

Hubbardton Battlefield

Commemorative History

Hubbardton Battlefield is an example of early efforts to preserve and commemorate Revolutionary War battlefields. The commemoration of this site dates to the mid-1800s, fostered by a largely local grassroots effort that included veterans and eyewitnesses to the event. Although not the first battlefield monument erected to commemorate an American Revolutionary War event, the Hubbardton Monument is one of the earliest in the New England states. The battle site was first commemorated by a wooden pole erected in 1840. The current monument was erected in 1859 by the Hubbardton Battle Monument Association. This was followed by official state involvement in the acquisition, development, and management, of the site in the early twentieth century. This later phase of site preservation was a part of a larger national trend in which organizations, and states, sought to place monuments, and create battlefield parks (ca. 1900-1930s), that coincided with both the expansion of automobile-based cultural tourism, and the Colonial Revival period.

As the site of the most significant Revolutionary War battle in what would become Vermont, Hubbardton Battlefield became the site of events commemorating not only the battle, but also recognizing American Independence itself. On 4 July 1807, “the young people of Hubbardton and its vicinity” celebrated Independence Day “on the hill where was fought the memorable battle...between the troops of Gen. FRASER and Col. WARNER.” Prayers, and orations, were delivered in the presence of the “aged veteran, with hoary locks and furrows brow, who had seen the horrors of war, with variegated countenances, expressive of grief, indignation, and joy, at the recollection of scenes so horrid and events so glorious.”¹

With the passing of the Revolutionary War generation, recognition and acknowledgment of participation in the battle became a feature in obituaries. When Colonel John Chipman died “aged about 87,” the obituary stated he “was engaged in the battle of Hubbardton.”² When Heman Allen past away at the age of 73 in 1852, his obituary pointed out that his father Major Heber Allen (1743-1782), a brother of Ethan Allen, had fought at Hubbardton.³

For decades, locals remembered the spot where Colonel Francis fell, and this location was routinely pointed out to visitors. An unidentified minister from Plainfield, preaching on the Hubbardton battlefield decades after the war, noted he preached at “...the place where once was heard the din of war & where garments were rolled in blood.” He recorded in his journal that he stood “just by where Col. Frances [*sic*] of Beverly was shot.”⁴ When Jared Sparks made a tour of battlefields in New England in 1830, he recorded in his journal that at Hubbardton, “The spot where Francis fell is pointed out.”⁵ The colonel’s body is believed to be buried under, or at least near, the battlefield monument erected in 1859 on the 82nd anniversary of the battle. The Hubbardton Battle Monument Association “for the purpose of erecting and maintaining a suitable

¹ *Rutland Herald* 1 August 1807.

² *Vermont Gazette* 29 September 1829.

³ *Semi-Weekly Eagle* (Brattleboro, VT) 13 May 1852.

⁴ He also stopped “At Castleton [and] visited the spot where was a fort – its timbers are now visible in the fence of a garden! Fort Warren had been abandoned as early as 1779. Fragment of a journal kept by a minister in the Lake Champlain area, v.p., 1777?. Dartmouth College - Rauner Special Collections Library, Hanover, NH.

⁵ MS Sparks 141g, 96. Houghton Library, Harvard U. Cambridge, MA.

monument” was founded in 1856.⁶ The celebration in 1859 is said to have attracted “nearly five thousand people,” among them “Father [Amos] Churchill, a veteran of some ninety years” (1774-1865) and Benjamin Hickok (1765-1862).⁷ In 1875, a wrought iron fence was placed around the monument (Photographs 9 and 10).

The unveiling of the monument was followed by official state involvement in the acquisition, development, and management, of the site in the second quarter of the twentieth century. In 1937, the Vermont legislature created the Hubbardton Battlefield Commission, which acquired 43 acres of land. It was reported in the Burlington newspaper that the purchase of battlefield lands by the state was intended to serve as a “permanent memorial to Seth Warner, the “Green Mountain Boys,” and the continental [*sic*] troops who fought there....”⁸ Anticipating visitors, the road from Castleton to the battlefield was widened and improved at this time. In 1943, two easements were executed with bordering landholders to prohibit commercial development on portions of their land.

