

## = Battle of Quebec ( 1775 ) =

The Battle of Quebec ( French : Bataille de Québec ) was fought on December 31 , 1775 , between American Continental Army forces and the British defenders of Quebec City early in the American Revolutionary War . The battle was the first major defeat of the war for the Americans , and it came with heavy losses . General Richard Montgomery was killed , Benedict Arnold was wounded , and Daniel Morgan and more than 400 men were taken prisoner . The city 's garrison , a motley assortment of regular troops and militia led by Quebec 's provincial governor , General Guy Carleton , suffered a small number of casualties .

Montgomery 's army had captured Montreal on November 13 , and early in December they joined a force led by Arnold , whose men had made an arduous trek through the wilderness of northern New England . Governor Carleton had escaped from Montreal to Quebec , the Americans ' next objective , and last @-@ minute reinforcements arrived to bolster the city 's limited defenses before the attacking force 's arrival . Concerned that expiring enlistments would reduce his force , Montgomery made the end @-@ of @-@ year attack in a blinding snowstorm to conceal his army 's movements . The plan was for separate forces led by Montgomery and Arnold to converge in the lower city before scaling the walls protecting the upper city . Montgomery 's force turned back after he was killed by cannon fire early in the battle , but Arnold 's force penetrated further into the lower city . Arnold was injured early in the attack , and Morgan led the assault in his place before he became trapped in the lower city and was forced to surrender . Arnold and the Americans maintained an ineffectual blockade of the city until spring , when British reinforcements arrived .

In the battle and the following siege , French @-@ speaking Canadians were active on both sides of the conflict . The American forces received supplies and logistical support from local residents , and the city 's defenders included locally raised militia . When the Americans retreated , they were accompanied by a number of their supporters ; those who remained behind were subjected to a variety of punishments after the British re @-@ established control over the province .

## = = Background = =

Shortly after the American Revolutionary War broke out in April 1775 , a small enterprising force led by Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold captured the key fortress at Ticonderoga on May 10 . Arnold followed up the capture with a raid on Fort Saint @-@ Jean not far from Montreal , alarming the British leadership there . These actions stimulated both British and rebel leaders to consider the possibility of an invasion of the Province of Quebec by the rebellious forces of the Second Continental Congress , and Quebec 's governor , General Guy Carleton , began mobilizing the provincial defenses . After first rejecting the idea of an attack on Quebec , the Congress authorized the Continental Army 's commander of its Northern Department , Major General Philip Schuyler , to invade the province if he felt it necessary . As part of an American propaganda offensive , letters from Congress and the New York Provincial Assembly were circulated throughout the province , promising liberation from their oppressive government . Benedict Arnold , passed over for command of the expedition , convinced General George Washington to authorize a second expedition through the wilderness of what is now the state of Maine directly to Quebec City , capital of the province .

The Continental Army began moving into Quebec in September 1775 . Its goal , as stated in a proclamation by General Schuyler , was to " drive away , if possible , the troops of Great Britain " that " under the orders of a despotic ministry ... aim to subject their fellow @-@ citizens and brethren to the yoke of a hard slavery . " Brigadier General Richard Montgomery led the force from Ticonderoga and Crown Point up Lake Champlain , successfully besieging Fort St. Jean , and capturing Montreal on November 13 . Arnold led a force of 1 @,@ 100 men from Cambridge , Massachusetts on the expedition through Maine towards Quebec shortly after Montgomery 's departure from Ticonderoga .

One significant expectation of the American advance into Quebec was that the large French Catholic Canadian population of the province and city would rise against British rule . Since the British took control of the province , during the French and Indian War in 1760 , there had been

difficulties and disagreements between the local French Catholics and the Protestant English @-@ speaking British military and civilian administrations . However , these tensions had been eased by the passage of the Quebec Act of 1774 , which restored land and many civil rights to the Canadians ( an act which had been condemned by the thirteen rebelling colonies ) . The majority of Quebec 's French inhabitants chose not to play an active role in the American campaign , in large part because , encouraged by their clergy , they had come to accept British rule with its backing of the Catholic Church and preservation of French culture .

