



Trophies and Plunder: After the Battle of Bennington

The seizure of “plunder” and its sale for distribution to troops routinely occurred during the Revolutionary War. The Battle of Bennington provides a closer look at how “plunder” worked and some of the complications it entailed.

By MICHAEL P. GABRIEL¹

As night fell on August 16, 1777, General John Stark’s militia and Green Mountain Boys army had won a resounding victory near Walloomsac, New York, defeating two German forces in what is known as the Battle of Bennington. In addition to capturing over seven hundred prisoners, Stark and his men recovered an enormous amount of equipment that littered the battlefield. While the main details of the battle are well known, what became of this equipment is less so. Many soldiers kept trophies of their participation in the victory, while Stark presented some items to Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire to commemorate the battle. He also sent some military equipment to the Continental Army. However, most of the items were sold as “plunder” at public auctions or vendue and the proceeds distrib-

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Southeast view from the Bennington Battlefield circa 1900. Note the Bennington Battle Monument on the far right. (From the author's collection).

uted among the soldiers. This story of the Bennington plunder reveals a lesser-known aspect of the battle and the Revolutionary War as a whole.

Before proceeding to this article's main focus, it is useful to establish several definitions. Military dictionaries from that era defined plunder as "hostile pillage, or spoils taken in war,"² and a connotation existed that this was inflicted upon civilians. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century soldiers also recognized the existence of "spoils," or "booty," or "prizes"—which were associated with naval actions—as items taken from an enemy. Soldiers considered such items fair game, and the troops and officers often divided them among themselves. Major General Friedrich Riedesel, who commanded the German troops with General John Burgoyne's army, expressed such ideas to his troops:

Booty is really what is taken from an enemy during or after an engagement, when posts are surprised or guarded "couvons" carried off. But the inhabitants of houses and people wandering along the roads are exempt from this, whatever they may think in their hearts. . . . All breaking into houses, plundering and such excesses are to be punished by means of flogging the first time, the second time and after due conviction by having to run the gauntlet four times straightway, without further court-martial.³

Throughout the Revolutionary War, however, Americans often did not make such distinctions concerning plunder and used the term interchangeably for both pillaging and legitimate spoils that could be taken and sold. In October 1775, a Continental Congress committee met with George Washington at Cambridge, Massachusetts, partly to revise the American articles of war. One revision noted that if a soldier left his “post or colours, in time of an engagement, to go in search of plunder,” he would lose “all Share of Plunder taken from the Enemy.”⁴ This demonstrates that the Continental Congress and Army recognized plunder as a legitimate “prize” for troops, but soldiers could not leave in the midst of battle to obtain it. A month later in Canada, Brigadier General Richard Montgomery briefly resigned his commission partly because of a dispute over plunder. Some of his men wanted to exchange their worn garments with those of British prisoners captured at Fort St. Johns on the Richelieu River. As a former British officer, Montgomery knew that the prisoners had paid for their clothing, which made it private property and not subject to seizure. As he wrote, “there was no driving into their Noddles [noodles?], that the clothing was really the property of the soldiers.”⁵ Montgomery did not object to his troops taking and selling legitimate booty, however. In November 1775, his forces captured eleven British vessels near the mouth of the Richelieu that were evacuating Montreal. Montgomery had the ships’ cargo sold and one soldier, Simeon Smith, recalled that his prize money totaled \$53.⁶

Many similar cases exist. Upon returning from his successful attack on Trenton, New Jersey, George Washington ordered his regimental commanders to “without delay, . . . have the Plunder of every kind (taken by his Reg’t) collected and given in the Quar. Master Gen’l. that the men may receive the value of it.” He similarly advised General William Heath, “to induce the Officers & Soldiery to exert themselves & to distress the Enemy, all plunder, Stores &c. taken, are to be divided equally between those who take it, having regards to the pays of the parties concerned to regulate the distributions.” As at Trenton, the local quartermaster would take possession of the captured items and pay the full value of whatever he kept. Following Colonel John Brown and Samuel Herrick’s attack on Fort Ticonderoga on September 18, 1777, the Vermont Council of Safety ordered wagon teams to help transport the plunder “belonging” to the two men. In October 1779, Washington approved of Colonel Daniel Broadhead’s sale of “the plunder & of the distribution of the profits among your Troops,” after he attacked Seneca villages on the Upper Allegheny River.⁷ These examples demonstrate

that the seizure of “plunder” and its sale for distribution to troops routinely occurred during the Revolutionary War. The Battle of Bennington provides a closer look at how “plunder” worked and some of the complications it entailed.

