

Millennium Grove, Chillicothe, Ohio
Saratoga Black Locust
Park Directory Tag: American History (AH13)

The black locust tree, *Robinia pseudoacacia*, is a medium-size hardwood deciduous tree belonging to the tribe Robinieae. It is endemic (usually found) to a few small areas of the United States but has been widely planted and naturalized around the world.

The tree was identified in 1607 at Jamestown by British Colonists, who used the timber to build houses. It was introduced into Britain in 1636. Through cultivation, the black locust is currently found in all 48 contiguous states.

Even though the black locust is native to North America, it is considered an invasive species in some areas. When the black locust invades an area, it will convert the grassland ecosystem into a forested ecosystem where the grasses are displaced. The black locust has been listed as invasive in Connecticut and Wisconsin and prohibited in Massachusetts.

This black locust in Millennium Grove comes from battlefield of Saratoga. The Battles of Saratoga, September 19 and October 7, 1777, marked the climax of the Saratoga campaign, giving a decisive victory to the Americans over the British in the American Revolutionary War.

During the Saratoga campaign, the British were led by General John Burgoyne. Burgoyne led a large invasion army southward from Canada into the Champlain Valley, hoping to meet with two other large British forces, one moving north from New York City and the other east from Lake Ontario. Neither force arrived, and Burgoyne was surrounded by American forces. He fought two battles that took place 18 days apart on the same ground 9 miles south of Saratoga, New York. They both failed.

The battle on September 19 began when Burgoyne moved some of his troops in an attempt to flank the entrenched American position on Bemis Heights. Bemis Heights had a clear view of the area and commanded the only road to Albany. Also, Bemis Heights and West Point were two of the state-of-the-art fortifications designed by famed Polish military engineer Tadeusz Kosciuszko.

American Major General Benedict Arnold anticipated the maneuver and placed significant forces in his way. Burgoyne did gain control of Freeman's Farm, but at a significant cost.

Also in the battle, Benedict Arnold, who's name is now synonymous with treason and betrayal, leg was injured forcing him out of action for two years. During those two years, Arnold felt others received credit for things he had accomplished and that's why he was passed over for promotion. This caused much bitterness in Arnold, and very possibly was a major factor for his treasonous plan to surrender Fort West Point to the British, but the plot was discovered in September 1780 whereupon Arnold fled to the British lines.

Burgoyne found himself trapped by superior American forces with no relief, so he retreated to Saratoga (now Schuylerville) and surrendered his entire army there on October 17. In both battles totaled, the Americans had 15,000 troops, with 90 being killed and 240 wounded.

Millennium Grove, Chillicothe, Ohio
Saratoga Black Locust
Park Directory Tag: American History (AH13)

Compared to the British who totaled 7,200 troops, with 440 killed, 695 wounded and 6,222 captured.

This was considered the great turning point of the war. This was the first major American victory, strengthening the American military strategic position and won enough confidence in the French, longtime British enemies, to give assistance to the Americans. French assistance would be a strong factor in determining the outcome of the war.

In response to Burgoyne's surrender, Congress declared December 18, 1777, as a national day "for solemn Thanksgiving and praise"; it was the nation's first official observance of a holiday with that name.

After the surrender, Burgoyne and his officers returned to England; the enlisted men became prisoners of war. In London Burgoyne came under sharp criticism and never held another active command. The other two British forces assigned to reinforce Burgoyne's forces for unknown reasons, changed plans and left Burgoyne's forces greatly outnumbered.

Burgoyne died in August of 1792 at the age of 69 or 70. February 4, 1722/1723, are both given as his date of birth. The reason for the discrepancy is that, before the reform of the English calendar in 1752, the year officially began on March 25. So, it is probably more accurate to use 1723 as his birth date since it is consistent with the new calendar which sets the beginning of the year in January rather than March. Therefore, Burgoyne was most likely 69 when he died.

Millennium Grove, Chillicothe, Ohio
Saratoga Black Locust
Park Directory Tag: American History (AH13)

