



#2 1998

A Chronology Of The Revolutionary War

with emphasis on Bedford County, Pennsylvania's role

Continued

1776: The Chapter Closes On Canada

The outcomes of battles and campaigns, and the achievements of victory or defeat, are most often decided by overt actions. The taking of a prominent landmark or the routing of the enemy's lines tends to define victory or defeat. The immediate outcome of a battle might be labeled a victory by those viewing it, but subsequent activities might present a different viewpoint. The Canadian victory at Quebec was one of those battles; it was not so clearly defined as a "victory" in light of the events that followed it.

The machinery of war is often a difficult thing to get into motion, but once it is in motion it becomes more difficult to halt. British reinforcements continued to make their way to Quebec following the Patriot defeat on New Year's day. General Sir Guy Carleton's army would swell to between 11,000 and 13,000 by the end of the summer.

The Patriot army did not immediately leave the region after being repulsed at Quebec. Upon the death of General Montgomery, his position was officially filled by Major General David Wooster, but Arnold continued to issue orders from his hospital bed. Wooster, the veteran of the French and Indian War, was not one of Arnold's favorite compatriots; he had attempted to prevent Arnold from leading his

Foot Guard to Cambridge following the battles of Lexington and Concord. Wooster, described by a contemporary as "the old pettifogger from New Haven," boasted that he would take Quebec where Montgomery and Arnold had failed.

Arnold detested such boasts and resolved not to share a command with him. In fact, Wooster had no intention of sharing a command with Arnold; he pointedly refused to even share his plans for a renewed attack on Quebec with Arnold. Whether it was fate or mere chance, Arnold found a way out to leave Quebec. Wooster did not arrive in the American camp until 02 April, but shortly thereafter Arnold's horse fell on him and aggravated the earlier wound. He received permission to return to Montreal.

General Wooster erected batteries on the Heights of Abraham and on Pointe Levis and proceeded to bombard the city. His efforts were of little consequence. The fire returned by Carleton's artillery inflicted much greater damage on the American camp. By the end of April Wooster had used up most of his ammunition supplies. In the meantime, the British made forays into the American camp and caused havoc. Dr. Isaac Senter, wrote in his journal that:

"We were, however, alarmed often by their coming out into the fuburbs,

pillaging after fire-wood, etc. They took down any building they could come at for that purpose. This occasioned the Colonel (Arnold) to give orders to our troops to burn and destroy as many houses as they would be likely to obtain, in order to distress them, in hopes they would be obliged to capitulate for want of fire-wood, etc. We, however, came short in our expectations to reduce them in this way, notwithstanding every house was burnt in the city suburbs where our troops could come nigh enough."

On the 29th of April, 1776 a commission made up of Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Chase and Charles and John Carroll arrived at the American camp outside Quebec. They had come to Canada with the express purpose of making another effort to convince the Canadians to join the Patriot cause against Great Britain. What they returned with was a report on the deplorable conditions at the camp. Their reports to Congress resulted in Wooster being replaced, on 01 May, by General John Thomas.

General Thomas inspected the situation as soon as he arrived and concluded that the siege should be ended. News was received on the 2nd of May of the eminent arrival of fifteen ships carrying British General John Burgoyne along

with reinforcements consisting of one English regiment, seven Irish regiments and 4,300 Germans. On the 5th of May General Thomas directed the American army to withdraw from their positions. On the 6th, the Patriots received word that the British fleet had arrived at Quebec. The news put a scare into the Americans, turning what Thomas hoped would be an orderly withdrawal into a rout. When Carleton received notice of the American withdrawal, he sent out a force of 900 men and four cannon. Thomas attempted to form his men into an opposing line, but they panicked and fled, leaving nearly two hundred of their sick compatriots along with muskets and artillery. According to Dr. Isaac Senter:

"...we were alarmed by the discharge of cannon down the river. These were immediately answered from the city, and at half an hour by four, four ships arrived in the harbour. Immediately upon landing their marines, foldiers, etc., they rushed out in parties, the one for Head Quarters upon the Plains of Abraham, and the other for Hospital General.