As he prepared his troops for battle on that hot, humid August day, Stark, as an added incentive, promised “that the soldiers should have all the plunder, taken in the enemy’s Camp.”⁸ This raises the question, what did they capture? Although no definitive list exists, several sources provide a glimpse. Stark informed Horatio Gates that “We recovered 4 pieces of Brass Cannon, some hundred Stand of Arms, 8 Brass Barrel Drums, [and] several Hessian Swords.”⁹ Historian Thomas M. Barker translated a highly detailed list containing fifty-four categories of equipment lost by Lieutenant-Colonel Heinrich Breyman in the battle’s second phase. The items included 278 muskets with bayonets; 32 single bayonets; 13 drums; 2 musical pipes and carrying cases; 8 carpenters’ axes; 43 rifle slings; 523 knapsacks; 564 bread bags; 129 camp kettles; 129 camp kettle sacks; 1 casserole pan; 47 reins; and 6 bridles.¹⁰ This list, compiled by the arsenal superintendent in Braunschweig, did not include the equipment that Lieutenant-Colonel Friedrich Baum’s multinational force lost during the first phase of the battle, and is therefore by no means complete. Still, it provides an idea of the sheer quantity and variety of equipment that the Americans found.

Interestingly, Stark made no reference to recovering money on the battlefield. When Burgoyne initially invaded New York in June 1777, he issued a proclamation urging Americans not to resist but rather to cooperate with him. As evidence of his good faith, Burgoyne offered to buy provisions “at an equitable rate, and in solid coin.”¹¹ Because Baum’s expedition to Bennington was partly motivated to obtain cattle and other provisions, presumably he brought money to purchase these. A careful reading of the sources reveals that this was not the case. Burgoyne assigned Philip Skene, a former British army officer who had established an estate on Lake Champlain at Skenesborough, New York, to Baum’s force to negotiate with civilians and obtain provisions. When Skene later listed his losses at Bennington, they included a tent, two horses, a number of personal items, and “some Money, amounting to about £54; 12: 0 that I had for Publick and Secret Service.” This money could not have been intended to buy provisions, however, because Skene’s orders instructed him to give “Receipts . . . for all Horses, and Cattle taken from the Country,” not cash. Therefore, while Baum’s forces certainly carried some money, it appears that it was not a large amount, and this was not intended to pay for requisitioned supplies.¹²

Having established that the Americans did not recover large amounts of money—or at least failed to report they did—what happened to all the equipment that lay strewn over the battlefield? Many soldiers took home souvenirs and trophies to mark their participation in the battle, and, in some cases, these remained in their families for years. Jesse Fields, a member of the Bennington militia, recalled that after the first engagement, “Our men were then scattered all over the field . . . some resting & refreshing themselves, some looking up the dead & wounded, & others in pursuit of plunder.” Thomas Jewett reputedly took Baum’s hat and sword, and David Robinson eventually purchased the latter. In the 1840s, Dr. Asa Fitch recorded a story that the wounded German officer was killed for his ornate uniform and sword, although this account contains some discrepancies. Franz Pfister, a former British officer and mill owner who commanded the local Loyalists, sustained a mortal wound in the engagement and lost most of his possessions. Jonathan Armstrong of Dorset, Vermont, took Pfister’s satchel and several personal items, Captain Jedediah Hyde recovered his theodolite and drafting tools, and an unidentified lieutenant took his lantern. Some of Pfister’s possessions are now on display in the Bennington Museum.¹³

Not all the soldiers who took trophies acquired them from officers such as Baum and Pfister. In many cases they obtained them in personal combat against nameless enemies. Lieutenant Joseph Rudd kept the sword of an adversary whom he grappled with in the “dragoon redoubt,” while Thomas Mellen retained the belt of a soldier he encountered while pursuing Breyman’s retreating troops. Rowell Colby kept the powder horn of a Native American he dispatched, along with “a copper Tea Kettle which he took from a Hessian on the same Tour.” Colby, like several other soldiers, also exchanged his musket for one found on the battlefield, and his gun is now on exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution. Vermont militiaman John Stewart brought home the weapons and accoutrements of a German soldier he captured, and years later his family still owned the sword, which they converted into a knife. Another soldier recalled “killing and rifling a Hessian officer, on the field of action.” Not all of those who brought home trophies provide such vivid accounts, yet they still kept souvenirs of their experiences. John Meriam returned to Chester, New Hampshire, wearing a pair of “Hessian gaiters,” and many years later Jonathan Joice’s widow recalled that he brought home a piece of ivory that was attached to an enemy cannon. “[H]e kept [it] for a long time after as a memento of that victory and of the part he took in the same.”¹⁴

