The Saratoga Campaign of 1777 was a British effort to gain control of the Hudson River Valley. This region was hotly contested because whoever controlled it would control the flow of people, supplies, and information between New England, Canada, and the Mid-Atlantic. By October 7, British and Revolutionary forces had engaged in a number of battles and were both fortified in Saratoga, north of Albany.

In this scene, we are inside the fortification known as Breymann's Redoubt, named after Heinrich Breymann, the commander of the soldiers there. Though from Brunswick, Breymann and his soldiers were often known – along with other German allies of the British – as Hessian. They wear blue coats with white facings and the tall, brass-fronted caps that marked them as elite soldiers called grenadiers. Most of them are fleeing towards us, and a soldier in a yellow coat with a brass drum has fallen to the ground in the center of the scene. They are running from American soldiers in fringed hunting shirts and other uniforms who have just stormed into the redoubt. At the head of this attack, Benedict Arnold (still on the Revolutionary side at this point) leads from atop a horse. A platoon of Brunswick soldiers to the right has just fired the volley that will kill Arnold's horse and wound him in the left leg.

This pivotal moment was the climax of the Battle of Bemis Heights, or the Second Battle of Saratoga. The British and German forces, with their defenses broken and no sign of reinforcements, were forced to surrender ten days later. This was an important Revolutionary victory, made all the more significant because it convinced the French to sign a formal alliance supporting the cause of the United States of America.