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Navigating Wilderness and Borderland: Environment and Culture in the Northeastern Americas during the American Revolution

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NAVIGATING WILDERNESS AND BORDERLAND: ENVIRONMENT AND
CULTURE IN THE NORTHEASTERN AMERICAS DURING
THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By

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B.A. University of Maine, 2011

M.A. University of Maine, 2013

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A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

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DISSERTATION ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT

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An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
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This dissertation examines the evolving interactions of nature and humans during the major military campaigns in the northern theatre of the American War for Independence (1775 - 1783) as local people, local environments, and military personnel from outside the region interacted with one another in complex ways. Examining the American Revolution at the convergence of environmental, military, and borderlands history, it elucidates the agency of nature and culture in shaping how three military campaigns in the “wilderness” unfolded. The invasion of Canada in 1775, the expedition from Quebec to Albany in 1777, and the invasion of Iroquoia in 1779 are the interconnected comparative case studies that inform this project. As human and non-human actors alike utilized the chaos of war to further distinct goals and purposes, the levels of assistance or resistance that each provided to the large British and Continental

forces that arrived from outside of the bioregion directly influenced the geopolitical and martial outcomes of campaigns.

The study argues that as European-style war machines groped forward, in unfamiliar territories, and navigated both ecological and cultural landscapes that the Northeast Borderlands exerted substantial causal force. This contiguous bioregion stretched from the District of Maine and Quebec in the east through northern New York and northwestern Pennsylvania, and from Montreal to Iroquoia and beyond during the latter half of the eighteenth century. South of this borderlands was the emergent Euro-American imperial power of the thirteen colonies that would become the United States, and to its north were the British colonies of Nova Scotia and Quebec. The Northeastern Borderlands was a mostly autonomous region in between colonial settlements that deployed military force as a principal means to expand. This dissertation examines the intertwined relationships among varied cultural and environmental landscapes in a large bioregion, on the one hand, and the process of waging war on the other. Careful attention to the distinct human ecology of the Northeastern Borderlands, its causal significance helps to transcend nationalistic interpretations of history that still dominates popular and scholarly understanding of the past, in general, and of the American Revolution, in particular.

DEDICATION

For my daughter,
Eliza Margret Soucier,
whose questioning of the world inspires my curiosity.

AKNOWLEDGMENTS

One thing that I learned throughout my time in graduate school is that no project, conference paper, article, or book chapter is a solitary endeavor. This dissertation is no exception to this universal truth of the academy. However, all faults remaining in this manuscript, as well as all other work published at present, are my own but I blame Ian J. Jesse.

Chief among those who assisted me through the journey of graduate school are my co-advisers Richard Judd and Liam Riordan. Liam is to blame for inspiring a bright-eyed, non-traditional undergraduate student sitting in his U.S. History I survey class to say, “that’s what I want to be when I grow up.” Through many conversations in his office, he led me down the path of academic redemption and finally an acceptance into graduate school. My budding interest in the era of the American Revolution was then nurtured and grown in both his undergraduate and graduate seminars concerning the topic. Dick sparked my interest in environmental history as a graduate student while Liam, who was then my M.A. adviser, was in Scotland on a Fulbright Fellowship. Dick is to blame for giving a very naïve and very hungry graduate student the advice of becoming an academic entrepreneur by diversifying my credentials as much as possible. By the time he taught me to say “no” regarding digital and public history projects, academic service work, and service to the department, Pandora’s box was already opened never to be closed again. Wedding Dick’s interest in environmental history and Liam’s interest in the American Revolution with my interest of both, we came up with a co-advising relationship that led to the two of them reading

countless drafts of my projects and writing countless letters of recommendation. This dissertation is the product of their willingness to step out of their zones of comfort to facilitate the project which I argued had great promise.

Other scholars at the University of Maine helped groom this dissertation from just an idea that arose during a seminar into what it is today. Jacques Ferland set aside many hours to provide guidance in navigating the depths of Canadian historiography and borderlands methodology for this project. Stephen Miller provided me with an understanding of military history and military history methodology that became the backbone of research for this project. He also fostered my interest in the subject through a road trip to the Society of Military History conference in Ottawa. Mark McLaughlin and Micah Pawling both took the time to have countless conversations with me regarding my work and pointed me into directions and sources that I otherwise never would have explored. Claire Campbell, Ed MacDonald, Brian Payne, Matthew McKenzie of the Northeast Atlantic Canada Environment History Forum also provided critical feedback on chapters of this dissertation and assisted me through the rigors of getting an article and book chapter published.

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Finally, I would be remiss to not thank my family for their support during my time in graduate school. Bonnie Soucier and Karen Birmingham provided countless hours of childcare which allowed me to travel for conferences and research; as well as commit to the day-to-day rigors of writing a doctoral dissertation. To Amanda – my wife, my friend, my editor – I am grateful for your understanding and support during our adventure through the often bizarre world of academia. You have been selfless, kind, and supportive through it all. This project is dedicated to our daughter Eliza, whose first words, first steps, and endless inquiries regarding the world around us provided me with much needed distractions and rejuvenation throughout the completion of this dissertation.

Daniel S. Soucier

Brewer, Maine

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Chapter 1

Towards an Environmental History of the American Revolution

The pages that follow present a story about the human ecology of the Northeastern Borderlands as a bioregion penetrated by relatively large-scale warfare in the late-eighteenth century.¹ It examines the evolving interactions of nature and humans during the major military campaigns in the northern theatre of the American War for Independence (1775 - 1783) as local people, local environments, and military personnel interacted with one another. Examining the American Revolution at the convergence of environmental, military, and borderlands history, this dissertation elucidates the agency of nature and culture in shaping how three military campaigns in the “wilderness” unfolded. The invasion of Canada in 1775, the expedition from Quebec to Albany in 1777, and the invasion of Iroquoia in 1779 are the comparative case studies for this project. As human and non-human actors alike utilized the chaos of warfare to further their own goals to survive and thrive, the levels of assistance or resistance they presented to the British and Continental forces that arrived largely from outside the bioregion directly influenced the geopolitical successes and failures of the military campaigns. Thus, this is also a story of how European-style war machines groped forward, in unfamiliar territories, to navigate both the wilderness landscape and cultural landscape of the Northeast Borderlands.

¹ William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *The Journal of American History* (March, 1992): 1347-1376, highlights the narrative value of environmental history.

Scholarly and popular understanding of the eighteenth-century wilderness are plagued by persistent images of seventeenth-century Puritans struggling to survive in the inhospitable environments where they first established their communities. Historian Perry Miller first recognized this in his influential 1953 essay "Errand into the Wilderness," explaining that the Puritan's self-understanding to complete the Reformation of Christianity elevated the peril of their venture with a wild landscape as an essential foil for their actions. Their knowledge of this natural landscape and its indigenous inhabitants was woefully limited, a great part of their mission, as noted by John Winthrop in 1630, was to forge a city upon a hill as a beacon to others that transformed the wilderness into lasting godly civilization.² The wilderness for these individuals was a place to be feared and conquered. It was a place of supreme conflict between good and evil, civilization and savagery, an Edenic garden and the realm of Satan, a conceptualization that persists, if in more secular form, to the present.³

According to environmental historian Roderick Nash, this fear of peril in the wilderness was challenged by a utilitarian understanding of the environment in the nineteenth century where trees were measured in board feet and acreage understood in terms of land for cattle to be pastured. In response to this increasingly market-based vision of the landscape, urban elites, following the lead of visual artists like Thomas

² Perry Miller, "Errand into the Wilderness," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January, 1953): 13-15.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

Cole, began to value and romanticize the wilderness in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ However, this dissertation argues that the simplistic historical progression of wilderness perception from fear, to utility, to romance, and then to conservation and preservation makes Euro-Americans complex relationship to nature in the Northeastern Borderlands too linear and unidirectional. By analyzing the written documentation left by soldiers during the American Revolution, this dissertation unearths a complex relationship between eighteenth-century individuals, almost all of them European or American-born men, and the natural world that transcended lines of class and urban-rural residence. Whether a soldier was an artisanal wig maker from Providence, Rhode Island, a farmer from Sherman Valley, Pennsylvania, or a merchant from New Haven, Connecticut, he simultaneously felt, in the face of wilderness travel, competing emotions of trepidation, awe, failure, invigoration, and accomplishment.⁵ Late-eighteenth century understandings of the wilderness existed in multiple planes of awareness with both positive and negative connotations.

As the British and Continental armies navigated the northeastern wilderness, their senses of fear, utility, and appreciation shaped their interactions with local indigenous, French, and provincial populations who resided within the bioregion of the Northeastern Borderlands. The way in which local people perceived, assisted, and

⁴ For more on the progressive continuum of American understanding of nature see Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

⁵ The soldiers referenced are Captain Simeon Thayer, Private George Morison, and Colonel Benedict Arnold. For more information on these individuals and other diarist during the Invasion of Canada in 1775, see Appendix A.

resisted, military interlopers entering their communities, and the way military personnel and local people negotiated with one another, was inextricably linked to the human ecology of the bioregion. These mutually constituted human and ecological relationships reshaped the war effort in the region and transformed the nature of cultural exchange therein.

As the War for Independence commenced, the borderlands was characterized by fluid identities and loyalties among indigenous and relatively sparse colonial settler populations with the British and Continental armies suddenly arriving with often sharp political, economic, and social demands. When these military forces struggled to master the cultural and environmental landscapes of the Northeastern Borderlands, they were often desperate to forge an accommodation, but over time this was largely replaced by external coercion. Eventually, negotiations broke down and scorched-earth campaigns designed to remove opposing local and regional cultures and ecological regimes characterized the exchanges in the altered wilderness. The geopolitical context of the war as a conflict between empire and colonies created the new nation of the United States and also created an international boundary between British North America and the United States that attempted to delineate a sharper border than had existed prior to the war. The three campaigns examined here mark a diplomatic, political, and social hardening of the region into separate geopolitical spheres, well before John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and Henry Laurens negotiated the Treaty of Paris in 1783.

Defining a Borderlands

As the historian C. Vann Woodward has argued, “to limit the subject of historical study within national boundaries is always to invite the charge of narrow perspective and historical nationalism.”⁶ In no subject area in American history is this truer for than the American Revolution. The conflict created a new political state, and historians of the event immediately set forth to create a new national narrative of American exceptionalism. Recently, scholars such as Maya Jasanoff and Elizabeth Mancke have shown that embracing a transnational, comparative, or borderlands approach to the study of the America Revolution can greatly enrich our understanding of this pivotal era that had more than just national consequences.⁷ Introducing a transnational methodology to the field of medical and environmental history in *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82*, Elizabeth A. Fenn adroitly demonstrates that the natural world has “no respect for boundaries of race, class, and nationality” as she examined how smallpox ravaged almost all of the North-American continent during the War for Independence from Mesoamerica to the far northwest.⁸ These studies suggest

⁶ C. Vann Woodward, *The Comparative Approach to American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 3.

⁷ Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalty in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011); Elizabeth Mancke, *The Faultlines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, CA. 1760-1830* (New York: Routledge, 2005). Another work of note is an anthology edited by Jerry Banister and Liam Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

⁸ Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-1782* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 3.

the fertile ground for scholarship that transcends a history of the American Revolution contained within strict geopolitical units.

In a landmark article on the field of transnational history, Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron defined a borderlands as a region that exists between two imperial powers with contested boundary lines.⁹ The focus of this dissertation is the Northeast Borderlands: a contiguous bioregion stretching in the east from the District of Maine and Quebec through western Pennsylvania and New York and into Iroquoia and Montreal. South of this borderlands in the mid-and-late eighteenth century were the nascent Euro-American imperial power of the Thirteen Colonies, and to its north were the British colonies of Nova Scotia and Quebec. Although borderlands has been an especially fertile analytical construct in the US and Mexican southwest, the intercolonial and intercultural makeup of the northeast was (and remains) a vital borderlands in North America. Those who lived in the region exploited their unique situation to maintain fluid identities and fluid allegiances to best advance the interests of the community or the individual as more important than distant geopolitical powers that they engaged with selectively at any given time and in response to specific local conditions.

This dissertation does not limit borderlands peoples to indigenous residents stuck in between colonial powers, as Adelman and Aron tend to. It argues that French-Canadians, Acadians, and English-speaking settlers as well as indigenous people living

⁹ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (June, 1999): 816.

within the Northeast Borderlands were able to utilize the War for Independence as a means to exercise autonomy and maximize their political and economic potential during the conflict by declaring and altering their relationships with one another and with external actors that made new demands upon the region. This fluidity remained a common characteristic of negotiation in the region as local people interfaced with British regulars, Continental soldiers, German mercenaries, and patriot and loyal militias. In navigating the Northeastern Borderlands, military personnel, by the same token, devised measures of accommodation with residents socially, culturally, religiously, economically, and environmentally.¹⁰ This borderland region existed on many levels as local agents assisted or resisted military interlopers forging new opportunities to improve their own lives and their own communities.

This dissertation combines military and environmental history to highlight how natural and local actors held little interest in the demands and boundaries established by distant imperial, colonial, and national diplomacy and politics. Instead, the interfaces between soldiers, colonists, indigenous people, and the non-human world during the American Revolution reshaped geopolitics as they adapted to the unique circumstances of borderlands warfare that crisscrossed the boundary lines connecting and separating New England, Canada, New York, and Iroquoia.

Utilizing this transnational approach, the Northeastern Borderlands is best viewed as a bioregion with a unique human ecology. Historian Carolyn Merchant

¹⁰ Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid, eds., *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005), 10. The editors highlight how borderlands concepts shaped the essays in their anthology.

defines bioregionalism as “an idea that people and other living and non-living things in a particular region...are interdependent” and “live as much as possible within the resources and ecological constraints of that place.”¹¹ This interdependency in the northeast created particular relationships between human beings and their natural, social, built, and hybrid environments. Similarly, Dan Flores argues that focusing on bioregionalism shows “the close linkage between ecological locale and human culture” highlighting “the variety of ways humans not only alter environments but also adapt to them.”¹² This approach accentuates the place of the non-human environment to shape human experiences and actions. Looking at the War for Independence through the lens of bioregionalism and human ecology can fruitfully transcend national boundaries to probe the multi-causal relationship among warfare, the environment, and human society to refashion geopolitics and military operations.

The Northeastern Borderlands is unique human ecological bioregion. It was a geopolitical area contested by Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples and, increasingly, during the eighteenth century by French and British imperial powers until the end of the Seven Years’ War expelled French authorities from most of the northeast. Shortly afterwards, a new imperial, and American, power sought hegemony in the region. Throughout, indigenous residents and local colonists negotiated their lives in this space at a considerable distance from the power of Euro-American states. The sparse

¹¹ Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History: An Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 218.

¹² Dan Flores, *The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 95.

population of this large region allowed those living within it to exercise autonomy and sovereignty with varying degrees of success over time. Ecologically, the region is bound by mountainous terrain and rich alluvial soils where residents wrested a variety of grains from their fields and fruit from their orchards. The region is well-watered receiving approximately 42 inches of rainfall annually, and intersected with riparian passages inland from the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of St. Lawrence. Large tracts of uncolonized space lay between Euro-American settlements and fortifications with no, or only rudimentary, colonial communications and infrastructure linking them.

Located in Between: A History of War and Environment Studies

The union of war and environment studies has emerged from an insightful article published in the *Environmental History Review* in 1995 entitled, "The Impact of World War II on the Land."¹³ Author, Ferenc Szasz, argued that despite the devastation wrought by the war on the built environment, human culture, and human society, military historians had claimed "that even the cataclysmic events of 1939 - 1945 involved no permanent alteration to the natural environment" as battlefields returned to farmland and post-war urban landscapes bustled with renewed activity.¹⁴ This traditional view did not take into account the use of chemical weapons, biological weapons, and radioactive weapons by both the Axis and the Allies, which Szasz argued "did alter the natural environment at a number of locations," including manufacturing

¹³ Ferenc M. Szasz, "The Impact of World War II on the Land: Gruinard Island, Scotland, and Trinity Site, New Mexico as Case Studies," *Environmental History Review*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Winter, 1995): 15-30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

sites where weapons were produced, arsenals where weapons were stockpiled, and laboratories where experiments took place.¹⁵ Due to the nature of these chemical, biological, and radioactive agents, it seems unlikely that the sites of their production, storage, and experimentation can ever return to their pre-war condition.

Following this article, all remained quiet on the hybrid war and environment front as military and environmental historians pursued interesting and provocative work each in their respective fields. In military history, analyses transcended the traditional focus on great generals and battle history to explore issues of race, class, culture, and gender. In environmental history, a much newer subfield, historians adopted methods from historical geography and focused on the entangled relationship between the natural non-human world, human systems of production, and human perceptions of the natural world – in short, how humans affect nature, how nature affects humans, and how humans think about it all. This does not mean that the environment did not play some role in the analysis of military history. Indeed, military historians have attended to weather, terrain, and natural resource struggles since Herodotus; however, as a leader in the new field, Richard P. Tucker, notes that traditional “interest lies almost exclusively with the human drama; they see nature as context, but not as consequence, of mass violence.”¹⁶ At the same time, he goes on to explain that environmental historians, for their part, “rarely” focused “on the dynamics

¹⁵ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶ Richard P. Tucker, “War and the Environment,” in *A Companion to Global Environmental History*, eds. J.R. McNeill and Erin Stewart Mauldin (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 319.

of mass violence or the structures of military operations.”¹⁷ The practitioners of the two fields held different interests, practiced different methodologies, and interfaced infrequently in print or in person.

Overcoming this divide, Edmund Russell published a trail-blazing monograph for the field of war and environment history, *War and Nature* in 2001.¹⁸ This book skillfully challenged traditional scholarship written by military, environmental, science and technology, and cultural historians by transcending the nature/culture divide. He argued that American control over the natural environment “coevolved” during times of war.¹⁹ In other words, as human beings fought one another, they developed chemicals which killed insects and as human beings began fighting insects, they developed chemicals which killed human beings. This laid the foundation for war and environment studies by highlighting the dialectical relationship between human violence and the natural world. Russell bridged the two fields, creating a common language and providing common themes to be explored and tested.

