

= Battle on Snowshoes (1757) =

The 1757 Battle on Snowshoes was a skirmish fought between Rogers ' Rangers and French and Indian troops during the French and Indian War on January 21 , 1757 . The battle was given this name because the British combatants were wearing snowshoes .

On January 21 , 1757 , Captain Robert Rogers and a band of his rangers were on a scouting expedition near Fort Carillon on Lake Champlain when they were ambushed by a mixed troop of French regulars , Canadien militiamen , and Indians . The fighting ended when darkness set in , with significant casualties on both sides . The French in their reports claimed the British had a distinct advantage due to their snowshoes .

= = Background = =

The French and Indian War broke out in 1754 between British and French colonists over territorial disputes along their colonial frontiers , and escalated the following year to include regular troops . By 1756 , the French had enjoyed successes in most of their frontier battles against the British . Their only notable failure occurred when the British stopped their southward advance from Lake Champlain in the 1755 Battle of Lake George . From bases at Fort St. Frédéric (located at what is now Crown Point , New York) and Fort Carillon (known to the British as Fort Ticonderoga) , the French and their Indian allies continued to scout and probe the British defenses on Lake George and the upper Hudson River . The British , who had fewer Indian allies , resorted to companies of rangers for their scouting and reconnaissance activities . The ranger companies were organized and directed by Robert Rogers , and eventually became known as Rogers ' Rangers .

= = Prelude = =

In the winter of 1757 , Rogers and several companies of his rangers were stationed at Fort William Henry at the southern end of Lake George and at Fort Edward on the upper Hudson . These forts were principally garrisoned by elements of the 44th and 48th Regiments , and formed the frontier between the British province of New York and the French province of Canada .

Captain Rogers led a scouting expedition from Fort Edward on January 15 , stopping at Fort William Henry to acquire provisions , snowshoes , and additional soldiers . The company left Fort William Henry on January 17 with 86 men , heading down the frozen Lake George . The next day twelve men turned back because of injuries . The remaining men continued north , reaching Lake Champlain at a point between Fort Carillon and Fort St. Frédéric on January 21 . They spotted a sled moving on the lake toward Fort St. Frédéric , so Rogers sent Lieutenant John Stark and some men to intercept it . However , more sleds were spotted , and Stark 's men were seen before they could retreat back into the woods . The sleds turned back toward Carillon . The British gave chase , but most of the French escaped . Rogers succeeded in taking seven prisoners .

Rogers learned from questioning the prisoners that a French and Indian war party had just arrived at Carillon , and that the two forts were garrisoned by a thousand regulars . Concerned that the escaped sleds would raise the alarm , Rogers immediately ordered a return to their last camp . His council disapproved of the return by the same route (a violation of Rogers ' own ranging guidelines) , but he overruled them , citing the need for speed and the deep snow . By early afternoon they had returned to their camp , rested , and were on their way south .

M. de Rouilly , the leader of the supply convoy Rogers had intercepted , returned to Carillon and alerted Paul @-@ Louis de Lusignan , the fort 's commander . According to Lusignan 's report , he immediately sent out a party of about 90 regulars from the Languedoc regiment under the command of Capitaine de Basserode , accompanied by about 90 Canadian militia and Indians . The Indians were primarily Ottawa under the command of Charles Michel de Langlade , one of the French @-@ Indian leaders at Braddock 's defeat in 1755 .

= = Battle = =

Rogers ' men then walked into an ambush , according to his estimate , by " 250 French and Indians . " The British were fortunate that many of the French muskets misfired due to wet gunpowder , as the surprise was nearly complete . Lieutenant Stark , who was bringing up the rear of the ranger column , established a defensive line on a rise with some of his men , from which they gave covering fire as those in the front retreated to that position . As they retreated Rogers ordered his captives slain so that his men might move more freely .

The fight lasted several hours and ended only after sunset , when neither side could see the other . Rogers was injured twice during the battle , once to the head and once to the hand . The French reported that they were at a disadvantage , since they were without snowshoes and " floundering in snow up to their knees " . Once darkness set in , Rogers and his survivors retreated 6 miles (9 @. @ 7 km) to Lake George , where he sent Stark with two men to Fort William Henry for assistance . On January 23 , Rogers returned to Fort William Henry with 48 able @- @ bodied and six wounded soldiers .

= = Aftermath = =

Bougainville questioned some of the men captured during the battle . He learned from them the disposition of men and materials all the way from Albany to Fort William Henry . Other captured British ended up as slaves to the Indians . Thomas Brown , who published a pamphlet that vividly described his captivity , spent almost two years in slavery , traveling as far as the Mississippi River before reaching Albany in November 1758 .

A similar battle was fought the following year , in which Rogers was very nearly killed and his company was decimated .