

# Mount Independence State Historic Site

## Trails and Self-Guided Tour

Six miles of walking and hiking trails guide you past the archaeological remains of the general hospital, batteries, blockhouses, barracks, and soldiers' huts, and offer scenic views of Lake Champlain. Locations are marked on the trail map. The **Baldwin**, **Orange**, and **Blue** Trails start at the trailhead kiosk near the museum.

### Before you go

Tickets are required for the trails and grounds. Purchase your trail ticket and obtain a trail map in the museum. We also offer bottled water in the museum shop.

Trails are varying distances and difficulties. Please watch for the color-coded markers to stay on the trails. Wheelchairs and strollers are permitted, but bicycles, horses, snowmobiles and ATVs are not allowed. Dogs are welcome, as long as they are leashed.

Please help keep Mount Independence one of America's least-disturbed Revolutionary War sites. Digging, collecting materials, and use of metal detectors are not permitted.

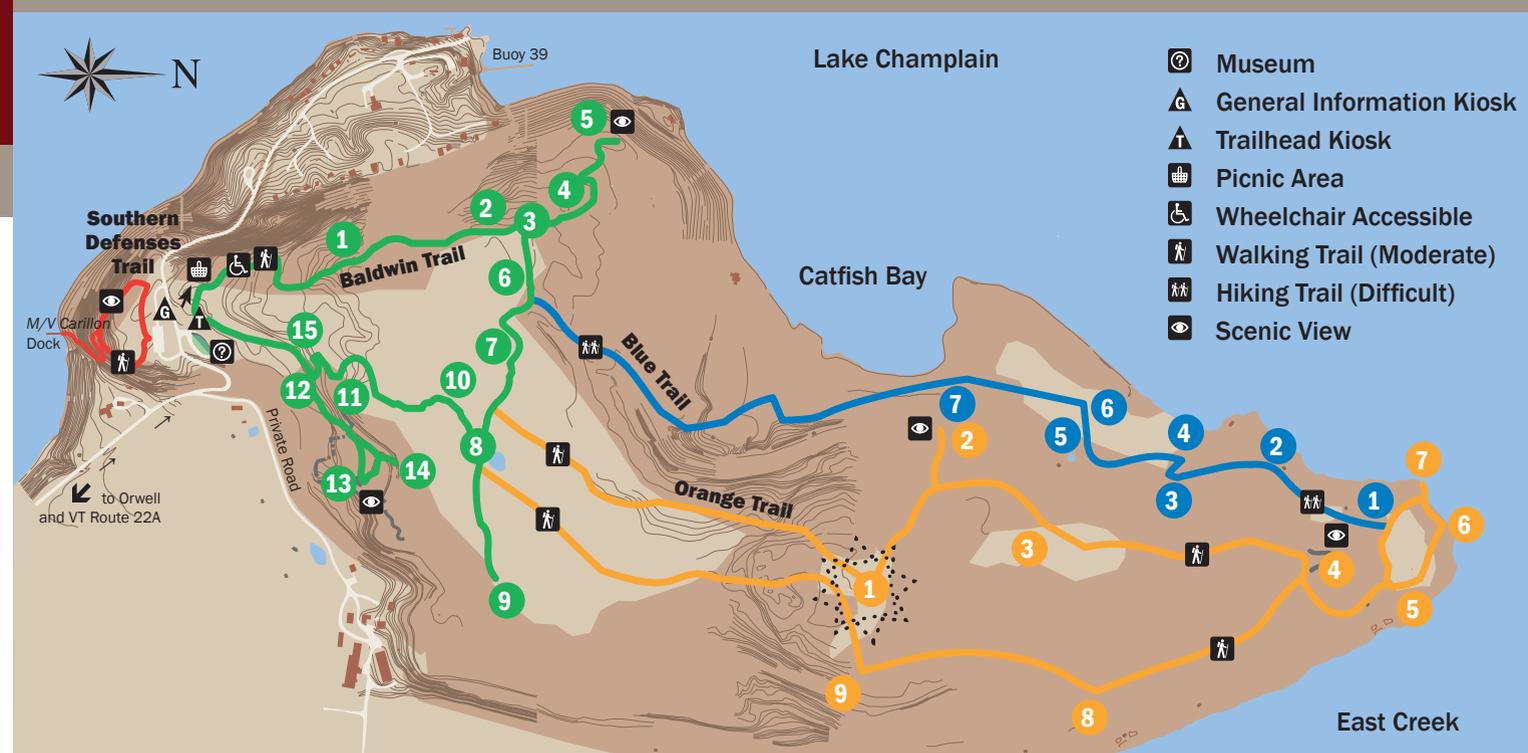
### Baldwin Trail (MODERATE, 1.6 MILES)

The Baldwin Trail, which has two spur trails, goes around the southern half of Mount Independence, with views of Lake Champlain, Fort Ticonderoga, and Mount Defiance. It meets the Standards for Outdoor Handicapped-Accessible Trails, with compacted surfaces and gentle grades, and is suitable for outdoor wheelchairs and strollers.