Russell’s methodology combined the theoretical construct of war and society studies – which looks at how military action affects society and how society affects the military – with the theoretical construct of environmental history – which looks at how human culture effects the environment and how the environment effects human culture. This combination creates its own theoretical construct to look at how warfare

¹⁷ Ibid., 319.

¹⁸ Edmund Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁹ Ibid., 2.

changes the environment and how the environment changes warfare. The timing for Russell's publication could not have been more perfect. In that same year, the United Nations declared November 6 for annual recognition as an International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.²⁰

Richard Tucker and Edmund Russell co-edited a valuable anthology in 2004 aptly titled *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally*, as a play on the dialectic between the non-human environment and warfare. Though three of the authors in the collection researched topics outside of the temporal focus of World War I and World War II—the topic of Tucker, Szasz, and Russell's work—the additional two-thirds of the collection focused on these two twentieth-century conflicts.²¹ This was not missed by the editors in their introductory remarks, but modern warfare in the twentieth century remains a notable limitation of the subfield of war and environment studies.

This collection stressed the core theme of how war shaped the environment and the environment shaped war. Further, it reflected “intellectually...merging [the] two prime fields” of war and environment studies including a “preliminary survey” of possible topics for research as well as “fruitful types of sources and methods” for advancing this analysis.²² A valuable intellectual borderlands between military and

²⁰ Richard P. Tucker and Edmund Russell, eds., *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Towards an Environmental History of Warfare* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon University Press, 2004), 2.

²¹ Tucker and Russell, *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally*. The three non-World War articles are: Stewart Gordon, “War, the Military, and the Environment: Central India, 1560 – 1820;” Roger S. Levine, “‘African Warfare in All Its Ferocity’: Changing Military Landscapes and Precolonial and Colonial Conflict in Southern Africa;” and Mark Feige, “Gettysburg and the Organic Nature of the American Civil War.”

²² Tucker and Russell, *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally*, 2-3.

environmental history has begun to be created where historians could find commonality and engagement.

Several key themes ran throughout the collection's chapters. The most prevalent was an interest in how warfare wreaks havoc on the landscapes where battles and bombings take place, or, in other words, the environmental collateral damage caused through the human action of battle. The authors explored not only the environmental degradation caused by the weapons of war but also the devastation caused by feeding the war machine. Supplying the army with natural resources to wage war resulted in a reorganization of local and peripheral landscapes. Additionally, they argue, it is often the superior access or control of resources that determined the victors of a battle, a campaign season, or an entire war. A final theme running through the papers was the relationship between the environment, warfare, and disease. Here the authors discussed how diseases and their vectors become a *Natural Enemy* causing the military and the nation state to focus not only on fighting their human opponents but also the non-human world around their forces. The themes and temporal scope of this anthology guided the direction of war and environment studies for almost a decade.

From 2004 to 2011 the journal *Environmental History* published several articles on a variety of topics concerning the two world wars. In 2004, Rauno Lahtinen and Timo Vurisalo wrote about urban agriculture in Finland during World War I and World War II; in 2006 Chris Pearson discussed the gathering of wood for fuel in Vichy, France; in 2010 Connie Y. Chiang examined the environmental context of the internment of Japanese-Americans; and in 2011 Matt Evenden published an article regarding the

global ecological footprint of aluminum production.²³ During this nascent stage of the subfield of war and environment studies several monographs were also published on the two world wars. Chris Pearson published two books relating to his work on Vichy France; Judith A. Bennett's monograph, titled *Natives and Exotics*, looked at the environment of the South Pacific and how American soldiers stationed there affected the fragile ecosystems of the Pacific islands.²⁴

The Cold War also gained popularity as a topic in the study of war and the environment. During the last decade, a half-dozen articles emerged mostly in the journal *Environmental History*. Jacob Hamblin published articles in 2002, 2008, and 2010 regarding the intersections of the environment and geopolitics during the 1960s and 1970s covering topics such as radioactive wastes, marine pollution, and environmentalism within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).²⁵ In 2007,

²³ Rauno Lahtinen and Timo Vurisalo, "'It's War and Everyone Can Do as They Please!': An Environmental History of a Finnish City in Wartime," *Environmental History* 9 (October, 2004): 679-700; Chris Pearson, "'The Age of Wood': Fuel and Fighting in French Forests, 1940 - 1944," *Environmental History* 11 (October, 2006): 775 - 803; Connie Y. Chiang, "Imprisoned Nature: Toward an Environmental History of the World War II Japanese American Incarceration," *Environmental History* 15 (April, 2010): 236 -267; Matt Eveden, "Aluminum, Commodity Chains, and the Environmental History of the Second World War," *Environmental History* 16 (April, 2011): 69 - 93.

²⁴ Chris Pearson, *Scarred Landscapes: War and Nature in Vichy France* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Chris Pearson, *Mobilizing Nature: The Environmental History of War and Militarization in Modern France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Judith A. Bennett, *Natives and Exotics: World War II and Environment in the Southern Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

²⁵ Jacob Darwin Hamblin, "Environmental Diplomacy in the Cold War: the Disposal of Radioactive Wastes at Sea during the 1960s," *The International History Review* 24 (June, 2002): 348 - 375; Jacob Darwin Hamblin, "Gods and Devils in the Details: Marine Pollution, Radioactive Waste and an Environmental Regime circa 1972," *Diplomatic History* 32 (2008): 539 - 560; Jacob Darwin Hamblin, "Environmentalism for the Atlantic

Mark Fiege wrote about the interface between the scientists of Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and the natural world. Through strolling, hiking, and climbing through the environment with one another, nuclear physicists became mentally rejuvenated by their environment allowing them to think more deeply about protons, neutrons, and electrons. He argued that his article elucidated “unexpected environmental features of the atomic project,” which help us to better understand the sense of wonder with which scientists engage in their work.²⁶ Historian Andrew Jenks melded the study of World War II and the Cold War in his 2007 article “Model City USA” that looked at the legacy of environmental, political, and social costs of achieving victory during these two conflicts. This case study of the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site in New York, a nuclear weapons waste management facility, highlights how the ideology of “patriotic sacrifice” in the United States coalesced with political organizations devoted to secrecy, abrogating any concerns for public safety and welfare.²⁷

Two books of note, one monograph and one anthology, deserve mention as well. In 2011, David Biggs, published, *Quagmire*, a riveting look at the intersections between hydrology, Euro-American imperialism, engineering, and warfare in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta from the pre-colonial past to the post-war present. Though the failings of

Alliance: NATO’s Experiment with the Challenges of Modern Society,” *Environmental History* 12 (January, 2010): 54- 75.

²⁶ Mark Fiege, “The Atomic Scientists, the Sense of Wonder, and the Bomb,” *Environmental History*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (July, 2007): 578.

²⁷ Andrew Jenks, “Model City USA: The Environmental Cost of Victory in World War II and the Cold War,” *Environmental History*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (July, 2007): 552.

the colonial powers to “modernize” Vietnam is an oft-told tale, by looking at the environment of the Mekong Delta over the *longue durée*, Biggs makes clear that the shortcomings of colonial projects in Vietnam stem not only from the colonizers’ unwillingness to understand the aspirations, knowledge, and capabilities of those being colonized, but also from their unwillingness to adapt to, and understand, local environmental conditions.²⁸

John McNeill and Corinna Unger co-edited *Environmental Histories of the Cold War* in 2013. This collection contains chapters on the environmental geopolitics of the Cold War, the impact of nuclear weapons testing on Earth and its atmosphere, the creation of megaproject dams to contain communism, climate and weather control, chemical warfare in Vietnam, and how the various actors in the Cold War degraded their environments for the war effort. McNeill and Unger argue in their introduction that this project came together to challenge the conventional historiography of the Cold War in order to “acknowledge that the Cold War was fought on Earth in the biosphere with [environmental] repercussions that will last perhaps a hundred thousand years.”²⁹

Viewing the first decade of the emerging field of war and environment studies it becomes clear that despite the rich scholarship being produced by the engagement of military and environmental history regarding the two world wars and the Cold War, scant attention has been paid to how the natural world and human conflict were

²⁸ David Biggs, *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta* (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 2011).

²⁹ J.R. McNeill and Corinna R. Unger, eds., *Environmental Histories of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

intertwined prior to the twentieth century. An exception to this was Lisa Brady's 2005 article "The Wilderness of War: Nature and Strategy in the American Civil War," which looked at key battles during the United States Civil War – Vicksburg, the Shenandoah Valley campaign, and Sherman's infamous march to the sea – as revealing an overall Union strategy to disrupt the Confederacy's ability to make their agroecosystems support massive wartime mobilization.³⁰

Brady's effort prompted an explosion of scholarship regarding the Civil War and the environment just as Edmund Russell's foundational book, *War and Nature*, turned a decade old. She published a monograph expanding upon her article entitled, *War upon the Land* in 2012.³¹ Megan Kate Nelson, Jim Downs, and Andrew Bell also published foundational works of Civil War and environment studies in 2012. Nelson's work explores how destruction of urban landscapes and wilderness, as well as human bodies – both from death and amputation – affected the variety of people living in America – white, black, male, female, northerner, southerner, citizen, soldier. She argues that the environmental ruins, both urban and wild, led to rebuilding and rebirth in the United States. However, much harder to ignore or remedy were the disabled men who reconfigured America's conception of humanity and death during the late nineteenth century.³² Downs examined the role of disease during the Civil War.

³⁰ Lisa Brady, "The Wilderness of War: Nature and Strategy in the American Civil War," *Environmental History* 10 (July 2005): 421 – 447.

³¹ Lisa Brady, *War upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes during the American Civil War* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2012).

³² Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2012).

However, instead of looking at soldiers, he focused on how disease affected the newly emancipated African American populace. The war created a refugee crisis in Union camps where disease thrived due to a lack of basic sanitation.³³ Bell looked to mosquitoes and microorganisms to highlight the importance of three things: diseases in warfare; how diseases “affected the timing and success of certain key military operations;” and how environmental factors have agency in warfare.³⁴ In 2013 Katheryn Shively Meier published *Nature’s Civil War* to highlight the effect of the natural world on both the mental and physical health of soldiers. She argued that environmental history offers military historians insights into issues of morale and how soldiers understood both their own health as well as the environment.³⁵ A recent anthology, *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green*, which contains essays by Brady, Nelson, and Meier, argues that folding environmental history into military history “can tell us many things we didn’t already know before and can also allow us to reassess some things we *thought* we knew. As its contributions to other fields suggest, environmental history can locate and turn over new stones in the Civil War field as well as reposition some older ones.”³⁶

³³ Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁴ Andrew Bell, *Mosquito Soldiers: Malaria, Yellow Fever, and the Course of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 7.

³⁵ Katheryn Shively Meier, *Nature’s Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

³⁶ Brian Allen Drake, *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green: Towards an Environmental History of the Civil War* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 3.

Towards an Environmental History of the War for American Independence

Despite the recent turn toward the nineteenth century, and the American Civil War in particular, few war and environment scholars of the United States have ventured into topics prior to the mid-nineteenth century. The focus of this dissertation, the American War for Independence and its interwoven relationship with bioregionalism and human ecology, remains largely overlooked. However, as argued in *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green*, in regard to the Civil War, combining military and environmental history with the study of a particular military conflict allows us to learn new things from well-trodden sources and campaigns. It challenges us to reassess standing narratives, suggests new interpretive questions to be answered, and recasts old ideas into a new analytical framework.

Three works of note regarding the environmental history of the American Revolution are important touchstones for this dissertation. The first, already mentioned above, is Elizabeth Fenn's *Pox Americana*, which shows that "in a New World environment where acquired immunity was rare, *Variola* was a virus of empire. It made winners and losers, at once serving the conquerors and determining who they would be."³⁷ The second, J.R. McNeill's *Mosquito Empires*, contains a chapter on how mosquitos as vectors of disease – specifically yellow fever and malaria – prevailed as a historical agent through their "pursuit of human blood," during the combined Franco-American

³⁷ Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775 – 82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 275.

fighting forces' siege of the British army at Yorktown in 1781.³⁸ His overall study of numerous case studies across the Greater Caribbean bioregion argues that “viruses, plasmodia, mosquitoes, monkeys, swamps—as well as humankind” shaped geopolitical history in the long colonial era from the early-seventeenth to the late-nineteenth century in a causal and dynamic manner.³⁹ Finally, David C. Hsiung published an article entitled “Food, Fuel, and the New England Environment” that argues that “battles proved to be the exception rather than the norm” for soldiers serving during the War for Independence.⁴⁰ Instead struggles over food, fuel, and livestock remained the primary preoccupation for the American and British forces. Hsiung highlights “the environmental context” from which these supplies were procured and argues that the War for Independence was “a human endeavor as dependent on the environment as farming and fishing.”⁴¹

These works provide an excellent baseline for starting to explore the intersections among warfare, the environment, and culture during the American Revolution. Fenn and McNeill’s transnational approaches highlight the value of looking at North America as a bioregion with specific environmental and cultural conditions that fueled the outbreak of disease. They both point to the agency of the natural world upon

³⁸ J.R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 195.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁰ David C. Hsiung, “Food, Fuel, and the New England Environment in the War for Independence, 1775-1776,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (December 2007): 615. Hsiung also builds upon this work in his contribution to Patrick Spero and Michael Zuckerman, eds., *The American Revolution Reborn* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

⁴¹ Hsiung, “Food, Fuel, and the New England Environment,” 617.

geopolitics of the era and illuminate how human and non-human actors alike created history in interaction with one another. Hsuing's case study of the siege of Boston notes that during the War for Independence natural commodities and circumstances demanded the close attention officers and soldiers far more than battles that proved the exceptions rather than the rule for conducting early modern military campaign. Overall, these historians elucidate that warfare, geopolitics, and the environment are inextricably entwined.

Scant attention to the American Revolution, despite the quality of the aforementioned authors, is a not entirely surprising feature of the subfield of war and environment studies. This stems from historiographical trends in military history, environmental history, and early American history. In the field of military history, scholars have ignored a focus on forested, wilderness, or wooded landscapes – those that are ripest for environmental analysis during the American Revolution – in favor of “jungle, desert, or urban” landscapes. In fact, most military training manuals advise commanders to “bypass” such regions to “maintain the momentum of the advance” whenever possible.⁴² The field of military history in regards to the American Revolution, too, as historian John Grenier notes, avoids “military operations on the frontier” and borderlands.⁴³ In U.S. environmental history, a preponderance of the

⁴² Andrew Clayton, *Warfare in the Woods and Forests* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), xii-xv.

⁴³ John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 146. For works that perpetuate this narrative, see Don Higginbotham, *The War for American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1783* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971); John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections of the Military Struggle for American Independence*

scholarship has focused on the twentieth century and particularly on the trans-Mississippi West.⁴⁴ This temporal and spatial focus excludes the eighteenth century and the struggle for American independence from the British empire. This neglect is evidenced in Peter C. Mancall's sweeping historiographical essay on the environmental history of early America in the *William and Mary Quarterly*. Mancall never mentions the American Revolution as a current or possible future venue of study in the joining of environmental and early American scholarship.⁴⁵ This is further substantiated by a 2016 anthology, *The Revolution Reborn*, designed to highlight new insights from emergent scholarly specialists. In it, only David Hsuing's chapter engages with the natural world by showing how the quest for saltpeter "challenged Americans' knowledge of science and the environment."⁴⁶

In analyzing the field of war and environment studies – from its continued focus on the two world wars to its incorporation of the American Civil War – a second pattern

(Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775-1783* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1964); Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War, The Continental Army & American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); John Ferling, *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War for Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴⁴ Notable exceptions include, William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Brian Donahue, *The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); and Richard W. Judd, *Second Nature: An Environmental History of New England* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014).

⁴⁵ Peter C. Mancall, "Pigs for Historians: *Changes in the Land* and Beyond," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (April 2010): 347-375.

⁴⁶ Spero, *Revolution*, 3.

emerges: a preponderance of war and environment scholarship primarily focuses on battles, military officers, or diseases. This drum-and-bugle renaissance is surprising considering that the field of military history incorporated social history over three decades ago. Paul Sutter, an environmental historian of the southern United States, argues that this focus on traditional military history topics is an “odd way to begin what is supposed to be [the] cutting-edge historiographical maneuver” that war and environment studies promises.⁴⁷ Sutter, as well as other historians, contend that inattention to social history by environmental historians studying warfare is a major hurdle that needs to be overcome. This dissertation aspires to leap this hurdle by focusing not primarily on battles and generals, but instead on the lived experiences of officers and soldiers interfacing with the unique human ecology of the Northeastern Borderlands during the American Revolution, and it shifts the gaze of war and environment studies away from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the late-eighteenth century. By shifting the temporal, spatial, and topical focus of war and environment studies, this dissertation sows the seeds for future harvests in the field.

The Northern Theatre of the American Revolution

This dissertation examines the experiences of soldiers, citizens, subjects, and indigenous people as they lived and served in the Northeast Borderlands during the American War for Independence. The chapters investigate three major wilderness campaigns that were among the most important large-scale military operations of the

⁴⁷ Paul Sutter, “Waving the Muddy Shirt,” in *The Blue, the Gray, and the Green: Toward an Environmental History of the Civil War*, ed. Brian Allen Drake (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2015), 226.

war: the invasion of Quebec by the Continental army through the District of Maine in 1775; the British expedition to New York from Montreal in 1777; and the invasion of Iroquoia by the Continental army in 1779. Focusing on the human ecology of the northeast reveals that these three campaigns were not disparate events held together simply by the geography of the region. Viewing the smaller incidences leading up to and following these campaigns sew the northern theatre of the war together strategically, tactically, environmentally, and transnationally. These include the breaking of the siege of Quebec in 1776, the Battle of Oriskany in 1777, and the destruction of the borderland communities of Cherry Valley and Wyoming in 1778, among others.

Throughout these varied events, military leaders sought to gain assistance from the indigenous and colonial populations and to control access to valuable agricultural and natural resources. Despite the best devised geopolitical and military planning of the British and Continental armies, human and environmental actors in the northeast bioregion took advantage of the disorder of war to survive and thrive autonomously of imperial and colonial structures. This unique human-ecological bioregion reshaped the war effort and altered the borderlands as soldiers, citizens, subjects, indigenous people, and non-human entities made history alongside and in combination with one another.

