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 GEO 478/678 Spatial Storytelling  
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## Map One Reflection

The goal of this map, my first submission to GEO 478/678 Spatial Storytelling, is designed to show where Gen. Benidict Arnold’s ten major battles as a soldier fighting first for the independence of the American colonies and then for the British Empire during the American Revolutionary War occurred. It also shows the continental scope of the revolutionary conflict, the shape and location of the rebelling thirteen colonies, and serves as a foundation for future maps that will allow me to add detail to Arnold battle locations; monuments; today’s cities, towns, roads, and national parks; populations; and messaging related to how Arnold has become to be seen in 2024 as an American anti-hero.

### Documentation of the Mapping Process

Battle Name	Lat.	Long.	Representation
Capture of Fort Ticonderoga	43.838164	-73.386164	Colonial
Battle of Quebec	46.809056	-71.201383	Colonial
Battle of the Cedars	35.8473	-86.4016	Colonial
Battle of Valcour Island	44.606306	-73.417497	Colonial
Battle of Ridgefield	41.303167	-73.500831	Colonial
Siege of Fort Stanwix	43.206333	-75.453147	Colonial
Battles of Saratoga	42.992664	-73.635831	Colonial
Raid on Richmond	37.6848	-84.2594	British
Battle of Blandford	37.234381	-77.3939	British
Battle of Groton Heights	41.353997	-72.075833	British

The  
 latitudinal and  
 longitudinal data I  
 used to place  
 Arnold’s battles on  
 the above map was  
 drawn from The

Historical Marker Database.<sup>1</sup> (See the following chart.) The database is a catalog of public

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.hmdb.org/>.

history monuments cast in metal, carved on stone, or embedded in resin. The website is a searchable online catalog of historical information viewed through the filter of permanent outdoor markers, monuments, and plaques. It also contains photographs, inscription transcriptions, marker locations, maps, and commentary.

I began this mapping project in Felt. My first step was to select a basemap, I chose a current map of the United States, which I hope is very relatable for the viewer. My second step was to add in points georeferencing Arnold's battles. Third, I chose a map of colonial America from edmaps.com and removed all the information but the thirteen colonies in GIMP so the viewer can connect today's political geography with the colonial political geography.<sup>2</sup> And finally, I overlaid each map to create the work shown on page one of this submission.

### Engagement with Core Storytelling Concepts

With *Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative: Where Narrative Theory and Geography Meet* by Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu and "Cartography I: Mapping narrative cartography" by Caquard in mind, I was able to create a map that:

- Establishes the relationship between Arnold, battle sites, and the colonial geography,
- Starts an exploration of an overarching analytical framework,
- Introduces concepts to evolve into far richer and creative maps that will, hopefully, yield more reduced power mapping opportunities, and
- Begins to explore narratives related to place, power dynamics, and secondary players connected to the Arnold story.

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<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.edmaps.com/html/thirteen\\_colonies\\_1763.html/](https://www.edmaps.com/html/thirteen_colonies_1763.html/).

### Evaluation of the Mapping Technique

The map on page one was generally successful because it introduces Arnold, his battle locations, and the American colonial geography; but it has its problems. The vast majority of the issues I have with the map are technical. First, because of the multiple platforms and the fact that this was the first time I used them, I was unable to effectively import a transparent layer of the thirteen colonies. As the viewer can see, the completed map is very blue which obscures the typography. Second, I wanted the battle points to look more like heat maps because battles do not take place at, nor do they impact, just one location. Third, I had no room to add the battle location names, so I plan to add that to the next map. Fourth, I failed to strike an effective balance between detail, scope, and effective symbology. (Simply put, the map looks cramped and washed out. I hope to correct these issues with the next mapping opportunity.) And finally, I am not sure it can become the effective canvas I want it to be.

### Power and Position

I am cognizant that this project has presented me with technical challenges, but the subject matter might also become difficult to transition away from traditional power structures and eliminate – or at least reduce – my position in the mapping and storytelling process. By this I mean that the basis of the map is raw power. It is Benedict Arnold as a military leader exercising military power over a space against the British Empire who in turn is either resisting or doing the same. This is literally a map that is based on the application of power and I am not yet clear how I can avoid this component of the Arnold story.

Additionally as a white, male, historian; I recognize that my approach might be inherently flawed because the majority of my sources cast Arnold through the methodological lens of “the great man.” I do not want to be a traditional cartographer in this class, but Arnold as the subject might make avoiding this “trap” difficult. I am not sure how I can create maps and their corresponding geographies unrelated to Arnold’s battles. It could also be insurmountable to add in secondary voices and non-military figures – especially enslaved, indigenous, and female figures – into future maps because they in many respects were never part of Arnold’s military campaigns.

Yes, this is the first map that I have created, which is why I am hopeful that many of these concepts will be fleshed out during the remainder of the semester as the class and I learn more mapping techniques. My hope is that I can break my engrained, traditional approaches to history by learning new tools that will make me less present in my maps while highlighting marginalized voices and eliminating the traditional power structures enveloping Arnold and the sources I may be drawing from.