

Call for Voice Actors

The Friends of the Bennington Battlefield has received a grant from NY Parks to add QR-code-enabled audio to existing signage at the Battlefield, located in Hoosick Falls, NY. We will need to record 21 files from 18 voice actors (15 male, 3 female); the actors voicing General Burgoyne and J.F. Wasmus will record two files; the actor(s) voicing General Stark will record two or three files (Stark was 50 years old for two files, and 82 for his letter of 1809). You are free to audition for as many or as few roles as you like. Actors need not be residents of New York.

For all actors: make your delivery engaging and clear, in a “natural” voice. Speak more or less in character. Other than Grandma Moses, we don’t know how the figures whose words you’ll be voicing actually sounded. Take the information in the italicized intros (*do not voice these*) and the content of the texts themselves as your cue. In the case of Burgoyne (British), DeLorimier (French Canadian), Lamb (British), and Wasmus (German), I suggest a light accent suggesting the country of origin. I have put pronunciation guides for foreign names in square brackets.

Once you have rehearsed, record your work – one file per passage, please – and send it as an attachment to **bennbattleaudio@gmail.com** by Friday, May 13, 2022. You do not need to read the whole script, except in the case of the shorter scripts; for the longer (roughly two-minute) scripts, one minute is enough, though you are welcome to read more if you like. Include your name on the file as well as the name of the person whose account of the Battle you’re voicing. In the body of your email, include your name, address, and phone number, and briefly describe any experience or training you have had in theater and/or voice acting. Clean recordings on cell phones or other digital devices in .mp3 or .mp4 format, for example, are adequate for auditions. If you need assistance or have questions, please email project coordinator Phil Holland at the email address above.

Voice actors who are chosen for roles may record from home if they have an adequate home studio. Other actors will need to travel to a recording studio, most likely the NY State facility at Peebles Island State Park, a 36-minute drive from Hoosick Falls. Recording will take place in May 2022.

Actors will be paid from grant funds disbursed by the Friends of the Bennington Battlefield. Fees will depend on the length of your recording(s), with a \$100 minimum. Mileage to and from the recording studio, or a home studio fee, will also be paid.

Scripts follow below. Do not voice italicized intros.

Scripts for Battlefield signage audio project/ 2022

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Grandma Moses (before the Battle)

2. *Four top panels East: Hessian Hill*

Thomas Mellen (whole battle)
Thomas Jefferson (“first link” letter to Stark...)

3. *Four top panels East: The first link...*

David Holbrook (hilltop assault)
Sipp Ives (story of, in the third person)
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4. *Four top panels South: “Had Day Lasted...”*

General John Stark (to Gates)
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Panel 1

1. Washington predicts victory

It's mid-July in the summer of 1777, and British General John Burgoyne is advancing from Canada with an army of 8,000 men. The Americans are in retreat. Yet in a letter to General Philip Schuyler, General George Washington envisions a patriot victory in the days ahead. It happened right here on August 16th.

“Though our affairs for some days past have worn a dark and gloomy aspect, I yet look forward to a fortunate and happy change. I trust General Burgoyne’s army will meet sooner or later with an effectual check, and that the success he has had will precipitate his ruin. From your account he appears to be pursuing that line of conduct which of all others is most favorable to us. I mean, acting in detachment. This conduct will certainly give room for enterprise on our part and expose his parties to great hazard. Could we be so happy as to cut one of them off, supposing it should not exceed four, five or six hundred men, it would inspire the people and do away much of their present anxiety. In such an event, they would lose sight of past misfortunes, and urged at the same time by a regard to their own security, they would fly to arms and afford every aid in their power.”

2. A mother flees the British advance

Sarah Rudd was married to Lieutenant Joseph Rudd of the Bennington militia. Here she describes what it was like for herself and her family as the British swept down from the north. She fled on horseback to Williamstown with her four children, aged 8, 4, 2, and 4 months.

