

= Benedict Arnold 's expedition to Quebec =

In September 1775 , early in the American Revolutionary War , Colonel Benedict Arnold led a force of 1 000 Continental Army troops on an expedition from Cambridge , Massachusetts to the gates of Quebec City . Part of a two -pronged invasion of the British Province of Quebec , his expedition passed through the wilderness of what is now Maine . The other expedition , led by Richard Montgomery , invaded Quebec from Lake Champlain .

Unanticipated problems beset the expedition as soon as it left the last significant colonial outposts in Maine . The portages up the Kennebec River proved grueling , and the boats frequently leaked , ruining gunpowder and spoiling food supplies . More than a third of the men turned back before reaching the height of land between the Kennebec and Chaudière rivers . The areas on either side of the height of land were swampy tangles of lakes and streams , and the traversal was made more difficult by bad weather and inaccurate maps . Many of the troops lacked experience handling boats in white water , which led to the destruction of more boats and supplies in the descent to the Saint Lawrence River via the fast -flowing Chaudière .

By the time Arnold reached the French settlements above the Saint Lawrence River in November , his force was reduced to 600 starving men . They had traveled about 350 miles (560 km) through poorly charted wilderness , twice the distance they had expected to cover . Assisted by the local French -speaking Canadiens , Arnold 's troops crossed the Saint Lawrence on November 13 and 14 and attempted to put Quebec City under siege . Failing in this , they withdrew to Point aux Trembles until Montgomery arrived to lead an unsuccessful attack on the city . Arnold was rewarded for his effort in leading the expedition with a promotion to brigadier general .

Arnold 's route through northern Maine has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Arnold Trail to Quebec , and some geographic features in the area bear names of expedition participants .

= = Background = =

On May 10 , 1775 , shortly after the American Revolutionary War began , Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen led an expedition that captured Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain in the British Province of New York . Allen and Arnold were aware that Quebec was lightly defended ; there were only about 600 regular troops in the entire province . Arnold , who had done business in the province before the war , also had intelligence that the French -speaking Canadiens would be favorably disposed toward a colonial force .

Arnold and Allen each made arguments to the Second Continental Congress that Quebec could and should be taken from the British , pointing out that the British could use Quebec as a staging area for attacks down Lake Champlain and into the Hudson River valley . Congress did not want to alarm the people of Quebec , and rejected these arguments . In July 1775 , amid concerns that the British might use Quebec as a base for military movements into New York , they changed their position , and authorized an invasion of Quebec via Lake Champlain , assigning the task to Major General Philip Schuyler of New York .

= = Planning = =

Arnold , who had hoped to lead the invasion , decided to pursue a different approach to Quebec . He went to Cambridge , Massachusetts in early August 1775 , and approached George Washington with the idea of a second eastern invasion force aimed at Quebec City . Washington approved of the idea in principle , but sent a message to General Schuyler on August 20 to ensure his support of the endeavor , since the two forces would need to coordinate their efforts .

Arnold 's plan called for the expedition to sail from Newburyport , Massachusetts along the coast and then up the Kennebec River to Fort Western (now Augusta , Maine) . From there , they would use shallow -draft river boats called bateaux to continue up the Kennebec River , cross the height of land to Lake Mégantic , and descend the Chaudière River to Quebec . Arnold expected to

cover the 180 miles (290 km) from Fort Western to Quebec in 20 days , despite the fact that little was known about the route . Arnold had acquired a map (copy pictured at left) and journal made by British military engineer John Montresor in 1760 and 1761 , but Montresor 's descriptions of the route were not very detailed , and Arnold did not know that the map contained some inaccuracies or that some details had been deliberately removed or obscured .

Washington introduced Arnold to Reuben Colburn , a boat builder from Gardinerstown , Maine , who was in Cambridge at the time . Colburn offered his services , and Arnold requested detailed information about the route , including potential British naval threats , Indian sentiment , useful supply opportunities , and an estimate of how long it would take to construct bateaux sufficient for the contemplated force . Colburn left for Maine on August 21 to fulfill these requests . Colburn asked Samuel Goodwin , the local surveyor in Gardinerston , to provide maps for Arnold . Goodwin , who was known to have Loyalist sympathies , provided maps that were inaccurate in the routes , distances and other important features they described .

