1 | Background

"The Campaign of Burgoyne, with its attendant circumstances, has had so much light thrown upon it by skillful writers that its review at the present time may seem unnecessary — even presumptuous. Yet, as artists of greater or less capacity are encouraged to repeat a theme, made familiar by the works of great masters, so perhaps, may be justified this attempt to portray again the great historical drama that opened so exultingly in June, 1777, near the banks of the St. Lawrence river, and terminated amid so many tragic elements in October of the same year, on the banks of the Hudson."

— Ellen Hardin Walworth, 1891

"In my Last Letter I had the Honour to acquaint Your Excellency of the March of The Army from Van Schaacks Island to Stillwater; Thursday last I reconoitred the Ground in advance from thence, and found This Incampment the properest Station the Army could take in the present circumstances — from hence to Saratoga…"

— Major General Horatio Gates, September 15, 1777

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Background

The battles of Saratoga rank among the most decisive in world history.

Introduction

Saratoga National Historical Park is located in the scenic upper Hudson River Valley in the towns of Stillwater and Saratoga, New York. The park preserves sites associated with a significant American military victory during the Revolution. The battles of Saratoga rank among the most decisive in world history. Here in 1777 American forces met, defeated, and forced a major British army to surrender, an event which led France to recognize the independence of the United States and provide critical military support to the struggling Americans.

Under a 1926 law, New York State began to acquire battlefield lands in preparation for the sesquicentennial of the battles. The battlefield was made part of the national park system in 1938 when Saratoga National Historical Park was authorized by the United States Congress. Since 1938, the portion of the Battlefield Unit owned by the National Park Service has been enlarged and three sites of the Old Saratoga Unit in Town of Saratoga have been added to the park: the General Philip Schuyler Estate in the village of Schuylerville, and the Saratoga Monument and Victory Woods in the village of Victory.

Purpose of the General Management Plan

The main function of a general management plan is to define clearly the park's purpose and management direction. The general management plan provides a foundation to guide and coordinate all subsequent planning and management. Per directions from Congress and National Park Service management policies, each park is required to have an approved plan. This ensures that park managers carry out, as effectively and efficiently as possible, the mission of the National Park Service, which states:

