

= Battle of Trois @-@ Rivières =

The Battle of Trois @-@ Rivières ( Three Rivers in English ) was fought on June 8 , 1776 , during the American Revolutionary War . A British army under Quebec Governor Guy Carleton defeated an attempt by units from the Continental Army under the command of Brigadier General William Thompson to stop a British advance up the Saint Lawrence River valley . The battle occurred as a part of the American colonists ' invasion of Quebec , which had begun in September 1775 with the goal of removing the province from British rule .

The crossing of the Saint Lawrence by the American troops was observed by Quebec militia , who alerted British troops at Trois @-@ Rivières . A local farmer led the Americans into a swamp , enabling the British to land additional forces in the village , and to establish positions behind the American army . After a brief exchange between an established British line and American troops emerging from the swamp , the Americans broke into a somewhat disorganized retreat . As some avenues of retreat were cut off , the British took a sizable number of prisoners , including General Thompson and much of his staff .

This was the last major battle fought on Quebec soil . Following the defeat , the remainder of the American forces , under the command of John Sullivan , retreated , first to Fort Saint @-@ Jean , and then to Fort Ticonderoga .

= = Background = =

The Continental Army , which had invaded Quebec in September 1775 , suffered a severe blow in the disastrous attack on Quebec City on New Year 's Eve in 1775 . Following that loss , Benedict Arnold and the remnants of the army besieged Quebec until May 1776 .

Early on May 6 , three Royal Navy ships sailed into Quebec Harbour . Troops on these ships were immediately sent into the city and , not long after , General Guy Carleton formed them up and marched them out to the American siege camp . General John Thomas , then in command of the American forces , had already been making arrangements to retreat , but the British arrival threw his troops into a panic . He led a disorganized retreat that eventually reached Sorel on about May 18 .

= = = British forces at Trois @-@ Rivières = = =

Throughout the month of May and into early June , ships carrying troops and war supplies continued to arrive at Quebec . By June 2 , Carleton had added the 9th , 20th , 29th , 53rd and 60th Regiments of Foot , along with General John Burgoyne , to his command . Also arriving in the fleet were Hessian troops from Brunswick commanded by Baron Riedesel .

After the Americans ' flight early in May , Carleton took no significant offensive steps but on May 22 , he sent ships carrying elements of the 47th and 29th Foot to Trois @-@ Rivières under Allan Maclean 's command . Brigadier General Simon Fraser led more forces to Trois @-@ Rivières on June 2 . By June 7 , the forces on the ground at Trois @-@ Rivières had grown to nearly 1 @,@ 000 , and 25 ships carrying additional troops and supplies were anchored in the river near the village and for several miles upriver .

= = = American arrangements = = =

Since Thomas 's retreat was instigated by the early arrival of three ships of the fleet carrying only a few hundred troops , he was unaware of the true size of the British army . In a war council at Sorel on May 21 , which included representatives of the Second Continental Congress , a decision was reached to make a stand at Deschambault , between Trois @-@ Rivières and Quebec . This decision was reached based on sketchy reports and rumors of the British troop strengths and was dominated by the non @-@ military Congressional representatives . Thomas contracted smallpox on May 21 , from which he died on June 2 . He was briefly replaced by Brigadier General William Thompson , who relinquished command to General John Sullivan when he arrived on June 5 at

Sorel with further reinforcements from Fort Ticonderoga .

On June 5 , just hours before Sullivan 's arrival , Thompson sent 600 troops under the command of Colonel Arthur St. Clair toward Trois @-@ Rivières with the goal of surprising and beating back the small British force believed to be there . Sullivan , on his arrival at Sorel , immediately dispatched Thompson with an additional 1 @, @ 600 men to follow . These forces caught up with St. Clair at Nicolet , where defenses against troop movements on the river were erected the next day . On the night of June 7 , Thompson , St. Clair , and about 2 @, @ 000 men crossed the river , landing at Pointe du Lac , a few miles above Trois @-@ Rivières .

