

= Siege of Fort St. Jean =

The Siege of Fort St. Jean ( also called St. John , St. Johns , or St. John 's ) was conducted by American Brigadier General Richard Montgomery on the town and fort of Saint @-@ Jean in the British province of Quebec during the American Revolutionary War . The siege lasted from September 17 to November 3 , 1775 .

After several false starts in early September , the Continental Army established a siege around Fort St. Jean . Beset by illness , bad weather , and logistical problems , they established mortar batteries that were able to penetrate into the interior the fort , but the defenders , who were well @-@ supplied with munitions , but not food and other supplies , persisted in their defence , believing the siege would be broken by forces from Montreal under General Guy Carleton . On October 18 , the nearby Fort Chambly fell , and on October 30 , an attempt at relief by Carleton was thwarted . When word of this made its way to St. Jean 's defenders , combined with a new battery opening fire on the fort , the fort 's defenders capitulated , surrendering on November 3 .

The fall of Fort St. Jean opened the way for the American army to march on Montreal , which fell without battle on November 13 . General Carleton escaped from Montreal , and made his way to Quebec City to prepare its defences against an anticipated attack .

= = Background = =

Fort Saint @-@ Jean guarded the entry to the province of Quebec on the Richelieu River at the northern end of Lake Champlain . When Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen captured Fort Ticonderoga and raided Fort St. Jean in May 1775 , Quebec was garrisoned by about 600 regular troops , some of which were widely distributed throughout Quebec 's large territory .

= = Continental Army preparations = = =

The invasion of Quebec began when about 1500 men , then under the command of General Philip Schuyler , arrived at the undefended Île @-@ aux @-@ Noix in the Richelieu River on September 4 , 1775 . On September 6 , the Americans began making forays toward Fort St. Jean , only 10 mi ( 16 km ) away . The army was initially composed of militia forces from New York and Connecticut , with most of its operation directed by Brigadier General Richard Montgomery , who took over complete command from Schuyler on September 16 , when Schuyler became too ill to continue leading the invasion .

= = British defensive preparations = = =

Fort St. Jean had been under preparations for an attack from the south ever since Arnold 's raid on Fort St. Jean on May 18 , in which he captured its small garrison and Lake Champlain 's only large military ship . When news of that raid reached Montreal , 140 men under the command of Major Charles Preston were immediately dispatched to hold the fort . Another 50 Canadian militia were raised in Montreal on May 19 , and were also sent to the fort .

When Moses Hazen , the messenger bearing news of Arnold 's raid , reached Quebec City and notified British Governor and General Guy Carleton of the raid , Carleton immediately dispatched additional troops from there and Trois @-@ Rivières to St. Jean . Carleton himself went to Montreal on May 26 to oversee arrangements for the defense of the province , which he decided to concentrate on St. Jean , as it was the most likely invasion route .

By the time the Americans arrived at Île @-@ aux @-@ Noix , Fort St. Jean was defended by about 750 men under the command of Major Charles Preston . The majority of these were regular troops from the 7th and 26th Regiments of Foot and the Royal Artillery . There were 90 locally @-@ raised militia , and 20 members of Colonel Allen Maclean 's Royal Highland Emigrants , men who were veterans of the French and Indian War . A detachment of Indians ( probably Caughnawaga from a nearby village ) patrolled outside the fort under the direction of Claude de Lorimier and Gilbert Tice .

The Richelieu River was patrolled by an armed schooner , the Royal Savage , under the command of Lieutenant William Hunter , with other boats under construction .

The fort itself , sited on the west bank of the Richelieu River , consisted of two earthen redoubts about 600 feet ( 180 m ) apart , surrounded by a ditch 7 feet ( 2 @. @ 1 m ) wide and 8 feet ( 2 @. @ 4 m ) deep that was lined with chevaux de frise . The southern redoubt was roughly 250 by 200 feet ( 80 by 65 metres ) , and it contained 6 buildings , including a bake house , the fort 's magazine , and storage houses . The northern redoubt was slightly larger , enclosing a two @-@ storey stone house that was used as a barracks . The defenders had cleared brush for several hundred yards around the fort to ensure a clear field of fire . They had put up a wooden palisade to the west of the redoubts , and dug a trench connecting the two redoubts , for ease of communications . The eastern side of the fort faced the river , where there was a shipyard and anchorage for the Royal Savage .

