American Revolution

Fort Ticonderoga

Fort Ticonderoga was a fort located in upstate New York between Lake Champlain and Lake George. There were three battles that took place there during the Revolutionary War.

Capture of Fort Ticonderoga

The capture of Fort Ticonderoga took place early in the Revolutionary War on May 10, 1775.

Green Mountain Boys

The Green Mountain Boys were a local militia led by Ethan Allen. They were given the task of taking over the fort for the patriots. They were joined by Colonel Benedict Arnold from Boston. At first the Green Mountain Boys did not want to fight under Colonel Arnold, but eventually Ethan Allen and Arnold agreed to a joint command.

Capturing the Fort

The Green Mountain boys began to sneak across the river during the night. However, only around half of the men had crossed the river by the time the sun rose. Rather than wait on the rest of the force to cross, Ethan Allen decided to attack.

There was only one guard on duty at the south gate where they first approached. When his musket misfired, the guard ran away and the way was open for the patriots. They quickly entered the fort and took the 48 British soldiers by surprise. When approaching the leaders of the fort, Ethan Allen yelled out that he was taking the fort "In the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!"

Fort Ticonderoga 1775 by Heppenheimer and Maurer

No one was killed in the attack. The main reason for the Americans to take the fort was to get control of its cannons. The cannons were moved to Boston where they were used to help end the Siege of Boston.

Siege of Fort Ticonderoga

The fort was held by the Americans and was used to defend New York from a British attack from the north. Guarding the fort were 2,000 soldiers under the command of General Arthur St. Clair. General St. Clair had requested more soldiers from George Washington, but Washington didn't believe that the British would attack.
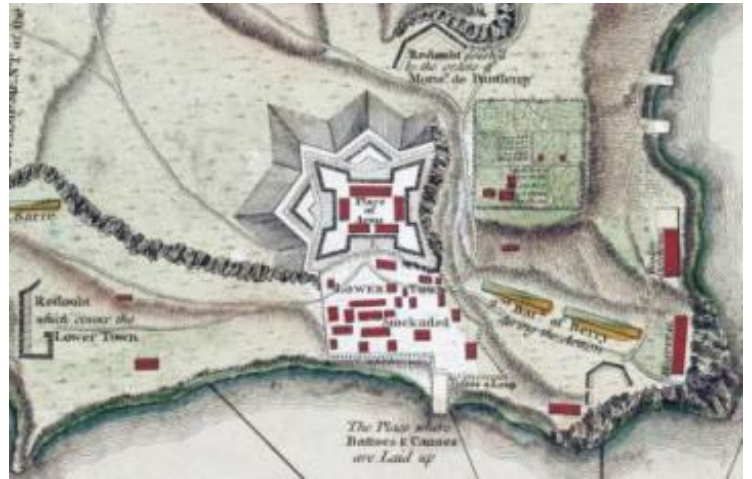
However, in early July of 1777 the British did attack. They brought a large force of 8,000 soldiers under the command of General John Burgoyne. Burgoyne realized early that Ticonderoga was vulnerable to an attack from the high ground of Mount Defiance. He positioned his artillery atop the mountain and began to surround the fort.

When St. Clair saw that the British had large guns in place on top of Mount Defiance, he knew he had no chance to keep the fort. He ordered his men to retreat and gave up the fort to the British. The loss of the fort was a huge blow to the Americans.

A diagram of the Fort
Click picture to see a larger version

Another Attack

On September 18, a force of 500 men led by Colonel John Brown attempted to take back the fort. There were around 700 British troops garrisoned at the fort. Brown was unable to take back the fort, but he did manage to rescue 118 American prisoners while capturing 293 British troops. The fort was held by the British for the rest of the war, but held little significance. It was abandoned by the British after the surrender at Yorktown in 1781.

Interesting Facts About the Fort Ticonderoga

- The fort was a strategically important site during the French and Indian War.
- General St. Clair was accused by some of taking bribes to give up the fort to the British, but was exonerated in a court martial trial.
- The Green Mountain Boys did not like Colonel Benedict Arnold. It is said that arguments broke out to the point where they even drew their weapons on him.
- It was reported that when the British retook the fort, King George III was so excited he announced to the Queen "I have beat them! I have beat all the Americans!"
- Benedict Arnold later became a traitor to the Continental Army when he went over to the British.

Activities

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