= = British preparations = =

= = = Defense of the province = = =

General Carleton had begun preparing the province 's defenses immediately on learning of Arnold 's raid on St. Jean . Although Carleton concentrated most of his modest force at Fort St. Jean , he left small garrisons of British regular army troops at Montreal and Quebec . Carleton followed the American invasion 's progress , occasionally receiving intercepted communications between Montgomery and Arnold . Lieutenant Governor Hector Cramahé , in charge of Quebec 's defenses while Carleton was in Montreal , organized a militia force of several hundred to defend the town in September . He pessimistically thought they were " not much to be depended on " , estimating that only half were reliable . Cramahé also made numerous requests for military reinforcements to the military leadership in Boston , but each of these came to nought . Several troop ships were blown off course and ended up in New York , and Vice Admiral Samuel Graves , the commander of the fleet in Boston , refused to release ships to transport troops from there to Quebec because the approaching winter would close the Saint Lawrence River .

When definitive word reached Quebec on November 3 that Arnold 's march had succeeded and that he was approaching the city , Cramahé began tightening the guard and had all boats removed from the south shore of the Saint Lawrence . Word of Arnold 's approach resulted in further militia enlistments , increasing the ranks to 1 @,@ 200 or more . Two ships arrived on November 3 , followed by a third the next day , carrying militia volunteers from St. John 's Island and Newfoundland that added about 120 men to the defense . A small convoy under the command of the frigate HMS Lizard also arrived that day , from which a number of marines were added to the town 's defenses .

On November 10 , Lieutenant Colonel Allen Maclean , who had been involved in an attempt to lift the siege at St. Jean , arrived with 200 men of his Royal Highland Emigrants . They had intercepted communications from Arnold to Montgomery near Trois @-@ Rivières , and hurried to Quebec to help with its defense . The arrival of this experienced force boosted the morale of the town militia , and Maclean immediately took charge of the defenses .

= = = Carleton arrives at Quebec = = =

In the wake of the fall of Fort St. Jean , Carleton abandoned Montreal and returned to Quebec City by ship , narrowly escaping capture . Upon his arrival on November 19 , he immediately took command . Three days later , he issued a proclamation that any able @-@ bodied man in the town who did not take up arms would be assumed to be a rebel or a spy , and would be treated as such . Men not taking up arms were given four days to leave . As a result , about 500 inhabitants ( including 200 British and 300 Canadians ) joined the defense .

Carleton addressed the weak points of the town 's defensive fortifications : he had two log barricades and palisades erected along the Saint Lawrence shoreline , within the area covered by his cannons ; he assigned his forces to defensive positions along the walls and the inner defenses ; and he made sure his inexperienced militia were under strong leadership .

= = Arnold 's arrival = =

The men Arnold chose for his expedition were volunteers drawn from New England companies serving in the Siege of Boston . They were formed into two battalions for the expedition ; a third battalion was composed of riflemen from Pennsylvania and Virginia under Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Morgan 's command . The trek through the wilderness of Maine was long and difficult . The conditions were wet and cold , and the journey took much longer than either Arnold or Washington had expected . Bad weather and wrecked boats spoiled much of the expedition 's food stores , and about 500 men of the original 1 @, @ 100 turned back or died . Those who turned back , including one of the New England battalions , took many of the remaining provisions with them . The men who continued on were starving by the time they reached the first French settlements in early November . On November 9 , the 600 survivors of Arnold 's march from Boston to Quebec arrived at Point Levis , on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence opposite Quebec City . Despite the condition of his troops , Arnold immediately began to gather boats to make a crossing . He was prepared to do so on the night of November 10 , but a storm delayed him for three days . Once on the other side of the Saint Lawrence , Arnold moved his troops onto the Plains of Abraham , about 1 @. @ 5 miles ( 2 km ) from the city walls .

