

= Battle of Quebec (1690) =

The Battle of Quebec was fought in October 1690 between the colonies of New France and Massachusetts Bay , then ruled by the kingdoms of France and England , respectively . It was the first time Quebec 's defences were tested .

Following the capture of Port Royal in Acadia , during King William 's War , the New Englanders hoped to seize Montreal and Quebec itself , the capital of New France . The loss of the Acadian fort shocked the Canadians , and Governor @-@ General Louis de Buade de Frontenac ordered the immediate preparation of the city for siege .

When the envoys delivered the terms of surrender , the Governor @-@ General famously declared that his only reply would be by " the mouth of my cannons . " Major John Walley led the invading army , which landed at Beauport in the Basin of Quebec . However , the militia on the shore were constantly harassed by Canadian militia until their retreat , while the expedition 's ships , commanded by Sir William Phips , were nearly destroyed by cannon volleys from the top of the city .

Both sides learned from the battle : the French improved the city 's defences , while the New Englanders realized they needed more artillery and better support from England to take the city .

= = Background = =

The colony of New France claimed the largest area of North America , although by population it was numerically inferior to the neighbouring colonies of New England and New York . By 1689 , there were only about 14 @, @ 000 settlers in New France , but most of the population lived in towns protected by elaborate forts .

In 1690 , Sir William Phips was appointed major @-@ general by Massachusetts to command an expedition against French Acadia . He sailed with seven vessels carrying a 450 @-@ strong militia " Foot Regiment " , and Port Royal surrendered on 21 May . Its governor , Louis @-@ Alexandre des Friches de Menneval , had only about 70 men , and no guns mounted , and would have been unable to resist . On 22 May , Phips recorded " We cut down the cross , rifled the Church , pulled down the High @-@ Altar , breaking their images " ; and on 23 May , " kept gathering Plunder both by land and water , and also under ground in their Gardens " .

This shocked the French colonists , who feared that their capital city would be the next target . Quebec did not have extensive fortifications in 1690 , and the whole landward side of the city to the north and west was exposed , particularly at the Plains of Abraham . Count Frontenac returned to Canada for a second term as Governor @-@ General , and ordered the construction of a wooden palisade to enclose the city from the fort at the Château Saint @-@ Louis to the Saint @-@ Charles River . Town Major Provost oversaw the construction of eleven small stone redoubts in this enceinte , which would have protected against cannon . Facing the plains on the west side was the strong point of the landward defences ? a windmill called Mont @-@ Carmel where a three @-@ gun battery was in place . The palisade line ended on the east side of the city , near the hospital . The batteries facing the river were also improved , with eight guns mounted beside the Château and six 18 @-@ pounders at the docksides . Temporary obstacles had also been put in place on the street leading up to the upper city .

Meanwhile , a mobile war party of 150 Albany militia and Iroquois warriors under Captain John Schuyler marched and canoed overland to Montreal , imitating the petite guerre tactics (long @-@ range expeditions into enemy territory) perfected by the French colonists . Schuyler 's expedition was designed to seize Montreal and pin French forces south of Quebec , allowing the Boston fleet to sail against the capital unopposed . Smallpox , lack of supplies , and disagreements among the officers caused most of the militia and Iroquois to turn back in disgust , leaving Schuyler with a fraction of the 855 men promised by the New England authorities . On 4 September the English raiders attacked settlements south of Montreal , killing some 50 habitants in the middle of their harvests . Too weak to risk a battle with the town 's garrison , Schuyler wrapped up the New England invasion and turned home . Thus , when Phips was sighted off Tadoussac , Frontenac

ordered the garrisons of Montreal and Trois @-@ Rivières to make for the threatened capital with all haste . Four days later the Governor arrived in Quebec with 200 ? 300 troops freed @-@ up by the failure of Schuyler 's invasion , considerably lifting the capital 's spirit of resistance .

= = Arrival of Phips = =

While the New England colonies and New York dispatched a force overland against Montreal , which accomplished virtually nothing , Massachusetts launched a separate expedition against Quebec . The whole operation had been financed by issuing paper bonds set against the expected booty to be taken from the city . The expedition consisted of about 32 ships (only four of which were of any size) and over 2 @, @ 300 Massachusetts militiamen , and was under the overall command of Phips , the victor at Port Royal . Its departure was delayed until quite late in the summer because it was waiting (in vain) for the arrival of additional munitions from England . Consequently , when Phips ' expedition set out from Hull on 20 August , it was inadequately supplied with ammunition . Bad weather , contrary winds , and lack of pilots familiar with the Saint Lawrence River hampered progress , and Phips did not anchor in the Quebec basin until 16 October .

Frontenac , a shrewd and experienced officer , reached Quebec from Montreal on 14 October . When all the militia whom he had summoned arrived , he had nearly 3 @, @ 000 men to defend the place . The New Englanders had been " quite confident that the cowardly and effete French would be no match for their hardy men " , but in fact the opposite was the case . Frontenac had reason for confidence , as he possessed a force of three battalions of colonial regulars that were certainly superior to Phips 's amateur companies ? in the event the regulars were not needed as the Canadien militia succeeded in repulsing Phips ' landing parties . Furthermore , the city was " sited on the strongest natural position they [the English officers] had likely ever seen . " Not only did it have impressive cliffs and Cape Diamond , but the eastern shore was so shallow that ships could not approach and landing craft would be needed .