Two German prisoners provided a view of Americans acquiring trophies and plunder, although the distinction between the two was extremely slim. Julius Wasmus, a company surgeon, recalled that the American who captured him took his watch before turning him over to several other soldiers. They proceeded to take his money, knife, and several other items, but failed to search his overcoat pockets. Another soldier took Wasmus's medical instruments when he tried to recover them from behind a tree where he had been captured. Fortunately for Wasmus, later that evening a captured British officer intervened on his behalf by telling an American major that the surgeon had been robbed. The major, proudly adorned in a grenadier hat, gorget,¹⁵ and carrying a German sword, ordered the guard to return Wasmus's personal items. He even managed to get back some of his lancets, which somehow ended up in Seth Warner's possession, although the American kept half of them. Johann Michael Bach, an artillery officer and sometime cartographer, did not fare as well. In addition to suffering a head wound that nearly cost him his eye, he was "badly mistreated and completely plundered" by the Americans, who seized his equipment and books.¹⁶

The various trophies and plunder that individual soldiers took home accounted for only a fraction of the vast amount of equipment recovered at Bennington. Stark ordered that the rest be collected and brought to the town, and this began immediately. On August 18, he had a large quantity deposited near the meetinghouse, where many of the prisoners were confined. The next day, New Hampshire soldier John Wallace recorded in his diary that ten wagonloads of plunder had arrived in Bennington, and this undoubtedly continued. Several weeks later he noted the arrival of another wagonload worth an estimated £100 "lawful money."¹⁷

As his men brought the captured equipment to town, Stark divided it into four categories, at least in his own mind. The first portion represented private property that should be returned to its rightful owners. On August 17, Stark informed some of the prisoners that they would get their possessions back. The next morning he told the captured officers that they could try to find their property among the items he had brought to the meetinghouse. Stark even sent Wasmus a watch, mistakenly thinking it was his.¹⁸ Stark's actions in regard to personal property mimic that of Montgomery's in Canada and even the major who had assisted Wasmus in getting some of his possessions back. Private property, even of soldiers, was not legitimate plunder; only property belonging to the enemy army was available to plunder.

Stark sent trophies to the three states that contributed most of the troops to the battle; these items possessed much greater symbolic significance than monetary value. On September 6, 1777, Stark presented a “*Hessian Broad Sword*” to Vermont “as a Memorial in Commemoration of the Glorious Action fought at *Walloodsack* August 16, 1777.” He made a similar presentation to the Massachusetts Council, giving it a German gun and bayonet, a broad sword, a brass barrel drum, and a grenadier cap. Not surprisingly, Stark sent the largest number of trophies to his home state of New Hampshire. These included a dragoon sword, drum, gun, cartridge box, bayonet, and grenadier hat, along with a request that they be “deposited in the State in memory of that glorious victory given them by the Divine Being who overpowers & Rules all things.”¹⁹ Interestingly, Stark did not send any trophies to New York. This is probably because he did not specifically mention New Yorkers in any of his accounts of the battle, perhaps not knowing the role they played. In fact, between 150 and 200 New Yorkers fought in the battle, some in organized militia companies and others in impromptu formations created immediately before the battle. Stark’s action might also reflect longstanding Yankee-Yorker tensions.²⁰

The third category consisted of the weapons and military equipment that Stark knew the Continental Army wanted, especially the four cannons his soldiers captured. This created the question of how to appraise the value of this equipment, because he had promised the men prize money. On August 22, Stark wrote Gates regarding “what the value of the Cannon, & the other artillery Stores . . . may be.”²¹ Gates replied five days later:

[I]n Regard to the Cannon & Military Stores taken from the Enemy, I am so confident of the desire of Congress to reward the Militia for so very Meritorious & Important Service that without further Application, I will Order them to be paid 5£ Lawful a pound for the Artillery & as much for each Sword, Musket, & Bayonet & Drum, as General [Benjamin] Lincoln shall upon Examination Judge reasonable. You will please to transmit a particular and Avouched Account of what the whole ammounts to & I will grant a Warrant upon the paymaster Gen for the Sum.²²

According to Gates’s appraisal, Stark’s men would receive £15 for each of the two three-pounder field pieces they captured from Baum and twice that amount for the six-pounders they took from Breymann. Unfortunately, no evidence exists as to what value Lincoln assigned to the other military stores or the total amount the paymaster sent to Bennington. Samuel Eaton was among the thirty men from Colonel Moses



One of the three-pounder cannons captured by the Americans at the Battle of Bennington. This one is located at the Vermont State Capitol Building in Montpelier. (From the author's collection).