The opening chapter has highlighted the historiographic context for the project, defined the Northeast Borderlands as a bioregion with a unique human ecology, and closes with a chapter overview about the scope of the dissertation. In doing so it places itself into the broader context of the literature regarding environmental history, military

history, and early American history and notes its own most important contributions to those fields. Chapter two examines the Continental army as it travelled from the plains of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the gates of the fortress at Quebec. It follows the soldiers as they navigated through the wilderness of the District of Maine and into the bucolic countryside of La Nouvelle-Beauce in Canada. Chapter three looks at the political turmoil in La Beauce and the agency of local people in resisting British authority, as they assisted the Continental army on their mission to Quebec for their own political, economic, and social gains. Chapters four and five explore the siege of Quebec, the southern retreat of the Continental army through the borderlands, and the pursuing campaign into New York by General John Burgoyne, which ended famously in the British army's surrender at Saratoga in 1777. The main focus of chapter six is the ensuing campaign into Iroquoia, where General George Washington commanded his subordinates to "pay them in their own coin," resulting in massive destruction of the agroecosystems of the Seneca in an effort to remove them, and the Iroquois, generally, from their lands and to force them on the British as imperial wards at Niagara.⁴⁸ The final chapter offers a conclusion that assesses what the combination of military, environmental, and borderlands history elucidates in regards to the so-called "wilderness" campaigns of the northern theatre of the American Revolution. It points to ways that the methodology of this study can be expanded both temporally and

⁴⁸ General George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, Head Quarters, Middlebrook, 5 May, 1779, quoted in *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. VII, 1778-1779, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (New York: Putnam's Sons Knickerbocker Press, 1890), 441.

geographically by scholars interested in the intersections of warfare, geopolitics, and human ecology.

This dissertation relies heavily on the written documentation left by soldiers, officers, politicians, and diplomats, as well as their loved ones, during the American War for Independence. These diaries, letters, and military reports repeatedly comment on the wilderness landscape and reveal how the natural world structured military, diplomatic, and human relations. Comparisons between officers' and common soldiers' assessments are particularly valuable for bringing to light how status differences informed views of the environmental and cultural borderlands in both the British and Continental armies. Most participants understood that their military service was uniquely important, and they expected it to be extraordinary. Thus, they generated unusually rich documentation that has not heretofore been analyzed from the perspectives of borderlands and environmental history.⁴⁹

Soldiers also wrote about their wartime experiences to try and gain a sense of control over what was happening to them. Historian of the Seven Years' War, Fred Anderson, argues that the vivid descriptions of battle often allowed soldiers to "sort out events, to arrange in sequences and categories the chaotic occurrences of combat."⁵⁰ Though this dissertation largely eschews the battles of the northern theatre of the

⁴⁹ For more on the purposes of soldiers writing diaries and their contents, see Geoffrey Plank, "New England Soldiers in the St. John River Valley, 1758-1760," in *New England and the Maritimes Provinces: Connections and Comparisons*, eds. Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 62; Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 145.

⁵⁰ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 145.

American Revolution, if one replaces narrow attention to battle and combat with an assessment about observations of the natural world and the local inhabitants of the borderlands, the insight becomes even more valuable. Soldiers did write about their experiences to sort out and to understand the chaotic occurrences of navigating the environmental and cultural bioregion of the northeast. The wealth of documents from the northern theatre exist in large part because soldiers wrote about their experiences to gain control over, and navigate, the natural world and to calculate how best to negotiate the human ecology of the borderlands. Indeed, as theorist Michel Foucault argues, “the history of power over nature is a history of...strategies of control, and modes of mapping, tabulation, recordation, classification, demarcation, and ordering.”⁵¹ This dissertation reveals how recording wartime experiences in the Northeastern Borderlands was a means to gain control over a natural and cultural bioregion.

No sources are ever purely objective; in fact, it is the subjective qualities of this evidence that most richly informs the analysis in this dissertation. The way that people document their lives and the lives of others – what they chose to dwell on, and what they chose to neglect – often is as revealing as the actual information that they recorded. One critique of a portion of the primary sources included in this dissertation is that many were published for monetary gain. Thus, it is argued that authors had potential profits in mind when writing their diaries, letters, and reports. In some cases, the original manuscripts no longer exist, and in others it appears that published memoirs

⁵¹ Michel Foucault quoted in Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 22.

were plagiarized anthologies of the diary entries and letters of fellow soldiers. Where possible, original manuscript evidence was used, and the information contained in published sources was crosschecked and reinforced with non-published materials.

Careful reading of these sources through the lens of war and environment studies clearly demonstrates that these writers had a probing interest about wilderness, had a relationship with other individuals and the environment, and that they negotiated the borderlands in a manner that often acknowledged nature's causal force in the bioregion that curtailed human agency in these campaigns. These sources capture multiple aspects of the human experience during the eighteenth century that remains obscured in the standard political, diplomatic, military, and economic histories of the American Revolution. Highlighting the environmental and transnational context of the Northeastern Borderlands demonstrates how the natural world exerted agency upon military events, how armies negotiated with local people, how local people negotiated with armies, and how individuals experienced and comprehended the non-human world that surrounded them. By understanding these variegated relationships among human and non-human actors we can expand our understanding of the experiences and significance of the American Revolution.

Chapter 2:

'Where there was no Signs of any Human Being':

Navigating the Northeast Wilderness during the March to Quebec, 1775¹

During the autumn of 1775, in the midst of the wilderness situated between the Eastern Country of Massachusetts and Quebec, William Humphrey, Lieutenant in the Continental Army, scratched in his journal that “the work of Nature may at one place please the eye and displease.”² Humphrey volunteered to serve on a secret mission to invade Canada under the command of then Colonel Benedict Arnold through the wilds beyond the Eastern Country (present day Maine). This short diary entry challenges a major trope in the literature that stresses the bravery and leadership of Arnold. In a feat comparable to Hannibal crossing the Alps in 218 BCE, he supposedly urged his men against all odds through the privations of the wilderness to the gates of Quebec. Humphrey’s passage—as well as many others discussed below—complicates this narrative by suggesting that nature, despite causing starvation and death among the soldiers, could also be a source of pleasure. This chapter adds nuance to our understanding of the invasion of Canada in 1775, eighteenth-century ideas of the natural world, and warfare in general. Further, it changes our understanding of wilderness and the American national narrative. And finally, it serves as a baseline for

¹ William Humphrey, MSS 9001-H. William Humphrey Diary. Collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

² Nature in this chapter refers to the non-human world experienced by these soldiers in the *wilderness* landscape of the Eastern Country of Massachusetts. The terms nature, natural world, and wilderness are interchanged for variety. Humphrey, William. MSS 9001-H. William Humphrey Diary. Rhode Island Historical Society.

further discussion of the environmental history of the War for Independence. The complex feelings towards the wilderness expressed by the men of Arnold's expedition mirrored the writings of other soldiers, British and American, serving in the Northeast Borderlands during war.

Soldiers and officers like Humphrey often wrote field journals and diaries while on tour because they expected their experiences to be extraordinary and thus worth recording.³ The war diaries of the men in Arnold's expedition described not only the events and occurrences of battle but also, as Humphrey shows, the non-human environment. Much like early American naturalists, Arnold's soldiers took notice of interesting and unique aspects of the natural world while on campaign, and were so impressed by what they saw that they took time to observe and record their thoughts and reflections as well. What function did this record serve? Although simple fascination with the woods of the Eastern Country may have been a factor in recording the character of the environment, it was also aimed at imposing order on the unfamiliar landscape and allowing the expedition to understand and thus gain power over the natural world in order to successfully navigate through the wilderness. As theorist Michel Foucault argues "the history of power over nature is a history of... strategies of

³ For example, see, Geoffrey Plank, "New England Soldiers in the St. John River Valley, 1758-1760," in *New England and the Maritimes Provinces: Connections and Comparisons*, eds., Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 62. For information regarding soldiers crafting narratives about their war service after serving, see James Kirby Martin ed., *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

control, and modes of mapping, tabulation, recordation, classification, demarcation, and ordering;" the recording of the environment was a means to gain power over the wilderness.⁴

The recording of nature has a long tradition in the Americas, beginning first with the naturalist-explorers of the sixteenth century. In his monograph, *Narrating Discovery*, literary scholar Bruce Greenfield argued that early American explorers reported "on what they themselves actually saw and experienced." When they created narratives of their adventures, "they told their stories from the observer's point of view" and "organized their narratives around a journey."⁵ Environmental historian Richard Judd, in his survey of natural history and conservation in early America, *The Untilled Garden*, noted that the writings of these first explorers "incorporated sight, sound, smell, touch, and even taste into the...assessment of nature."⁶ Further, environmental historian William Cronon argued in his field-defining monograph, *Changes in the Land*, that explorers of early America catalogued the natural world as they came in contact with it

⁴Quoted in Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 22.

⁵ Bruce Greenfield, *Narrating Discovery: The Romantic Explorer in American Literature, 1790 - 1855* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 71. The organization of soldier narratives around a journey is less present in field diaries, however, it is almost always the case that when these field diaries were later examined by soldiers and converted into memoirs during the first two decades of the nineteenth century that they organized their thoughts and experiences around their journey opting to leave out some mundane details such as distance marched.

⁶ Richard Judd, *The Untilled Garden: Natural History and the Spirit of Conservation in America, 1740-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 92.

for the purpose of harvesting its resources in the future.⁷ The writings of the men on the expedition to Quebec in 1775 incorporated all of these means of recording nature—observation as a journey; a full-bodied experience; and utilitarian exercise.

This chapter argues that the American soldiers on the March to Quebec—and in a broader sense, all soldiers in intimate contact with unfamiliar landscapes—can be viewed as both amateur naturalists and explorers who *observe, interact* with, and *interpret* nature. The soldiers blended two traditions: that of soldiers' war diaries recording unusual experiences during their martial missions, and of explorers explaining, studying, and commodifying the natural world. Furthermore, this chapter argues that the soldiers' relationship with the wilderness beyond the Eastern Country cut across the military hierarchy, transcending rank, age, and societal class.

These sources challenge the standing narrative about wilderness, first advanced in 1967 by environmental historian Roderick Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind*, in two important ways. The first is the assertion that the appreciation for the natural world originated with urban elites during the nineteenth century. The second is that those who experience wilderness by living or laboring within it are unable to appreciate the aesthetic and spiritual qualities in nature.⁸ The diarists on Arnold's March to Quebec came from diverse locations (see Appendix A), including wooded backcountry, long-settled farming communities, and bustling urban seaports. They held a variety of

⁷ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 20.

⁸ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 51.

occupations ranging from physician to farmer. Dr. Isaac Senter came from the largest community of Newport, Rhode Island with a population of 6,716 while John Joseph Henry, a gunsmith after the war, travelled from the farming community of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with a population of 297 to join the Continental army. This well-documented military campaign provides an exceptionally broad lens focused on eighteenth-century perceptions of the environment, and it allows environmental history to enrich a long-standing military history narrative.⁹

A Plan is Hatched

By the time the War for American Independence commenced, Benedict Arnold, a well-respected merchant in New Haven, Connecticut, had amassed a dedicated entourage of revolutionaries. In the winter of 1774, Arnold and over sixty men established a local militia company. Given his standing in the community and his reputation as a resolute proponent of the rights of American colonists, the men of the company elected him as their captain. When word of the conflict between the British and patriots at Lexington and Concord reached New Haven, Arnold assembled his militia company and they set forth to join the revolutionaries in Massachusetts. Once there, Arnold utilized his social network through both patriot and Masonic channels to obtain a commission as a colonel in the Massachusetts Army. He aimed primarily to embark on a mission to capture Fort Ticonderoga in northern New York and secure the artillery stored there by the British. Revolutionary leaders greatly valued this task as

⁹ This aim is similar to that of Lisa Brady in *War upon the Land*, who used the United States Civil War to understand how nineteenth-century citizens understood the natural world and their place within it.

there were strong suspicions of a plan by the British to invade the colonies from Quebec.¹⁰

During Arnold's tenure in the Lake Champlain region in May of 1775, he often contemplated the threat of invasion from the north. Incoming intelligence reports combined with the daily command situation on the ground to fuel these fears. Arnold, proactive in his military strategy, conceived a plan for an attack on Montreal and Quebec. This initial plan had two objectives: to eliminate the British threat in the north, and to secure the French and indigenous populace of Quebec as allies.¹¹

While Arnold seized artillery in the Lake Champlain region, the Second Continental Congress created an army of regulars, printed paper currency to support this standing army, and designated George Washington as the commander of the revolutionary force. On June 27, 1775, after careful consideration of operational strategies devised by Arnold, Congress decided to send an invading force into Canada with the intent of capturing the fortifications of Quebec and bringing the rest of the territory into the Revolution as the fourteenth rebellious colony.¹² However, Congress

¹⁰ James Kirby Martin, *Benedict Arnold Revolutionary Hero: An American Warrior Reconsidered* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 86. Biographies of Benedict Arnold tend to swirl around notions of whether or not he is the great hero or great villain for the United States during the American Revolution. Recent representative scholarship includes, Joyce Lee Malcom, *The Tragedy of Benedict Arnold: An American Life* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2018); Nathaniel Philbrick, *Valiant Ambition: George Washington, Benedict Arnold, and the Fate of the American Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017); Stephen Brumwell, *Turncoat: Benedict Arnold and the Crisis of American Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Barry K. Wilson, *Benedict Arnold: Traitor in our Midst* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

¹¹ James T. Flexner, *The Traitor and the Spy: Benedict Arnold and John Andre* (New York: Harcourt, Bruce, and Company, 1953), 53.

passed over Arnold and instead selected General Philip Schuyler of New York, an influential veteran of the Seven Years' War, to command the invasion. Schuyler's political standing and knowledge of Quebec made him the rational and pragmatic choice to lead the expedition. Due to declining health, however, Schuyler relinquished his command to General Richard Montgomery after the expedition set forth.¹³

Arnold, though disappointed not to have been chosen to lead the invasion of Canada, did not abandon hope for involvement in the mission. Instead, he devised a plan for a secondary invading force that would set out from the revolutionaries' stronghold at Cambridge, Massachusetts and travel to Canada through the frontier wilderness of the Eastern Country of Massachusetts Bay Colony, up the Kennebec River and down the Chaudière River in Canada to the capital city of Quebec. He convinced General George Washington that a two-pronged invasion of Canada would force the Major-General and Governor of Quebec, Guy Carleton, to abandon either Montreal or Quebec.

In September, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army General George Washington informed the Continental Congress that he "detached Col. Arnold, with one thousand men, to penetrate into Canada by way of the Kennebeck River, and, if

¹² Kevin Phillips, *1775: A Good Year for Revolution* (New York: Penguin Group, 2012), 473; For more on Quebec as the Fourteenth Rebellious Colony see, Justin H. Smith, *Arnold's March from Cambridge to Quebec: A Critical Study, Together with a Reprint of Arnold's Journal* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1903); Mark R. Anderson, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada, 1774 - 1776*. (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2013).

¹³ Hal Shelton, *General Richard Montgomery and the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 95.

possible, to make himself master of Quebeck.”¹⁴ On September 11, the soldiers departed from Washington’s encampment at Cambridge and set out for Newburyport, a small harbor town on the Merrimac River in Massachusetts. Arnold’s expedition set sail for the Eastern Country wilderness on September 19, 1775, exactly five months to the day after the fighting at Lexington and Concord.

Arnold and his troops assembled at Fort Western—located in modern-day Augusta, Maine—in late September of 1775. The objective was to reach Canada by traveling up the Kennebec River through the wilderness beyond the Eastern Country, portaging over the Great Carrying Place to the Dead River, which they would also ascend. From there, they would travel over the Height of Land to the Chaudière River which flows into the St. Lawrence River, less than five miles from the fortifications at Quebec.¹⁵ [See Appendix B] At the time of the expedition, there were only six incorporated towns located on the Kennebec River above modern-day Bath.¹⁶ The most northern of these, Vassalboro, was located approximately twelve miles from Fort Western and 240 miles from Quebec via the Kennebec-Chaudière waterway. Indeed, the isolation that the expedition confronted is illustrated by the fact that muskets lost by soldiers as they trekked through the wilderness remained undiscovered until more than eight decades later in 1858.¹⁷

¹⁴ George Washington to Continental Congress, Camp at Cambridge, September 21, 1775, *American Archives Series 4*, Volume 3, 760.

¹⁵ Edward D. Sullivan, *Benedict Arnold: Military Racketeer* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1932), 81.

¹⁶ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1990), 13-14.

Before commencing this journey, Arnold organized his men into four divisions and two small scouting parties. The first scouting party was led by Lieutenant Archibald Steele, who was charged with a reconnaissance mission to gain intelligence from Wabanaki living between Fort Western and Lac Mégantic – the headwater of the Chaudière River.¹⁸ The second scouting party, commanded by Lieutenant Nathaniel Church, surveyed the land to the Dead River, blazing a path and recording the distance so that the main division would know how far to march each day to keep on schedule.¹⁹

The first company, wearing “coarse hunting shirts, animal hide leggings over their woolen trousers, short coats and moccasins,” consisted of Captain Daniel Morgan and his backwoods riflemen.²⁰ These men were to serve as trailblazers for the expedition. The second and third companies, comprised of infantry, were led by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Greene and Major Jonathan Return Meigs, respectively. Colonel Roger Enos led the fourth company, which acted as the rear guard and carried a preponderance of the expedition’s supplies.²¹ Arnold sent these companies into the wilderness one day’s march apart to prevent the whole expedition from becoming ensnared in the obstacles and portages that lay in wait. Arnold himself traveled in a

¹⁷ Sullivan, *Benedict Arnold*, 89.

¹⁸ Benedict Arnold to George Washington, Fort Western, September 25, 1775, *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series* Vol. 2, ed. Philander D. Chase (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 41.

¹⁹ Smith, *Arnold’s*, 88.

²⁰ Wilson, *Benedict Arnold: Traitor in our Midst*, 56.