On 16 October , Phips sent Major Thomas Savage as an envoy to deliver a summons of surrender to Frontenac . The encounter has been described as an application of psychological warfare . Before the fighting Frontenac led Phips ' envoys blindfolded through roaring mobs in the streets of Quebec in order to mask his numerical inferiority . Then , in the Château Saint @-@ Louis , Frontenac and many of his officers in their best dress listened to the envoy as he demanded the city 's surrender . Overawed by this " stately Hall full of Brave Martiall men , " Savage did his best to deliver Phip 's ultimatum . Drafted by Massachusetts Puritans , the document began severely :

The New Englander told them they had one hour to comply , and then pulled out his watch . The proud and temperamental Frontenac was so enraged that he wanted to have the envoy hanged before the full view of the English fleet , and it was only because of the Bishop of Quebec , François de Laval , that he was calmed . Asked for a written response , Frontenac shot back :

Savage accepted his blindfold with relief and was led back to his ship . Phips ' council of war was extremely vexed by the reply , having expected to fall upon a defenseless and panicked city . That evening drums and fifes were heard approaching Quebec , followed by heavy cheering from the town : Louis @-@ Hector de Callière had arrived with the remaining Montreal militia , giving Frontenac a numerical advantage over the New Englanders .

= = Battle = =

The New Englanders saw that the only possible place to crack the defences was on the city 's northeastern side , where the walls were weakest . Their plan was to land their main force on the Beauport shore east of the Saint Charles River , and have it cross the river in the fleet 's boats , along with the field guns . When the landing force was on the heights west of Quebec , the fleet would attack the city and land a second force there . Frontenac had expected the land attack to come from Beauport , and the banks of the river had already been built up with field fortifications on the southwestern side . He proposed to fight only a skirmishing action there , holding his regulars in reserve for a European @-@ style battle on the open ground west of Quebec .

However , the open battle never took place . The 1 @, @ 200 @-@ strong English landing force under Major John Walley , Phips ' second @-@ in @-@ command , never got across the Saint Charles . Frontenac had sent strong detachments of Canadian militiamen under Jacques Le Moyne de Sainte @-@ Hélène , along with some Indians , into the wooded areas east of the river . When the English landed on 18 October , they were immediately harassed by Canadian militia , while the ships ' boats mistakenly landed the field guns on the wrong side of the Saint Charles . Meanwhile , Phips 's four large ships , quite contrary to the plan , anchored before Quebec and began bombarding the city until 19 October , at which point the English had shot away most of their ammunition . The French shore batteries had also proved to be much more than a match , and the ships were pounded until the rigging and hulls were badly damaged ; the ensign of Phips ' flagship the Six Friends was cut down and fell into the river , and under a hail of musket shots , a daring group of Canadians paddled a canoe up to the ships to capture it . They triumphantly brought the ensign back to the Governor unscathed .

During the bombardment , the land force under Walley remained inactive , suffering from cold and complaining of shortage of rum . After a couple of miserable days , they decided to carry the shore positions and try to overcome the French earthworks . They set out on 20 October " in the best European tradition , with drums beating and colors unfurled , " but there was a skirmish at the edge of the woods . The New Englanders could not cope with the maintained heavy Canadian fire , and the brass field guns fired into the woods had no effect . Although Sainte @-@ Hélène was mortally wounded , 150 of the attackers had been killed in action , and were utterly discouraged . They made a retreat in a state of near panic on 22 October , even abandoning five field guns on the shore .

= = Aftermath = =

On 23 and 24 October , an exchange of prisoners was negotiated and effected , and the ships set sail for Boston . Although Phips ' own account of the expedition admitted only 30 dead in combat , smallpox and marine accident claimed about 1 @, @ 000 more . James Lloyd of Boston wrote in the following January , " 7 vessels yet wanting 3 more cast away & burnt . " Cotton Mather tells how one brigantine was wrecked on Anticosti ; her crew maintained themselves on the island through the winter and were apparently rescued the following summer by a ship from Boston . Phips ' defeat was complete and disastrous ; fortunately for the French , since food was lacking to feed the large force assembled to defend Quebec in case of a prolonged siege . Phips himself had displayed no natural military talents to offset his lack of experience . It can be argued however that the absence of trained soldiers and adequate supplies had doomed the enterprise from the start . Governor of New York Henry Sloughter captured the mood in the English colonies when he wrote :

Canada exulted in its victory and survival ; on 5 November the Te Deum was sung in Quebec in a chapel renamed Notre Dame de la Victoire , Our Lady of Victory . When news of the expedition reached Versailles , Louis XIV ordered a medal struck bearing the inscription : Kebeca liberata M.DC.XC ? Francia in novo orbe victrix , or " Deliverance of Quebec 1690 ? France victorious in the New World . "

Jacques Le Moyne , who died soon after the battle , was mourned by the whole colony for his courtesy and valour . The Onondaga Iroquois sent a wampum collar as a token of sympathy , and released two captives to honour his memory . His brother , Charles Le Moyne , won fame for his part in the battle , and he later received an additional grant of land for his services and became the first Baron de Longueuil .

Both sides learned from the battle . The French victory showed that to take Quebec , the cannon of " Old England would have to be brought in " . Similarly , Frontenac realised the defences needed significant improvement , and in 1692 , he gave Ingénieur du Roi Josué Berthelot de Beaucours the task of designing a fortress that could withstand a European @-@ style siege . This was delayed by the Canadian winter , and work commenced in the summer of 1693 on an earth rampart with large bastions to enclose the city , and pointed wooden stakes to top the walls . A complete shore battery , known as the " Royal battery " , was built immediately after the siege . It was shaped like a small bastion , and featured 14 gun embrasures to cover both sides of the Saint Laurence and the river

itself .

Although another expedition was launched against Quebec during Queen Anne 's War , it failed to reach its target when transports wrecked with great loss of life in the Gulf of St. Lawrence . The city 's improved defences would not be tested until the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759 .