= = Battle = =

The American crossing had been seen by a local militia captain , who rushed to the British camp at Trois @-@ Rivières and reported to General Fraser . Thompson left 250 men to guard the landing and headed the rest towards Trois @-@ Rivières . Unfamiliar with the local terrain , he convinced Antoine Gautier , a local farmer , to guide the men to Trois @-@ Rivières . Gautier proceeded , apparently intentionally , to lead the American army into a swampy morass from which it took them hours to extricate themselves . In the meantime , the British , having been alerted to the American presence , proceeded to land troops from the fleet and formed battle lines on the road outside the village . Ships were also sent up to Pointe du Lac , where they drove the American guards there to flee across the river with most of the boats .

Some of the Americans , led by Thompson , made their way out of the swamp to be confronted by HMS Martin , which drove them back into the swamp with grapeshot . A column of men under Colonel Anthony Wayne fared only a little better , arriving out of the swamp only to face Fraser 's formation . A brief exchange of fire took place : but the Americans , clearly outmatched by Fraser 's forces , broke and ran , leaving arms and supplies behind . Portions of the American force retreated to the edge of the woods , which gave them some cover , and attempted to engage some of the British troops : but fire from those troops kept them off the road and fire from some of the ships in the river kept them from the shore . St. Clair and a number of men made it back to the landing site , only to find it occupied by the British troops . Only by returning to the swampy woods and continuing to flee upriver did these men escape capture at that time . Wayne eventually managed to form a rear guard of about 800 men , which attempted an attack on the British position ; but they were driven back into the woods . Wayne then led a staggered retreat , in which companies of men slipped away , with the woods giving cover to hide their true numbers .

General Carleton arrived in Trois @-@ Rivières late in the action . A detachment of British forces led by Major Grant had taken control of a bridge over the Rivière @-@ du @-@ Loup , a critical crossing for the Americans retreating along the north shore of the Saint Lawrence . Carleton ordered Grant to withdraw , allowing most of the Americans to escape , either because he did not want to deal with large numbers of prisoners or because he wanted to demoralize the Americans further . A significant number of Americans did not make it that far , and were captured . These included General Thompson and seventeen of his officers . It was not until June 13 that the British finished rounding up the stragglers . In all , 236 captives were taken . Brendan Morrissey says that about 30 Americans were killed in the battle , while Howard Peckham gives a figure of 50 Americans killed .

= = Aftermath = =

Scattered fragments of the American army made their way overland on the northern shore to Berthier , where they crossed over to Sorel . Some did not return until June 11 . Sullivan , who counted 2 @, @ 500 effective troops under his command , at first wanted to make a stand at Sorel , but smallpox , desertions , and word that the British fleet was again under sail to come upriver convinced him it was time to retreat . By June 17 , the Continental Army had left the province ; but not before it had attempted to burn Montreal , as well as destroying Fort Saint @-@ Jean and any boats of military value capable of navigating Lake Champlain .

Carleton ordered most of the British army to sail upriver toward Sorel on June 9 , but they did not

actually leave until he joined them on June 13 . A detachment of 1200 men under Fraser marched up the northern shore toward Berthier and Montreal . The British fleet arrived at Sorel late on the 14th ; the Americans had left there just that morning . Elements of the British army entered Montreal on June 17 , and also arrived at Fort Saint @-@ Jean in time to see the last Americans ( the very last one reported to be Benedict Arnold ) push away from its burning remnants .

The captives were treated quite generously by Carleton . Although the conditions of their imprisonment were not always good , he provided them with clothing , and eventually had all but the officers transported to New York and released .

= = Legacy = =

A site near the Le Jeune bridge was designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 1920 in order to commemorate the battle .

There are three plaques in the city of Trois @-@ Rivières commemorating aspects of the battle . A plaque honouring the British participants was placed at the National Historic Site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada . A plaque honouring the American dead was placed in the Parc Champlain by the Daughters of the American Revolution in August 1985 . The third plaque honours Antoine Gauthier for his role in misleading the American troops .

During the American retreat from Quebec , and in this battle , wounded soldiers were treated at the Ursuline convent in Trois @-@ Rivières . Congress never authorized payment for these services and the convent has retained the bill . A bill that was about £ 26 at the time is now estimated to be between ten and twenty million dollars . On July 4 , 2009 , during festivities marking the town 's 375th anniversary , American Consul @-@ General David Fetter symbolically repaid the debt to the Ursulines with a payment of C \$ 130 .