Nichols's New Hampshire regiment who escorted the captured equipment to Albany. This included the four cannons—which were at some point engraved “Taken from the Germans at Bennington August 16, 1777”—along with 149 dragoon swords or “pallash,” which were subsequently issued to the 2nd Continental Light Dragoons.²³

As he had promised, Stark set aside the final portion, probably the largest, for sale with the proceeds going to the troops. As Washington's general order after Trenton makes clear, quartermasters usually oversaw this large and important task. Stark's motley force lacked an established quartermaster department, so several men from different states took on this task, probably to ensure a fair and equal distribution. These included Captain Christopher Webber from New Hampshire, New York Sergeant Austin Wells, and two Vermonters, Ensign Ephraim Pierce and Colonel William Williams. Wells commanded the guard that oversaw the “Cattle, Horses, and other property taken from the British and Torys,” and Pierce claimed that he “attend[ed] to the sale and division” of it. While these two men apparently managed the hands-on aspects of guarding and auctioning the plunder, the other two men were in charge overall. Webber's personal waiter, John Meriam, remembered that the captain remained in Bennington after the battle, “in charge of captured property,” but Williams's superior rank, coupled with his Ver-

mont ties, suggests that the final authority rested with him, as does other evidence.²⁴

In addition to collecting and processing the items brought to Bennington, Williams and the others attempted to recover the trophies and plunder from individual soldiers. Each item that a soldier kept for himself reduced the prize money for everyone else. Thomas Mellen found a barber's pack on the battlefield, "but was obliged to give up all my findings till the booty was divided." On August 20, Williams ordered Captain Samuel Robinson to search Lieutenant Jacob Hide's house for plunder "taken in the late Action and consealed by the soldiers." Six days later Captain Kimball Porter reported that his company was similarly searched.²⁵

Circumstantial evidence shows that these attempts to recover captured property from the troops sometimes led to violence. On September 3, Williams and Adjutant Joseph Fay—a member of the large Bennington Fay family—assaulted a soldier in a dispute over his own horse, cutting the man's head. The details of this incident and what lay behind it are unknown, but an event three days later suggests that it had something to do with plunder. On September 6, John Wallace's diary recorded that Fay severely caned a minister, Samuel Ely, injuring him so badly that he was forced to return home.²⁶ On October 7, the *Connecticut Courant* published an announcement from Williams offering a ten-dollar reward for Ely's arrest:

Run away from Head Quarters, about the 5th instant, with the following Valuable Articles, one infamous, loquacious SAMUEL ELY, formerly an itinerant preacher

This inhuman, plundering villain may be distinguished by his being constantly Found clothed with a face of brass, and armed with a lying tongue

Articles

A number of silk and worsted hose, one British officers coat, one gold diamond ring, one pair of shoes, a number of Holland shirts, several pairs of breeches, (some of which he sold to the prisoners for solid coin) one gold eppalet, one lawn apron, a considerable quantity of linen, some engineers instruments, a pocket book, and many other articles too numerous to mention; all of which he knew to be in direct opposition to general orders.²⁷

Ely returned to Bennington sometime in 1778—whether voluntarily or by force remains unknown—to face these charges and "made a handsome Defence relative to the Plunder he had taken." According to Captain Samuel Robinson, who served as the court clerk, Ely justified his actions by saying that "what he had taken was at the point of a

Sword, as a Volunteer for his groaning, bleeding Country; and . . . he supported himself and lived upon his own Money while in Camp, and was no charge to his Country.” Robinson then noted that the court never questioned Ely’s actions nor authorized that he “be advertised, nor stigmatized.” This suggests the dispute between Williams, Fay, and Ely was personal and probably had some of its roots in plunder. Further adding to this conjecture is that three members of the Wilmington, Vermont, Committee of Safety published an announcement praising Ely and demeaning Williams’s courage. The men called Williams the “Plunder Master General” and said that his soldiers also referred to him by this moniker. More significantly, the Wilmington men said that Williams left the field of battle at Bennington, so Ely took his place, a claim the minister never made.²⁸

Williams and his fellow committeemen not only had to contend with the soldiers who kept plunder, but also with local civilians. Immediately after the battle, one resident recalled that his neighbor “was quite diligent in gathering plunder,” obtaining three ox-sleds of “knapsacks, carts, [and] wagons.” He further noted that his father and a friend’s detention as suspected Loyalists prevented them from collecting plunder, like their neighbors. Similar to ordering a search of Jacob Hide’s house, Williams instructed Captain Robinson to arrest Alexander Gordon, his wife, and any other people he found who took items from the battle-field. Such individuals were to be brought before the committee “to answer [for] thier conduct.”²⁹

Once the committee had gathered enough plunder from the battle-field, the troops, and local residents to make it worthwhile, they placed it up for sale. Some goods taken from Pfister’s mill may also have been included.³⁰ Records indicate that at least four auctions or “vendues” took place in Bennington. The first occurred on Monday, August 25, with additional ones on that Wednesday, Friday, and on the following Thursday, September 4. We know that soldiers participated because Captain Peter Kimball recorded that he attended all four auctions and purchased a German gun at the last one for forty-nine shillings. In 1840, an article in the *Bellows Falls Gazette* claimed that Stark purchased Baum’s sword, “a beautiful sabre, with silver scabbard and gold hilt,” along with the books of a mortally wounded German engineer, probably Pfister. Presumably, local residents also bought items, but unfortunately very few details beyond this exist. No contemporary sources record what was actually sold or the amounts that bidders paid, beyond Kimball’s notation.³¹