The army was in such a scattered condition as rendered it impossible to collect them either for a regular retreat or to bring them into action. In this dilemma, orders were given to as many of the troops to retreat as the time would permit; and in the most irregular, helter skelter manner we raised the siege, leaving every thing: all the camp equipment, ammunition, and even our clothing, except what little we happened to have on us."

The Americans pushed upriver a distance of about fifty miles and neared the British fortification at Trois Rivieres. The British harassed them for a while, but eventually General Carleton returned to Quebec to wait for the remainder of Burgoyne's troops to disembark. During

the American withdrawal from the environs of Quebec, General Thomas died from smallpox and the command was taken up once more by Colonel Benedict Arnold. Dr. Senter continued to make notes in his journal, describing the American withdrawal to Sorel:

"They...kept in chase of us up the river, both by land and water, and in the most disorderly manner we were obliged to escape as we could... The most of our sick fell into their hands, with all hospital stores, etc. The first stand we endeavored to make was at Point De Shombo, 45 miles from Quebec. But not being able to collect provisions sufficient, were obliged to abandon it and proceed up along (the river). The poor inhabitants, seeing we were abandoning their country, were in the utmost dilemma, expecting as many as had been aiding us... to be sacrificed to the barbarity of those whose severity they had long felt."

"The small-pox still rife... I was ordered by Gen. Thomas... to repair to Montreal and erect an hospital for their reception - as well by the natural way as inoculation... About this time an action happened up above Montreal, at the Cedars... between (an American party led by) Major Sherburne... and a number

of favages with one company of regular troops. Sherburne and the chief of his party were taken, fome few killed, etc."

"Fortune and the country feemed jointly againft us... Our propect was... gloomy."

The command of the garrison at Montreal was taken up by Colonel Moses Hazen while Arnold traveled northward to join Thomas' troops. Reports of British activity to the west induced to lead a force of four hundred men to defend The Cedars, a post about thirty miles west of Montreal. On 15 May, Hazen received word that a British force of well over six hundred men (nearly five hundred of which were Indians) under Captain Forster was headed toward The Cedars. Leaving Major Isaac Butterfield in charge of the garrison at The Cedars, Hazen returned to Montreal for reinforcements. He directed Major Henry Sherburne's unit toward The Cedars, but he was too late. On the 16th Forster's redcoats confronted the smaller Patriot garrison and Major Butterfield surrendered without a fight. Four days later, Sherburne's column was ambushed a few miles from The Cedars and forced to surrender. A week later, on the 26th of May, as Arnold and his men approached from the east, he was met by Major Sherburne, who had been sent by Forster. Sherburne warned Arnold that the British commander was threatening to hand the American prisoners over to the Indians should Arnold attempt an attack. To Arnold's credit, he managed to reach a peaceful agreement with Forster to exchange prisoners.

The Congress, upon learning of General John Thomas' withdrawal from Quebec, appointed Brigadier General John Sullivan to command the Americans. Assuming that he would be able to launch an attack on Quebec and succeed where Montgomery, Arnold, Wooster and Thomas had failed, Sullivan brought nearly 3,300 Continental Line troops with him from Albany. He joined forces with four regiments sent by General Washington under the command of Brigadier General William Thompson. Thompson's regimental commanders were Anthony Wayne, William Irvine, Arthur St. Clair and William

Maxwell.

Sullivan was impetuous and spoiling for a fight from the very beginning. He decided to establish a base at Sorel, on the American side of the St. Lawrence River midway between Quebec and Montreal, from which he could maneuver and yet hold upper Canada. One of the first things Sullivan did upon his arrival was to launch an attack on the British garrison holding Trois Rivieres. The attack, on the 8th of June, was a fiasco.