The troops approaching Quebec 's walls were significantly under @-@ equipped . Arnold had no artillery , each of his men carried only five cartridges , more than 100 muskets were unserviceable , and the men 's clothing had been reduced to rags . Despite being outnumbered two to one , Arnold demanded the city 's surrender . Both envoys sent were shot at by British cannons , signifying that the demand had been rebuked . Arnold concluded that he could not take the city by force , so he blockaded the city on its west side . On November 18 , the Americans heard a ( false ) rumour that the British were planning to attack them with 800 men . At a council of war , they decided that the blockade could not be maintained , and Arnold began to move his men 20 miles ( 32 km ) upriver to Pointe @-@ aux @-@ Trembles ( " Aspen Point " ) to wait for Montgomery , who had just taken Montreal . Henry Dearborn , who later became U.S. Secretary of War under President Thomas Jefferson was present at the battle and wrote his famous journal , The Quebec Expedition , which outlined the long and difficult march to the battle and the events that occurred there .

= = Montgomery 's arrival = =

On December 1 , Montgomery arrived at Pointe @-@ aux @-@ Trembles . His force consisted of 300 men from the 1st , 2nd , and 3rd New York regiments , a company of artillery raised by John Lamb , about 200 men recruited by James Livingston for the 1st Canadian Regiment , and another 160 men led by Jacob Brown who were remnants of regiments disbanded due to expiring enlistments . These were supplemented several days later by a few companies detached by Major General David Wooster , whom Montgomery had left in command at Montreal . The artillery Montgomery brought included four cannons and six mortars , and he also brought winter clothing and other supplies for Arnold 's men ; the clothing and supplies were a prize taken when most of the British ships fleeing Montreal were captured . The commanders quickly turned towards Quebec , and put the city under siege on December 6 . Montgomery sent a personal letter to Carleton demanding the city 's surrender , employing a woman as the messenger . Carleton declined the request and burned the letter unread . Montgomery tried again ten days later , with the same result . The besiegers continued to send messages , primarily intended for the populace in the city , describing the situation there as hopeless , and suggesting that conditions would improve if they rose to assist the Americans .

On December 10 , the Americans set up their largest battery of artillery 700 yards ( 640 m ) from the walls . The frozen ground prevented the Americans from entrenching the artillery , so they fashioned a wall out of snow blocks . This battery was used to fire on the city , but the damage it did was of little consequence . Montgomery realized he was in a very difficult position , because the frozen ground prevented the digging of trenches , and his lack of heavy weapons made it impossible to breach the city 's defenses . The enlistments of Arnold 's men were expiring at the end of the year , and no ammunition was on the way from the colonies . Furthermore , it was very likely that British

reinforcements would arrive in the spring , meaning he would either have to act or withdraw . Montgomery believed his only chance to take the city was during a snowstorm at night , when his men could scale the walls undetected .

While Montgomery planned the attack on the city , Christophe Pélissier , a Frenchman living near Trois @-@ Rivières , came to see him . Pélissier was a political supporter of the American cause who operated the St. Maurice Ironworks . He and Montgomery discussed the idea of holding a provincial convention to elect representatives to Congress . Pélissier recommended against this until after Quebec City had been taken , as the habitants would not feel free to act in that way until their security was better assured . The two agreed that Pélissier 's ironworks would provide munitions ( ammunition , cannonballs , and the like ) for the siege . This Pélissier did until the Americans retreated in May 1776 , at which time he also fled , eventually returning to France .

A snowstorm arrived on the night of December 27 , prompting Montgomery to prepare the troops for the attack . However , the storm subsided , and Montgomery called off the assault . That night , a sergeant from Rhode Island deserted , carrying the plan of attack to the British . Montgomery consequently drafted a new plan ; this one called for two feints against Quebec 's western walls , to be led by Jacob Brown and James Livingston , while two attacks would be mounted against the lower town . Arnold would lead one attack to smash through the defenses at the north end of the lower town , and Montgomery would follow along the Saint Lawrence south of the town . The two forces would meet in the lower town and then launch a combined assault on the upper town by scaling its walls . The new plan was revealed only to the senior officers .

