

**A JOURNAL OF THE EXPEDITION
TO QUEBEC, IN THE YEAR 1775,
UNDER THE COMMAND OF
COLONEL BENEDICT ARNOLD**

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JAMES MELVIN

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INTRODUCTION.

In the month of September, 1775, about the same time that Canada was invaded by the usual route from New York, under General Montgomery, a body of troops, amounting to about 1,100 men, was detached from the American army before Boston, and designed to invade the province of Canada by a new and unexpected route.

The command was given to Colonel Benedict Arnold, an officer already well known, and remarkable for his bold enterprise, daring courage, and impetuous and determined character. The officers accompanying the expedition were also well known for their soldierlike qualities. Many of them had seen service, and were selected for these reasons, and the subsequent distinction to which many of them rose, proves the wisdom and sagacity of the choice.

After some delay, the troops embarked in boats at

Gardiner, in Maine, and proceeded to ascend the Kennebec River. Their route lay across the coast to the mouth of the Kennebec, thence up that river to its source, and thence to the River St. Lawrence. In this enterprise the troops encountered great difficulties, being obliged to contend against impetuous currents and deep swamps, and were frequently compelled to haul their canoes up rapid streams and over falls of water. They had, moreover, craggy precipices and difficult mountains to ascend; and, in some places, were compelled to cut their way, for miles, through woods so dense that their progress was sometimes only four or five miles a day. In addition to this, their provisions at length became so scarce that some of the men were obliged to eat not only their dogs, but even their cartridge boxes, breeches, and shoes. The constant exposure and fatigue, as well as the want of food, caused many to fall sick, or drop from exhaustion, and one-third of the original number were eventually forced to return to their homes.

Notwithstanding all this, the remainder bore all their distresses with the greatest fortitude and constancy. They were encouraged by their brave commander, and cheered with the hope of ultimate success and the honor that would forever attach to them as participators in an

enterprise that would rival the exploit of Xenophon, or any of the other famous expeditions of antiquity.

After a long and toilsome journey, encountering difficulties and hardships almost impossible to conceive, in a dense wilderness, wild and uninhabited, at a season of continued cold and rain, the troops finally arrived in the inhabited parts of Canada, to the no small surprise, awe and admiration of the people of that province.

This expedition has taken a conspicuous place in the records of the past. The historian has dilated at length upon it, and the enterprise has been considered one of the grandest in conception, and one of the most brilliant in execution, of any that has ever been attempted in the world.

The participators have been lauded and admired, and the commander has been frequently spoken of as the American Hannibal.

The following Journal, which was kept by one of the actors of that famous expedition, cannot, therefore, fail to be of interest. In it will be found the results of the enterprise, the daring and gallantry evinced in the assault of Quebec, and the final repulse of the brave assailants, together with the subsequent capture and incarceration of a portion of them as prisoners of war.

Of James Melvin, the author of the Journal, we have,

unfortunately, no knowledge, further than that he was attached to the company commanded by Captain Dearborn. An effort has been made to ascertain some facts in regard to his history, but without success. From the character of the Journal, the style in which it is written, and the beauty and distinctness, we can form no other conclusion than that he was a man of education, and that he belonged to a family of position and respectability.

A JOURNAL.

CAMBRIDGE, September 13, 1775.

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- Sept. 13. This day being Wednesday, marched from Cambridge, in Captain DEARBORN'S⁽¹⁾ company, destined for Quebec, and were to embark at Newburyport for Kennebec river. We lodged in Medford.
- " 14. Received one month's pay, and marched to Lynn ; lodged at Porter's tavern.
- " 15. Marched to Ipswich.
- " 16. Marched to Newburyport ; the company were quartered in a rope-walk.
- " 17. *Sunday*—the detachments went to meeting.
- " 18. P. M.—Embarked on board a schooner of seventy-five tons ; the whole were embarked in eleven vessels.
- " 19. About 10 o'clock sailed out of the harbor, and stood on and off, waiting for one of the vessels which got aground, and not getting off the men were put on board the other vessels, and we sailed in the afternoon with a fair wind and pleasant weather ; at night it grew thick and foggy, with rain, thunder, and lightning, and blowed fresh.
- " 20. In the morning, foggy and wet ; lay too part of the night, at daybreak two of our fleet

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- were in sight, and we made sail and stood in for the shore. Blowed fresh—we made Seguin.
- Sept. 21. Saw two of our vessels coming out of Sheeps-gut river into Kennebec. We proceeded up the river as far as the tide would permit, and came to anchor within six miles of Fort Western.
- “ 23. Arrived at Fort Western.^(a) One JAMES McCORMICK^(b) shot Sergeant BISHOP.
- “ 25. McCORMICK was found guilty.
- “ 26. He was brought to the gallows, and reprivied.
- “ 27. Got our provisions into batteaux, and went about four miles.
- “ 28. Proceeded up the river and found the water shoal, which caused a rapid current, and we were obliged often to get out and wade, pulling the boat after us.
- “ 30. Arrived at Fort Halifax, where was the first carrying-place; the land here is better than that near the sea. We carried over our batteau and provisions; the carrying-place is opposite the fort.
- Oct. 1. Proceeded up the river; encamped in the
- “ 2. woods; went about ten miles. Cold and rainy.
- “ 3. Came to Scowhegan Falls;^(c) the carrying-place is about forty rods over a little island
- “ 4. Went up to Bumazces Ripples, and came to Norridgewalk. The carriage-place is about a mile in length. We had oxen to haul over our provisions. Our batteaux were

1775. caulked. We were now to take our leave of houses and settlements, of which we saw no more, except one Indian wigwam, until we came among the French, in Canada.
- Oct. 6. Left Nerridgewalk ; went about five miles.
- " 7. Went about twelve miles, and encamped. The land here is level and good ; the river rapid.
- " 8. Proceeded up the river, and encamped about five miles below the falls.
- " 9. Arrived at the great carrying-place, where was a log house built for the sick.
- " 10. Mr. Spring,^(s) our chaplain, went to prayers ; we went to the first pond, four miles from the river ; it blowed hard, and one of the men was killed by the falling of a tree.
- " 11. Crossed the first pond about three-quarters of a mile over ; here is plenty of fine trout.
- " 12. There was a log house built on the first carrying-place, between the first and second ponds.
- " 13. Crossed the carrying-place from this pond to another ; the carrying-place is about one mile over.
- " 14. Crossed the pond about half a mile over, and got over the carrying-place about one and a half miles in length ; the woods are cedar and hemlock.
- " 16. Crossed the third pond about one and a half miles over. We got over the fourth carrying-place, four and a half miles in length ; part of the way over a boggy swamp, overgrown with white moss and bushes, which