= = First approach = =

= = Skirmish with Indians = = =

On September 6 , Generals Schuyler and Montgomery led a force of men in bateaux to a landing point about 1 mile ( 1 @. @ 6 km ) upriver from Fort St. Jean . Schuyler remained with the boats while Montgomery led some men into the swampy lands above the fort . There they were surprised by about 100 Indians led by Tice and Lorimier . In the ensuing skirmish , the Americans suffered 8 dead and 9 wounded , while the Indians suffered 4 dead and 5 wounded , with Tice among the wounded . The American troops , which were relatively untried militia forces , retreated to the boats , where they erected a breastwork for protection . The fort 's defenders , seeing this , fired their cannon at the breastwork , prompting the Americans to retreat about 1 mile ( 1 @. @ 6 km ) upriver , where they set up a second breastwork and camped for the night . The Indians , resentful that neither the British forces in the fort nor the habitants had come to their support in the engagement , returned to their homes .

At this camp , Schuyler was visited by a local man , believed by some historians to be Moses Hazen . Hazen , a Massachusetts @-@ born retired officer who lived near the fort , painted a bleak portrait of the American situation . He said that the fort was defended by the entire 26th regiment and 100 Indians , that it was well @-@ stocked and ready for a siege . He also said that the habitants , while friendly to the American cause , were unlikely to help the Americans unless the prospects for victory looked good . Schuyler held a war council on September 7 , in which the command decided to retreat back to Île @-@ aux @-@ Noix . However , on September 8 , reinforcements arrived : another 800 men including Connecticut militia under David Wooster and New Yorkers with artillery , joined them . Heartened by this arrival , they decided instead to proceed with a nighttime attempt on the fort . Schuyler , whose illness was getting more severe ( he was so ill " as not to be able to hold the pen " ) , turned command of the army over to Montgomery .

Reports of this first contact between opposing forces outside St. Jean were often wildly exaggerated , with many local reports claiming it as some kind of victory . The Quebec Gazette , for example , reported that 60 Indians had driven off 1 @, @ 500 Americans , killing 30 and wounding 40 . Following this news , General Carleton issued orders for all of the nearby parishes to call up ten percent of their militia . Officers of the militia reported to Montreal , but many militia men stayed home . By September 7 , a troop of about 120 men was raised , which was sent to Fort St. Jean .

= = Propaganda and recruiting = = =

On September 8 , Schuyler sent Ethan Allen ( acting as a volunteer since he had been deposed as head of the Green Mountain Boys by Seth Warner ) and John Brown to circulate a proclamation announcing the Americans ' arrival , and their desire to free the Canadians from the bondage of British rule . Allen and Brown traveled through the parishes between St. Jean and Montreal , where they were well @-@ received , and even provided with local guards . James Livingston , a local

grain merchant ( and a relative of Montgomery 's wife ) , began raising a local militia near Chambly , eventually gathering nearly 300 men .

Allen also visited the village of the Caughnawaga , from whom he received assurances of their neutrality . The Caughnawaga had been the subject of a propaganda war , with Guy Johnson , the British Indian agent , trying to convince them ( as well as other tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy ) to take up arms against the Americans . However , Schuyler had successfully negotiated an agreement in August with most of the Iroquois to remain neutral . Word of this agreement reached the Caughnawaga on September 10 ; when Carleton and Johnson learned of it , Johnson sent Daniel Claus and Joseph Brant in an attempt to change the minds of the Caughnawaga ; their entreaties were refused .

= = Second approach = =

On the night of September 10 , Montgomery led 1000 men out again , returning to the first landing site by boat . In the confusion of the darkness and the swamp , some of the troops were separated from the rest . When they encountered one another again , there was panic , as each mistook the other for the enemy . After just 30 minutes in the swamp , they returned to the landing . Montgomery , who had stayed with the boats , sent the troops out again . This time , the vanguard encountered a few Indians and habitants , and again panicked . Two of the " enemy " were killed , but the troops again made a disorderly retreat to the landing , which their commander , Colonel Rudolphus Ritzema , was apparently unable to stop .

While the command staff met to discuss the next move , word came in that the British warship Royal Savage was approaching . This started a disorganized retreat up the river back to Île @-@ aux @-@ Noix , in which the command staff was nearly left behind .

A third attempt was planned for September 13 ; bad weather delayed attempts until September 16 . However , General Schuyler was by this time so ill that he thought it necessary to withdraw to Ticonderoga . He left that day , turning full command of the invasion over to Montgomery . Schuyler was not the only one falling ill ; the bad weather , and the swampy , malaria @-@ infested terrain of Île @-@ aux @-@ Noix was also taking a toll on the troops , as more of them became ill as well . The bad news was tempered by good ; an additional 250 troops , in the form of a company of Green Mountain Boys under Seth Warner , and another company of New Hampshire men under Colonel Timothy Bedel , arrived at Île @-@ aux @-@ Noix .