Sullivan began what was intended to be a surprise attack at 3:00am. The local guide turned on the Patriots and led them down the wrong road. When they discovered that they had been tricked they attempted to backtrack, but to save time they left the public roads and started cross country. They soon found themselves stuck in a swamp. They reached dry ground about daybreak, and were seen and fired upon by British vessels in the river. In their effort to take cover within the bordering woods, they found themselves falling into another swamp. At that point the group fanned out in all directions and became separated. At some time after 8:00am Anthony Wayne and about two hundred men met up with a group of redcoats, but the Americans were successful in the skirmish that ensued. William Thompson, in control of the main body of the Patriots, was stopped by a line of entrenchments that the British under General Burgoyne had quickly established. Thompson did not hesitate to launch an attack on the British lines, but the Patriots were forced to retreat under heavy fire. That retreat was cut off by British troops who had encircled the Americans, and the Patriots fled through the woods toward Sorel. Carleton did not want to take the Americans as prisoners and so they were allowed to escape. He commented to one of his officers at the time:

"What would you do with them" Have you fpare provifions for them" Or would you fend them to Quebec to ftarve? No, let the poor creatures go home and carry with them a tale which will ferve his majefty more effectually than their capture."

They continued for about two days, reaching the bridge at Riviere du Loup, over which the British let them pass. Despite his wishes, 236 Americans surrendered to Carleton rather than

continue on in flight. Nearly four hundred Americans lay dead in the confused fighting at Trois Rivieres, compared to only about a dozen British.

Benedict Arnold wrote to Sullivan from Montreal, urging him to quit Canada and take the American troops back to the United Colonies. Sensing the futility of his situation, Sullivan agreed with Arnold's counsel and the American army mobilized to head toward Crown Point. Arnold's three hundred men evacuated Montreal on 09 June just in time to avoid a confrontation with British troops. The last Patriot to leave

the mainland of Canada was Benedict Arnold. He watched as the last of the enlisted men got into the canoes and were safely heading toward the American side. He got off his horse, drew his pistol and shot the horse dead. Then he removed the saddle and bridle, loaded it into his own canoe and shoved off. Captain James Wilkinson, Arnold's aide-de-camp made note of Arnold's actions.

"After the laft boat but Arnold's had put off, at his inftance we mounted our horfes and proceeded two miles down the direct road to Chambly, where we met the advance guard of the Britifh divifion under Lieutenant-General Burgoyne. We reconnoitred it a few minutes, then galloped back to St. John's; and ftripping our horfes, Arnold fhoot his own (to keep it out of the enemy's hands) and ordered me to follow his example, which I did with reluctance.

The fun was now down, and the enemy's front in view, and we took and affectionate leave of Colonel Louis, the faithful chief of the Cachnawaga tribe, and the only Canadian (resident) who accompanied the army in its retreat from Canada. He caft a forrowful look at our boat and retired precipitately into the adjacent foreft... General Arnold then ordered all hands on board, and refifting my proffers of fervice, pushed off the boat with his own hands, and thus indulged the vanity of being the laft man who embarked from the fhores of the enemy. We followed the army twelve miles to the Ifle aux Noix, where we arrived after dark."

Sullivan's 2,500 man army evacuated Sorel on the 14th only an hour before a British fleet arrived at that place. Skirmishes flared along the way as the retreating American armies were badgered by the British. Sullivan's troops rendezvoused with Arnold's Montreal garrison on 17 June near St. John's on the Richelieu River. From there the Patriot army continued southward via Lake Champlain to Crown Point. A bivouac was established at Crown Point while the army caught its breath. The last of the Americans arrived by boat at the fort at Crown Point on the 7th of July.

The bivouac at Crown Point saw a continuance of hard times for the Patriot army: prevalence of diseases including malaria and smallpox, inadequate shelter and lack of the necessities of clothing and food. John Adams sent a letter to the delegates assembled in Congress in which he noted the miserable conditions of the army at

Crown Point. Rather than take measures to provide for the troops, the response of the Congress was to lay the blame on Sullivan.