“It was an eventful year. I can never forget, while anything of memory lives, my flight on horseback, and in feeble health, with my babe and two other small children and my eldest daughter running on foot by the side of me from Bennington to Williamstown under circumstances of great alarm and fear from Hessians, Tory-enemies, and Indians, and the absence of my husband at the time of this my trial for months before, and for months afterwards.”

3. The raid on Bennington

British General John Burgoyne sent Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Baum with a force of more than 800 men to seize supplies at Bennington. Burgoyne spelled out the five objectives of the raid -- and the danger it might face.

“The object of your expedition is to try the affections of the country, to disconcert the councils of the enemy, to mount the Riedesel's [REED-azelz] dragoons, to complete Peters' corps, and to obtain large supplies of cattle, horses and carriages.

“It is highly probable that the corps of Mr. Warner, now supposed to be at Manchester, will retreat before you. But should they, contrary to expectation, be able to collect in great force, and post themselves advantageously, it is left to your discretion to attack them or not, always bearing in mind that your corps is too valuable as to let any considerable loss be hazarded on the occasion.”

4. Grandma Moses remembers

The painter Anna Mary Robertson Moses, better known as Grandma Moses, lived in nearby in Eagle Bridge, New York. Late in life she wrote that...

“I have been told that my Great Grandfather E. Robertson was sent out as a lookout, back in the year of 1777. He was plowing a field in Cambridge, when far to the west he saw a patch of woods that seemed to change each time he went around the field. He watched it closely, and made up his mind that it was an army. He unhitched his horses from the plow, turning one loose, and rode the other down through Coila, warning all that the British were coming. On his way to Bennington he met the Bennington Boys, who had received news that an army was coming up from Troy to take many barrels of pork. But they met near Walloomsac and had a fierce battle there, and there one of my Great Grandfather's black horses was killed.”

Panel 2

1. Thomas Mellen remembers

At age 92, Thomas Mellen of New Hampshire, and later of Newbury, Vermont, vividly recalled his part in the Battle. He fought in both engagements.

"Between two and three o'clock the battle began. The Germans fired by platoons and were soon hidden by the smoke. Our men fired each on his own hook, aiming wherever he saw a flash; few on our side had either bayonets or cartridges... Before I had time to fire many rounds our men rushed over the breast-works, but I and many others chased straggling Hessians in the woods.

"We pursued until we met Colonel Breymann [BRAY-mun] with 800 fresh troops and larger cannon, which opened a fire of grape shot. We skirmishers ran back till we met a large body of Stark's men and then faced about. But the enemy outflanked us, and I said to a comrade, 'We must run or they will have us.' He said, "I will have one more fire first."

"In a few minutes we saw Seth Warner's men hurrying to help us; half of them attacked each flank of the enemy and beat back those who were just closing around us. Stark's men now took heart and stood their ground. My gun barrel was at this time too hot to hold so I seized the musket of a dead Hessian.

"Soon the Germans ran, and we followed; many of them threw their guns down on the ground, or offered them to us, or kneeled, some in puddles of water... I came to one wounded man flat on the ground, crying "water" or "quarter". I snatched the sword out of his scabbard, and while I ran on and fired, carried it between my teeth, thinking I might need it."

2. **Jefferson to Stark, 1805**

In 1805, President Thomas Jefferson wrote to then 77-year-old General John Stark at his home in New Hampshire.

"I have lately learned...that you are still in life and enjoy health and spirits. The victories of Bennington, the first link in the chain of successes that issued in the surrender at Saratoga, are still fresh in the memory of every American... Permit me therefore, a stranger who knows you only by the services you have rendered, to say that your memory will be cherished by those who came after you as one who has not lived in vain for his country. I salute you, venerable patriot and General, with affection and reverence. -- Thomas Jefferson"

Panel 3

1. **Hand to hand combat**

David Holbrook, of Adams, Massachusetts, was only 17 years old when he volunteered for the local militia. 55 years later, he swore a deposition for a pension and recalled his service in the Battle.