The trail meanders through the locations of two brigade encampments and past the foundations of the General Hospital (6), two soldier huts (4, 15), two blockhouses (9, 11), a storehouse (10), the southern battery defenses (13), and a probable powder magazine (14). Interpretive signage offers more detail about each of the sites.

### Southern Defenses Trail (MODERATE, 0.2 MILES)

This loop trail begins near the parking lot and has compacted surfaces, stairs, and stone steps. It goes past the remains of a blockhouse, and provides a look at rugged rock formations and southern Lake Champlain. A short spur trail leads to the dock for the *M/V Carillon* tour boat.



### Orange Trail (MODERATE, 2.5 MILES)

OFF BALDWIN TRAIL, NEAR MARKER 8

**1 STAR FORT BARRACKS:** This clearing marks the barracks square within the star fort, the central stronghold on Mount Independence at its highest point. Logs placed years ago outline the star stockade. The well in the northwest corner may date from the war.

**2 CRANE:** This foundation, roughly 30 feet square, was the base for a gigantic crane that lifted cannons, heavy equipment, and supplies from the lower lakeshore and meadow 200 feet below. Vessels anchored in Catfish (or South) Bay. Loads were carried to a ramp, from which they were hoisted to the top. Turn back and follow the orange markers.

**3 ARTIFICERS SHOPS:** This area was the location of shops for blacksmiths, armorers, rope makers, wheelwrights, turners, shingle makers, and other artificers.

**4 HORSESHOE BATTERY (CITADEL):** The horseshoe-shaped earthen walls or parapet protected a platform with five cannons commanding the lake to the north and narrows between Fort Ticonderoga and Mount Independence. It covered the shore cannon battery below. The 1963 Society of the Colonial Dames stone memorial

denotes the site of the Revolutionary War flagpole. Turn back a short distance to go down the trail to sites 5, 6, and 7 or take the eastern leg of the trail back to the **Baldwin Trail**.

**5 SHORE BATTERY:** Remains of an earthen parapet to the left and right are from an extensive battery with twenty cannons that guarded the north shore. This was the first line of defense at Mount Independence.

**6 BRIDGE SITE:** The slope of the old road can be seen heading down to the take-off point of the over 350-foot-long bridge that connected Mount Independence and Fort Ticonderoga. The 12-foot-wide deck was anchored to 22 sunken caissons built on and through the ice starting in March 1777. The trail continues up the old road at the left.

**7 MASTING POINT:** Some have thought this rock outcropping was used in 1776 for stepping (raising) the masts for the boats of Benedict Arnold's fleet. In the 1750s, the French made wood-gathering and perhaps stone-quarrying forays for Fort Carillon, later named Fort Ticonderoga by the British.

**8 OBSERVATION SHELTER:** This well-preserved "L"-shaped foundation may be the remains of a lookout hut or shelter. A tree and brush abatis or defense rimmed the height of land overlooking East Creek and north to Lake Champlain.

**9 FOUNDATION:** This rectangular foundation may have been for a blockhouse overlooking East Creek. It is about 200 feet east of the star fort stockade wall. Below is a large outcropping of black chert stone, used by Native Americans to make tools and weapons, and by Revolutionary soldiers for gun flints.

### Blue Trail (DIFFICULT, 2.2 MILES)

OFF BALDWIN TRAIL OR NEAR NORTH END OF ORANGE TRAIL

This trail roughly follows a Revolutionary War-era supply road between the Hospital (#6, **Baldwin Trail**) and the bridge (#6, **Orange Trail**).

**1 FORGE AREA:** Large amounts of charred debris and slag suggest this was the location of a forge for working iron for small arms and tool repairs.

**2 SUPPLY ROAD:** On this rocky incline is some original stonework for the American supply road leading into the defense.

**3 QUARRY:** The quarry site may date from the 1750s when the French occupied and controlled the Champlain Valley. The British ousted the French in 1759 during the French and Indian War. Perhaps stone quarried here was hauled over ice across the lake to build the French Fort Carillon.

**4 FOUNDATION:** Over time the bank has eroded, causing part of this rectangular foundation to slide toward the shoreline.