On August 29, Captain Peter Clark informed his wife, “All this week they have been venduing the plunder that we took from the Enemy,

which, if Justice is done there will be considerable to each man.”³² This raises the question, how much money did the auctions generate and how much did each soldier receive? This is an extremely difficult question to answer given the paucity of detailed sources and the differences in currency. The arsenal superintendent who compiled the list of the equipment that Breymann lost at Bennington assessed it at 7,101 Reich thalers, 23 groschen, and 2 pfennigs, which converts to £1,158 or 3,860 Spanish Reals (dollars).³³ Still, this only represented part of what the Germans lost at Bennington, and presumably the Americans did not recover everything. Some equipment was undoubtedly destroyed in combat or never found. Furthermore, individual soldiers kept some items as trophies, as discussed above. Still, some evidence exists to provide rough estimates of how much money was raised and the amount each soldier received.

On September 23, Captain Samuel Robinson gave \$5 plunder money to fifty-four men, most of whose names also appeared on his company muster roll of Vermont militia.³⁴ Dan Kent similarly claimed that he received four “continental dollars,” and New Hampshire soldier Thomas Mellen put the figure at the same amount plus “some odd cents.” Massachusetts militiaman Michael Mason, on the other hand, said that his portion was 2 shillings 6 pence, while Peter Kimball wrote on September 19, “I went to town & gut the plunder money for the company £1-13-7-0 which was in the Benningtown fight of my company.”³⁵ Kimball’s muster roll contains fifty-five names of men, officers included, who enlisted prior to the battle.³⁶ Dividing this number by the amount his company received equals only approximately 7 pence per man, which is markedly lower than the other sources report. Kimball’s phrasing “in the Benningtown fight” raises the possibility that only those who actually saw combat received plunder money, not everyone in the company. Dividing Mason’s amount (2 shillings 6 pence) into Kimball’s total equals only about thirteen men receiving money out of fifty-five. This would be difficult to explain to those soldiers who had marched to Bennington but did not fight, whether because of illness, detached duty, or some other reason, and therefore did not receive plunder money.

On September 25, Kimball wrote, “The plunder money at Bennington Divided to 2250 men.”³⁷ This figure gives us an “official” number of Stark’s combat strength at Bennington. It also allows us to calculate broadly how much money the plunder auctions raised. Using Robinson, Kent, and Mellen’s amount of \$4-\$5 per man, the auctions raised a between \$9,000 and \$11,250. Mason’s and Kimball’s values of 7 pence and 2 shilling 6 pence per man results in £65 to £281.

Still, as the discussion of Kimball's company reveals, not everyone who believed that he deserved plunder money received it, and this created problems in at least one instance. On August 23, an officer detained two soldiers, Charles Cavenough and John McAllister, in Manchester, for "Concealing and Conveying away two Horses & a Quantity of other Plunder . . . taken from the Enemy on the 16th August and under pretence of being ordered there by Col. [Thomas] Stickney." On September 2, Captain Benjamin Sias, one of Stark's company commanders, convened their court martial. McAllister pled not guilty, saying that Ensign William Beard ordered him to accompany Cavenough to Kent with the horses and plunder. The court accepted this defense because McAllister was merely following Beard's orders. Cavenough, on the other hand, denied that he said that Stickney had sent him to Manchester, but freely admitted to taking the horses and plunder. Cavenough justified his actions by stating, "he had been in the service Last year and at the taking of Valuable Plunder at Trenton and prince Town Last Winter, had been promised repeatedly by Superior Officers an equal Part of the Plunder taken at both places & declares he never Received one Shilling." The court sympathized with Cavenough and showed leniency, believing that he was "Pleading Ingorance in some manner." It sentenced him to be confined for only four hours and to pay any costs for returning the plunder to Bennington.³⁸ Had Cavenough waited several more weeks, he would have received his share of the plunder money. One wonders if he was among the 2,250 soldiers who did.

This then is the story of the Bennington plunder. Based on the evidence, similar auctions occurred after other engagements throughout the war, but we know little about this subject because it has not been examined in any depth. Did the men who brought home trophies and souvenirs from the battle take these or buy them at the auctions? Some, such as Joseph Rudd and Thomas Mellen, who identified the specific soldier from whom they obtained their prize, probably took them on the battlefield and then managed to avoid Williams's efforts to recover them. This is more difficult to determine for the others, such as Meriam. The plunder system also raises the question as to whether the soldiers fought for a cause or mere loot. The answer was certainly different for every soldier, but based on the small amount they received, plunder was not the principal motivation. Obtaining recognition for their service at an important event seems to have been a bigger issue. Dan Kent of Dorset, Vermont, said it best when he wrote:

"During the whole war I neither plundered nor speculated for prop-

erty. During The battle of Bennington tho' things were scattered about within my reach, I never stooped down to take an article, thou' I saw many who did. We were promised after the battle an equal share: what I received was just four continental dollars, but this was enough to show that I was one who contended for the victory."³⁹

NOTES

¹ The author would like to thank Bob Selig for sharing his sources and ideas on plunder. Thanks also go to Henry Retzer, Don Londahl-Smith, and Eric Schnitzer for their thoughtful comments, and Kathie Ludwig of the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA, for assistance with the Horatio Gates Papers.