²¹ George F.G. Stanley, *Canada Invaded, 1775-1776* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert Ltd., 1973), 72.

birch-bark canoe paddled by Wabanaki guides to move swiftly from the rear guard to the scouting party and back to check on progress and to manage difficulties.²²

The patriot leadership devised two main goals for the Arnold expedition. The first was to remove the threat of attack on New York and New England posed by the British and Mohawk forces to the north by giving control of fortifications such as Montreal and Quebec to General George Washington.²³ Additionally, the expedition was to gain control of the St. Lawrence waterway, which provided water-based access to most of inland Canada. Secondly, control of Canada would result in a valuable ally in the eighty-thousand *Canadiens* who had a long history of conflict with the British.²⁴ Arnold argued that control of Quebec and the rest of Canada would also provide America with “an inexhaustible granary” and would furthermore, “cut the British from the lucrative fur trade.”²⁵ Revolutionary leaders hoped that victory in Quebec would give them a decisive advantage in their quest for home rule, whether achieved through independence or reconciliation.

It is important to understand that the expedition did not head out into the complete unknown. Small French and indigenous military parties, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, utilized the route up the Kennebec River over the

²² Thomas A. Desjardin, *Through a Howling Wilderness: Benedict Arnold's March to Quebec, 1775* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), 55.

²³ Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army & American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 98.

²⁴ Desjardin, *Through*, 5.

²⁵ Flexner, *The Traitor*, 53.

Height of Land to the Chaudière River for raiding frontier settlements in southern Maine.²⁶ In fact, Arnold utilized the map and journal of British engineer John Montresor who traveled the same route in 1761 during the Seven Years' War. [See Appendix C] However, prior to Arnold's expedition, the passage was only traversed with small, mobile forces carrying light birch-bark canoes.²⁷

The armaments and supplies that large European-style forces mobilized became cumbersome for the expedition. The bateaux crafted for the invasion were not light. Due to the urgency of the order, they were fabricated out of green wood, which made them extraordinarily heavy – estimated to weigh approximately four-hundred pounds each – and prone to leaks.²⁸ In addition to portaging unwieldy bateaux, the men also transported supplies and implements of war. For a force of over 1,000 soldiers, this required them to “fight their way through with guns and armament, barrels of flour and pork, cooking kits, tents, oars, poles, and carpenters' supplies, including barrels of nails.”²⁹ Unlike the small expeditions that successfully navigated this wilderness, Arnold's model rested on the methods of the traditional European war machine. Historian Robert Middlekauff criticized that “Arnold's optimism” was “equaled only

²⁶ For more information, see Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeny, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 2005).

²⁷ Flexner, *The Traitor*, 61.

²⁸ Wilson, *Benedict Arnold: Traitor*, 57.

²⁹ Sullivan, *Benedict Arnold: Military*, 82.

by his ignorance of the geography of the Northeast.”³⁰ Arnold falsely believed that he and his soldiers had only one hundred and eighty miles to travel to Quebec, when in fact they had over three hundred and fifty, a distance that would take over six weeks to traverse.³¹ At the end of this expedition, the participants were not rewarded with rest and relaxation, but instead they fought a battle against one of the most fortified cities in the Americas. Most importantly, however, Arnold and the expeditionary force underestimated their vulnerability to the chaos of nature in the poorly charted and isolated wilderness beyond the Eastern Country.

Wilderness and the Eighteenth Century Soldiers’ Mind

In their diaries, the men of the expedition catalogued flora and fauna to provide order to the inchoate landscape they were traveling through and to sharpen their ability to obtain food and forage from the wilderness. They described nature in romantic terms, and at the same time viewed it as an obstacle to military success. Throughout their journey, the landscape assumed agency as tension built between the soldiers’ fascination with raw nature and their struggle to survive in it. But to understand why they felt compelled to record the natural history of the region, it is necessary to review how they defined and redefined wilderness as the expedition progressed.

Though much is written in the secondary literature about the meaning of wilderness during the eighteenth century, this chapter uses the contemporary definition

³⁰ Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 310. Montresor’s map which was heavily relied on by Arnold was inaccurately surveyed while the expedition was traveling downstream.

³¹ Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, 24.

that the soldiers imposed in their diaries. Colonial Americans perceived wilderness as a place of chaos and isolation, yet the expeditioners would be forced to rely upon this unfamiliar landscape to overcome any adversities that lay in wait. Private Simon Fobes, upon departing from a settlement just north of Fort Western near Norridgewock Falls in early October, recorded that, “this was the last English settlement on our route. Now commenced our march into the wilderness.”³² Private George Morison stated in more verbose terms that the soldiers must “exchange the luxuriant and healthful plains of Cambridge for the inhospitable and dismal regions of the North – To leave delightful fields for barren wildernesses; verdant meadows and enlivening streams for miry marshes and stagnant ponds; and the habitants of men, for the haunts of wild beasts.”³³

³² Simon Fobes Journal in *March to Quebec: Journals of the Members of Arnold’s Expedition*, ed. Kenneth L. Roberts (Portland, ME: Down East, 1938), 581.

³³ George Morison, *An Interesting Journal of Occurrences during the Expedition to Quebec Conducted by the Celebrated Arnold at the Commencement of the American Revolution Giving Particular Account of the Unparalleled Sufferings Sustained by that Detachment in Passing through the Wilderness Together with a Description of the Battle of Quebec Kept by George Morison a Volunteer in the Company of Riflemen Commanded by Capt. Hendricks who was Slain at the Attack Upon Quebec* (Hagerstown: James Magee, 1803) located in Research Materials, Charles E. Banks, Volume 6, Ms. N-1782, Massachusetts Historical Society (herein, *An Interesting Journal of Occurrences*), 19; for more statements by common soldiers regarding the wilderness and lack of inhabitants see also: Samuel Barney Journal in Stephen Darley ed., *Voices from a Wilderness Expedition: The Journals and Men of Benedict Arnold’s Expedition to Quebec in 1775* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2011), 177; William Door journal, 1775-1776, 1 Folder, 1775-1776, Ms. S-82b, Massachusetts Historical Society (herein, *Journal, 1775-1776*); John Joseph Henry Diary, William Henry Papers, Collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Jeremiah Greenman, *Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1978), 15; Kimball Journal in Darley, *Voices*, 164; Morison, *An Interesting Journal of Occurrences*, 21; *Ibid.*, 21; *Ibid.*, 27; *Ibid.*, 29; *Ibid.*, 35; *Ibid.*, 45; Abner Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking of Chatham, Connecticut Detailing the Distressing Events of the Expedition Against Quebec under the Command of Col. Arnold in the Year 1775* (Catskill: Eagle Office, 1810) located in Research Materials. Charles E. Banks, Volume 6, Ms. N-1782, Massachusetts Historical Society (herein, *Stocking*), 125; *Ibid.*,

Wilderness was an unknown: an empty vessel the soldiers would fill with meaning as they passed through it.

The officers of the expedition shared this uncertainty of the wilderness regarding it as a place where human beings did not reside. Like the enlisted men, they had no point of reference for navigating a landscape so completely apart from civilization and its comforts. By October 30, after the expedition had been in isolation for almost four weeks, Lieutenant William Humphrey wrote that his men had “only 4 days provision in this wilderness, where there was no signs of any human being.”³⁴ On the same day, Captain Simon Thayer noted that he resided “in the midst of a frightful wilderness habit’d by ferocious animals of all sorts, without the least sign of human trace.”³⁵ The

126; *Ibid.*, 133; *Ibid.*, 136. Joseph Ware, *A Journal of a March from Cambridge on an Expedition Against Quebec in Col Benedict Arnold’s Detachment Sept 13 1775* located in Research Materials, Charles E. Banks, Volume 8, Ms. N-1782, Massachusetts Historical Society (herein, *A Journal of a March*), 3; *Ibid.*, 9; Ebenezer Wild, *A Journal of a March from Cambridge, on an Expedition against Quebec in Colonel Benedict Arnold’s Detachment, Sept 13, 1775* in the *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, Second Series, Volume II* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1886) herein *Wild MHS*, 268. The Wild diary is likely a copy of a diary written by another soldier as Ebenezer Wild served in the Continental Army from 1776 - 1781.

³⁴ William Humphrey Diary, MSS 9001-H, William Humphrey Diary, Rhode Island Historical Society.

³⁵ Simeon Thayer Diary, Simeon Thayer Papers, Diary, MSS. 24, Rhode Island Historical Society; for more statements by officers regarding the wilderness and lack of inhabitants see also: Isaac Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter Physician and Surgeon to the Troops Detached from the American Army Encamped at Cambridge, Mass., on a Secret Expedition Against Quebec, under the Command of Col. Benedict Arnold in September, 1775* (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1846), Box-L 1846, Massachusetts Historical Society, 9; *Ibid.*, 11; Dr. Isaac Senter Diary, Isaac Senter Papers, MSS165, Box 2, Folder 6, Journal of Isaac Senter, Rhode Island Historical Society; *Diary of William Hendricks & Capt. John Chambers* located in Research Materials, Charles E. Banks, Volume 7, Ms. N-1782, Massachusetts Historical Society (herein, *Diary of William Hendricks*), 12; Benedict Arnold to Philip Schuyler, October 13, 1775, in *American Archives, Fourth Series, Vol. III*, 1062-3; Major Timothy Bigelow to His Wife, October 25, 1775 in *Ibid.*; Return Jonathan

idea of wilderness as empty of human reference was exemplified in the closing of a letter written by Ensign James Knowles to his wife on October 14, 1775. He listed his location as “at new found land on Dead River.”³⁶ This prospect of movement through what Puritan minister Michael Wigglesworth described as a “howling wilderness where none inhabited but hellish fiends” caused a wave of uncertainty and fear as the troops departed the small settlement near Fort Western.³⁷

Ordering an Inchoate Landscape

To overcome their misgivings about this amorphous landscape, Arnold and his men began to impose order on it by systematically listing the flora and fauna they encountered. Environmental historian William Cronon has argued that explorers arriving in the New World catalogued and listed “natural products which were of potential use to a European way of life” as a means to understand nature through a process of commodification.³⁸ As Cronon explained, “little sense of ecological

Megis, *A Journal of Occurrences which Happened within the circle of Observation in the Detachment Commanded by Colonel Benedictine Arnold: Consisting of Two Battalions, which were Detached from the Army at Cambridge, in the year 1775* (United States?: s.n., 1776), 6, Early American Imprints no. 14888 (herein *A Journal of Occurrences*); John Topham, John Topham Journal, MSS 9001-T, Rhode Island Historical Society, (herein, *The Journal of John Topham*).

³⁶James Knowles to His Wife, 1 Folder, 1767-1775, Ms. S-730, James Knowles letters, 1767-1775; bulk: 1775, Massachusetts Historical Society.

³⁷ Michael Wigglesworth, *God's controversy with New England: written in the time of the great drough Anno 1662 / by a lover of New-England's Prosperity i.e. Michael Wigglesworth, 1662*, Folder, 1662, Ms. S-157, Massachusetts Historical Society. For this study it is irrelevant if this area was truly uninhabited or not. What matters for this analysis is that the soldiers of the expedition believed that they were setting off into an empty barren landscape.

³⁸ William Cronon, *Changes*, 20.

relationships emerges from such a list. One could not use it to describe what the forest actually looked like or how these trees interacted with one another. Instead, its purpose was to detail resources for the interest of future undertakings.”³⁹

Following a similar practice, the diarists of the expedition responded to their new environment by listing the commodities that were of value to their way of life. This process helped them understand and tame the chaotic wilderness before them. Benedict Arnold described the wilderness landscape as “in general fertile and tolerably well-wooded with some oak, beech, maple, pine, hemlock &c.”⁴⁰ The expedition’s surveyor, John Pierce, recorded the landscape in his journal as containing “timber on the river” which is comprised of “Spruce Birch Pine Beech maypole Elm White Cedar Fur &c.” with the shore “covered in Joint Grass.”⁴¹ Major Return Meigs noted that “the land we passed this day generally very good...The Woods abound in these Parts with, Butternut, Beech, Hemlock, white Pine, red cedar, &c.”⁴² Lieutenant Humphrey

³⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰ Benedict Arnold Diary, Houghton MS Am 1859, Houghton Library, Harvard University; A copy of this exists in Benedict Arnold, *A Journal of an Intended Tour from Cambridge to Quebeck via Kennebeck with a Detachment of Two Regiments of Musketeers and Three Companies of Riflers Consisting of about Eleven Hundred Effective Men Commanded by Benedict Arnold* located in Research Notes, Charles E. Banks, Volume 4, Ms. N-1782, Massachusetts Historical Society, (herein *A Journal of an Intended Tour*).

⁴¹ Pierce Journal in ed. Kenneth Roberts, *March to Quebec: Journals of the Members of Arnold’s Expedition, Compiled and Annotated by Kenneth Roberts, during the Writing of Arundel*, 661; for more statements by John Pierce regarding the quality of the land and the listing of flora see also: Ibid., 654, Ibid., 658.

⁴² Meigs, *A Journal of Occurrences*, 4.

added to this assessment by stating that “the land is, I think, very fine and will produce very fine grain of any kind in an abundance.”⁴³

Common soldiers also discussed the fertility of the soils and productivity of the forests and systematically listed the surprisingly large selection of useful flora the wilderness contained. Private Abner Stocking noted that the landscape “appeared to be very rich and fertile,” while Private James Melvin quickly scratched in his journal, “the woods are cedar and hemlock.”⁴⁴ John Joseph Henry compared the trees in the Eastern Country to those of his home in Pennsylvania, writing:

the timber trees of this country are in a great measure different from those of our own [in Pennsylvania]. Here are neither oaks, hickories, poplars, maples, or locusts; but there is a great variety of other kinds of excellent timber, such as the white and yellow pines, hemlock, cedar, cypress, and all the species of firs.⁴⁵

⁴³ William Humphrey, MSS 9001-H, William Humphrey Diary, Rhode Island Historical Society. For more statements by officers regarding the quality of the land and the listing of flora see also: Arnold, *A Journal of an Intended Tour*, 10-11; *Ibid.*, 13; Henry Dearborn, *A Journal Kept by Capt. Henry Dearborne, of the Proceedings, and Particular occurrences, which happened within my knowledge, to the Troops, under the Command of Colonel Bennedict Arnold, in the year 1775 Which Troops were detached from the American Army Lying before the Town of Boston, for the purpose of marching to, and taking possession of Quebec*, Rare BKS MS G.33.10, Boston Public Library, Oct 1, (herein *A Journal Kept*); *Ibid.*, Oct 4; *Ibid.*, Oct 7; *Ibid.*, Oct 15; *Ibid.*, Oct 17; *Ibid.*, Oct 28; *Ibid.*, Nov 5; *Ibid.*, Nov 6; Durbin Journal in ed. Darley, *Voices*, 106; Hendricks, *Diary of William Hendricks*, 12; Meigs, *A Journal of Occurrences*, 4; *Ibid.*, 5; Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 10; *Ibid.*, 13; *Ibid.*, 19; *Ibid.*, 21; Thayer, *The Invasion*, 4-5; Topham, *The Journal of John Topham*, 71; *Ibid.*, 83. *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴⁴ Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 128; James Melvin, *A Journal of the Expedition to Quebec in the Year 1775 under the Command of Colonel Benedict Arnold* (Philadelphia: Franklin Club, 1864), 3.

⁴⁵ Henry, *Campaign*, 26. For more statements by common soldiers regarding the quality of the land and the listing of flora see also: Barney Journal in ed. Darley, *Voices*, 176; *Ibid.*, 178; Dorr, *Journal, 1775-1776*, between Oct 1 and Oct 14; Henry, *Campaign*, 26; Kimball Journal in ed. Darle, *Voices*, 164, Melvin, *A Journal of the Expedition*, 2; Morison,

Recording this natural history made the landscape of the Eastern Country familiar and provided points of reference for the diarists, who related the wilderness to the familiar landscapes of their homeland. Further, discussing the prospects of Western agriculture in the wilderness became a reference point for comparing the wilds of Maine to more civilized landscape increasing its familiarity and the soldiers comfort. This mental comparison – sorting the familiar from the unfamiliar – helped the expedition navigate the unknown.

Typically, in the journals, fauna was catalogued differently from flora. Survival in the wilderness dictated a more utilitarian approach to the natural history of animals. Fauna were generally recorded only when they were killed for subsistence; there were, however, some exceptions. On October 12, Arnold noted that there had been “plenty of Moose and other game on the River.”⁴⁶ Private Henry observed that “angling for trout and chub in the morning and evening made up our stock of fresh food.” While fishing, the men “frequently saw ducks, &c. and many moose deer.”⁴⁷ Expedition surveyor John Pierce described the Kennebec River as containing “Salmon and Trouts – river full of Fish – Plenty of Beaver minks and Otter”⁴⁸ with “Some Fowls – Such as Geese Gulls ducks &c.”⁴⁹ These passages suggest that the soldiers in the expedition saw the

An Interesting Journal of Occurrences, 27; *Ibid.*, 29; *Ibid.*, 45; *Ibid.*, 51; Quebec Journal #3 in ed. Darley, *Voices*, 134; Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 126; *Ibid.*, 128; *Ibid.*, 130; *Ibid.*, 131; *Ibid.*, 132; Squier Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 623; Ware, *A Journal of a March*, 3-5; Wild, *Wild MHS*, 268.

⁴⁶ Arnold, *A Journal of an Intended Tour*, 17.

⁴⁷ Henry, *Campaign*, 23.

⁴⁸ Pierce Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 657.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 654. For more statements by the diarists regarding the listing of fauna, not including fish, see Dorr, *Journal, 1775-1776*; Hendricks, *Diary of William Hendricks*, 12-3;

wilderness as lush and providential, and the value they attached to certain elements in the otherwise unfamiliar landscape built confidence in the expedition's ability to navigate or even survive in a "howling wilderness."

Once the wilderness was ordered and reference points established, the Kennebec-Chaudière corridor could be successfully navigated. Moreover, the rivers upon which the expedition traveled became sources of provisions. By recording the natural history of the rivers, the expedition began to anticipate places where fishing would be successful; the wilderness became more predictable and reliable. Soldiers found that fishing was the best at the foot of a waterfall. Private Stocking wrote that "at the foot of [Hellgate Falls]" he and his compatriots "found fine fishing for salmon trout."⁵⁰ As the expedition portaged around larger falls and moved across watersheds, they found that small ponds were also fecund fisheries. Camping next to one of these ponds, Captain Simeon Thayer noted in his journal that it was "full of trout, of which we caught plenty."⁵¹ Indeed, according to Arnold they "caught a prodigious number of very fine salmon trout, nothing being more common than a man's taking eight or ten dozen in one hours' time, which generally weigh half a pound a piece."⁵² These fish, an

Meigs, *A Journal of Occurrences*, 5; Melvin, *A Journal of the Expedition*, 8; Morison, *An Interesting Journal of Occurrences*, 27; Topham, *The Journal of John Topham*, 73; Ware, *A Journal of a March*, 3; Wild, *Wild MHS*, 268.

