

General John Stark

General John Stark of New Hampshire, commander of the Patriot forces at the Battle of Bennington, was one of the heroes of the American Revolution. He led New Hampshire militiamen at the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775 and also fought bravely under General George Washington in the Patriot victories at Trenton and Princeton at the end of 1776.

As Burgoyne's British army surged down the Champlain Valley in the summer of 1777, and Vermont appealed to New Hampshire for military assistance, Stark took command. Leading militia from New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont, and joined by Seth Warner's Continental soldiers, he soundly defeated both Baum and Breymann along the Walloomsac River near Bennington on August 16, 1777.

In 1809, when he was 81 years old and too old to travel to Bennington to commemorate the Battle, General Stark wrote a letter to the veterans gathered there. He said that his men *"had not learned the art of submission, nor had they been trained to the art of war,"* and that their success *"taught the enemies of liberty that undisciplined freemen are superior to veteran slaves."* He went on:

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.

Then he added a P.S.: *"I will give you my volunteer toast – Live free or die – Death is not the greatest of evils."*



"There they are, the redcoats and the Tories. We beat them today or this night Molly Stark sleeps a widow."