² Charles James, *An Universal Military Dictionary, in English and French: In which are Explained the Terms of the Principle Sciences that are Necessary for the Information of an Officer*, 4th ed. (London: T. Egerton, 1816), 650.

³ "To the 3 Brigades of German Troops. Concerning Marauding and Booty, 22 July 1777," *Extract from Sundry Journals together with Other Records Respecting Military Events and Matters of Various Kinds* (HZ-6), Fiche 211, page 937, Lidgerwood Collection at Morristown National Historical Park, David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania.

⁴ "Proceedings of the Committee of Conference, 18-24 October 1775; II Minutes of the Conference," in Philander D. Chase, ed., *The Papers of George Washington: The Revolutionary War Series 2, September-December 1775* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1987), 196, 204 n16 (hereafter cited as *Washington Papers*).

⁵ Michael P. Gabriel, *Major General Richard Montgomery: The Making of an American Hero* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 139-41, quote on 140.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 138-39; National Archives, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files (2,670 reels; hereafter cited as *Pension Records*), Simeon Smith, S4849.

⁷ "General Orders, 27 December 1776," "Washington to William Heath, 31 December 1776," and "Washington to Daniel Broadhead, 18 October 1779," in *Washington Papers*, 7: 449, 496; 22: 755; "In Council of Safety, 25 September 1777;" "To Mr. Wright & other Teames in Company from Council of Safety, 26 September 1777;" and "To Mr. David Sessions from Council of Safety;" in E. P. Walton, ed., *Records of the Council of Safety and Governor and Council of the State of Vermont*, vol. 1 (Montpelier, VT: Steam Press of J. and J. M. Poland, 1873): 181-83. When John Hancock, the president of the Continental Congress, learned about the auctioning of some of the horses captured at Trenton, he requested that George Washington buy him one or two. "John Hancock to Washington, 11 January 1777," in *Washington Papers*, 7: 506.

⁸ "John Stark to Horatio Gates, 22 August 1777," Horatio Gates Papers, Reel 5: frame 0179, David Library.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ "Appendix: Breymann's Loss of Matériel at the Battle of Bennington," in Thomas M. Barker, "The Battle of Bennington in German Archives and Museums: Four Maps and Four Historical Images," produced for and distributed by the Walloomsac Battle Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution, Cambridge, NY, n.d. These maps and the list of Breymann's losses are also included in *The Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Association* 7 (2001). For this list in German, see Don O. Elster, *Geschichte der stehenden Truppen im Herzogtum Braunschweig-Wolfenbuettel*, vol. 2 (1901; Reprint, Bad Honnef, LTR Verlag Bad Honnef, 1982), 400-01.

¹¹ "A Journal of Carleton's and Burgoyne's Campaigns," *Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, 11 (December 1964): 268.

¹² "Instructions to Colonel Skeene, upon the Expedition to Bennington" in George F. G. Stanley, *For Want of a Horse: Being a Journal of the Campaigns against the Americans in 1776 and 1777 Conducted from Canada, by an Officer Who Served with Lt. Gen. Burgoyne* (Sackville, N.B.: Tribune Press Limited, 1961), 131; "Philip Skene to the Board of General and Field Officers, Cambridge, Near Boston, 20 March 1778," Hall Park McCullough Papers, Bennington Museum, Bennington, Vermont. British forces often paid for provisions with receipts, despite Burgoyne's and other officers' promises. In 1778, the British launched major foraging operations in Westchester County, New York, and Bergen County, New Jersey, yet paid loyalists with receipts, some of which were not redeemed for years. See Todd W. Braisted, *Grand Forage 1778: The Battleground around New York City* (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2016), 165.

¹³ For Fields' account, see Michael P. Gabriel, *The Battle of Bennington: Soldiers and Civilians* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 52; Abby Maria Hemenway, ed., *The Vermont Historical*

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Gazetteer: A Magazine Embracing a History of Each Town, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Biographical and Military, vol. 1 (Burlington, VT: Miss A. M. Hemenway, 1867), 160, 187; Thomas M. Barker, "Braunschweigers, Hessians and Tories in the Battle of Bennington (16 August 1777): The American 'Revolution' as a Civil War," *The Hessians: Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association* 10 (2007): 32 n21, 35 n34; Kenneth A. Perry, *Fitch Gazetteer of Washington County, New York*, vol. 2 (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 1999), 27-28, item 801. The original is found with the Asa Fitch Papers at the New York Public Library. The account that Fitch recorded has Baum conversing with his captors in English, although he only spoke German, which necessitated Burgoyne assigning a British officer to the expedition to serve as translator. For another account of what happened to Baum's sword and Pfister's books, see n31 below and the accompanying article text.