On September 2 , Washington received a letter from General Schuyler in reply to his August 20 message . Schuyler agreed with the suggested plan , and Washington and Arnold immediately began to raise troops and place orders for supplies .

= = Recruitment and preparations for departure = =

Because there had been little direct action at Boston after the Battle of Bunker Hill in June , many units stationed in the American camps besieging the town were bored with garrison life and eager for action . Arnold selected a force of 750 men from the large number who expressed interest in the proposed expedition . Most of these were divided into two battalions : one commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Roger Enos and the other by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Greene . The rest were placed in a third battalion under Daniel Morgan that included three companies ? 250 men ? of Continental riflemen from Virginia and the Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment . These frontiersmen , from the Virginia and Pennsylvania wilderness , were better suited to wilderness combat than to a siege , and had been causing trouble since arriving outside Boston . The entire force numbered about 1 @ , @ 100 . Among the volunteers were other men who rose to later prominence during and after the war , including Aaron Burr , Return J. Meigs , Henry Dearborn , and John Joseph Henry .

Washington and Arnold were concerned about Indian support for (or opposition to) the effort , as well as the reception Arnold 's forces might receive from the Canadians once they arrived near the Saint Lawrence River . On August 30 , Washington wrote to General Schuyler of a meeting he held with an Abenaki chief , " [The chief] says the Indians of Canada in general , and also the French , are greatly in our favor , and determined not to act against us . " Four Abenakis accompanied the expedition as scouts and guides .

= = Cambridge to Fort Western = =

On September 2 , as soon as General Schuyler 's agreement with the expedition was known , Arnold wrote a letter to Nathaniel Tracy , a merchant of his acquaintance in Newburyport . He asked Tracy to acquire sufficient shipping to transport the expedition to Maine without drawing attention to Royal Navy ships patrolling the area . The sea voyage was viewed by both Arnold and Washington as the most dangerous part of the expedition , because British patrols were highly effective at interfering with colonial shipping at the time .

The expedition began its departure from Cambridge on September 11 , marching to Newburyport . The first units to leave were composed largely of men from that area , to whom Arnold had given extra time so that they would be able to see their families once more before the expedition left Newburyport . The last troops marched off on September 13 ; Arnold rode from Cambridge to Newburyport on September 15 after making final purchases of supplies .

Headwinds and fog delayed the departure of the expedition from Newburyport until September 19 . In twelve hours , they reached the mouth of the Kennebec River . They spent the next two days negotiating the island channels near its mouth and sailing up the river . Arriving in Gardinerston on

the 22nd , they spent the next few days at Reuben Colburn 's house , organizing supplies and preparing the boats they would use for the rest of the expedition . Arnold inspected Colburn 's hastily constructed bateaux , finding them , in a portent of troubles to come , to be " very badly built " , and " smaller than the directions given " . Colburn and his crew spent the next three days building additional bateaux .

Arnold 's troop movements did not escape British notice . General Thomas Gage in Boston was aware that Arnold 's troops were " gone to Canada and by way of Newburyport " , but he believed the target to be Nova Scotia , which was at the time virtually undefended . Francis Legge , the governor of Nova Scotia , declared martial law , and on October 17 sent a message to England laden with rumors about American actions that turned out to be false . Admiral Samuel Graves eventually received intelligence about Arnold 's activities , reporting on October 18 that the American troops " went up the Kennebec River , and ' tis generally believed are for Quebec " .

= = Scouting = =

As the troop transports arrived , Arnold dispatched some of the men in the already @-@ constructed bateaux up the Kennebec River 10 miles (16 km) to Fort Western , and the others by foot on a track leading to Fort Halifax , 45 miles (72 km) up the Kennebec . While waiting for the bateaux to be completed , Arnold received word from scouts Colburn had sent out to reconnoiter the proposed route . Their reports included rumors of a large Mohawk force near the southernmost French settlements on the Chaudière River . The source of these rumors was Natanis , a Norridgewock Indian believed to be spying for Quebec 's governor , General Guy Carleton ; Arnold discounted the reports .