⁵⁰ Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 126-7.

⁵¹ Thayer, *The Invasion*, 6.

⁵² Arnold, *A Journal of an Intended Tour*, 55.

unexpected bounty from the wilderness of the Eastern Country, were the “tastiest trough” that Dr. Isaac Senter had ever consumed.⁵³

The waterway corridors served also as watering holes for several species of game. The largest, and consequently most prized, was the moose. Moose were so ubiquitous in the beginning portion of the expedition that Private John Joseph Henry described his “canoe” having “sunk deep” into the water “by the weight of our venison.”⁵⁴ By October 13, a little over one week after commencing their journey into the wilderness, the men of Meigs’ division had “killed 4 Moose, which is excellent Meat.”⁵⁵ The members of the expedition were curious about animal and often described them in great detail. Private George Morison, in a mix of curiosity and utility, described the moose as:

large as a common horse. The males have horns commonly four feet long and six or seven inches broad, edged like a saw. They are of a dun color, have a head much like an ass. It is said that these animals are a species of the Rein-deer, found in the same latitude in the north of Russia.⁵⁶

Lieutenant William Humphrey wrote that his men “had killed a moose. The skin appeared to be as big as that of an ox that would weigh 600 wt. This is the same species

⁵³ Senter Journal in ed. Darley, *Voices*, 157. For more statements by the diarists regarding fishing and the amount of fish caught, see Dearborn, *A Journal Kept*, Oct 9; *Ibid.*, Oct 12; Henry, *Campaign*, 23; *Ibid.*, 24; *Ibid.*, 29; Shipton, *Rhode*, 17; Meigs, *A Journal of Occurrences*, 5; Melvin, *A Journal of the Expedition*, 3; Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 13; Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 128; *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁴ Henry, *Campaign*, 44.

⁵⁵ Meigs, *A Journal of Occurrences*, 5.

⁵⁶ Morison, *An Interesting Journal of Occurrences*, 27.

as that of the reindeer and would be of the same service to the inhabitants as the reindeer is to the Laplanders and the upper Norwegians."⁵⁷ The Finnish, Norwegians, and Russians historically utilized the reindeer for several purposes. The most important was to supplement their diets with a rich source of protein. Clothing was also procured from their hides and tools crafted from their bones and antlers. However, reindeer were also "employed as draught-animals" in these regions beginning in the late-sixteenth century.⁵⁸ The comparison between the moose of the Eastern Country and the reindeer of the Arctic further shows the commodification of the landscape as the soldiers imagined these animals as beasts of burden to aid future settlement.

Smaller game also became standard fare of the expedition. Captain Simeon Thayer noted on October 29, that "this night we had the good fortune to kill a partridge, of which we made a good soup and some supper."⁵⁹ As provisions began running low, Private James Melvin happily recorded that he "shot a small bird called a Sedee, and a squirrel, which I lived upon this day."⁶⁰ The men also foraged among the flora. Private Henry noted that they "discovered and ate a delicious species of cranberry."⁶¹

In addition to providing food to supplement the ever-dwindling stores of the expedition, the wilderness also supplied medicine and materials to repair clothing and watercraft. On October 25, Captain Henry Dearborn "was Seized with a Violent Head-

⁵⁷ Shipton, *Rhode*, 16-7.

⁵⁸ Berthold Laufer, "The Reindeer and its Domestication," *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (April-June, 1917): 122.

⁵⁹ Thayer Journal ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 259.

⁶⁰ Melvin, *A Journal of the Expedition*, 8.

⁶¹ Henry, *Campaign*, 33-4.

Ach and fever," and the wilderness bestowed upon him "herbs in the woods" which were boiled into a "Tea" for his relief. He "drank very Hearty of it and the next morning felt much Better."⁶² Private John Joseph Henry noted in his journal that the balsam fir had healing properties as well. Its sap "was heating and cordial to the stomach," and prevented the men from being "assailed by sickness."⁶³ These folk remedies were specific to the region and were likely provided by local guides of either European or Wabanaki descent.

Upon being mishandled and dropped, one of the canoes of Dearborn's company was split open. The men hauled the broken canoe up on the riverbank.

[It] was brought to the fire, and placed in a proper posture for operation.

The lacerated parts were neatly brought together, and sewed with cedar root. A large ridge of pitch, as is customary in the construction of this kind of watercraft, was laid over the seam to make it water-tight. Over the seam a patch of strong bark a foot in width, and of a length sufficient to encircle the bottom, even to the gunwales, was sewed down at the edges and pitched.⁶⁴

After drying near the fire, the canoe was once again ready for use in transporting men and provisions through the wilderness. Nature also supplied the material needed to fix shoes. After wearing out the heel of his shoes, and having the seam burst, Henry had to either mend them or go barefoot the rest of the way to Quebec. He noted, "bark, the

⁶² Dearborn, *A Journal Kept*, Oct 25.

⁶³ Henry, *Campaign*, 27.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 42.

only succedaneum for twine or leather in this miserable country, was immediately procured, and the shoe bound tightly to the foot.”⁶⁵ This utilization of the natural world to supply the expedition with supplies greatly enhanced the success of their invasion of Canada.

A Wilderness Aesthetic, Christianized Naturalism, and the Eighteenth Century

Subline

The wilderness landscape provided the troops with more than just provisions and supplies. It provided a visual aesthetic and piqued their curiosity, distracting them from the rigors of the passage and the terrors of isolation. On October 14, Arnold described his surroundings as “very beautiful & noble” with “a high chain of mountains encircling the Pond, which is deep, clear & fine water, over which a forked mountain [Mount Bigelow] which exceeds the rest in height bear N. west, & covered with Snow, in contrast with the others adds greatly to the beauty of the scene.”⁶⁶

Arnold’s depiction could have been an attempt to highlight his gentlemanly sophistication to his superior, General Washington, who received copies of his journal. However, it follows a pattern of appreciation for the natural world in the diaries of both the officers and common soldiers. Private John Joseph Henry and Dr. Isaac Senter commented on the mountainous terrain as well. Henry noted that “several of these mountains seemed to stand on insulated bases, and one in particular, formed a most beautiful cone, of an immense height.”⁶⁷ Senter, apparently surprised by the scene

⁶⁵ Ibid, 65.

⁶⁶ Arnold Journal ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 51.

⁶⁷ Henry, *Campaign*, 34.

before his eyes, wrote that “this was a very beautiful situation for the wilderness, a large mountain bordering boldly on the N.W., with more at a greater distance in the South, and S.W.”⁶⁸

Several days after passing through this mountainous terrain, the expedition “Came to an Indian Wig-Wam,” located on a pastoral landscape that was of great interest to Captain Henry Dearborn. He wrote in his journal that “it Stands on a Point of Land Beautifully situated, there is a Number of acres of Clear’d Land a Bout it...the river is very Still, and good Land on each side of it a Considerable part of the way.”⁶⁹ As a wealthy physician, Dearborn was likely considering land speculation and the settling of the Eastern Country. As a native of New Hampshire, he knew firsthand that “many New England towns faced a demographic crunch” and “land hunger dominated” much of the region during the mid-eighteenth century, causing many individuals to relocate to the westward or into the District of Maine.⁷⁰ In fact, after the war, Dearborn became “an avid land speculator...[and] served as Kennebeck Proprietor James Bowdoin’s land agent.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 12.

⁶⁹ Dearborn, *A Journal Kept*, Oct 17. For more statements by the diarists regarding the beauty of the mountainous landscape, see Senter in ed. Darley, *Voices of a Wilderness Expedition*, 159; Arnold Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 49; *Ibid*, 51; Thayer Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 253; Topham Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 253; Thayer Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 254; Meigs Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 177.

⁷⁰ Brian Donahue, *The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 197; Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 79.

⁷¹ Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 217.

Other soldiers, who would not turn to land speculation after the war, also commented on the beauty of the landscape. After reaching a particularly agreeable vista on the journey to Quebec, Private Abner Stocking was captivated by his beautiful surroundings. At sundown his division:

encamped in a most delightful wood, where I thought I could have spent some time agreeably in solitude, in contemplating the works of nature.

The forest was stripped of its verdure, but still appeared to me beautiful. I thought that though we were in a thick wilderness, uninhabited by human beings, yet we were as much in the immediate presence of our divine protector, as when in the crowded city.⁷²

Present in this passage is what historian Perry Miller termed “Christianized naturalism.” By finding the works of God in the natural world the expedition gained an important frame of reference to combat their fears regarding the dangers of the natural and supernatural world lurking in the wilderness.

Stocking, a privateer from Connecticut, serving as a private in the Continental Army, could appreciate the romance – and indeed the divinity – of the natural world seeing “sermons in stones.”⁷³ Connecting wilderness to religion provided comfort and solace in an unknown landscape. In another passage, Stocking expressed a reaction approaching the sublime: “Hell-gate falls” was “of astonishing height, and exhibit an awful appearance.”⁷⁴ Private John Joseph Henry was sailing bateaux across a pond

⁷² Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 125.

⁷³ Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 211.

⁷⁴ Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 126.

when through an opening in the trees he and the other enlisted soldiers “obtained a full view of those hills which were...called the ‘Height of Land.’ It made an impression upon us that was really more chilling than the air which surrounded us.”⁷⁵ This is the true essence of the sublime.⁷⁶ The sublimity of the natural world generated strong sensations of awe, terror, danger, and appreciation for the beholder. The grandeur of the hills before them inspired feelings of awe of the wilderness and nature’s transcendent power.

Countless other soldiers expressed their awe and reverence of “serpentine” streams and rivers, “very fine” and “beautiful” lakes and ponds, the stillness of the early morning in the wilderness, “serene...at its dawn,” and the “beautiful meadow[s]” and “grove[s] of birch woods.”⁷⁷ In the spring following the siege of Quebec, Reverend Ammi Robbins, on an expedition to reinforce Arnold, commented about how peaceful it was to sail on the rivers and lakes he encountered. On April 10, he “sailed on the lake a little for diversion” and on May 3, he “had the most pleasant sail [he] ever was in,

⁷⁵ Henry Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 316. For more statements by the diarists regarding the sublimity of the landscape, see *Ibid.*, 15; James Knowles to His Wife, October 24, 1775, 1 Folder, 1767-1775, Ms. S-730, James Knowles letters, 1767-1775; bulk: 1775, Massachusetts Historical Society; Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 29; *Ibid.*, 30; Thayer Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 252; Morison Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 522; Pierce Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 658.

⁷⁶ The definition of sublime used is from Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, in Pall-mall, 1757).

⁷⁷ Henry Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 310; Durbin Journal in ed. Darley, *Voices of a Wilderness Expedition*, 106; Senter Journal in ed. Darley, *Voices from a Wilderness Expedition*, 154; *Ibid.*, 157; Arnold Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 58; Thayer Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 251.

without the least need of rowing” he found his surroundings to be “the most pleasant [he] ever saw.”⁷⁸

A Sense of Wonder

Wilderness was ordered into categories of usefulness and ranked according to its aesthetic qualities, but it was also the focus of scientific interest. Major Meigs mused that the rocks along the river were “polished curiously in some places.”⁷⁹ Pierce, upon noticing “heaps of Stones” scattered along several parts of the rivers, asked the expedition’s guides about this phenomenon. They responded, in jest, that they “were carried their by ye Salmon and Trouts.”⁸⁰ A curious rock caught John Joseph Henry’s eye as the expedition rowed past, “it was standing in conical form, five feet in perpendicular height, scalloped out, down the water’s edge.” John Getchell, one the expeditions guides told him that this is where the Abenaki Indians were harvesting their arrowheads. He questioned the accuracy of this statement at first, but settled on the fact that it must be so as no other scientific explanation he could think of made sense.⁸¹ Upon reaching the Dead River several diarists commented on the unique properties of the current. Private Jeremiah Greenman wrote that the water was “so still you cant but jest procive wich way it runs / its black and very deep.”⁸²

⁷⁸ Ammi Robbins, *The Journal of the Rev. Ammi R. Robbins, A Chaplain in the American Army, in the Northern Campaign of 1776* (New Haven: B.L. Hamlen, Printer to Yale College, 1850), 7; *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁹ Meigs, *A Journal of Occurrences*, 4.

⁸⁰ Pierce Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 657.

⁸¹ Henry Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 305.

⁸² Greenman, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, 16. For more statements by the diarists regarding the visual aesthetic or curiosities of the wilderness, see Arnold, *A Journal of an Intended Tour*, 15; Dorr, *Journal, 1775-1776*, Oct 14; Henry, *Campaign*, 26; Shipton, *Rhode*,

Like the early American naturalists described in Richard Judd's *The Untilled Garden*, the soldiers in Arnold's expedition "used their feelings to give meaning to a land that carried no established [Western] cultural associations and where nature itself seemed formless and confusing." Judd pointed out that "their emotional reactions accented the wildness of the landscape but, as they learned to ignore the biting flies and let these confusing features sort themselves out, the language of emotion became a way of conveying the beauty and majesty of the ...wilderness."⁸³ Similarly, the more time Arnold's men spent in the wilderness, the more comfortable they became with the order they imposed on this landscape. Once they made sense of the land, they were free to explore curiosities and find beauty in their isolated condition.

Wilderness Victorious: The Defection of Colonel Roger Enos' Company

Although the Kennebec-Chaudière wilderness provided food, forage, and rejuvenating aesthetics, it was still a major obstacle for the expedition. Indeed, it harbored a wide range of perils. Historian Justin Smith, one of the first professional chroniclers of the expedition, wrote that "the March itself was a campaign, — a campaign against the forest and the flood, against fatigue, sickness, and famine."⁸⁴ These were the obstacles that the expedition had to overcome in their passage to Quebec.

17; Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 12; *Ibid.*, 18; *Ibid.*, 19; *Ibid.*, 21; Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 128; Thayer Journal in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 253; *Ibid.*, 259; Topham, *The Journal of John Topham*, 73; Ware, *A Journal of a March*, 5.

⁸³ Judd, *Untilled*, 85.

⁸⁴ Smith, *Arnold's March*, 2.

The most prevalent daily obstacle was the lack of potable water, which wreaked havoc on the troops' digestive systems. Dr. Senter recorded the situation in his journal:

Many of us were now in a sad plight with the diarrhea. Our water was of the worst quality...quite yellow. With this we were obliged not only to do all our cooking, but use it as our constant drink. Nor would a little of it suffice, as we were obliged to eat our meat [with] exceeding salt. This with our constant fatigue called for large quantities of drink. No sooner had it got down than it was puked up by many of the poor fellows.⁸⁵

The water was dangerous for many reasons. Diarrhea led to dehydration, and this in turn compelled the invalid to drink more water, perpetuating the symptoms. Senter also noted that the men in the expedition were suffering from gout due to poor nutrition.⁸⁶

Having to stop along the way due to malaise or fatigue was problematic. The men marched in column formation through the wilderness to hide their numbers. If one stopped, he lost his place in line and had to join in when there was another break in the line or at the end. If the need for rest was longer, the unfortunate soldier was often left behind to catch up later. In his war pension application, Private Richard Vining noted, "I, having occasion to stop, was left by my company and got lost and was in the woods alone three days without a mouthful of provisions."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 11.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁷ Richard Vining Pension Application in *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence*, ed. John C. Dann (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 15-6.

The harsh autumn weather was also a major obstacle. The first fatality to occur in the wilderness took place during a windstorm on October 10, when “one of the men was killed by the falling of a tree.”⁸⁸ The incident left men wary: “the danger of encamping among the trees was thought great,” one wrote.⁸⁹ In addition to the high winds, the troops weathered a heavy rainstorm for three consecutive days from October 19 to 21. It is likely this was the result of a late-season hurricane that traveled along the east coast to the Eastern Country and “slammed deep into the Maine wilderness.”⁹⁰ In the midst of this storm, Arnold and his men were startled awake one morning at approximately four o’clock with the river, having risen “8 feet perpendicular in 9 hours,” flooding their campsite, ruining clothes, blankets, supplies, a preponderance of their food stores.⁹¹ It is highly likely that in the wake of this harsh weather and flooding fish and wildlife became scarce.⁹² Hence, by the final days of October, the men in the expedition were desperate for provisions. One soldier noted in his journal that “his comrades shot a robin and a ferret” for sustenance.⁹³

Indeed, the challenges of wilderness travel were too great for some. Throughout the journey, water seeped and splashed into the bateaux and rotted supplies of bread,

⁸⁸ Melvin, *A Journal of the Expedition*, 3.

⁸⁹ Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 14.

⁹⁰ Martin, *Benedict Arnold*, 127.

⁹¹ Benedict Arnold in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 54.

⁹² Folke Skuncke, *The Moose: Studies, Hunting, and Care* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt and Sons, 1949); F. Frazer Darling, *Herd of Red Deer* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937); Rich Kirn, “Flood Impacts to Wild Trout Populations in Vermont,” Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife (October, 2011)

http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/library/Reports_and_Documents/Fisheries/Flood_Impacts_to_Wild_Trout_Populations_in_Vermont.pdf

⁹³ Desjardin, *Through*, 80.

peas, and salted meat.⁹⁴ Many of the craft capsized and splintered on the rocks and rapids, causing further loss of provisions. Due to the state of the food supplies in the forward divisions, Benedict Arnold sent orders to Greene and Enos to send back any members to the army whom they felt unable to make the journey, either physically or mentally, and then to make haste in coming up with the rest of the army to reorganize the stores of provisions.⁹⁵ On October 24, three days after suffering through the hurricane, Colonel Greene and Colonel Enos held a council of war with their senior officer to decide whether to ignore Arnold's orders to send supplies forward or to continue forward despite their lack of provisions. Voting occurred along divisional lines with the men of Greene's division – Lieutenant-Colonel Christopher Greene, Major Timothy Bigelow, Captain John Topham, Captain Simeon Thayer, Captain Samuel Ward – voting to continue forward with the men of Enos' division – Captain Thomas Williams, Captain Samuel McCobb, Captain William Scott, Adjutant Jedediah Hyde, and Lieutenant Peters – voting to return to Cambridge. Enos himself voted to continue forward, though many soldiers speculated that this was contrived between him and his

⁹⁴ Martin, *Benedict Arnold*, 124.