= = Siege begins = =

On September 17 , Montgomery 's army disembarked from their makeshift fleet just south of St. Jean , and sent out John Brown with a detachment to block the road going north from the fort to Montreal . A small flotilla of armed boats guarded the river against the possibility of Royal Savage attacking the army as it landed .

Brown and his men made their first interdiction that day , capturing a wagon @-@ train of supplies destined for the fort . Preston , seeing that this had happened , sent out a sortie to recover the goods . Brown 's men , who had had time to hide the supplies in the woods , retreated until the sounds of the conflict reached the main body of the army . Montgomery , along with Bedel and his company , rushed to Brown 's aid , and succeeded in driving the British back into the fort without recovering the supplies . During this encounter , Moses Hazen was first captured and questioned by Brown , and then arrested again by the British , and brought into the fort . That night , Hazen and Lorimier , the Indian agent , sneaked out of the fort and went to Montreal , to report the situation to Carleton .

Montgomery began entrenching his troops around the fort on September 18 , and constructing a mortar battery south of the fort . He ordered Brown to establish a position at La Prairie , one of the sites where there was a crossing of the Saint Lawrence River to Montreal . Ethan Allen went with a small company of Americans to collect Canadiens that Livingston had been recruiting , and take them to monitor Longueuil , the other major crossing point . Livingston had established a base at

Point @-@ Olivier , below Fort Chambly , another aging fort at the base of some rapids in the Richelieu River , and was urging his compatriots to join him there . Some Loyalists attempted to dissuade others from joining with Livingston ; Livingston 's supporters sometimes violently opposed attempts by Loyalists to organize , and Carleton did nothing at the time to assist the Loyalists outside the city .

Allen , who was already renowned for his bravado in the action at Fort Ticonderoga , decided , when he reached Longueuil on September 24 , to attempt the capture of Montreal . In the Battle of Longue @-@ Pointe , this effort failed on the next day , with Allen and a number of men captured by the British . The alarm raised by Allen 's proximity to Montreal resulted in the mustering of about 1 @,@ 200 men from rural districts outside Montreal . Carleton failed to capitalize on this upwelling of Loyalist support by using them for a relief expedition against the besieging Americans . After several weeks of inaction by Carleton , the rural men drifted away , called by the demands of home and harvest . ( Carleton did take advantage of the moment to order the arrest of Thomas Walker , a Montreal merchant who was openly pro @-@ American and had been reporting to the Americans . )

The conditions for the Americans constructing the siege works were difficult . The ground was swampy , and the trenches quickly became filled knee @-@ deep in water . Montgomery described his army as " half @-@ drowned rats crawling through a swamp " . To make matters even worse , food and ammunition supplies were running out , and the British showed no sign of giving in despite the American bombardment . Disease also worked to reduce the effectiveness of the Americans ; by mid @-@ October , more than 900 men had been sent back to Ticonderoga due to illness . In the early days of the siege , the fort 's defenders took advantage of the land they had cleared around the fort to make life as difficult as possible for the besiegers erecting batteries . Major Preston wrote in his journal on September 23 that " a deserter [ tells us where ] the enemy are erecting their battery and we distress them as much as we can with shells . " Until large guns arrived from Ticonderoga , the fort 's defenders enjoyed a significant advantage in firepower .

= = Large cannon arrive = =

On October 6 , a cannon that was dubbed the " Old Sow " arrived from Ticonderoga . Put in position the next day , it started lobbing shells at the fort . Montgomery then began planning the placement of a second battery . While he first wanted to place one to the northwest of the fort , his staff convinced him instead to place on the eastern shore of the Richelieu , where it would command the shipyard and the Royal Savage . This battery , whose construction was complicated by an armed row galley sent from the fort to oppose the works , was completed on October 13 , and opened fire the next day . One day after that , the Royal Savage lay in ruins before the fort . Its commander had , in anticipation of her destruction , ordered her to be anchored where her supplies and armaments might be recovered .

= = Fort Chambly taken = =

James Livingston had advanced to Montgomery the idea of taking Fort Chambly , near where his militia was encamped . One of Livingston 's captains , Jeremy Duggan , had , on September 13 , floated two nine @-@ pound guns past St. Jean , and these guns were put to use to that end . Chambly , which was garrisoned by only 82 men , mostly from the 7th Foot , was surrendered on October 18 by its commander , Major Joseph Stopford , after two days of bombardment . Most seriously , Stopford failed to destroy supplies that were vitally useful to the Americans , primarily gunpowder , but also winter provisions . Six tons of powder , 6 @,@ 500 musket cartridges , 125 muskets , 80 barrels of flour and 272 barrels of foodstuff were captured .