Arnold and most of the force had reached Fort Western by September 23 . The next day , Arnold sent two small parties up the Kennebec . One , under Pennsylvania Lieutenant Archibald Steele , was ordered to scout as far as Lake Mégantic to gather intelligence . The second , under Lieutenant Church , was to survey the route as far as the Dead River , at a place known to the local Indians as the Great Carrying Place , so that Arnold might better estimate how far the column would need to travel each day .

= = Early troubles = =

The full expedition set out from Fort Western on September 25 . Morgan 's riflemen led the way , blazing trails when necessary . Colburn and a crew of boatwrights came in the rear , to repair bateaux as needed . Morgan 's group traveled relatively lightly , as they would be working to make the trail , while the last group , commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Enos , carried the bulk of the supplies . The expedition arrived at its first target , Fort Halifax , a decaying relic of the French and Indian War , on the second day . There was a rough track from Fort Western , so some of the men and supplies had moved overland rather than in the bateaux that had to be portaged around the falls above Fort Western to begin the trip . Arnold , rather than traveling in a heavy bateau , traveled in a lighter canoe so that he might move more rapidly among the troops along the travel route .

Arnold reached Norridgewock Falls , location of the last settlements on the Kennebec , on October 2 . Even at this early date , problems were apparent . The bateaux were leaking , resulting in spoiled food and a continual need for repairs . The men were constantly wet , due not only to the leakage but also the frequent need to pull the heavy boats upstream . As temperatures began to drop below freezing , colds and dysentery set in , reducing the effectiveness of the force .

The portage around Norridgewock Falls , a distance of about one mile (1 @.@ 6 km) , was accomplished with the assistance of oxen provided by the local settlers , but it took almost a week to complete ; Arnold did not depart from there until October 9 . Colburn 's crew devoted some of this time to making repairs on the bateaux . Most of the expedition reached the Great Carrying Place on October 11 , and Arnold arrived the next day . This stretch of the trek was complicated by heavy rains , rendering the portages difficult due to extremely muddy conditions .

= = The Great Carrying Place = =

The Great Carrying Place was a portage of roughly 12 miles (19 km) , bypassing an unnavigable section of the Dead River , the tributary of the Kennebec that the expedition was to follow . The portage included a rise in elevation of about 1 @, @ 000 feet (305 m) to the high points of the carry , with three ponds along the way . Lieutenant Church , the leader of the survey team , described the route as a " bad road but capable of being made good " , an assessment that turned out to be somewhat optimistic .

The vanguard of the main body , led by Daniel Morgan , met Lieutenant Steele 's advance scouting party en route to the first pond . This party had successfully scouted the route to the height of land above the Dead River , but the men were near starvation . Their supplies had been depleted , and they were largely subsisting on a protein @-@ rich diet of fish , moose , and duck . Most of the men continued to supplement their meager supplies with the local wildlife as the expedition continued .

Church , in his description of the route , had failed to account for the heavy rains and the generally boggy conditions between the first and second ponds . Rain and snow slowed the long portage , and the expedition had its first casualty when a falling tree killed one of the party . Some of the men who drank the brackish waters along the way became violently ill , forcing Arnold to order construction of a shelter at the second pond as cover for the sick , and to send some men back to Fort Halifax for supplies that had been cached there .

The first two battalions finally reached the Dead River on October 13 , and Arnold arrived three days later . At this point , Arnold wrote a number of letters informing Washington and Montgomery of his progress . Several letters intended for Montgomery were intercepted and turned over to Quebec 's Lieutenant Governor Hector Theophilus de Cramahé , giving Quebec its first notice that the expedition was on its way . Arnold also dispatched the survey team again , this time to mark the trail all the way to Lake Mégantic .

= = Ascending the Dead River = =

Progress up the Dead River was extremely slow . Contrary to its name , which supposedly described the speed of its currents , the river was flowing rapidly enough that the men had trouble rowing and poling against the current . The leaky boats spoiled more of the food , forcing Arnold to put everyone on half rations . Then , on October 19 , the skies opened , and the river began to rise in the pouring rain . Early on October 22 , the men awoke to discover that the river had risen to the level of their camp , and they had to scramble to even higher ground for safety . When the sun rose they were surrounded by water .