⁹⁵ Benedict Arnold to Richard Montgomery, November 8 1775, St. Marie, Benedict Arnold Letter book, Maine Historical Society Special Collections, Collection 1765 (herein MHSSC 1765); Benedict Arnold to George Washington, November 8, Point Levi, MHSSC 1765; Benedict Arnold to Roger Enos, October 15, Third Carrying-Place, MHSSC 1765; Benedict Arnold to Roger Enos, October 17, On the Dead River, 20 Miles above the Portage, MHSSC 1765; Isaac Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 27.

officers so that his honor – and perhaps life – would be protected in his likely court martial.⁹⁶

Captain Williams gave Major Bigelow “a Barrel of Pork & one of flour...[and] 6 Barrels more of Provisions.”⁹⁷ Enos, his officers and enlisted men, as well as 200 soldiers from a variety of companies, then retreated to Cambridge, choosing self-preservation over wilderness privation. This desertion cost Arnold not only 300 healthy soldiers but also most of his remaining provisions as well as the expedition’s medicine chest.⁹⁸

When Roger Enos returned to Cambridge, General George Washington immediately placed him under arrest and dispatched a committee to explore the matter of his return. Enough wrongdoing was found and on December 1, 1775, Brigadier-General John Sullivan presided over the court martial of Colonel Enos. The Continental Army charged Enos with desertion, having left the detachment sent from Cambridge under the command of Colonel Benedict Arnold without the permission of his commanding officer. He admitted his guilt as to the charge laid before him; however, he stated that the “Circumstances of the Case were such as to oblige [me] to do so.” He

⁹⁶ Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 28; Full names compiled from Darley, *Voices*, 221 -254. For comments regarding the conspiracy of Enos and his officers to vote as they did, Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 29.

⁹⁷ National Archives, “Letters of John Hancock, and Miscellaneous Papers, 1774 - 1785,” *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774 - 1789*, Film 247, Reel 71, Item 58.

⁹⁸ Thayer, *The Invasion*, 9-11; Henry, *Expedition*, 59.

then presented the testimony of his officers as evidence of his companies' hardship and to uphold his honor as a commander.⁹⁹

In their depositions the officers noted that the commanders of Greene's and Enos' divisions held a council of war to determine the best course of action due their extreme "want of Provisions." Through their "best Computation" they argued that it would take 15 days from their position at the Great Carrying Place to reach the French inhabitants and that they did not have enough food stores due to spoilage and loss in the wake of the recent hurricane.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the commanding officers decided that the soldiers of Greene's division should push forward with four days of provisions and that Enos' division should return to the English settlements, located nearly 100 miles away near Fort Western, taking with them three days' worth of supplies.¹⁰¹

All those deposed stated that despite the decision made by the council of war, Colonel Enos planned to march forward with Greene's division after sending his own soldiers back to Cambridge. However, his subordinate officers protested exclaiming

⁹⁹ National Archives, "Letters of John Hancock, and Miscellaneous Papers, 1774 - 1785," *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774 - 1789*, Film 247, Reel 71, Item 58. Those who presented depositions during Enos' court martial include Captain Thomas Williams, Captain Samuel McCobb, Captain William Scott, Lieutenant Richard Buckmaster, and Adjutant Hyde (presumably quartermaster Jedidiah Hyde who returned with Enos' division). Other than Buckmaster, all of these men were present at the council of war between Enos' and Greene's divisions.

¹⁰⁰ In many ways this shows the expedition's limited geographic knowledge regarding the distances to be traveled from Fort Western to Quebec. Examining the diaries of the soldiers in Greene's division, the men met French and indigenous inhabitants from the Beauce region of Quebec carrying to them food and supplies on November 2 a mere eight days after the council of war and they arrived at Beauce-Sartigan the first settlement in the region on November 4.

¹⁰¹ National Archives, "Letters of John Hancock, and Miscellaneous Papers, 1774 - 1785," *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774 - 1789*, Film 247, Reel 71, Item 58.

that “it was absolutely necessary for Col Enos to take the Command” to “preserve the Harmony & Order necessary to secure the safe Retreat of the men” as there were 150 soldiers from other divisions also retreating due to illness and injury with only a subaltern to command them. The court was “Unanimous of Opinion” and ruled that under the circumstances laid before them, Enos acted appropriately with all charges being dismissed.¹⁰²

The diaries of the soldiers that continued forward tell a different story. Captain Thayer noted that the council of war resolved that Colonel Enos “should not return back.” With all of the officers in Enos’ division refusing to place themselves in “imminent danger,” Greene’s division negotiated for a bateau, four barrels of flour and two barrels of pork. However, when they took the bateau to be filled up with supplies they were “deceived, and only received two Barrels of flour.” Thayer then exclaimed that Enos’ took up with his “Effeminate officers” professing that it was “surprising that the party returning, professing Christianity, should prove so ill-disposed toward their fellow-brethren and soldiers...especially when [they] observe our numerous wants.”¹⁰³ Upon the officers of Greene’s division taking leave from those of Enos’, Captain Williams wished them success but told them he did not expect to see any of them again

¹⁰² National Archives, “Letters of John Hancock, and Miscellaneous Papers, 1774 – 1785,” *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774 – 1789*, Film 247, Reel 71, Item 58.

¹⁰³ Thayer, *The Invasion*, 10-11. One diarist of the Arnold Expedition, Ephraim Squier, was a member of Enos’ division. Interestingly, Kenneth Roberts points out in *March to Quebec*, that the mental attitude of the men of Enos’ division can be summed up by the September 11 entry by Squier from Cambridge which noted that the division “paraded on the old spot, in order to march for Quebec, but refused to march till we had a month’s pay, so we stayed in Cambridge to-day.” *March to Quebec*, 619.

due to the scarcity of their provisions and the dangers of the isolated wilderness. Colonel Enos, with tears streaming down his face wished the party success but surmised this was his last farewell to his fellow compatriots.¹⁰⁴

The Distress of Desertion

Despite Colonel Enos' acquittal during the court martial, the soldiers still marching through the wilds of Maine gave him no such quarter. Captain Henry Dearborn noted that the retreating companies took with them "more than their part...of Provision, and Ammunition" leaving the soldiers "disheartened and discouraged" knowing that they no longer had the supplies to retreat nor a fighting force large enough to take Quebec. On the evening of October 27, the soldiers of Dearborn's company said a "General Prayer, that Colo: Enos and all his men, might die by the way, or meet with some disaster, Equal to the Cowardly dastardly and unfriendly Sprit they discover'd in returning Back without orders."¹⁰⁵ Surgeon Isaac Senter, diagnosed the men of Enos' division with "*Hydrophobus*" showing their "fear...of proceeding any further."¹⁰⁶ Many others chastised Enos' division for having an advantage over the rest of the soldiers as they had "experienced much less fatigue" having been in the rear of the detachment where the road they followed had been blazed and beaten down by

¹⁰⁴ Thayer, *The Invasion*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁵ Dearborn, *A Journal Kept*, Oct 27.

¹⁰⁶ Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 28. For more critiques of Enos' division returning, see Simon Fobes Journal in ed. Kenneth Roberts, *March to Quebec: Journals of the Members of Arnold's Expedition, Compiled and Annotated by Kenneth Roberts, during the Writing of Arundel*, 581; George Morison Journal in ed. Kenneth Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 516; Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 17.

other soldiers. "They only followed." Further, they had no need for provision rationing as they carried the bulk of the supplies.¹⁰⁷

Twenty-four year old Captain Henry Dearborn noted less than a week after the defection of Colonel Enos that "some Companies had but one pint of Flour for Each Man and no Meat at all."¹⁰⁸ John Joseph Henry, who was sixteen years of age at the time of the march, recounted that the men had made "a good fire, but no food." He felt that "the world had lost its charm." Faced with the possibility of starvation in the isolation of wilderness, he stated that his "privations in every way were such as to produce a willingness to die."¹⁰⁹ Henry surely was not the only soldier to consider taking his own life at this stage of the journey.

With little to sustain them, the men resorted to boiling, cooking, and eating anything they had in their possession. They consumed hair grease, shoes, cartridge boxes, soap, candles, lip balm and what little they now could obtain from the wilderness, including a squirrel's head.¹¹⁰ Dearborn wrote in his journal that Captain Goodrich's company killed his dog and another, and ate them for sustenance.¹¹¹ Private Morison noted that the soldiers "devoured this strange repast with extream voracity, not exception the skin feet or entrails."¹¹² Commenting on the incident, Dr. Isaac Senter noted that the "poor animal was instantly devoured, without leaving any vestige of the

¹⁰⁷ Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 17; Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Dearborn, *A Journal Kept*, Oct 30.

¹⁰⁹ Henry, *Campaign*, 67.

¹¹⁰ Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 22; Greenman, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, 18.

¹¹¹ Dearborn, *A Journal Kept*, Nov 1.

¹¹² Morison, *An Interesting Journal of Occurrences*, 63.

sacrifice.”¹¹³ Another soldier admitted that he ate “part of the hind quarter of a dog for supper.” He added: “we are in a pitiful condition.”¹¹⁴ The officers realized that the situation was grave and issued orders for every man to practice self-preservation and move onward to the Canadian settlements. Heeding the call, some began to “steal food from their companions.”¹¹⁵ As they left their fallen comrades, the starving called out asking the others if they planned to “leave [them] to perish in this wilderness?” This greatly affected Private George Morison who recalled in his journal, “never will that heart-piercing interrogatory forsake my memory.”¹¹⁶

The distress felt in the wilderness was not limited to men: at least two female camp-followers – seventeen year old Jemima Warner and Susannah Grier – had joined the men on their expedition.¹¹⁷ Though camp-followers were not greatly discussed in the diaries, Private Abner Stocking recalled with sorrow Jemima Warner and her husband:

My heart was ready to burst and my eyes to overflow with tears when I witnessed distress which I could not relieve. The circumstances of a young Dutchman, and his wife, who followed him through this fatiguing march, particularly excited my sensibility. They appeared to be much interested

¹¹³ Senter, *Journal of Isaac Senter*, 22.

¹¹⁴ Caleb Haskell, *Caleb Haskell's diary, May 5, 1775 – May 30, 1776: A Revolutionary Soldier's Record before Boston and with Arnold's Quebec Expedition*, ed. Lorthrop Withington (Newburyport, MA: W.H. Huse & Company, 1881), 12.

¹¹⁵ Clare Brandt, *The Man in the Mirror: a life of Benedict Arnold* (New York: Random House, 1994), 52.

¹¹⁶ Morison, *An Interesting Journal*, 61.

¹¹⁷ Wilson, *Benedict Arnold: Traitor*, 55.

in each other's welfare and unwilling to be separated, but the husband, exhausted with fatigue and hunger fell a victim to the king of terrors. His affectionate wife tarried by him until he died, while the rest of the company proceeded on their way. Having no implements with which she could bury him she covered him with leaves, and then took his gun and other implements and left him with a heavy heart. After traveling 20 miles she came up with us.¹¹⁸

This vignette is incredibly revealing, for it exemplifies what historian James Axtell has written about warfare in colonial America: "in the tangled forests and tumbling rivers of eastern America, bulky European war machines broke down."¹¹⁹ The soldiers of the expedition were in such dire straits that they heeded their officers' call to try to save their own lives despite the suffering of those around them. The loyalty, courage, and strength displayed by Jemima Warner exceeded that of her husband's brothers-in-arms. Not only did she remain with him but, without provisions, carried both of their remaining gear twenty miles before catching up with the rest of the company.

Though her plight was much less severe than Jemima Warner's, Susannah Grier, the wife of Private Joseph Grier, purportedly "a large, virtuous, and respectable woman," commanded the men to "avert their eyes as she hiked up her skirts" while

¹¹⁸ Stocking, *An Interesting Journal of Abner Stocking*, 135. For more on camp followers during the American Revolution, see Nancy K. Loane, *Following the Drum: Women at the Valley Forge Encampment* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2009); Holly Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and the Community during the American Revolution* (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

¹¹⁹ James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3.

drudging through swamps and streams.¹²⁰ Private John Henry's "mind was humbled, yet astonished, at the exertions of this good women." Neither he, nor his compatriots "dared to intimate a disrespectful idea of her," throughout the long journey.¹²¹

On October 28, Arnold –still ignorant of Enos' defection– realized the expedition's dire situation, and he pushed forward with a small party hoping to secure food and provisions. He was concerned that the party might be trapped upon reaching the settlements "with the wilderness at their backs," but the only alternative was to let his force starve in the wilds between the Eastern Country and Quebec. From this point forward, the success of the mission and the lives of the troops rested in the hands of the French and Wabanaki inhabitants of the Beauce region of Quebec.¹²²

Soldiers as Amateur Naturalists

As illustrated by their writings, the soldiers on Arnold's expedition to Quebec should be viewed as amateur naturalists. Arnold and his men were completely engaged with their natural surroundings. To make the wilderness less imposing and more useful to the expedition, the soldiers embarked on a desperate quest to understand their surroundings and impose some sense of order and predictability on the wilderness landscape. This made the wilderness more useful and reliable as a source of food and less threatening as a gateway to Quebec. They were interested with

¹²⁰ Henry, *Campaign*, 62; Mark A. York, *Patriot on the Kennebec: Major Reuben Colburn, Benedict Arnold and the March to Quebec, 1775* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 69.

¹²¹ Henry, *Campaign*, 62.

¹²² Flexner, *The Traitor*, 64.

the wilderness not just on the level of survival, but on other planes of consciousness as well. Their diaries reveal a near irrepressible sense of curiosity, reverence, and awe not unlike the reactions of romantic writers and artists of the coming decades. This is not to say that Continental soldiers were proto-Audubons; however, they were not frightened Puritans either. Instead, they occupied a space in between where their idea about the American wilderness was transitioning, as was the nation itself, into enlightenment modernity. Here the wilderness became rationalized and ordered through careful thought and intimate interaction.

Clearly, the relationship between expedition members and the wilderness was complex. The men—often simultaneously—felt fear, consternation, intrigue, scrutiny, invigoration, and awe towards nature. As noted at the start of this chapter, Lieutenant William Humphrey hinted at this complex and paradoxical relationship in remarking that “the work of Nature may at one place please the eye and displease.”¹²³ In spite of the privation Private George Morison suffered in the wilderness, he noted, “our adventures furnished us with more mirth and jocularly than perhaps are to be found in palaces or mansions of the great.”¹²⁴ Both starvation and spiritual rejuvenation occurred simultaneously in wilds of the Eastern Country. The landscape was concurrently aesthetically pleasing and physically draining.

The soldiers on the expedition perceived their natural surroundings on many levels: sensual, aesthetic, and even scientific. Intriguingly, this relationship with nature

¹²³ William Humphrey, MSS 9001-H, William Humphrey Diary, Rhode Island Historical Society.

¹²⁴ Morison, *An Interesting Journal of Occurrences*, 43.

extended across the military strata of officers and common soldiers, challenging Roderick Nash's conclusion that "in America the beginnings of appreciation [for the natural world] are found among [urban] writers, artists, scientists, vacationers, gentlemen-people, in short, [those] who did not face wilderness from the pioneer's perspective."¹²⁵ The soldiers of Arnold's expedition came from varied locations ranging from the bucolic countryside to the urban seaport. Their social status varied greatly as well, and all of these men, regardless of rank, held complex views of nature which they expressed from, as Nash would call it, a "pioneer's perspective."

This recasts our understanding of the idea of wilderness during the eighteenth century and throughout American history. Instead of existing on a progressive linear continuum from fear to utility to romance the story of wilderness in the North-American mind is complicated and exists in multiple spheres of understanding even for the same individual at the same time.

¹²⁵ Nash, *Wilderness*, 51.

Chapter 3

'News of Provisions Ahead': Politics, Autonomy, and Accommodation in a Borderlands Beauce

In May of 1775, Gabriel Elzear Taschereau, the *seigneur* for much of La Nouvelle-Beauce, travelled to Sainte Marie with orders from Guy Carleton, Governor-General of Canada, to institute a militia in the parish and to appoint a captain to organize, drill, and muster the said militia when needed.¹ Carleton devised a strategy to mobilize the *censitaires* of Canada to buttress British soldiers in the colony to ward off an invasion of Canada by the Continental Congress or an individual rebellious colony to the south.² In Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce, Monsieur Taschereau met with little antagonisms from the local people. He appointed *la sieur* Etienne Parant the elder as Captain of the *seigneurial* militia.³ However, not all of the local parishes responded with such outward displays of amicability. The *censitaires* in several parishes, particularly Saint Joseph and Pointe Levy protested against the militarization of La Beauce. The situation came to a head

¹ A *seigneur* is a property holding landlord.

² *Censitaires* are *seigneurial* settlers akin to a class of farming peasants.

³ Michael P. Gabriel editor, S. Pascale Vergereau-Dewey translator, *Quebec during the American Invasion, 1775-1776: The Journals of Francois Baby, Gabriel Taschereau & Jenkin Williams* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 59. Herein this source will be cited as *Journals of BTW*. This collection consists of the reports of Baby, Taschereau, and Williams who received a commission from Guy Carleton to investigate how the Continental army was able to navigate and negotiate their way through rural Canada to Quebec. Based on these findings, the British placed La Beauce under martial law, reorganized the militia, punished community members, and ostracized others. Their investigation was conducted during the summer of 1776 after the siege of Quebec was broken.

when Taschereau imprisoned a settler who refused to serve in the militia. Afterwards, mutiny became the general response to the raising of the militia throughout this rural region of Quebec.⁴ [For a rough sketch of La Beauce see Appendix D]

A few months later, three spies from the American colonies under rebellion to the south headed into the colony of Canada to gather information about British activities. Three men successfully navigated the St. John River and were suspected to be moving through the Chaudière River Basin gathering intelligence as they travelled across La Nouvelle-Beauce. Hearing of this, a government agent, Monsieur Launière, dispatched an order to Captain Parant of Sainte Marie parish to find and arrest these three individuals. Parant, however, was part of a broad network of mutineers – despite his militia commission and ostensible complaisance – he took no such action. He, his family, and most of his neighbors sympathized with the rebel cause. In fact, he knew that the three spies were in Sainte-Marie parish and he also knew that they were being entertained at the house of his neighbor, Claude Patry. The question was, how could Parant execute the orders he received in his role as a militia captain and still support the resistance movement.⁵

He thought about this problem throughout the day and that evening he sent a woman from the parish, who spoke English, to warn the spies, as well as Claude Patry, that Parant had received orders to arrest them and deliver them to the British army, knowing that the men fled during the night, and were not present when he arrived at

⁴ Serge Courville, Pierre C. Poulin, and Barry Rodrigue, *Histoire de Beauce-Etchemin-Amiante* (Quebec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 2003) 173.

