

= Battle of Ticonderoga ( 1759 ) =

The 1759 Battle of Ticonderoga was a minor confrontation at Fort Carillon ( later renamed Fort Ticonderoga ) on July 26 and 27 , 1759 , during the French and Indian War . A British military force of more than 11 @, @ 000 men under the command of General Sir Jeffery Amherst moved artillery to high ground overlooking the fort , which was defended by a garrison of 400 Frenchmen under the command of Brigadier General François @-@ Charles de Bourlamaque .

Rather than defend the fort , de Bourlamaque , operating under instructions from General Louis @-@ Joseph de Montcalm and New France 's governor , the Marquis de Vaudreuil , withdrew his forces , and attempted to blow up the fort . The fort 's powder magazine was destroyed , but its walls were not severely damaged . The British then occupied the fort , which was afterwards known by the name Fort Ticonderoga . They embarked on a series of improvements to the area and began construction of a fleet to conduct military operations on Lake Champlain .

The French tactics were sufficient to prevent Amherst 's army from joining James Wolfe at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham . However , they also tied up 3 @, @ 000 of their own troops that were not able to assist in Quebec 's defense . The capture of the fort , which had previously repulsed a large British army a year earlier , contributed to the Annus Mirabilis of 1759 .

= = Background = =

The French and Indian War , which started in 1754 over territorial disputes in what are now western Pennsylvania and upstate New York , had finally turned in the favor of the British in 1758 following a string of defeats in 1756 and 1757 . The British were successful in capturing Louisbourg and Fort Frontenac in 1758 . The only significant French victory in 1758 came when a large British army commanded by James Abercrombie was defeated by a smaller French force in the Battle of Carillon . During the following winter , French commanders withdrew most of the garrison from Fort Carillon ( called Ticonderoga by the British ) to defend Quebec City , Montreal and French @-@ controlled forts on the Great Lakes and the Saint Lawrence River .

Carillon , located near the southern end of Lake Champlain , occupied a place that was strategic in importance even before Samuel de Champlain discovered it in 1609 , controlling access to a key portage trail between Champlain and Lake George along the main travel route between the Hudson River valley and the Saint Lawrence River . When the war began , the area was part of the frontier between the British province of New York and the French province of Canada , and the British had stopped French advances further south in the 1755 Battle of Lake George .

= = = British planning = = =

For the 1759 campaign , British secretary of state , William Pitt , ordered General Jeffery Amherst , the victor at Louisbourg , to lead an army into Canada by sailing north on Lake Champlain , while a second force under James Wolfe , who distinguished himself while serving under Amherst at Louisbourg , was targeted at the city of Quebec via the Saint Lawrence . Instructions were sent to the governors of the Thirteen Colonies to raise up 20 @, @ 000 provincial militia for these campaigns . About 8 @, @ 000 provincial men were raised and sent to Albany by provinces as far south as Pennsylvania and New Jersey . New York sent 3 @, @ 000 men and New Jersey sent 1 @, @ 000 . Massachusetts mustered 6 @, @ 500 men ; about 3 @, @ 500 went to Albany , while the remainder were dispatched for service with Wolfe at Quebec or other service in Nova Scotia . The balance of the provincial men came from the other New England provinces and Pennsylvania . When Quaker Pennsylvania balked at sending any men , Amherst convinced them to raise men by threatening to withdraw troops from forts in the Ohio River Valley on the province 's western frontier , which were regularly subjected to threats from Indians and the French .

When Amherst learned through Sir William Johnson that the Iroquois League was prepared to support British efforts to drive the French out of their frontier forts , he decided to send an expedition to capture Fort Niagara . He sent 2 @, @ 000 of the provincials west from Albany along with 3 @, @

000 regular troops under Brigadier General John Prideaux in May . He led the remainder of the provincials , consisting primarily of Massachusetts , New Jersey , and Connecticut men , north to Fort Edward , where they joined 6 @, @ 000 regular troops ( about 2 @, @ 000 Royal Highlanders , as well as the 17th , 27th , and 53rd regiments of foot , the 1st Battalion of the 60th Foot , about 100 Royal Artillery , 700 of Rogers ' Rangers , and 500 light infantry under Thomas Gage ) .