After spending most of that day drying out , the expedition set off on October 23 . Precious time was lost when some of the men mistakenly left the Dead River and ascended one of its branches , having been fooled by the high water . Soon after , seven bateaux overturned , spoiling the remaining food stores . This accident compelled Arnold to consider turning back . He called together his nearby officers for a council of war . Arnold explained that although the situation was grim , he thought that the expedition should continue . The officers agreed , and decided to pick an advance party that would proceed as rapidly as possible to French settlements on the Chaudière , and work to bring supplies back . The sick and infirm were to retreat to American settlements in Maine .

Further back on the route , Lieutenant Colonel Greene and his men were starving . They had little flour , and were consuming candle wax and shoe leather to supplement their minimal rations . On October 24 , Greene attempted to catch up with Arnold , but was unable to do so because Arnold had moved too far ahead . When he returned to camp , Lieutenant Colonel Enos had arrived , and they held their own council . Enos 's captains were united in wanting to turn back despite Arnold 's most recent orders , which were to press ahead . In the council , Enos cast a tie @-@ breaking vote in favor of continuing , but in a meeting with his captains after the council , announced that because they were insistent on returning , he was acceding to their decision , and would return . After giving Greene 's men some of his supplies , Enos and 450 men turned back .

= = Lake Mégantic = =

The impact of the inaccurate maps was felt when the expedition reached the height of land . Portions of the advance party became lost in swampy bogs (the area surrounding Spider Lake on the topographic map shown above) that were not on those maps , resulting in delays reaching Lake Mégantic . Although this part of the party crossed the height of land on October 25 , it was not until two days later that they reached the lake . On October 28 , the advance party descended the upper Chaudière , destroying three of their bateaux when they turned over and crashed into rocks above some falls on the river . The next day they encountered several Penobscot Indians , who confirmed that they were not far from Sartigan , the southernmost French settlement on the Chaudière .

Arnold , when he reached Lake Mégantic , sent a man back to the two remaining battalions with instructions on how to navigate the swampy lands above the lake . However , the way Arnold described the route included information from the incorrect maps that he had not seen on the route . As a result , some elements of the expedition spent two days lost in swamps before the majority finally reached the falls on the upper Chaudière on October 31 . Along the way , Captain Henry Dearborn 's dog was eaten , an event recorded in his diary : " [They ate] every part of him , not excepting his entrails ; and after finishing their meal , they collected the bones and carried them to be pounded up , and to make broth for another meal . "

= = Arrival at Quebec = =

Arnold first made contact with the local population on October 30 . Sympathetic to his plight , they supplied provisions and cared for the sick ; some were well paid for their aid , while others refused payment . Arnold distributed copies of a letter written by Washington asking the habitants to assist the expedition , and Arnold added promises to respect the persons , property , and religion of the locals . Jacques Parent , a Canadien from Pointe @-@ Levi , notified Arnold that Lieutenant Governor Cramahé had ordered the destruction of all boats on the southern banks of the Saint Lawrence after receiving the intercepted communications .

On November 9 the expedition finally reached the Saint Lawrence at Pointe @-@ Levi , across the river from Quebec . Arnold had about 600 of his original 1 @, @ 100 men , and the journey had turned out to be 350 miles (560 km) , not the 180 that Arnold and Washington had thought it would be . From John Halstead , a New Jersey @-@ born businessman who operated a mill near Pointe @-@ Levi , Arnold learned of the arrest of his courier and the interception of some of his letters . Halstead 's mill became the organizing point for the crossing of the Saint Lawrence . Some of Arnold 's men purchased canoes from the habitants and the local Saint Francis Indians , and then transported them from the Chaudière to the mill site . The forces crossed the Saint Lawrence on the night of November 13 ? 14 after three days of bad weather , likely crossing the mile @-@ wide river between the positions of HMS Hunter and HMS Lizard , two Royal Navy ships that were guarding the river against such a crossing .