⁵ Gabriel, *Journal of BTW*, 60.

Patry's house the next morning to arrest them. Parant then mustered his Lieutenant Julien Landry and several French militiamen by the names of Fabien Routier, Antoine Marcoux, Louis Parant, Ignace Ferland, and Charles Huard to search for the three men up the Chaudière River to the next parish. Not knowing how much of a head start the spies had gotten, and fearing that the militia might catch them, he ordered the men to proceed cautiously, to allow plenty of time for the three Americans to slip out of his jurisdiction. Government officials later complained that Etienne Parant allowed "unidentified people" safe harbor and passage through Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce several more times during the summer of 1775.⁶

Most historians have noted that even though *habitants* across Quebec often supported and sympathized with the American rebellion, their support for the rebels' military expeditions during 1775 -1776 remained irregular, hesitant, and dubious.⁷ Indeed, the sources show a mixed reaction to the American invaders. Some *habitants* ardently backed the Continental Army, providing assistance in any way that they

⁶ Ibid., 60. It is interesting that in the report of Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce in the *Journals of BTW* the rebellious nature of Etienne Parant is blamed on his wife who they say corrupted him. The journals note that at first Captain Parant "showed his zeal and affection for the King's service." Apparently it was easier for these government officials to believe that within one or two months of his militia commission that his wife changed his mind instead of realizing that they appointed an individual who was radically opposed to British rule in La Beauce.

⁷ See, for example, Mark R. Anderson, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada, 1774 - 1776* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2013); Serge Courville, Pierre C. Poulin, and Barry Rodrigue, *Histoire de Beauce-Etchemin-Amiante* (Quebec: Institut Quebecois de recherche sur la culture, 2003); Thomas A. Desjardin, *Through a Howling Wilderness: Benedict Arnold's March to Quebec, 1775* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006); L'Abbé Verreau, *Invasion du Canada: Collection de Memoirs, Recueillis et Annots* (Montreal: Eusebe Senecal, 1873).

could, while others wished to remain neutral in the war between English-speaking peoples, lending support to the invading force for financial gain. Finally, some decided their best interest lay in remaining loyal to the British king.⁸ Much like indigenous people throughout eastern North America, the French and Wabanaki inhabitants of La Beauce made a variety of choices based on local circumstances and generally sought neutrality until forced to do otherwise.⁹ The primacy of local factors that historian Greg Rogers has found decisive for a slightly early period in the northern borderlands remained true in La Beauce during the American Revolution. It led military and political officials as well as soldiers, local people, and traders, to operate within a different culture of power. This *petite politique* aimed to take advantage of the fluidity of people, resources, and information through intercultural diplomacy during the day-to-day business of colonial and military operations that recognized no lasting national or tribal allegiances or authority much of the time.¹⁰ In fact, loyalty itself remained fluid and inward looking within these rural communities.

The fluidity of identity and authority in La Beauce meant that the actions of Parant and his fellow *Beaucerons* highlight an oft-neglected aspect of the Revolutionary War in Canada. In La Beauce, the colonial population played a decisive role during the

⁸This is evidenced in the Journals of Baby, Tashereau, and Williams.

⁹ For more on the political autonomy of a variety of indigenous groups during the American Revolution, see Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Greg Rogers, "Petite Politique: The British, French, Iroquois, and Everyday power in the Lake Ontario Borderlands, 1724-1760" Doctoral Dissertation. University of Maine. 2016. v.

invasion of 1775 that was both an imperial struggle between the rebellious colonies of America and a local struggle between *Les Beaucerons* and the power structure of the *seigneurial* system being adapted to British rule in the region. In the classic formulation of J. Franklin Jameson, the political struggle raised questions of both “home rule” and “who should rule at home.”¹¹

The *habitants* aided the Continental Army in a variety of ways. They provided provisions and shelter, supplied critical intelligence, gave directions and transported soldiers, and they created artillery ramparts and enlisted in the American army as soldiers. On a less material level, they travelled through the countryside to arouse the public spirit by setting parish bells ringing and reading letters from General George Washington outside of their churches. Through coercion, shame, community pressure, and at times imprisonment, they also impeded efforts from royalists who supported the British and their militarization of La Beauce.¹²

The scholarly literature surrounding the events of 1775 and 1776 in La Beauce tends to ignore the perspective of the *habitants* in favor of a narrow focus on the Continental Army. In fact, historians who discuss the invasion of Canada in 1775 typically limit their narratives to the marches and actions of the expeditions under Colonel Benedict Arnold or General Richard Montgomery. Thus, the viewpoint of the soldiers (and especially their officers) have overshadowed that of the French-speaking

¹¹ J. Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (Princeton University Press, 1926), 22.

¹² The term royalist was used by the British and *Les Beaucerons* to describe those loyal to the British crown.

inhabitants. In a preponderance of the scholarship La Beauce does not appear until Benedict Arnold first staggered out of the wilderness and into Beauce-Sartigan (St. George) desperate for succor for at the end of October 1775.¹³ This chapter counters that traditional framework by emphasizing the political situation in La Nouvelle-Beauce prior to the arrival of Arnold and his men. It highlights the variety of ways that *habitants* participated in the invasion of Canada and emphasizes the region as a borderland with a multitude of loyalties and allegiances in spite of British political and military control of the colony. This chapter also focuses on the *habitant* – or *seigneurial* peasant – population of the colony, as they are often neglected in favor of English speakers and the economic and religious elites of the *seigneurial* system.

Perhaps most importantly, this chapter argues that notwithstanding local political willingness to defy the British, *Les Beaucerons* and Arnold's expedition could not have reached a state of accommodation with one another if that military force was seen as an invading body. Thus, the significance of how the wilderness transformed the Continental soldiers from a band of vociferous patriots into impoverished and self-

¹³ Works focusing on the invasion of Canada, 1775 specifically or the topic of Canada during the American Revolution more widely typically focus on the march of Benedict Arnold through the wilds beyond the Eastern Country of Massachusetts. Those that focus on the borderlands interface include Mark R. Anderson, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada, 1774 - 1776* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2013); John Codman, *Arnold's Expedition to Quebec* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1901); Thomas A. Desjardin, *Through A Howling Wilderness: Benedict Arnold's March to Quebec, 1775* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006); Gustave Lanctot, *Canada & the American Revolution*, translated by Margaret M. Cameron (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1967); Justin Harvey Smith, *Arnold's March from Cambridge to Quebec: A Critical Study* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1903).

effacing men, was a critical catalyst in helping human actors to overcome the powerful cultural divisions of religion, language, and uncertain political allegiances.

Rural Canada: A Rebellious Landscape

Historians' assessment of La Beauce in this period typically begin their narratives by highlighting changes throughout British North America with the outbreak of armed conflict in Lexington and Concord in April of 1775. However, according to Canadian historian, S.D. Clark, the inhabitants living in the frontier regions of Quebec, such as La Nouvelle-Beauce, took full advantage of the changes in state power at the end of the Seven Years' War in North America to get out from under the oppressive seigneurial system by creating small amounts of political protest at the everyday level far before the Americans began their armed conflict across the colonial border. In fact, *habitants* in the rural regions of Canada began to carve out local political autonomy even before the British took official political control of colony in 1763.¹⁴

For example, Provincial Governor James Murray noted that the clergy who had dominion over the frontier regions of Quebec during France's rule were losing their control over the *habitant* populace. He wrote that "their influence over the people was and is still very great, but though we have been so short a time in the Country, a difference is to be perceived, they do not submit so tamely to the Yoke...they every day take an opportunity to dispute the tythes with their *Cures*."¹⁵ Not only did the *habitants* dismiss clerical authority, they also refused to express public reverence for those of a

¹⁴ S.D. Clark, *Movements of Political Protest in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

higher social stratum. Quebec Lieutenant-Governor Cramahe wrote to the Secretary of State Lord Hillsborough in 1772 stating that “ the Canadian Noblesse often alledge...the middling and lower sort of People daily lose of that Deference and Respect they used formerly, upon all occasions to shew their Superiors.”¹⁶ This social divide widened when elites of *Canadien* society fell in line with the British ruling class and the *habitants* increasingly went their own way.

The British, in an attempt to buttress the power of French elites who complained of an unruly rural populace, restored French civil law in the Quebec Act of 1774, restoring the tithe to bolster the Catholic Church and the *corvee* to confirm the power of the *seigniorial* system.¹⁷ This angered many of the *habitants* who had carved out niches of autonomy from the traditional elites of New France, in some instances minimalizing the tithes they paid and the amount of *corvee* owed to their feudal landlords.

Attempting to stoke the flames of radicalization of the *habitants*, during the autumn of 1774, the Continental Congress sent an address to the residents of Quebec titled, *L'appel du Congrès aux Canadiens* seeking common ground in the American struggle against

¹⁶ Cramahe to Hillsborough, Quebec, July 25, 1772, Quoted in Victor Coffin, “The Province of Quebec and the Early American Revolution: A Study in English-American Colonial History” *Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 1896): 286.

¹⁷ For more on the Quebec Act restoring French civil law and reactions to it, see Cory Biad, *Neoliberalism and National Culture: State-Building and Legitimacy in Canada and Quebec* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 57; Roberto Toniatti and Jens Woelk, *Regional Autonomy, Cultural Diversity and Differentiated Territorial Government* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Walter R. Borneman, *American Spring: Lexington, Concord, and the Road to Revolution* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2014). A *corvee* is the system of unpaid labor that the *habitants* were required to give their *seigneurs* as part of their social obligation for being tenants on their land.

British hegemony in North America. Contested local control spurred by knowledge that other colonies were rebelling combined with other factors to fuel a mutinous mood among some.

When Governor-General Guy Carleton ordered the creation of a French-Canadian militia he once again impinged on *habitant* autonomy. The locals, presumably still upset by some of the provisions of the Quebec Act, protested against this and argued that the British and *seigneurs* had no right to impose military service on their tenants. It was then that Gabriel Taschereau imprisoned one of his tenants for refusing to serve in the militia, which infuriated the local populace even more. One parish, Saint-Joseph-de-Beauce, “unanimously revolted and refused to acknowledge the King’s authority, despite the good counsel of their priest.” Although the *habitants* in La Beauce eventually capitulated to their *seigneurs*, they often removed government appointed militia captains in favor of individuals in the community who frequently did not enforce British martial law.¹⁸ In one example, the government demanded the arrest of suspected *Canadien* and American spies in La Beauce, but militia captains refused, either directly or through subterfuge.

When Taschereau arrived at St. Joseph to institute a militia an angry crowd gathered, then dispersed, refusing to hear the *seigneur* speak. Two members of the community, Bazil Vachon dit Pomarlau and Giguierre traveled to Ste. Marie to convince

¹⁸ For more on the structure of the militia, see Allan Greer, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 100-107. Here Greer discusses that the local community had no official capacity in the selection of militia officers, however, they would resist orders, form protests, and petition superiors for the removal of those they did not approve of.

the bailiff, Ignace Ferland, to entice the local residents to side against British authority in their small towns. However, the bailiff refused.¹⁹ Vachon and Giguere returned to St. Joseph where they were offered commissions as officers in the local militia by the British. When they refused, they were ordered by the local priest to accept them. Standing firm Vachon and Giguere rebuffed the proposition and spoke in favor of the American rebels.²⁰

Actions such as these greatly worried Carleton. The military hostilities at Salem, followed by armed fighting at Lexington and Concord, raised the possibility of rebellion anywhere and everywhere. Carleton exchanged letters with several colonial governors and officials through the summer and fall of 1775 articulating his growing anxiety regarding the restlessness of the *habitants*.²¹ The fear and apprehension he showed highlights the nature of ideological diffusion during the eighteenth century. Revolutionary rhetoric and fears of armed resistance played on the minds of government officials and permeated porous colonial boundaries. The vast expanses of unpoliceable wilderness situated between the rebellious colonies and Canada combined with informal inter-colonial social networks and shared colonial wariness of efforts to make the empire more efficient helped to make La Beauce a fertile ground for radicalism during the summer of 1775.

¹⁹ Gabriel, *Journal of BTW*, 63.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

²¹ Sir Guy Carleton Papers, Film 57, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution.

By autumn of 1775, the British, having learned of Colonel Benedict Arnold's orders to capture Quebec, attempted to coerce the militia at Pointe Lévy to take up arms. In an act of defiance, Pointe Lévy sent envoys into the neighboring parishes of La Nouvelle-Beauce to join them in opposing the British government.²² A mass of armed *habitants* from the parishes between La Nouvelle-Beauce and Quebec marched to Pointe Lévy as a show of resistance against the British government, intended on preventing the mobilization of those who had been called upon to serve.²³ Going one step further, once the Continental Army reached Pointe Lévy during the autumn of 1775, the militia captain, Joseph Lambert, accepted an officer's commission at the same rank in the service of the rebel forces, which he renewed at year's end.

Spies ranged through La Beauce and other regions of Canada fueling Carleton's fears regarding the susceptibility of his population to rebellious ideas. At the end of June, Carleton wrote to the commander-in-chief of the British military in North America, Thomas Gage, lamenting that Canada, especially the rural parts situated further from British power, was largely under the pernicious influence of "the Rebels" who sought to "poison the Minds of these poor People." Carleton enclosed several pieces of propaganda that the American agents had dispatched throughout the countryside.²⁴ It was challenging to govern a relatively new British colony where allegiances and identities as loyal subject, active rebel, or something in between were

²² Gabriel, *Journal of BTW*, 67.

²³ *Ibid.*, 58-9.

²⁴ Thomas Gage Papers, Guy Carleton to Thomas Gage, Montreal, June 28, 1775; Series II, Subseries I, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

unreliable and amorphous. Indeed, the *habitants* of La Beauce seemed to harbor and aide the very individuals causing Governor-General Carleton great consternation.

Other military officers noticed the unrest amongst the *censitaires*. While serving as Captain of the British militia in Quebec, Thomas Ainslie kept a journal of his experiences.²⁵ During the summer of 1775, he noted that the Continental Congress sent many agents into the Canadian countryside to spread revolutionary fervor to the “Canadian Peasants.” As with Carleton, he conveyed his fears that rebellious Americans would corrupt the French populace. Through their speeches and printed tracts, the Americans “had poison’d” the *habitants* “minds.” Ainslie identified this activity specifically in La Beauce, which he called the “Parishes below Quebec.” In a mix of fear and wonder he observed that “Arm’d strangers...disappear’d suddenly” and that nobody in the British armed service “knew their business.” However, many of the officers and soldiers “conjectur’d that they came to learn the sentiments of the Country People. & the state of Quebec” likely for either a future military invasion or to incite a total insurrection in the *seignuries* of the colony.²⁶

The observations of Carleton and Ainslie reveal a palpable fear washing through the British military and government during the summer months of 1775. Despite attempts to militarize La Beauce the British had little control over who crossed the porous border between the colony of Canada and the rebellious colonies to the south.

²⁵ Thomas Ainslie also served as the Collector of Customs at the Port of Quebec. Fred Wurtle, *Blockade of Quebec in 1775-1776 by the American Revolutionists* (Quebec: Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 1905), 3.

²⁶ Thomas Ainslie Journal in *Blockade of Quebec*, 11-12.

The way Ainslie despaired over the rebels' ability to appear and disappear suddenly does not point to the stealth or covertness in which these individuals moved, but instead reflects how individuals in La Beauce, such as Etienne Parant and an unnamed female neighbor, aided and abetted revolutionaries in Canada. Indeed, it was not the prowess of these agents of the Continental Congress that allowed them to slip through the fingertips of British officials' time after time, but rather it was the agency of the *habitants* throughout the Canadian countryside who concealed them. If the allegiances and identities of those in La Beauce remained rigid and loyal to the British during 1775, it is unlikely that these spies would have been able to penetrate either the territories or the minds of the *censitaires* of the region.

The apparent ubiquity of the American interlopers in the frontier and rural regions of Canada caused British officials to project their anxieties onto the landscape of the colony. As word of the suspected spies proliferated, these regions themselves began to take on a frightful visage. It was clear to men like Carleton and Ainslie that much of the colony beyond the influence of the major British strongholds was friendly – or at the very least neutral – to the emissaries of the American Revolution. In his journal, Ainslie appeared alarmed at the ease which spies traversed the border. To him every “hunter” or “woodsmen” of the northeast could enter and exit Canada with the greatest of ease and at their every whim. The frontier nature of the territories of Canada which abutted the border with the colonies to the south became a major liability as operatives of

revolution could emerge from, or disperse into, the wilderness at any time.²⁷ Three main watercourses – The St. Lawrence River, the St. John and Madawaska River corridor, and the Kennebec-Chaudière corridor – left the Beauce region vulnerable to infiltration. Ainslie worried that any one of these three riverine landscapes, with their carrying places and densely wooded cover, could bring spies, soldiers, and implements of war to the doorstep of Quebec. Further elevating this concern was the fact that the St. Lawrence River and the Kennebec-Chaudière watercourse were “well known to the back settlers in Massachusetts & in N. Hampshire.”²⁸ The military endeavor launched by the Continental Army during the autumn of 1775 from Cambridge through the Kennebec-Chaudière corridor corroborated these fears and forced the British to prepare for a full-scale invasion by the Continental army.