"Hearing the alarm that the enemy were about to attack Bennington, this declarer started immediately and got to Bennington the same night, and next morning went to the lines of the

enemy and remained there watching their movements. And the next day being the sixteenth of August, Captain Enos Parker selected a company of 60 or 70 men from the men who had promiscuously come together, of which this declarer was one, and marched them across the river by a circuitous route of five or six miles, mostly through woods, with all possible silence, and brought us up in the enemy's rear, and there we sat in silence until a signal (the firing of two muskets) was given, when the American army made a rush upon the British entrenchments, which being received by the British with boldness, the battle became general and desperate immediately and continued about two hours' close combat without form or regularity... until the entrenchments were completely routed, and those who had not been killed and had not escaped surrendered at discretion.

"This declarer, in the scaling of the breastwork of the Enemy in the first engagement, put his right hand upon the top of the breastwork & threw his feet over, but his right leg was met by a British bayonet which held it fast, and he pitched head first into the entrenchment and the soldier hit him a thump upon the head. But was dispatched by the next man that came up & this declarer was thereby relieved, and in the heat of feeling forgot his wounds. But when the Enemy fled in the second engagement he found myself exhausted and could not pursue, the blow upon his head and the wound in his leg having occasioned the loss of considerable blood."

2. Sipp Ives, a Black Green Mountain Boy

A number of Black soldiers fought on the Patriot side at the Battle of Bennington, as they had from the outset of the Revolution.

At Bennington most were members of Colonel Seth Warner's Continental regiment known as the Green Mountain Boys. Sixty years after the Battle, Patriot militia captain Daniel Brown recalled seeing "a black man on the ground that was mortally wounded" whom he had recognized as belonging to the corps that Warner led into action at a critical moment during the second engagement. That man was Sipp Ives, one of 30 Patriots who died at the Battle. We don't know if Ives was free or enslaved; he had enlisted in early 1777 at a town in the northern Berkshires. Enslaved men, typically serving in place of their enslavers, were often promised their freedom in return for risking their lives but were not always granted that freedom if they survived.

3. From a German doctor's journal

Julius Friedrich Wasmus was a surgeon's mate attached to the Prinz Ludwig regiment of Brunswick [German] dragoons that fought for the British at the Battle of Bennington. He was taken prisoner and almost lost his journal.

"We came to the bridge where Lieut. Colonel Baum [BOM] had stood; our men had taken this route for their retreat and some of them had run through the water. Many had been killed or wounded in their flight; all the rest had been taken prisoner.

“Some of our wounded were still lying here and there; they will be taken to the houses at the bridge. The horror of these scenes cannot really be described. To see a friend or fellow creature lie bleeding on the ground who has been cruelly wounded by the murderous lead and approaches his death shaking – crying for help – and then not be able, not be allowed to help him, is that not cruel?”

“The Americans used to consider us unbeatable and did not believe they could capture our regular troops, but what will they now say about us! -- Will they keep on running away from us in the future?”

“The future frightens me. To all appearances, we live here under a nation extremely enraged, whose language none of us understands; everyone is asking what will become of us. But we were cheered up a little when we were treated to beef, pork, potatoes and punch tonight. While we were sitting at dinner, a man entered the room and sat down at my side. This was the American Colonel Warner. After the meal, he took out a small metal box from his pocket, which belonged to me. It contained lancets that he contemplated with great curiosity. He gave me 6 pieces and the remaining 6 he wanted to keep. He also had this journal of mine, which he returned to me.”

Panel 4

1. General Stark's report

After the battle, General John Stark wrote an account of the action to General Horatio Gates, Commander of the Northern Department. Stark is said to have rallied his troops on the morning of the Battle with the words: “There they are, the redcoats and the Tories. We beat them today or this night Molly Stark sleeps a widow.”