= = Battle = =

= = = Montgomery 's attack = = =

A storm broke out on December 30 , and Montgomery once again gave orders for the attack . Brown and Livingston led their militia companies to their assigned positions that night : Brown by the Cape Diamond bastion , and Livingston outside St. John 's Gate . When Brown reached his position between 4 am and 5 am , he fired flares to signal the other forces , and his men and Livingston 's began to fire on their respective targets . Montgomery and Arnold , seeing the flares , set off for the lower town .

Montgomery led his men down the steep , snow @-@ heaped path towards the outer defenses . The storm had turned into a blizzard , making the advance a struggle . Montgomery 's men eventually arrived at the palisade of the outer defenses , where an advance party of carpenters sawed their way through the wall . Montgomery himself helped saw through the second palisade , and led 50 men down a street towards a two @-@ story building . The building formed part of the city 's defenses , and was in fact a blockhouse occupied by 15 Quebec militia armed with muskets and cannons . The defenders opened fire at close range , and Montgomery was killed instantly , shot through the head by a burst of grapeshot . The few men of the advance party who survived fled back towards the palisade ; only Aaron Burr and a few others escaped unhurt . Many of Montgomery 's officers were injured in the attack ; one of the few remaining uninjured officers led the survivors back to the Plains of Abraham , leaving Montgomery 's body behind .

= = = Arnold 's attack = = =

While Montgomery was making his advance , Arnold advanced with his main body towards the barricades of the Sault @-@ au @-@ Matelot at the northern end of the lower town . They passed the outer gates and some British gun batteries undetected . However , as the advance party moved around the Palace Gate , heavy fire broke out from the city walls above them . The height of the walls made it impossible to return the defenders ' fire , therefore Arnold ordered his men to run forward . They advanced down a narrow street , where they once again came under fire as they approached a barricade . Arnold received a shot in the ankle as he was organizing his men in an

attempt to take the barricade and was carried to the rear , after transferring command of his detachment to Daniel Morgan . Under Morgan 's command , they captured the barricade , but had difficulty advancing further because of the narrow twisting streets and damp gunpowder , which prevented their muskets from firing . Morgan and his men holed up in some buildings to dry out their powder and rearm , but they eventually came under increasing fire ; Carleton had realized the attacks on the northern gates were feints and began concentrating his forces in the lower town . A British force of 500 sallied from the Palace Gate and reoccupied the first barricade , trapping Morgan and his men in the city . With no avenue of retreat and under heavy fire , Morgan and his men surrendered . The battle was over by 10 am .

This was the first defeat suffered by the Continental Army . Carleton reported 30 Americans killed and 431 taken prisoner , including about two @-@ thirds of Arnold 's force . He also wrote that " many perished on the River " attempting to get away . Allan Maclean reported that 20 bodies were recovered in the spring thaw the following May . Arnold reported about 400 missing or captured , and his official report to Congress claimed 60 killed and 300 captured . British casualties were comparatively light . Carleton 's initial report to General William Howe mentioned only five killed or wounded , but other witness reports ranged as high as 50 . Carleton 's official report listed five killed and 14 wounded .

General Montgomery 's body was recovered by the British on New Year 's Day 1776 and was given a simple military funeral on January 4 , paid for by Lieutenant Governor Cramahé . The body was returned to New York in 1818 .