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

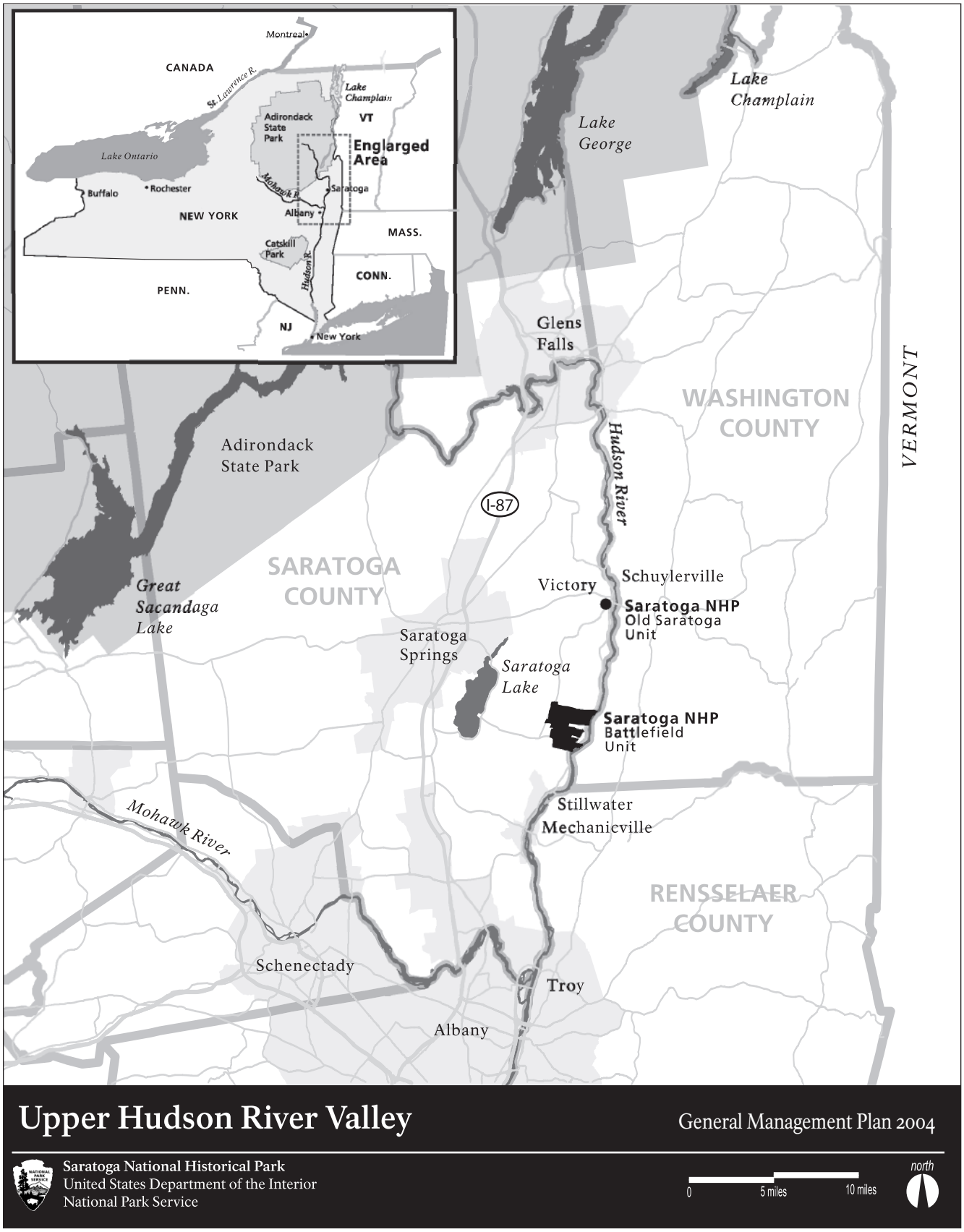
The general management plan describes the resource conditions and visitor experiences that should exist at Saratoga National Historical Park, and why they should exist. It takes a long view, 15–20 years into the future. It is a policy-level document that provides guidance for park managers and is not detailed, specific, or highly technical in nature. All other plans tier off of the general management plan, which provides a consistent framework for coordinating and integrating the various types of park planning and implementation that are needed to guide park management.

After the general management plan is adopted, the park's five-year strategic plan will be updated to lay out goals and management actions in accord with the general management plan. When funds become available to begin the design of facilities or to undertake other specific actions that are consistent with the general management plan, site-specific planning, research, and environmental analysis will be done. These undertakings will be subject to federal and state consultation requirements, and the public will be involved throughout the process.

The four basic elements required of National Park Service general management plans (by Public Law 95-625) are:

- Measures for preservation of the area's natural and cultural resources.
- Types and general intensities of development associated with public enjoyment and use of the area, including general locations, timing of implementation, and costs.
- Identification and implementation commitments for visitor carrying capacities.
- Potential boundary modifications and the reasons for them.

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.



Upper Hudson River Valley

General Management Plan 2004

Saratoga National Historical Park
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