“On the 16th, in the morning, I was joined by Colonel Simonds, with some militia from Berkshire county. I pursued my plan, detached Colonel Nichols, with two hundred men, to attack them in the rear; I also sent Colonel Herrick, with three hundred men, in the rear of their right, both to join and attack. I also sent Colonels Hobart and Stickney, with two hundred men to their right, and sent one hundred men in their front, to draw away their attention that way; and about three o'clock we got all ready for the attack. Colonel Nichols begun the same, which was followed by all the rest. The remainder of my little army I pushed up in the front, and in a few minutes the action began in general. It lasted two hours, the hottest I ever saw in my life—it represented one continued clap of thunder; the enemy was obliged to give way, and leave their field pieces and all their baggage behind them. Our martial courage proved too hard for them.

“In a few minutes I was informed that there was a large re-enforcement on their march within two miles. Lucky for us, that moment Colonel Warner's regiment came up fresh. The battle continued obstinate on both sides till sunset; the enemy was obliged to retreat; we pursued them till dark, but had daylight lasted one hour longer, we should have taken the whole body of them.

“Too much honor cannot be given to the brave officers and soldiers for gallant behavior; they fought through the midst of fire and smoke, they mounted two breastworks that were well fortified and supported with cannon.

2. “...the most active and rebellious race...”

In General Burgoyne’s report to London after the battle, he admitted that the Americans were a committed and resourceful enemy.

“The great bulk of the country is undoubtedly with the Congress, in principle and in zeal; and their measures are executed with a secrecy and dispatch that are not to be equalled. Wherever the King’s forces point, militia, to the amount of three or four thousand assemble in twenty-four hours; they bring with them their subsistence, etc., and, the alarm over, they return to their farms. The Hampshire Grants (Vermont) in particular, a country unpeopled and almost unknown in the last war, now abounds in the most active and most rebellious race of the continent, and hangs like a gathering storm upon my left.”

3. A letter to veterans from General Stark

Some of the men General Stark had led at the Battle invited him to a commemoration in Bennington in 1809, when he was 81 years old. He was not up to the trip, he said, but he sent them a memorable letter. It closes with these words:

“You say you wish your young men to see me, but you who have seen me can tell them that I never was worth much for a show, and certainly cannot be worth their seeing now. In case of my not being able to attend, you wish my sentiments. Them you shall have as free as the air we breathe.

“As I was then, I am now – the friend of the equal rights of men, of representative democracy, of republicanism, and the Declaration of Independence, the great charter of our national rights: and of course, the friend of our indissoluble Union and Constitution of the states.

John Stark

P.S.: I will give you my volunteer toast – “Live free or die – Death is not the greatest of evils.”

Panel 5

1. *The cannon on the hilltop*

Julius Wasmus, a Brunswick [German] surgeon’s mate, witnessed the action on the hilltop and was taken prisoner by the Americans. His journal provides a vivid look at the battle. On the morning of the main action, he wrote:

“It became increasingly lively in the brush in front of our line. A cannon was therefore requested, which was sent with the reminder: one should not consider a few individuals to be a line or regiment. The strangest thing of all was that our commander did not know where we were standing. He had not visited us these past three days.”

The British artillery crews at the Battle were Hessians. They sprayed shot into the brush until their guns fell silent:

“The cannon shot balls and grapeshot sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left and then again forward into the brush... The cannon in our entrenchment went quiet because the sergeant who commanded it had been shot. The eight men at the cannon were either killed or wounded.”

Panel 6

1. The hilltop assault

Jesse Field was a member of Captain Elijah's Dewey's Bennington militia company. He was among the men who attacked the British hilltop position.

“On the morning of the 16th, a body of troops was detached to attack the enemy on the north, and Colonel Herrick with his regiment of rangers and a part or the whole of Colonel Brush's regiment of Militia, including Captain Dewey and Captain Samuel Robinson's company of militia from Bennington, crossed the river where the camp went over the hills and forded the river again below the enemy and come up in their rear from the south west. I was on or near the right and front of the party. When we came in sight of the works we halted, and it seemed that the rear of our party had been detained for some cause and did not come on so quick as they ought to have done. We stood but a short time when the firing commenced from the party on the north. I recollected of hearing our Lieutenant exclaim, “My God what are we doing? They are killing our brothers. Why are we not ordered to fire?” In a moment our adjutant rode up and ordered us to advance. We pressed forward and as the Hessians rose above their works to fire, we discharged our pieces at them. We kept advancing and about the second fire they left their works and ran down the hill to the south or southeast. We followed on over their works and pursued them down the hill. The day was very warm, they were in full dress and very heavy armed, and we in our shirts and trousers and thus had much the advantage in the pursuit.”

