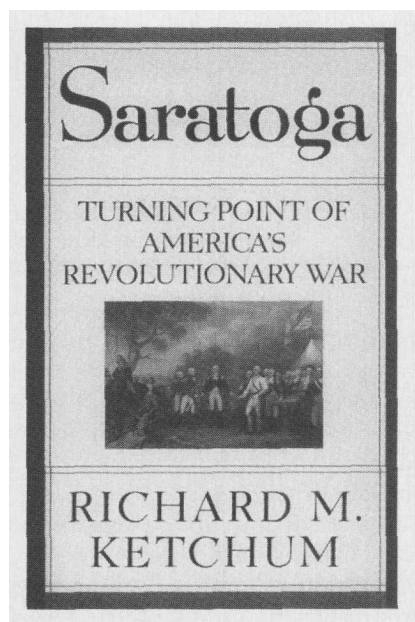


Revolutionary History

reviewed by LtCol Horace S. Mazet, USMCR(Ret)

SARATOGA: The Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War.
By Richard M. Ketchum. Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1997, 545 pp., \$30.00. (Member \$27.00)



The roaring of gunfire, the cries of the wounded, chilling warwhoops and hoarse yells punctuate this decisive drama of the American revolution. In America's stubborn effort for independence in 1776 and 1777, this vivid account of a series of battles by Richard M. Ketchum provides a superb record of a determined rabble that never despaired. Ferocious struggles at Saratoga provided the backdrop against which the author has set a group of well-documented characters with precise reasons for their tactics—in short, a definitive record of the daily actions of generals, enlisted personnel, and farmers carrying muzzle-loaders.

At Bennington, New York the fighting was fierce. Seth Warner's Green Mountain Boys arrived at the crucial moment. Dozens of the enemy lay dead, 140 of the remainder were prisoners. Brunswick cannon, quantities of baggage, and a large number of horses and wagons were

lost. The author of this enthralling and detailed account of the campaign states that between 900 and 1,000 men were lost—killed, wounded, captured, or missing—and it might have been worse had darkness not prevented further American pursuit. Fifteen percent of the professional soldiers British Gen Johnny Burgoyne had brought from Canada were lost. Only seven dragoons returned to the army, and that regiment was left with a mere camp guard, a few sick, and those who had been left behind.

Bennington changed Burgoyne's attempt to conquer the Hudson Valley and its tributaries. He was not definitely on the defensive and, the author states, more dismal days were ahead. There was no ignoring the desperate situation with hundreds of prisoners now in American hands. Burgoyne had to press on, down the Hudson and link up with the loyalist troops intending to push north to form a consolidated army again. The problems incident to this desperate measure are delineated in detail by the author as he describes the debacles at Freeman's Farm on 19 September, and Bemis Heights on 7 October—known integrally as the eventual collapse and defeat of the British army at Saratoga.

At Saratoga the spirit of those revolutionary days attains a brilliant climax. Patriots gathered in overwhelming numbers to face the regimented Redcoats and best them at their own game, with the result that the British abandoned hope of quelling the rebellion in 1777. Yet, for another 5 years the invading forces of better-equipped British army and their German mercenaries annoyed, harassed, and dis-

persed the patriot contingents until the bitter, pervasive fever of independence conquered British suppression at Yorktown, and George Washington became the hero of the new republic.

Richard M. Ketchum, indefatigable researcher and historian, has produced the definitive story of our struggle against British oppression with splendid, sparkling pages in this enthralling account of events that proved to be the turning point of the revolution. History seldom recounts

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any more basic struggle to a noble end that the Saratoga campaign, so thoroughly researched, sparked with the elan and the actions of determined patriots. Quotes of the various participants and their beneficial actions against the invaders admirably prove their mettle. The summer and fall of 1777 springs full-blown and alive in the pages of this stirring narrative history.

Quotes from individuals include the common enlisted man, frontiersmen, and sergeants, as well as key officers on both sides. A throng of personalities stalk the chapters with animation and clarity until the final emergence from oppression serves to bring well-earned victory and hope for the nascent free country. It is a measure of accomplishment by a determined people shown in all their rugged convictions. The story is presented with detailed explanations and unbiased prose to mark a vital, pregnant victory for the struggling young American nation.



>LtCol Mazet, a World War II veteran, has 36 years of flying experience with the Navy and the Marine Corps. He is a graduate of Brown University and Columbia University's School of Journalism.

Marine Corps Gazette ☆ December 1998