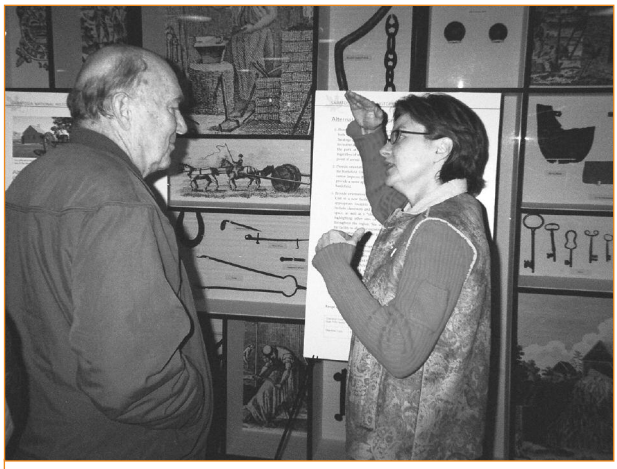
0 5 miles 10 miles

north

The Planning Process

The National Park Service takes an interdisciplinary approach to planning. The team that prepared this general management plan for Saratoga National Historical Park was made up of individuals skilled in the areas of cultural resource management, historic preservation, interpretation, collections management, landscape architecture, history, archeology, natural resource management, and community planning, as well as including all division chiefs at the park.

The team undertook numerous research projects to provide sound information to guide planning. Subject matter experts conducted research on such topics as the park's cultural landscape, visitor use, collections, and furnishings (Appendix D lists the research undertaken). The information generated was incorporated into the planning process as it became available.



Discussing alternatives at the Public Open House, January 2004.

As a starting point for planning, the team reviewed the park's purpose, as defined in its enabling legislation, and its legislative history. The team then developed a significance statement that identified the resources which make the park nationally significant. The team also formulated goal statements that describe the ideal conditions park managers seek to achieve. Then, in March 2000, the team invited some 30 scholars and resource specialists to define the park's interpretive themes — the most important stories to be told at Saratoga National Historical Park.

To acquaint the community with the National Park Service planning process, to solicit comments or concerns regarding the future of the park, and to report on the status of planning, the planning team held two public scoping sessions in March 2000. Both sessions, one held in Stillwater, the other in Schuylerville, were well attended. At these meetings, team members discussed the purpose and significance statements and the park's goals with the participants. The team followed up with a newsletter in August 2000, which highlighted comments received from the public and reported on the status of planning. The newsletter was distributed to over 700 people and was also made available on the park's website.

In the next stage of the process, the team drew on input from numerous sources to identify issues that the plan should address. This was a comparative, historical phase, in which planners examined the park's 1969 master plan, which had been adequate in its day, in the light of the great changes that had taken place since then. Sweeping changes had occurred in the park, in the surrounding region, in government regulations, in the historical profession, and in public expectations. The result was an extensive list of new issues the plan needed to address.

For many of these issues, laws or National Park Service policies dictate that certain actions are required. In this category were several major natural resource issues, such as defending against invasive non-native species and protecting water resources within the park. Certain other needs, while not required by law, were so obvious and pressing that they could not responsibly be avoided. Examples were the need to improve the maintenance function by adding a maintenance facility in the Old Saratoga Unit and improving visitor orientation in that area.

After the needs were identified, objectives were expressed, which described the desired conditions that would exist once the need had been satisfied. Those issues that inescapably had to be addressed, either because of legal requirements or the general consensus of everyone involved, were framed as Objectives Common to All Alternatives. This meant that these objectives would be dealt with similarly regardless of which alternative was chosen or any

Milestones of the Planning Process

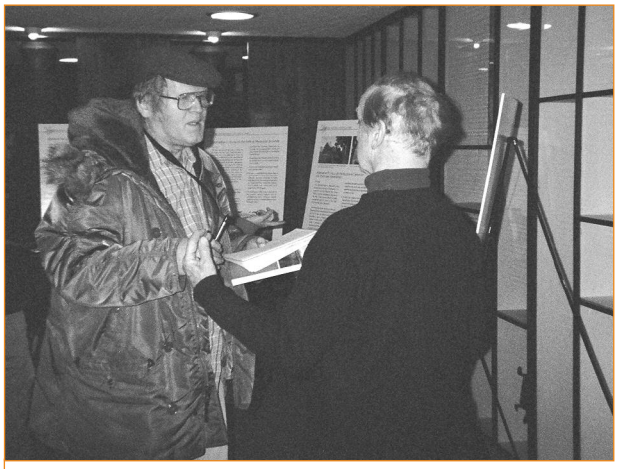
Two Public Meetings	March 2000
Interpretive Themes Workshop	March 2000
Newsletter #1	August 2000
Briefing for Planners and Officials	July 2001
Newsletter #2	September 2001
Schuyler Estate Workshop	October 20001
Regional Visitor Center Feasibility Workshop	April 2002
Draft General Management Plan and Summary Newsletter	January – March 2004
Public Open House	January 2004
Abbreviated Final Environmental Impact Statement	August 2004
Record of Decision	September 2004