= = Siege = =

Arnold refused to retreat ; despite being outnumbered three to one , the sub @-@ freezing temperature of the winter and the mass departure of his men after their enlistments expired , he laid siege to Quebec . The siege had relatively little effect on the city , which Carleton claimed had enough supplies stockpiled to last until May . Immediately after the battle , Arnold sent Moses Hazen and Edward Antill to Montreal , where they informed General Wooster of the defeat . They then travelled on to Philadelphia to report the defeat to Congress and request support . ( Both Hazen and Antill , English @-@ speakers originally from the Thirteen Colonies who had settled in Quebec , went on to serve in the Continental Army for the rest of the war . ) In response to their report , Congress ordered reinforcements to be raised and sent north . During the winter months , small companies of men from hastily recruited regiments in New Hampshire , Massachusetts , and Connecticut made their way north to supplement the Continental garrisons at Quebec and Montreal . The presence of disease in the camp outside Quebec , especially smallpox , took a significant toll on the besiegers , as did a general lack of provisions . Smallpox ravaged Montgomery and Arnold 's forces largely due to exposure to infected civilians released from Quebec . Governor Carleton condoned this practice , realizing it would severely weaken the American siege effort . In early April , Arnold was replaced by General Wooster , who was himself replaced in late April by General John Thomas .

Governor Carleton , despite appearing to have a significant advantage in manpower , chose not to attack the American camp , and remained within Quebec 's walls . Montgomery , in analysing the situation before the battle , had observed that Carleton served under James Wolfe during the 1759 Siege of Quebec , and knew that the French General Louis @-@ Joseph de Montcalm had paid a heavy price for leaving the city 's defenses , ultimately losing the city and his life in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham . British General James Murray had also lost a battle outside the city in 1760 ; Montgomery judged that Carleton was unlikely to repeat their mistakes . On March 14 , Jean @-@ Baptiste Chasseur , a miller from the southern shore of the Saint Lawrence , reached Quebec City and informed Carleton there were 200 men on the south side of the river ready to act against the Americans . These men and more were mobilized to make an attack on an American gun battery at Point Levis , but an advance guard of this Loyalist militia was defeated in the March 1776 Battle of Saint @-@ Pierre by a detachment of pro @-@ American local militia .

When General Thomas arrived , the conditions in the camp led him to conclude that the siege was

impossible to maintain , and he began preparing to retreat . The arrival on May 6 of a small British fleet carrying 200 regulars ( the vanguard of a much larger invasion force ) , accelerated the American preparations to depart . The retreat was turned into a near rout when Carleton marched these fresh forces , along with most of his existing garrison , out of the city to face the disorganized Americans . The American forces , ravaged by smallpox ( which claimed General Thomas during the retreat ) , eventually retreated all the way back to Fort Ticonderoga . Carleton then launched a counteroffensive to regain the forts on Lake Champlain . Although he defeated the American fleet in the Battle of Valcour Island and regained control of the lake , the rear guard defense managed by Benedict Arnold prevented further action to capture Ticonderoga or Crown Point in 1776 .

= = Aftermath = =

On May 22 , even before the Americans had been completely driven from the province , Carleton ordered a survey to identify the Canadians who had helped the American expedition in and around Quebec City . François Baby , Gabriel Elzéar Taschereau , and Jenkin Williams travelled the province and counted the Canadians who actively provided such help ; they determined that 757 had done so . Carleton was somewhat lenient with minor offenders , and even freed a number of more serious offenders on the promise of good behavior ; however , once the Americans had been driven from the province , measures against supporters of the American cause became harsher , with forced labor to repair American destruction of infrastructure during the army 's retreat being a frequent punishment . These measures had the effect of minimizing the public expression of support for the Americans for the rest of the war .

Between May 6 and June 1 , 1776 , nearly 40 British ships arrived at Quebec City . They carried more than 9 ,000 soldiers under the command of General John Burgoyne , including about 4 ,000 German soldiers ; so - called Hessians from Brunswick and Hanau under the command of Baron Friedrich Adolf Riedesel . These forces , some of which having participated in Carleton 's counteroffensive , spent the winter of 1776 - 77 in the province , putting a significant strain on the population , which numbered only about 80 ,000 . Many of these troops were deployed in 1777 for Burgoyne 's campaign for the Hudson Valley .

Three current United States Army National Guard units ( Company A of the 69th Infantry Regiment , the 181st Infantry Regiment , and the 182nd Infantry ) trace their lineage to American units that participated in the Battle of Quebec .