The Congress had received news of the disaster at Trois Rivieres on 17 June, 1776 and they responded to it with the suggestion to General Washington to appoint Major General Horatio Gates to command the American army in Canada. That suggestion might have come as a surprise to General Washington because he had received a letter from Sullivan dated the 5th and 6th of June, in which Sullivan led him to believe that things were going well in Canada. General Washington wrote back to Sullivan on the 16th of June, in which he stated that he was "exceedingly happy on Account of the agreeable and interefting Intelligence it contains. Before it came to Hand, I almoft dreaded to hear from Canada..." In a letter to the president of the Congress, Washington wrote:

"The Inclofed came to my hands, as a private Letter from General Sullivan. The tendency (for it requires no explanation) will account for the contraft between it and the Letter of Genl. Arnold.

That the former is aiming at the Command in Canada, is obvious. Whether he merits it or not, is a matter to be considered; and that it may be confidered with propriety I think it my duty to obferve, as of my own knowledge, that he is active, fpirited, and Zealously attach'd to the Caufe...Congress will be pleafed therefore to determine upon the propriety of continuing him in Canada, or fending another, as they fhall fee fit."

It is hard to tell what John Sullivan's motive was for writing to General Washington and leading him into believing that the American army was winning the fight in Canada. Perhaps it was an attempt to place a question in the commander-in-chief's mind about the integrity of the other officers at Canada, notably Arnold. Perhaps Sullivan simply feared the consequences of having failed. He might have been aware of Washington's response to the surrender of Major Butterfield at The Cedars. A letter, dated 13 June, had been sent by Washington to

General Philip Schuyler in which he directed Schuyler to take proper measures to bring Butterfield and others to trial to be punished for *"their base and cowardly behavior."* Irregardless of the motive, and in spite of Sullivan's deception on Washington, and even before they received Adams' letter on the Crown Point camp's conditions, the Congress had set Sullivan's replacement in motion.

General Washington sent a letter to Major General Horatio Gates dated 24 June, 1776 in which he stated:

"Sir: The Honourable the Continental Congress, reposing the greatest Confidence in your Wisdom, and Experience, have directed me to appoint you, to the very important Command of the Troops of the United Colonies in Canada"

General Gates was directed to consult with General Philip Schuyler, when he reached Albany, in regard to *"such Advice and information respecting the Operations of the Campaign as may be useful and necessary."* Accompanied by General Schuyler, Gates arrived at Crown Point on July 6, 1776 to take command.

The 6th Pennsylvania Regiment of the Continental Line was left to hold Crown Point and the rest of the troops headed to Fort Ticonderoga at the southern edge of Lake Champlain.

The British, in the meantime, established their camp at St. Johns. There they began to construct a fleet of ships for the purpose of assailing Ticonderoga. The ship, *Inflexible*, was dismantled on the St. Lawrence and carried overland to be reassembled on the lake. The *Inflexible* carried a compliment of eighteen guns. Two schooners, carrying twelve and fourteen guns respectively, a gondola carrying seven guns, twenty smaller gunboats and a radeau, a large raft to carry upwards of three hundred men along with heavy, 24-pounder guns, and twenty-eight longboats carrying field pieces and supplies rounded out Carleton's fleet.

The Americans possessed only four small ships carrying a total of thirty-six guns between them. Arnold sent out a call for artisans through the countryside, which was answered by craftsmen from the town of Skenesboro. Arnold named Brigadier General David Waterbury to

manage the construction of a fleet and through the late summer an American fleet began to take shape. Six gundalows (*i.e.* flat-bottomed, single mast vessels that could carry three guns and a crew of forty-five) and six larger, 10-gun galleys were constructed by the end of August.

On 23 August, 1776 Arnold set sail northward across Lake Champlain. He anchored his ships near Bay St. Amand, ten miles south of Valcour Island, while he drilled his crews in anticipation of a fight.

The fight that Arnold prepared for came on 11 October, 1776. American lookouts had spotted the British fleet sailing southward up the lake. Arnold's ships hugged the west side, the lee side, of Valcour Island as Carleton's sailed confidently on the opposite side. By the time Carleton discovered the American fleet, he was past the island and, in order to attack, had to double back against the wind. As a result, a large portion of the British fleet was not able to take part in the battle that ensued. The *Thunderer*, the large radeau was one of the vessels that was unable to see action.