The city of Quebec was then defended by about 150 men of the Royal Highland Emigrants under Lieutenant Colonel Allen Maclean , supported by about 500 poorly organized local militia and 400 marines from the two warships . When Arnold and his troops finally reached the Plains of Abraham on November 14 , Arnold sent a negotiator with a white flag to demand their surrender , to no avail . The Americans , with no cannons or other field artillery , and barely fit for action , faced a fortified city . After hearing rumors of a planned sortie from the city , Arnold decided on November 19 to withdraw to Pointe @-@ aux @-@ Trembles to wait for Montgomery , who had recently captured Montreal .

= = Aftermath = =

When Montgomery arrived at Pointe @-@ aux @-@ Trembles on December 3 , the combined force returned to the city and began a siege , finally assaulting it on December 31 . The battle was a devastating loss for the Americans ; Montgomery was killed , Arnold was wounded , and Daniel

Morgan was captured along with more than 350 men . Arnold did not learn until after the battle that he had been promoted to brigadier general for his role in leading the expedition .

The invasion ended with a retreat back to Fort Ticonderoga , Montgomery 's starting point , during the spring and summer of 1776 . Arnold , who commanded the army 's rear guard in the later stages of the retreat , was able to delay the British advance sufficiently to prevent them from attempting to reach the Hudson River in 1776 .

Enos and his detachment arrived back in Cambridge late in November . Enos was court @-@ martialed , charged with " quitting his commanding officer without leave " . He was acquitted , and returned to service as Lieutenant Colonel of the 16th Connecticut Regiment .

John Sullivan , the court @-@ martial President , made public a written statement in support of Enos ' conduct , and other officers also issued a public circular to support Enos , including William Heath , John Stark , Joseph Reed , and James Reed .

Enos subsequently moved to Vermont , where he served in the militia as Colonel , Brigadier General and Major General , including commanding troops on the Vermont side of Lake Champlain during the Saratoga campaign to deter John Burgoyne from foraying into Vermont .

Reuben Colburn was never paid for his work , despite promises made by Arnold and Washington ; the expedition ruined him financially .

Henry Dearborn settled on the Kennebec River after the war , and represented the area in the U. S. Congress before Thomas Jefferson appointed him Secretary of War . Private Simon Fobes , who kept one of the many journals of the expedition , was captured in the Battle of Quebec . He and two others escaped captivity in August 1776 and retraced the trek in the opposite direction , once again with meager resources . They benefited from better weather and equipment the expedition had abandoned along the way . Fobes reached his home near Worcester , Massachusetts at the end of September , and eventually rejoined the army . Captain Simeon Thayer kept a journal which was published by the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1867 as The invasion of Canada in 1775 . After being captured at Quebec , Thayer was exchanged on July 1 , 1777 and returned to the Continental Army with the rank of major . He distinguished himself during the Siege of Fort Mifflin in November 1777 and briefly assumed command after the post 's commandant was wounded .

= = Legacy = =

A number of geographic features along the route of the expedition bear names related to the expedition . East Carry Pond , Middle Carry Pond , and West Carry Pond , are all on the route of the portage at the Great Carrying Place , which is in the Carrying Place Town Township [sic] of Maine . Arnold Pond is the last pond on the Dead River before crossing the height of land . Mount Bigelow in Maine was named for Major Timothy Bigelow , one of Arnold 's officers .

The wilderness portion of the route through Maine , roughly from Augusta to the Quebec border , was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1969 as the " Arnold Trail to Quebec " . The Major Reuben Colburn House , which served as Arnold 's headquarters , is now a state historic site administered by the non @-@ profit Arnold Expedition Historical Society , and is also listed on the National Register . Both Fort Western and Fort Halifax are National Historic Landmarks , primarily for their age and their role in earlier conflicts .

An historical marker in Danvers , Massachusetts commemorates Arnold 's expedition , placed by the Massachusetts Society , Sons of the American Revolution . There is also an historical marker in Moscow , Maine placed in 1916 by the Kennebec chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution , and two at Skowhegan Island in Maine placed in 1912 and 2000 by the Eunice Farnsworth Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution . In Eustis , Maine , on the western shore of Flagstaff Lake stands a marker commemorating the expedition . The lake was created in the 20th century by damming the Dead River , inundating part of the expedition route . Mount Bigelow , whose first recorded ascent was by Timothy Bigelow , stands just south of the lake .