Panel 7

1. Native warriors in action

Claude-Nicolas-Guillaume de Lorimier was a French-Canadian officer in Burgoyne's army who had learned Native languages. He served as an interpreter, scout and leader of raids. He led 150 Mohawk Indians from Canada on the expedition to Bennington.

"I established myself on some high ground with my Indians, and there I heard four musket shots on our right, the same number on our left and four behind us. Not doubting that this was the enemy's signal to attack, I went and found the Colonel and suggested that I be allowed to go forward with the left-hand column of my Indians. Colonel Baum [BOM] approved.

"We had marched about 600 yards when our scouts were killed just in front of us. The Indians fell back upon the camp and only one Caughnawaga named Jakonowe [Kah-nah-WAH-ga named Jah-KO-no-way] came forward with me. The enemy spotted us and we became the target of a considerable fusillade. We flung ourselves flat on the dead run to let the volley go by and then I rejoined my party. I wasn't hurt, but I found them in disorder. By this time, Colonel Baum was coming under heavy attack and since I had only about 150 men I sent Martin Hasaregoua [Hah-sah-reh-GOO-ah] to scout; he came back saying the enemy were too numerous for us to try an attack.

"I shouted to Major Campbell, "Let's get back to the reinforcements," which we did at top speed. Once we were out of danger, I saw that I was short one man and that the poor Major had fainted. This held us up for a while, since we set about hastily picking blueberries and feeding them to the major so that he was soon fit to travel again.

"Not far from this place we met Major Breyman [BRAY-mun] and we turned toward the enemy on the double. But we had hardly gone 400 yards along the base of a very high crag when we received a terrible volley of musket fire from some traitors who, two hours earlier, had come into our entrenchments as friends on Major Skene's recommendation."

Panel 8

1. The armies face off

Here General John Stark recounts the first meeting of the British and American forces two days before the main battle.

"The 14th I marched with my Brigade and a few of this States' Militia to oppose them, and to cover Gregg's retreat, who found himself unable to withstand their superior numbers: About four miles from the Town I met him on his return, and the Enemy in close pursuit of him, within half a mile of his rear; but when they discovered me they presently halted on a very advantageous piece of ground. I drew up my little army on an eminence in open view of their

encampments, but could not bring them to an engagement. I marched back about a mile, and there encamped. I sent out a few men to skirmish with them, killed thirty of them, with two Indian Chiefs.”

2. A grandson remembers

Levi Beardsley was born in a house not far from where you are standing, eight years after the Battle. In his sixties, Beardsley wrote down the stories his family had often told him about what happened.

“A considerable part of the contest was on my grandfather's farm, and in sight of his house; in fact, the enemy commenced their breastwork at his house, which being of logs was intended to be filled with men as a strong point of defence.

“My grandfather, then about 50 years old, was a noncombatant. He used to remark that “it was as necessary to have some at home to raise bread and meat for the armies as to engage in active warfare.” My mother, then about twelve years old, has often described the alarm that pervaded all classes. In the ranks of the Americans who were advancing to check the enemy were so many young that they appeared like boys, several of whom were crying.

“My father, who was very near the scene of action, and could hear every gun, used to compare the incessant reports with the constant snapping of hemlock brush when exposed to fire. In the midst of all the din of small arms, the field pieces kept booming away at the advancing Americans. They pushed forward cautiously towards the breastworks and intrenchments, sheltering themselves wherever a shelter intervened; but to render their attack successful it was necessary to advance and come to close work as soon as possible, for the Hessians and Tories were mainly protected.