**5 SPRING:** The papers documenting Gen. Arthur St. Clair's 1778 court martial refer to a water source "on the west side of Mount Independence, on the low ground, near the lake; it was very steep and about one half a mile distant from the fort." This would have been the major water source for the fort. The large flat stone slabs may be steps leading down to the spring.

**6 GARDENS:** This large open meadow is where the American brigades maintained vegetable gardens. The long, narrow east-west depressions across the meadow from the cliff base to the lake are remains of drainage ditches for the gardens.

**7 CRANE RAMP:** About 75 feet away from here, at the base of the cliff, are remains of the ramp from which supplies brought in by boat were hoisted by crane to the top (see #2, **Orange Trail**).

# Mount Independence State Historic Site

One of the nation's most significant  
Revolutionary War sites

On July 7, 1776, at an American Council of War at Crown Point, New York, generals discussed the threat of British invasion from Canada. They planned to concentrate American forces on "the strong ground on the east side of the Lake, opposite to Ticonderoga." This rugged promontory in present-day Vermont jutted north into Lake Champlain, opposite of the old French fort at Ticonderoga, and would provide defense against the enemy coming down from British-controlled Canada.

The Americans immediately began construction of a new defense at that location that would protect New England and points south. After a reading of the newly adopted Declaration of Independence to the troops on July 28, the defense was christened Mount Independence.



## An impressive sight

Lt. Col. Jeduthan Baldwin of Massachusetts, chief engineer of the American Northern Army, with assistance from Thaddeus Kosciusko, designed Mount Independence's sophisticated three-tier defensive system. By late October 1776, three brigades had completed encampments, the large shore battery and horseshoe-shaped battery, and began a picket fort in the center of the Mount. The sight of Mount Independence, Fort Ticonderoga, and 12,000 assembled troops proved so impressive that British General Guy Carleton and his fleet abandoned an attempted invasion, retreating to Canada for the winter.

## British return and strategic withdrawal

Many American troops went home in the winter of 1776-1777, reducing forces to 2,500. Fresh soldiers arrived in the spring of 1777, but there were not enough men to complete construction and garrison the forts.



In early July, British Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne's forces threatened the area. During the early hours of July 5-6, the Americans withdrew from Mount Independence and Fort Ticonderoga, with the British close behind. At Hubbardton on July 7, an American rear guard checked the British and their German allies in a hard-fought battle. The American main force was saved, and moved on to defeat Burgoyne later that year at the critical Battles of Bennington and Saratoga.

## Site preservation and restoration

After the Revolutionary War, the site fell into disrepair. The Vermont legislature approved the sale of cast-iron war-related artifacts for reuse, and by the early 1900s, the land making up the former defense had been transformed through farming and overgrowth.

In 1911, Stephen Pell of Fort Ticonderoga purchased the northern 113 acres of Mount Independence to preserve the views from across the lake as well as this historically significant site. In 1961, the State of Vermont began buying parcels of the southern section of Mount Independence.

Today, Mount Independence is jointly owned and managed by the State of Vermont's Division for Historic Preservation and the Fort Ticonderoga Association. Exhibits combine artifacts discovered in archaeological investigations with state-of-the-art technology to tell the story of this significant Revolutionary War fortification. Special activities include the annual "Soldiers Atop the Mount" living history weekend, school programs, lectures, concerts, guided walks, and other history and nature programs.



## Hours

Open late May through Columbus Day, daily, 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM, (802) 948-2000. Off-season call (802) 759-2412.

## How to get there

The site is located six miles west of the intersections of VT Routes 22A and 73 near Orwell village. At the intersection, take Route 73 west for a very short distance, then go straight onto Mount Independence Road. Follow this road, which eventually turns to dirt, for six miles. The museum will be on your right. The parking lot entrance is on the left, across from the museum.



## Explore the site from Lake Champlain

A privately operated cruise boat, the *M/V Carillon*, offers narrated 1-½ hour tours focusing on the geographic and military significance of Mount Independence and southern Lake Champlain. The boat operates from Larrabee's Point in Shoreham, Vermont, and may dock at Mount Independence. For information, call 802-897-5331.

## Other Sites to Visit

To learn more about the Revolutionary War in the region, visit:

### Hubbardton Battlefield State Historic Site

Hubbardton, VT (802) 273-2282

### Bennington Battle Monument

Bennington, VT (802) 447-0550

### Old Constitution House

Windsor, VT (802) 672-3773

### Fort Ticonderoga, Ticonderoga, NY (518) 585-2821

### Saratoga National Historical Park

Stillwater, NY (518) 664-9821



# Mount Independence

STATE HISTORIC SITE

Orwell, Vermont