A furious cannonade raged for a number of hours. The fire from the British fleet was joined by rifle fire from troops on the mainland shore. The *Inflexible* greatly overpowered the American ships and the outcome of the fight looked bleak for Arnold. According to Arnold:

"At half-past twelve, the engagement became general, and very warm. Some of the enemy's ships, and all of their gondolas beat and rowed up within musket-shot of us. They continued a very hot fire, with round and grape shot until five o'clock...The New York lost all officers, except the captain. The Philadelphia was hulled in so many places that she sank...The Congress received seven shot between wind and water and was hulled a dozen times...The Washington was hulled a number of times. Both vessels are now very leaky...The whole killed and wounded amounted to about sixty. The enemy landed a large number of Indians"

on each shore, who keep an incessant fire...We suffered much for want of feamen and gunners...It was thought prudent to return to Crown point."

By the time dusk settled on the landscape, the Americans had used up roughly three quarters of their ammunition and had sustained sixty casualties. The darkness of night was a welcome relief for the Americans; they formed a line-ahead formation and slipped past the British ships.

At dawn on the 12th, Arnold anchored the five most damaged of his ships at Schuyler's Island to take an assessment of the situation. The rest of his fleet continued ahead. The decision was made to scuttle two of the five, a third one ran aground and the remaining two were deemed alright to continue on. So Arnold and those two ships hurried on to catch up to the rest of the American fleet. Carleton was enraged when he found the Americans had slipped past him. He set off in swift pursuit and caught up to Arnold's ships near Split Rock. In the fighting that followed, the British

captured two ships and ran another aground. The *Congress*, on which Arnold rode, was able to safely reach the rest of the fleet at Crown Point.

Arnold conferred with Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Hartley, the commander of the garrison at Crown Point about the feasibility of holding that fort. Their decision was that they should destroy the Crown Point defenses and repair to Ticonderoga. Upon their arrival there, they were met by British rowboats carrying 110 Americans whom Carleton had captured during the naval battle, but now, in a gesture of generosity, was paroling.

Carleton then made a fateful decision which would, in the near future, curb the British supremacy in the region. He decided that he might not be able to take Ticonderoga, and he withdrew to St. Johns. The chapter on the Canada Campaign was effectively closed.

This chronological history of the Revolutionary War will be continued in a future newsletter.

---2nd Quarterly Meeting---

The 2nd Quarterly Meeting of the Blair County Chapter, SAR will be held on April 11, 1998 at the Kings Family Restaurant in Altoona. The meeting will start at 12:00noon. Please plan to attend. The meeting will be presided over by Compatriot Bernard R. Smith, who was named Interim President at the last meeting. Our best wishes for continued recovery are extended to Compatriot Danny Barner.

Arthur St. Clair

Arthur St. Clair was noted in the foregoing essay as being one of the regimental commanders of the troops who were led by General William Thompson to join with the troops under General John Sullivan in Canada. St. Clair received his commission to the rank of Colonel of the 2nd Pennsylvania Battalion on 03 January, 1776. He was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General on 09 August, 1776. While most people may be familiar with the facts associated with St. Clair's Continental Line service and his less than spectacular career as the first governor of the Northwest territory after the Revolutionary War, not as many may be acquainted with the roles he played in the early history of Bedford County.

Arthur St. Clair, an Englishman by birth, served as Bedford County's first Prothonotary, receiving his commission on 12 March, 1771. On the day prior to that commission, he was named *Dedimus Potestatem*, which (according to Bailey's *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary*) indicated a commission given to a private man for the purpose of speeding up some act pertaining to a judge. Arthur St. Clair served as a Justice of the Peace during the course of three years; he received his first commission to that position on 23 November, 1771, the second on 27 February, 1773, and the third on 09 April, 1774. On 08 November, 1772 he was sworn in as the Clerk of the Quarter Sessions. His office was located in the cellar of the Thomas Smith/ Espy House on Pitt Street in Bedford. A small log house near Ligonier became Arthur St. Clair's home following his retirement in 1803 when the Northwest Territory became the state of Ohio.