¹⁴ For Rudd, see Gabriel, *Battle of Bennington*, 54; for Mellen, see John Hayward, *A Gazetteer of Vermont, Containing Descriptions of all the Counties, Towns, and Districts in the State, and of its Principal Mountains, Rivers, Waterfalls, Harbors, Lakes, and Curious Places, to Which are Added Statistical Accounts of its Agriculture, Commerce, and Manufactures with a Great Variety of Other Useful Information* (Boston: Tappan, Whittemore, and Mason, 1849), 215; *Pension Records*, Rowell Colby W22824, John Stewart R10154, Jonathan Morse W18525, John Meriam S18974, Jonathan Joice R4713. For Colby's musket see, Smithsonian Institution, "The Price of Freedom: Americans at War," accessed 15 June 2018, <https://amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/collection/object.asp?ID=451>.

¹⁵ A gorget was a metal collar that officers wore around their necks as a symbol of rank.

¹⁶ Helga Doblin, trans., *An Eyewitness Account of the American Revolution and New England Life: The Journal of J. F. Wasmus, German Company Surgeon, 1776-1783* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 72-74; "Johann Michael Bach to the Court Marshall, 7 December 1778," and "Bach to Most Illustrious Landgrave, 3 October 1782," in Bruce E. Burgoyne, trans., *Most Illustrious Hereditary Prince: Letters to Their Prince from Members of the Hesse-Hanau Military Contingents in the Service of England during the American Revolutionary War* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2003), 175, 177 (quote)-78.

¹⁷ Michael P. Gabriel, "John Wallace's Journal of the Battle of Bennington, August 16, 1777," *The Walloomsack Review* (Fall 2018): 11, 13.

¹⁸ Doblin, *Wasmus Journal*, 74-75.

¹⁹ John E. Goodrich, comp., *The State of Vermont: Rolls of the Soldiers in the Revolutionary War, 1775 to 1783* (Rutland, VT: The Tuttle Co., 1904), 783; David Pulsifer, *The State House in Boston, Massachusetts* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1865), 15; Nathaniel Bouton, ed., *Provincial and State Papers: Miscellaneous Documents and Records Relating to New Hampshire at Different Periods*, vol. 8 (1874; reprint, New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1973), 669. For photographs of some of the trophies that Stark sent to the states, such as swords, drums, and a grenadier cap, among other items captured at Bennington, see Don Troiani, *Soldiers of the American Revolution* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2007), 64, 65, 70, 76, 77.

²⁰ See Michael P. Gabriel, "New Yorkers at the Battle of Bennington," unpublished paper prepared for the Conference on New York State History, Plattsburgh, NY, 6 June 2009.

²¹ "John Stark to Horatio Gates, 22 August 1777," Gates Papers, 5: 0179.

²² "Horatio Gates to John Stark, 27 August 1777," *ibid.*, 5: 0270.

²³ *Pension Records*, Samuel Eaton R3212; for the fate of the four cannons captured at Bennington, see Douglas R. Cubbison, "The Artillery never gained more Honour": *The British Artillery in the 1776 Valcour Island and 1777 Saratoga Campaigns* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 2007), 148-50; J. Earle Percy, "The Bennington Cannon," *New York History* 18 (July 1937): 313-14; Troiani, *Soldiers*, 65.

²⁴ *Pension Records*, John Meriam S18974, Austin Wells S32054, Ephraim Pierce S23372.

²⁵ Hayward, *Gazetteer of Vermont*, 215; "Colonel William Williams to Captain Samuel Robinson, 20 August 1777," A-006, Stevens Collection, vol. 3: 599, Manuscript Vermont State Papers Record Series, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA), Middlesex, VT; Charles C. Coffin, *The History of Boscawen and Webster from 1733 to 1878* (Concord, NH: Republican Press, Asso., 1878), 262.

²⁶ Gabriel, "Wallace Journal," 12; "Accounts to be Inquired into Without loss of Time [1777]" contains a list of random issues, two of which involve Williams and horses. The first says that the colonel can tell where several horses have been taken to by "Certain persons who think tis no harm to Steal from a State because a Tory once owned them [the horses] So they feel Pretty Well." The other states that Williams's waiter [?] can identify by name those people who took horses over the mountain. Whether these items particularly relate to Williams cutting the soldier is unknown, but it shows the colonel's involvement with such issues. SE-118, vol. 37: 32, Manuscript Vermont State Papers Record Series, 1777-1946, VSARA.

