

The Royalton Raid, 1780

On this day in history, October 16, 1780, the Royalton Raid is one of the last Indian attacks in New England during the American Revolution. **The Royalton Raid was an attack of 270 Mohawk and Abenaki Indians led by British officers on several small villages in what is now central Vermont. This is the region that produced the Green Mountain Boys and patriot leaders such as Ethan Allen and Seth Warner.**

In the fall of 1780, a campaign launched from British Quebec conducted simultaneous raids along Vermont's White River, the Mohawk River valley in New York and on the shores of Lake Champlain and Lake George. The White River attack was led by Lieutenant Richard Houghton and six other British soldiers. The campaign was intended to terrorize the inhabitants of New York, Vermont and New Hampshire to prevent them from organizing and launching any further raids against Canada.

On the morning of October 16, the large force of Indians attacked the small town of Royalton, which was then a village of about 25 homes on both sides of the river. The Indians went from house to house capturing as many residents as they could and killing anyone who resisted. Most of the town's residents were captured, while a few escaped or hid. As the Indians left town, they burned the buildings and destroyed any crops and livestock they found. The attack continued up and down the river for several miles, with the settlements of Sharon and Tunbridge suffering the same fate.

That night, a large party of 300 militia located the Indians, having gathered after survivors got away and warned nearby towns. The militia began attacking, but were warned that all the captives would be killed if the attack did not stop. The attackers reluctantly pulled back to spare the captives and let the raiders go.

One hero to rise out of the Royalton Raid was Hannah Hendee. Hendee escaped capture, but her young son and other children were

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taken captive by the raiding party. She was outraged that British officers would capture children and use them as pawns in war. She crossed the river and followed the raiding party until she found them. She accosted Lt. Houghton for taking children and demanded that they be returned. Houghton complied and returned Hendee's son, as well as several other children.

Four settlers were killed in the Royalton Raid and 26 were taken captive. They were marched to Canada and sold to the British where some spent as long as two years in dismal prisons. **Just as the Revolution came to an end, one of the captives taken in the raid, Zadock Steele, helped stage a prison break from the notorious Prison Island in the St. Lawrence River. Steele traipsed across the wilderness for three weeks, nearly starved, before he came to an American settlement. Unbeknownst to him, the war had already ended and all the remaining prisoners had been released.**