Timothy Bedel negotiated a cease @-@ fire with Major Preston so that the prisoners captured at Chambly could be floated up the river past St. Jean . The loss of Chambly had a dispiriting effect at St. Jean ; some of the militia wanted to surrender , but Preston would not allow it . Following Chambly 's capitulation , Montgomery renewed his intention to construct a battery northwest of St.

Jean . This time , his staff raised no objections , and by the end of October guns that were emplaced there opened fire on the fort .

= = Carleton tries to help = =

In Montreal , Carleton was finally prodded to move . Under constant criticism for failure to act sooner , and mistrustful of his militia forces , he developed a plan of attack . He sent word to Colonel Allan Maclean at Quebec to bring more of his Royal Highland Emigrants and some militia forces to Sorel , from where they would move up the Richelieu toward St. Jean , while Carleton would lead a force across the Saint Lawrence at Longueuil .

Maclean raised a force of about 180 Emigrants , and a number of militia . By the time he reached Sorel on October 14 , he had raised , in addition to the Emigrants , about 400 militia men , sometimes using threatening tactics to gain recruits . His and Carleton 's hopes were dashed on October 30 , when Carleton 's attempted landing at Longueuil of a force numbering about 1 @,@ 000 ( mostly militia , with some Emigrants and Indian support ) was repulsed by the Americans . A few of his boats were landed , but most were driven off by Seth Warner 's use of field artillery that had been captured at Chambly .

Maclean attempted to press forward , but his militia forces began to desert him , and the forces under Brown and Livingston were growing in number . He retreated back to Sorel , and made his way back to Quebec .

= = Surrender = =

In late October , the American troop strength surged again with the arrival of 500 men from New York and Connecticut , including Brigadier General David Wooster . This news , combined with the new battery trained on the fort , news of the failed relief expedition , and dwindling supplies , made the situation in the fort quite grim .

On November 1 , Montgomery sent a truce flag , carried by a prisoner captured during Carleton 's aborted relief attempt , into the fort . The man delivered a letter , in which Montgomery , pointing out that relief was unlikely to come , offered to negotiate a surrender . Preston , not entirely trusting the man 's report , sent out one of his captains to confer with Montgomery . The counteroffer , which Montgomery rejected , owing to the lateness of the season , was to hold a truce for four days , after which the garrison would surrender if no relief came . Montgomery let the captain examine another prisoner from Carleton 's expedition , who confirmed what the first one had reported . Montgomery then repeated his demand for an immediate surrender , terms for which were drawn up the next day .

Preston 's troops marched out of the fort and surrendered their weapons on November 3 , with the regulars in full dress uniform . He surrendered 536 officers and soldiers , 79 Canadien and 8 English volunteers .

= = Aftermath = =

Following the news of St. Jean 's surrender , Carleton immediately began preparing to leave Montreal . He left Montreal on November 11 , two days before American troops entered the city without opposition . Narrowly escaping capture when his fleet was forced to surrender after being threatened by batteries at Sorel , he made his way to Quebec to prepare that city 's defenses .

Casualties on both sides during the siege were relatively light , but the Continental Army suffered a significant reduction in force due to illness throughout the siege . Furthermore , the long siege meant that the Continental Army had to move on Quebec City with winter setting in , and with many enlistments nearing expiration at year 's end . Richard Montgomery was promoted to Major General on December 9 , 1775 , as a result of his successful capture of Saint Jean and Montreal . He never found out ; the news did not reach the American camp outside Quebec before he died in the December 31 Battle of Quebec .

In 1776 , the British reoccupied the fort following the Continental Army 's abandonment of it during its retreat to Fort Ticonderoga .

= = Legacy = =

The British ( and then Canadian ) military occupied the Fort Saint @-@ Jean site until 1995 , using it since 1952 as the campus of the Royal Military College , which still occupies part of the site . The site now includes a museum devoted to the 350 @-@ year military history of Fort Saint @-@ Jean .

Siege of Fort St. Jean is mentioned in a Fort Saint @-@ Jean plaque erected in 1926 by Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada at the Royal Military College Saint @-@ Jean . " Constructed in 1743 by M. de Léry under orders from Governor la Galissonnière . This post was for all the military expeditions towards Lake Champlain . In August 31 , 1760 , Commandant de Roquemaure had it blown up in accordance with orders from the Governor de Vaudreuil in order to prevent its falling into the hands of the English . Rebuilt by Governor Carleton , in 1773 . During the same year , under the command of Major Charles Preston of the 26th Regiment , it withstood a 45 day siege by the American troops commanded by General Montgomery . "