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²⁷ Quoted in J. L. Bell, "The Rev. Samuel Ely at Bennington," *Boston 1775*, 2 February 2014, accessed 4 June 2018, <http://boston1775.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-rev-samuel-ely-at-bennington.html>.

²⁸ All quotes from J. L. Bell, "Samuel Ely and the 'Plunder Master General,'" *Boston 1775*, 3 February 2014, accessed 4 June 2018, <http://boston1775.blogspot.com/2014/02/samuel-ely-and-plunder-master-general.html>. Also see Bell's "The Memory of Samuel Ely," *Boston 1775*, 4 February 2014, accessed 4 June 2018, <http://boston1775.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-memory-of-samuel-ely.html>.

²⁹ "Colonel William Williams to Captain Samuel Robinson, 20 August 1777," A-006, Stevens Collections, 3: 599, VSARA; Winston Adler, ed., *Their Own Voices: Oral Accounts of Early Settlers in Washington County, New York* (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1983), 64; Interestingly, on September 24, Gordon and another man, Sergeant John Bean, pled guilty and were fined for stealing two horses from a Henry Snyder. Walton, *Records of the Council of Safety*, 180.

³⁰ On August 16, 1777, Libeus Armstrong took provisions from Pfister's mill and brought them to Bennington for the army's use. On September 6, Lincoln suggested that Stark took these items and possibly sold them at the auction. "22 September 1777," in Walton, *Records of the Council of Safety*, 176; "Benjamin Lincoln to Horatio Gates, 6 September 1777," Gates Papers, 5: 0479.

³¹ Coffin, *The History of Boscawen*, 261-62; "Reminiscence," *The Bellows Falls (VT) Gazette*, 22 February 1840, 1. There are reasons to doubt the newspaper story concerning Stark's purchase of Baum's and Pfister's possessions. The article appeared sixty-three years after the battle, contains factual errors, such as his horse being shot out from under him during the battle, and contradicts other accounts of what happened to these items.

Interestingly, on September 4, "a considerable sum of money, in Continental bills, the particular form as yet unknown; and also a number of receipts for cash, and other accounts of cash" along with some personal items were stolen from Stephen Fay's residence in Bennington, the Catamount Tavern. Ira Allen, the treasurer for the Vermont Committee of Safety, offered a \$30 reward for the arrest of the thief and \$10 for the return of the money. Perhaps this money was the proceeds of the auctions. One also wonders if this theft had anything to do with Joseph Fay's beating of Reverend Ely and Ely's subsequent departure from Bennington. The *Connecticut Courant*, 7 October 1777, 1.

³² H. W. D. Bryant, ed., "Letters Relative to the Battle of Bennington," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 14 (April 1860): 123.

³³ My thanks to Henry Retzer for this complex conversion. Retzer's email to author, 18 May 2018.

³⁴ "Received of Samuel Robinson five Dollars of plunder money Sept. 23d 1777," A-006, Stevens Collection, 3: 345, VSARA. Henry Stevens Sr., a collector of old manuscripts, copied this list from an original document, which is no longer extant. Approximately forty-four names on the plunder money list match those on Robinson's muster roll, which contains ninety men. Variations in spelling and handwriting do not allow for an exact number. For Robinson's muster roll, see Goodrich, ed., *Vermont: Rolls of the Soldiers*, 27; for information on Stevens, see Eleazer D. Durfee and D. Gregory Sanford, *A Guide to the Henry Stevens, Sr. Collection at the Vermont State Archives* (Montpelier, VT: Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, [1989]), https://www.sec.state.vt.us/media/46737/Stevens_Collection.pdf, accessed 12 July 2018.

³⁵ Dan Kent, "Action in Vermont During the Revolutionary War: Dan Kent's Narrative," *Vermont History*, 39 (1971): 111; Hayward, *Gazetteer of Vermont*, 213; *Pension Records*, Michael Mason S28804; Coffin, *History of Boscawen*, 263.

³⁶ Isaac W. Hammond, ed., *Rolls of the Soldiers in the Revolutionary War, May, 1777 to 1780: with an Appendix Embracing Names of New Hampshire Men in Massachusetts Regiments*, vol. 2 (1886; reprint, New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1973), 185-87.

³⁷ Coffin, *History of Boscawen*, 263.

³⁸ "Proceedings of a Regimental Court Martial, 2 September 1777," Moffat-Whipple Papers, Box 4, Folder 20, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH. The court records list the two defendants as "Charles Cavandar" and "John McColister." The spellings used in the text come from their names listed on Captain Peter Clark's muster roll. See Hammond, *Rolls of the Soldiers*, 188-89.

³⁹ Kent, *Action in Vermont*, 111 n 5.