In the mid-1950s, the first museum building was erected on the battlefield, placed “at the highest point...” with views from its windows “...of the four significant and dramatic phases of the decisive engagement...”⁹ The museum also included an electric map and a battle diorama. This small stone structure (28 by 20 feet) was erected in time for the beginnings of the period of automobile tourism that linked historical, and natural, places throughout the United States. The museum building, although highly successful, was replaced in 1970 by a Visitor Center situated closer to Monument Hill Road. This building was dedicated by Governor Deane Davis in 1971.¹⁰

The Hubbardton Battlefield State Historic Site was initially listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.¹¹ As part of their ongoing stewardship of this cultural, and historical, resource, the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation (VDHP) completed a Cultural Resources Management Plan in 2000, and followed up on this planning report with an archeological survey in 2001.¹² A study of the battlefield was funded by the American Battlefield Protection Program

⁶ “An Act to incorporate the Hubbardton Battle Monument Association and to repeal a certain Act Therein Mentioned” is printed in *Acts and Resolves passed by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont at the October Session 1857* (Montpelier, 1857), 119-120. It repealed the act of 13 November 1856 which had been granted to residents of Castleton rather than Hubbardton.

⁷ On Amos Churchill see Gardner Asaph Churchill and Nathaniel Wiley Churchill, *The Churchill Family in America* (n.p. 1904), 386; Henry Clark, *An Historical Address delivered at Hubbardton, VT., on the Eighty-Second Anniversary of the Battle of Hubbardton, July 7, 1859.* (Rutland, 1859), 9/10. Amos Churchill’s remembrance of the battle and its commemoration can be found in Churchill, “A Sketch...” *Rutland County Herald* (Rutland, Vermont), December 29, 1854.

⁸ Anonymous, "Allen and Ellis on Hubbardton Battlefield Com.," *The Burlington Free Press* (Burlington), Thursday, April 29, 1937.

⁹ Anonymous, "Site for Hubbardton Battlefield Museum Building Selected by State," *The Burlington Free Press* (Burlington), Wednesday, 21 September, 1955.

¹⁰ Anonymous, "Reception Center at Hubbardton to be Dedicated," *The Burlington Free Press* (Burlington), Monday, June 29, 1970.

¹¹ William Pinney, Hubbardton Battlefield National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Entered in the National Register 11 March 1971. Form dated 1970.

¹²For the cultural resource management plan, see Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., *Hubbardton Battlefield State Historic Site Cultural Resource Management Plan: Town of Hubbardton, Rutland County, Vermont* (The Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, 2001). The archeological survey, including metal detection, was reported in Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc., *Phase IB Archaeological Survey Hubbardton Battlefield State Historic Site, Town of Hubbardton, Rutland County, Vermont* (The Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, 2002).

in 2010, which built on these previous studies. That document compiled historic first-person accounts, conducted a military terrain analysis (KOCOA analysis) of the battlefield and the Gerlach map (Figure 2), summarized the previous archeological studies of the battlefield, and offered recommendations for interpretation, and documentation.¹³ In 2016, VDHP received a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program to revise and update the original nomination, reflecting the recent historical scholarship and current understanding of sites of conflict.

The Hubbardton Battlefield National Register nomination was updated for a boundary increase/decrease and with additional documentation, which was accepted by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places on October 10, 2018.

The study of historical battlefields requires a unique combination of military history, archeology, and terrain or landscape analysis.¹⁴ Not only is it important to know the who, what, where, when, and how, of the specifics of the battle, but knowledge of the historical development of the place the battle occurred is critical in order to understand the event, and the subsequent changes, that may have taken place. The Hubbardton Battlefield nomination, as amended, successfully combines the elements of military history, archeology, and terrain analysis. Due to minimal modern changes to the landscape since 1777, the battlefield conveys what occurred on this site over two centuries ago. The battlefield also has the potential to contain additional archeological evidence that can contribute to the interpretation of the battle.

¹³ Kenny and Crock, *Hubbardton*.

¹⁴ Glen Foard, *Battlefield Archaeology of the English Civil War*, Oxford, UK, 2012; Foard and Richard Morris, *The Archaeology of English Battlefields: Conflicts in the Pre-Industrial Landscape*, York, UK, 2012.