“The battle was sharply contested, but the result is known; the Hessians were defeated and taken, and a large body of them, when they surrendered, came running down the hill near the house with as little order as so many sheep, and surrendered in plain sight, several being shot after they had ceased firing.

“This was the first check that Burgoyne had met with, and in its consequences was most fatal, for his force was weakened by more than one thousand men, his operations crippled and restricted to the immediate vicinity of his headquarters, while the influence on the Americans was electrical.”

Panel 9

1. Colonel Baum is routed

Roger Lamb of the 9th British Regiment of Foot told the story of the last stand of the Brunswick dragoons and their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Baum.

“On a signal being made by the Americans, Baum was attacked on all sides by superior numbers. He maintained his post above two hours and often repulsed the enemy; but finding that his men had expended all their ammunition, and Lieutenant Colonel Breymann’s [BRAY-munz] corps not yet appearing, he was obliged to think of a retreat with the dragoons. He twice forced his way through the enemy, and was as often attacked by fresh troops. As a last resource, he ordered his men to draw their swords and rush in upon the enemy, where, notwithstanding every effort of bravery, this valiant corps, overpowered by superior numbers, was entirely broken, and most of them were either killed or taken prisoners. Among the latter was their wounded commander.”

Panel 10

1. “I commanded the Loyalists at Bennington...”

Col. John Peters was the commander of the Queen’s Loyal Rangers, a Loyalist regiment that was stationed at the Tory Fort. He later wrote an account of the Battle to a friend in London:

“I commanded the Loyalists at Bennington, where I had 291 men of my regiment with me, and I lost above half of them in that engagement... A little before the Royalists gave way, the Rebels pushed with a strong party on the front of the Loyalists where I commanded. As they were coming up, I observed a man fire at me, which I returned. He loaded again as he came up and discharged again at me, and crying out “Peters, you damned Tory, I have got you,” he rushed on me with his bayonet, which entered just below my left breast, but was turned by the bone. By this time I was loaded, and I saw that it was a rebel captain, Jeremiah Post, an old schoolfellow and playmate, and a cousin of my wife’s. Though his bayonet was in my body, I felt regret at being obliged to destroy him.”

2. “...doing their duty to the King...”

Colonel John Peter’s wife Ann was in Montreal when she received news of the defeat of the King’s forces at Bennington. She was told that her husband and one of her sons had died of their wounds. She is said to have replied:

“My calamities are very great: but, thank God they died doing their duty to their King and Country; I have six sons left who, as soon as they shall be able to bear arms I will send against the rebels, while I and my daughter will mourn for the dead, and pray for the living.”

3. A Patriot is wounded

John Orr was a 29-year-old lieutenant in Colonel Stickney’s New Hampshire regiment. At the Battle of Bennington, Stickney’s men were ordered to attack the Tory Fort. As Orr

advanced under fire, he was shot just above the knee and lay in the field until he was dragged to safety, as musket balls flew overhead. The injury left him disabled for life.

“About 4 o’clock, Nichols began, and the cracking of the muskets was such that imagination could see men falling by the dozens. We arose and with shouts marched rapidly to the attack. I marched with the appearance of a brave soldier. When we had passed through the wood and cornfield, we came in sight of the enemy, at about fifteen rods (about 80 yards] distance.

“They commenced firing with muskets at an alarming rate, so that it seemed wonderful that any of the attacking party should escape. I soon found that a bullet was commissioned to lay me low. After having lain fifteen or twenty minutes, one of our sergeants came and offered to take me off the ground. I told him he was unable, for I could not help myself. He said he would not leave me there, for the enemy might come and kill me. He therefore called a soldier to his assistance. They took hold of me by my arms, and attempted to carry me off; but the bullets flew directly at us, so that I charged them to lay me down instantly, each take a hand, and stoop so low, that the flax would conceal them, and drag me on my back into the cornfield, where I should be out of sight of the enemy. This order they obeyed, and took me to the road, where many of the wounded were collected.”