other elements it might contain. (The distinction between common objectives and objectives specific to one alternative was carried through until a proposal was chosen. In this condensed version, the distinction has been removed, and all objectives and their resulting actions are presented in the same form.)

After considering the relevant factors, the team determined that there were two main subject areas where visions for the park's future differed substantially: (1) visitor experience and (2) partnership opportunities. Public participants' visions of how visitors should move through the park and how they should be presented with information varied widely. Also, people had different views regarding the appropriate level of park participation in the numerous regional initiatives that are being undertaken in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk Valleys. The planning team used these two broad "decision points" as the basis for developing the following three alternative approaches to park management:

Alternative A

Focus on Current Management Objectives allowed for incremental action toward existing objectives with minimum change to the park's current management philosophy and physical conditions. This concept would have entailed no significant expansion of the park's participation in regional initiatives. Alternative A represented the so-called No-action Alternative required by the National Environmental Policy Act.



Public Open House, January 2004.

The planning team published and distributed a series of newsletters to generate public awareness of the project and to solicit feedback from interested citizens.

Alternative B

Focus on the Battles, Siege, and Surrender concentrated on improving visitor understanding of the events that led to the 1777 British surrender at Saratoga by providing a more complete and logical depiction of these events. It rehabilitated key landscape features to help the visitor understand conditions faced by the armed forces and how landscape conditions were used and manipulated to serve tactical needs. This concept also enabled park staff to work with regional partners in developing outreach initiatives.

Alternative C

Focus on the Park as Memorial Grounds presented the park as a memorial landscape that has been commemorated in numerous ways over generations, from the erection of monuments, to the establishment of state and federal parkland, to contemporary efforts to link important sites through regional heritage initiatives. This approach preserved and enhanced interpretation of key landscape features to help the visitor understand the military events of 1777 and the efforts to commemorate those events. Moreover, this alternative envisioned the park as an important gateway to the regional initiatives of the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

The three alternatives, as well as the interpretive themes for the park, were presented in the second newsletter, published in the autumn of 2001. This newsletter was distributed to over 1,000 people and was posted on the park's website.

In addition to publishing the newsletter, the planning team sought public input at three meetings with various stakeholder groups. In July 2001, the team presented the preliminary alternatives to area planners and to local and county officials. In October 2001, stakeholders provided input at a meeting that focused on treatment of the Schuyler Estate. A meeting in April 2002 addressed the feasibility of developing a regional visitor center in Old Saratoga. The State Historic Preservation Office was briefed on the content of the draft plan and was sent an advance draft. Throughout the process, the superintendent kept local, county, and state officials informed on the progress of the plan, and consulted with them on specific issues.

Input from these sources made it apparent that a new alternative, combining favored elements of the initial concepts, was desirable. In response, the planning team developed "Alternative D" as the Preferred Alternative, and it is presented in this document as the Plan.

Alternative D (now the Plan)

Focus on the Burgoyne Campaign builds on Alternative B and incorporates elements of Alternative C to represent what the National Park Service views as the best management direction for the park. As in Alternative B, this approach focuses on improving visitor understanding of the events that led to the 1777 British surrender by providing a more complete and logical depiction of these events. It also includes — secondary to the strategic factors — interpretation of the efforts to commemorate the military events and opportunities to reflect on their meaning. Additionally, this approach enables the park to expand its partnerships with other Burgoyne Campaign–related sites and regional entities in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.