= = = French planning = = =

In the 1759 campaign , French war planners directed most of their war resources into the European theater of the Seven Years ' War . In February , France 's war minister , Marshal Belle @-@ Isle , notified General Louis @-@ Joseph de Montcalm , who was responsible for the defense of Canada , that he would not receive any significant support from France , due in large part to English naval domination of the Atlantic and the risks associated with sending a large military force under those circumstances . Belle @-@ Isle impressed on Montcalm the importance of maintaining at least a foothold in North America , as the territory would be virtually impossible to retake otherwise . Montcalm responded , " Unless we have unexpected luck , or stage a diversion elsewhere within North America , Canada will fall during the coming campaign season . The English have 60 @, @ 000 men , we have 11 @, @ 000 . "

Montcalm decided to focus French manpower on defending the core territory of Canada : Montreal , the city of Quebec , and the Saint Lawrence River Valley . He placed 3 @, @ 000 troops from the la Reine and Berry regiments under Brigadier General François @-@ Charles de Bourlamaque for the defense south of Montreal , of which around 2 @, @ 300 were assigned to Fort Carillon . He knew ( after his own experience in the previous year 's battle there ) that this force was too small to hold Carillon against a determined British attack by competent leaders . Instructions from Montcalm and New France 's governor , the Marquis de Vaudreuil , to de Bourlamaque were to hold Carillon as long as possible , then to destroy it , as well as the nearby Fort St. Frédéric , before retreating toward Montreal .

= = British advance and French retreat = =

Although General Amherst had been ordered to move his forces " as early in the year , as on or about , the 7th of May , if the season shall happen to permit " , Amherst 's army of 11 @, @ 000 did not leave the southern shores of Lake George until July 21 . There were several reasons for the late departure . One was logistical ; Prideaux 's expedition to forts Oswego and Niagara also departed from Albany ; another was the slow arrival of provincial militias .

When his troops landed and began advancing on the fort , Amherst was pleased to learn that the French had abandoned the outer defenses . He still proceeded with caution , occupying the old French lines from the 1758 battle on July 22 , amid reports that the French were actively loading bateaux at the fort . His original plan had been to flank the fort , denying the road to Fort St. Frédéric as a means of French escape . In the absence of French resistance outside the fort , he decided instead to focus his attention on the fort itself .

For the next three days , the British entrenched and began laying siege lines to establish positions near the fort . This work was complicated by the fact there was little diggable ground near the fort , and sandbags were required to protect the siege works . During this time , the French gun batteries fired , at times quite heavily , on the British positions . On July 25 , a detachment of Rogers ' Rangers launched some boats onto the lake north of the fort and cut a log boom the French had placed to prevent ships from moving further north on the lake . By July 26 , the British had pulled artillery to within 600 feet ( 180 m ) of the fort 's walls .

Bourlamaque had withdrawn with all but 400 of his men to Fort St. Frédéric as soon as he learned that the British were approaching . The cannon fire by this small force killed five and wounded another 31 of the besieging British . Captain Louis @-@ Philippe Le Dossu d 'Hébecourt , who had been left in command of the fort , judged on the evening of July 26 that it was time to leave . His men aimed the fort 's guns at its walls , laid mines , and put down a powder trail to the overstocked

powder magazine . They then lit the fuse and abandoned the fort , leaving the French flag flying . The British were notified of this action by the arrival of French deserters . General Amherst offered 100 guineas to any man willing to enter the works to find and douse the fuse ; but no one was willing to take up the offer . The entire works went off late that evening with a tremendous roar . The powder magazine was destroyed , and a number of wooden structures caught fire due to flying embers , but the fort 's walls were not badly damaged . After the explosion , some of Gage 's light infantry rushed into the fort and retrieved the French flag . Fires in the fort were not entirely extinguished for two days .

= = Aftermath = =

The British began occupying the fort the next day . In one consequence of the French forces ' hasty departure from Carillon , one of their scouting parties returned to the fort , believing it to still be in French hands ; forty men were taken prisoner .

The retreating French destroyed Fort St. Frédéric on July 31 , leaving the way clear for the British to begin military operations on Lake Champlain ( denying the British access to Champlain had been the reason for the existence of both forts ) . However , the French had a small armed fleet , which would first need to be neutralized . The time needed to capture and effect some repairs to the two forts , as well as the need to build ships for use on Lake Champlain , delayed Amherst 's forces further and prevented him from joining General Wolfe at the Siege of Quebec . Amherst , worried that Bourlamaque 's retreat might be leading him into a trap , spent August and September overseeing the construction of a small navy , Fort Crown Point ( a new fort next to the ruins of Fort St. Frédéric ) , and supply roads to the area from New England .

On October 11 , Amherst 's army began to sail and row north on Lake Champlain to attack Bourlamaque 's position at the Île @-@ aux @-@ Noix in the Richelieu River . Over the next two days , one of the French ships was captured ; the French abandoned and burned the others to prevent their capture . On October 18 , he received word of Quebec 's fall . As there was an " appearance of winter " ( parts of the lake were beginning to freeze ) , and provincial militia enlistments were set to end on November 1 , Amherst called off his attack , dismissed his militia forces , and returned the army to winter quarters .

The British definitively gained control of Canada with the surrender of Montreal in 1760 . The fort , which had always been called Ticonderoga by the British ( after the place where the fort is located ) , was held by them through the end of the French and Indian War . Following that war , it was manned by small garrisons until 1775 , when it was captured by American militia early in the American Revolutionary War .

= = Commemorations = =

A major reenactment of French and Indian War events took place at Fort Ticonderoga on June 26 ? 27 , 2009 .