Les Bostonnais Arrive in La Nouvelle-Beauce

On the evening of October 30, Colonel Benedict Arnold and a small foraging party arrived at the first Canadian settlement of Beauce-Sartigan beyond the undefined geopolitical boundary between the rebellious colony of Massachusetts and Quebec. This small envoy from the Continental Army narrowly escaped starvation in the wilds of Maine and now had the difficult task of navigating through the cultural borderlands

²⁷ Ainslie Journal in *Blockade of Quebec*, 12. Roderick Nash in his 1964 monograph *Wilderness and the American Mind* argues that the frontier wilderness remained a place of fear and trepidation to those unfamiliar with it through the nineteenth century as wilderness landscapes posed a very tangible threat to the lives of those in close proximity. Having hostile individuals coming in and out of these regions, usually indigenous peoples in Nash’s account, heightens the uneasiness felt by Euro-Americans operating within these landscapes.

²⁸ Ainslie Journal in *Blockade of Quebec*, 12.

of Quebec. In 1775, La Nouvelle-Beauce had the characteristics of a borderland between two competing imperial powers – British and American – each with their own vision for the fate of the colony of Canada. One defining aspect of this region as a borderland was that La Beauce was not initially settled by either of these Anglo-imperial powers as frontier societies; it began its colonial experience within the French proprietary system of *seigneurial* grants and inhabited by the Wabanaki and *Canadiens*. This feudal landholding structure was one of the few socio-political remnants of New France in Quebec.²⁹

Despite rebellious tendencies by *Les Beaucerons* against the British and their moderate support for the American cause, significant social and cultural divides separated the soldiers of Arnold's expedition and the *Canadien* and Wabanaki residents of the region that needed to be negotiated. Foremost, the expedition was comprised of invading soldiers, while the makeup of the local populace included a preponderance of civilians with weak commitments to the largely defunct British militia. Culturally, the *Canadiens* consisted of French-speaking Catholics, the Wabanaki were Algonquian speakers of both indigenous and Catholic faiths, and the revolutionaries, were overwhelmingly English-speaking Protestants. Thus, if the expedition from Massachusetts was to have success in this region, and *Les Beaucerons* were to not be treated as a conquered and invaded people, these two groups would have to bridge major differences and develop a sense of trust and accommodation with one another.

²⁹ Courville, *Histoire de Beauce*, 113-122.

This process of accommodation began with Colonel Benedict Arnold relating a message to the *Canadiens* from General George Washington requesting assistance for the soldiers of the Continental Army as follows:

Friends, and Bretheren,

The unnatural Contest between the English Colonies and Great-Britain, has now risen to such a Height, that Arms alone must decide it. The Colonies, confiding in the Justice of their Cause, and the Purity of their Intentions, have reluctantly appealed to that Being, in whose Hands are all human Events. He has hitherto smiled upon their virtuous Efforts – The Hand of Tyranny has been arrested in its Ravages, and the British Arms which have shone with so much Splendor in every Part of the Globe, are now tarnished with Disgrace and Disappointment. – Generals of approved Experience, who boasted of subduing this great Continent, find themselves circumscribed within the Limits of a single City and its Suburbs, suffering all the Shame and Distress of a Siege. While the trueborn Sons of America, animated by the genuine Principles of Liberty and Love of their Country, with increasing Union, Firmness and Discipline repel every Attack, and despise every Danger.

Above all, we rejoice, that our Enemies have been deceived with Regard to you – They have perswaded themselves, they have even dared to say, that the Canadians were not capable of distinguishing between the Blessings of Liberty, and the Wretchedness of Slavery; that gratifying the

Vanity of a little Circle of Nobility – would blind the Eyes of the People of Canada. – By such Artifices they hoped to bend you to their Views, but they have been deceived, instead of finding in you that Poverty of Soul, and Baseness of Spirit, they see with a Chagrin equal to our Joy, that you are enlightned, generous, and virtuous – that you will not renounce your own Rights, or serve as Instruments to deprive your Fellow Subjects of theirs. – Come then, my Brethren, unite with us in an indissoluble Union, let us run together to the same Goal. – We have taken up Arms in Defence of our Liberty, our Property, our Wives, and our Children, we are determined to preserve them, or die. We look forward with Pleasure to that Day not far remote (we hope) when the Inhabitants of America shall have one Sentiment, and the full Enjoyment of the Blessings of a free Government.

Incited by these Motives, and encouraged by the Advice of many Friends of Liberty among you, the Grand American Congress have sent an Army into your Province, under the Command of General Schuyler; not to plunder, but to protect you; to animate, and bring forth into Action those Sentiments of Freedom you have disclosed, and which the Tools of Despotism would extinguish through the whole Creation. – To co-operate with this Design, and to frustrate those cruel and perfidious Schemes, which would deluge our Frontiers with the Blood of Women and Children; I have detached Colonel Arnold into your Country, with a Part

of the Army under my Command – I have enjoined upon him, and I am certain that he will consider himself, and act as in the Country of his Patrons, and best Friends. Necessaries and Accommodations of every Kind which you may furnish, he will thankfully receive, and render the full Value. – I invite you therefore as Friends and Brethren, to provide him with such Supplies as your Country affords; and I pledge myself not only for your Safety and Security, but for ample Compensation. Let no Man desert his Habitation – Let no one flee as before an Enemy. The Cause of America, and of Liberty, is the Cause of every virtuous American Citizen; whatever may be his Religion or his Descent, the United Colonies know no Distinction but such as Slavery, Corruption and arbitrary Domination may create. Come then, ye generous Citizens, range yourselves under the Standard of general Liberty – against which all the Force and Artifice of Tyranny will never be able to prevail.³⁰

In this widely distributed broadside, General Washington emphasized security, by assuring the *Canadiens* that British power in the United Colonies of America was largely limited to the port city of Boston which remained under siege. Washington appealed to the French for material assistance for the invasion of Canada by assuring local people that the Continental army arrived in their communities as a protecting and liberating force rather than an invading one. Further, in their mission to protect the *habitants*

³⁰ George Washington, *Address to the Inhabitants of Canada*, September 14, 1775, Broadside, Library of Congress, George Washington Papers.

Washington prohibited plunder and required the expedition to pay fair value for what the *habitants* could spare. On an ideological level, he complimented the *Canadien* populace for shrewdly understanding that the British appealed only to the elites of their communities – *seigneurs* and parish priests – and celebrated the *habitants'* ability to understand the differences between just and unjust systems of government without the guidance of the nobility. In closing, Washington invited the people of La Nouvelle-Beauce to join in the universal cause of self-government which knew nothing of the boundaries of religion or descent.

Exiting the wilderness void of supplies, with ragged clothing, and in an emaciated state, the soldiers of the expedition did not look like an invading force to *Les Beaucerons*. In fact, in this deleterious state, it is doubtful that the French and Wabanaki inhabitants viewed them as a protecting force either. The wilderness beyond the Eastern Country, thus played a causal role in transforming a spirited and jingoistic detachment of 1,000 soldiers into a motley band of 600 malnourished and dehydrated stragglers begging for basic assistance to survive.

It is not surprising that despite differences in language and culture that the inhabitants of the region obliged request for assistance from the leadership of the Continental army, considering their dire situation and the political tension between the British and *Les Beaucerons*. Receiving a kind welcome from a sympathetic population, Benedict Arnold procured supplies for his men, including oxen, sheep, coarse oatmeal, two horses, and five hundred pounds of flour, which were sent back into the wilderness under the supervision of Lieutenant Nathaniel Church with the aide of eight

Frenchmen.³¹ Despite Washington's friendly letter, neither the people of the United Colonies nor the residents of La Beauce had a change of heart concerning the faith, culture or societies of their respective 'other.' Instead, American patriots adopted a pragmatic approach towards the *Canadiens*, understanding that the landscape and people of Canada could play an instrumental role in achieving independence from the British. Inhabitants of La Beauce were similarly pragmatic in accepting the terms of Washington's letter as a first step in the process of accommodation between the two distinct groups.³²

As part of this pragmatic approach, General Washington understood that verbal abuse by the Continental army against the *habitants* would rapidly disseminate throughout the larger Catholic community in both Canada and the nascent United States, hindering the invasion of Canada and perhaps the entire war effort. In view of this, Washington issued strict orders to Colonel Arnold prohibiting the use of any anti-Catholic rhetoric by his soldiers with punishment administered for every single infraction.³³ Indeed, Catholic historian Charles Metzger argues that Benedict Arnold "seized every occasion to proclaim that the Americans would respect the persons, property, and religion of the Canadians."³⁴ These measures were aimed at winning the

³¹ Arnold in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 80.

³² Martin, *Benedict Arnold Revolutionary Hero*, 111.

³³ Gustave Lancelot, *Canada & the American Revolution 1774-1783*, translated by Margaret M. Cameron (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1967), 98.

³⁴ Charles H. Metzger, *Catholics and the American Revolution: A study in Religious Climate* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962), 50-1.

propaganda war by persuading the local French-speaking populace that they were allied in a common struggle against the British crown.

'News of Provisions Ahead'

Although Arnold's laborious journey through the wilderness had ended, it was during the final days in the wilds of Maine, as October turned to November, that his men experienced their most extreme deprivation.³⁵ Provisions dwindled at a rapid rate, as throughout the journey rain and river water caused food to spoil. Wildlife became scarce in the wake of a hurricane which occurred from October 19 to 21. These circumstances combined with the defection of Colonel Roger Enos and the rear guard on October 24, costing the expedition over three hundred fit soldiers and most of the remaining food stores. By the end of October, foodstuffs of any kind became extremely scant.

On November 2, Captain Henry Dearborn marched only four miles before he met Lieutenant Church and the Frenchmen sent back by Arnold into the wilderness with food and supplies to bring the rest of the soldiers into La Nouvelle-Beauce. This surreal sight, he wrote, "Caus'd the Tears to Start from my Eyes."³⁶ Shortly after, when the men of the rifle company arrived, their reactions were similar; many noted that it was the most joyful sight they had seen in their entire lives. Others stared at one another in disbelief "doubting our senses."³⁷ Those who had the strength cheered a

³⁵ Flexner, *The Traitor and the Spy*, 69.

³⁶ Dearborn in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 139-40.

³⁷ Morison in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 529.

“feeble huzza of joy.”³⁸ Almost immediately, the Frenchmen killed the livestock and prepared the meat for the soldiers’ fire. However, most of the soldiers, in their famished condition, refused to wait, and consumed their bounty straight from the butcher’s blade.³⁹ As word began to trickle back through the line, Samuel Barney scrawled in his diary that on this date he and his comrades ate all of their remaining food stores after hearing “news of provisions ahead.”⁴⁰

The boost in morale was best described by Private George Morison, who exclaimed that “this sudden change was like a transition from death to life.”⁴¹ They ate small rations of beef and coarse oatmeal, and felt as though they had “feasted sumptuously.”⁴² While the soldiers divided their rations and ate their new provisions, several indigenous women came to their relief in canoes with small cakes which were “sold to the soldiers for a shilling each, and quickly devoured.”⁴³ Furthermore, the Frenchmen continued upriver to rescue those who had fallen and were incapacitated due to famine and fatigue. Private Morison noted that the French “gave them bread and saved them from death, [and] placed them on horses” to be brought up with the others at camp.⁴⁴ After being delivered from a state of starvation by the *habitant* and Wabanaki inhabitants of La Beauce the Continental soldiers quickly abandoned their prejudices.

³⁸ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 342.

³⁹ Desjardin, *Through a Howling Wilderness*, 104.

⁴⁰ Samuel Barney in ed. Darley, *Voices from a Wilderness Expedition*, 181.

⁴¹ Morison in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 529.

⁴² Stocking in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 556.

⁴³ Fobes in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 585.

⁴⁴ Morison in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 530.

Meanwhile, back in the French settlements, more men began to trickle out of their wilderness prison, arriving in scattered and dispersed groups “out of a blinding snowstorm.”⁴⁵ Private James Melvin came to the first house he had seen since departing Norridgewock several weeks earlier and purchased boiled rice from the Wabanaki inhabitants of the residence.⁴⁶ Unfamiliar with the cordial relationship between the French and the indigenous peoples of the region, the troops were surprised by their close living proximity. They came out of the wilderness expecting parishes “full of French settlers.” Instead, in several of the first communities the Wabanaki populace far outnumbered the French.⁴⁷

After crossing into Quebec, one soldier, seemingly in disbelief, noted that “the people are all French and Indians, but they are exceedingly kind to us.”⁴⁸ The hospitality surprised several of the men in the expedition. Their own ministers had condemned the Catholics as controlled by Satan himself through his Anti-Christ pawn, the Pope. The colonists also were suspicious of the influence of Jesuit missionaries over the indigenous populace. Additionally, in the eyes of the revolutionaries, the French colonists in Quebec were backward due to the social, economic, and cultural constraints of feudal French traditions that had little use for representative government.⁴⁹ The surprisingly warm reception suggests three things: an appreciation for the expedition’s

⁴⁵ Brandt, *Man in the Mirror*, 55.

⁴⁶ Melvin in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 440.

⁴⁷ Desjardin, *Through a Howling Wilderness*, 107.

⁴⁸ Haskell in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 478.

⁴⁹ Martin, *Benedict Arnold Revolutionary Hero*, 109.

successful navigation of the wilderness, political ambitions in aiding the Continental army against the British, and their religious responsibility and humane concerns for the physical needs of the individuals of the march. The mix of motives depended on the identity and loyalty of the individual assisting the soldiers.

As his emaciated soldiers emerged from the wilderness, Arnold and his small detachment moved further into La Beauce and continued to receive a welcome reception. On November 1, John Pierce, engineer and surveyor for the march, recorded that he “dined with the Indians” and “Slept between two Frenchmen in a French house.”⁵⁰ He also purchased twenty pounds of butter for the troops. Pierce and Arnold both noted that the inhabitants were “very friendly;” they were “Treated very Kindly this Night,” though Pierce did feel that it was “very odd to hear them at their Devotion.”⁵¹ Although the *habitants* supplied the army with provisions and greeted them with great hospitality, religion remained a point of suspicion as the soldiers traversed La Beauce.

By November 3, the remainder of the expedition had entered the mixed frontier villages, and they, too, were greeted warmly. News also reached the rebellious colonies in America on this day that “Col. Arnold ... was safe arrived in Canada, and met with a cordial reception from the Canadians.”⁵² This marked a turning point in the expedition,

⁵⁰ Pierce in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 670.

⁵¹ Arnold in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 81; Pierce in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 670.

⁵² “More Fresh News from Canada: Carleton’s Defeat, and Arnold’s Success” (New York?: s.n. 1775).

as the remaining force was committed to invading Quebec, having finally completed the trek through the wilderness beyond the Eastern Country.

Les Beaucerons immediately began feeding emaciated soldiers and administering aid to those who were ill.⁵³ The *habitants* in St. Joseph parish warmly accepted the Continental soldiers into their community, providing assistance and victuals “most willingly.” They also offered material assistance to the war effort by providing the rebel army with canoes and guides for their journey down the Chaudière.⁵⁴ Abner Stocking recalled that the French “seemed moved with pity for us and to greatly admire our patriotism and resolution, in encountering such hardships for the good of our country.”⁵⁵ This theme was recounted in the journals of others as well, and is the key to understanding how the expedition successfully navigated the borderland region of La Beauce. Their suffering in the wilderness of Maine allowed the *Canadien* and Wabanaki populace of the region to view them not as an invading force, but instead, as honorable and courageous individuals in need of care and human compassion.

The inhabitants of La Beauce aided the expedition by not only providing food and transportation but also by traveling into the wilderness to help stragglers and those who were too famished to continue. The compassion of *Les Beaucerons* surprised the Protestant Yankees, largely from New England and the Mid-Atlantic colonies, when the *habitants* came upon a member of the expedition who perished before breaking free of

⁵³ Lanctot, *Canada & the American Revolution*, 97.

⁵⁴ Gabriel, *Journal of BTW*, 64.

⁵⁵ Stocking in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 557.

his wilderness prison. With disbelief the soldiers of the expedition saw the French treat his remains with the care and ritual they would give one of their own. "This real Catholicism toward the remains of one we loved, made a deep and wide breach upon" sixteen-year-old John Henry's deep-seated prejudices against Catholic people.⁵⁶ The robust assistance of the inhabitants of La Beauce was essential to the expedition's success in reaching the fortifications of Quebec.

Others were similarly moved by the cordiality of the French and Wabanaki of La Beauce, even those who had also served in the Seven Years War in North America, which had ended just over a decade earlier. In fact, it was probable that some of the French and Wabanaki individuals who greeted Arnold's men so warmly had also served in the prior conflict.⁵⁷

One historian claimed that "the need of succor for the exhausted troops and so charitable the response of the peasant that the religious issue was immediately and automatically voided."⁵⁸ Although the writings of several of the expedition members proves this to be exaggerated, the hospitable reception and tender care provided by the *Canadiens* certainly bridged a significant cultural boundary. Indeed, the agony inflicted on the members of the expedition by the wilderness caused the rebel soldiers (as well as their caregivers) to be more receptive to the other.

This accommodation also included notable material mutual self-interest as the expedition restored their provisions by purchasing bread, milk, eggs, potatoes, turkeys

⁵⁶ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 346.

⁵⁷ Desjardin, *Through a Howling Wilderness*, 109.

⁵⁸ Sullivan, *Benedict Arnold: Military Racketeer*, 102.

and even luxury items such as sugar, rum, and brandy. They gorged themselves on potatoes, beef, bread, and vegetables. John Joseph Henry described one man as attempting to “defy death for the mere enjoyment of present gratification.” Unfortunately, this soldier “died two days later.”⁵⁹ For some, the nourishment provided by the French became a double-edged sword after being so long without food.

As the expedition moved further into the territory of La Beauce toward the parishes of Gilbert and Sainte Marie, and as the soldiers’ hunger subsided, some became suspicious of the good will of the *habitants* in providing provisions and transportation services. Captain Henry Dearborn commented that “the Inhabitants appear to be very kind, but ask a very Great price for their Victuals.”⁶⁰ Private Abner Stocking echoed these sentiments, stating that because the French were “knowing [of] our need of their articles, some of them would extort from us an extravagant price.”⁶¹ Several other soldiers made similar observations in their journals, and historians have often highlighted such comments in order to show that the *habitants* did not support the expedition but rather took advantage of them, suggesting that money was the underlying motivation for French and Wabanaki hospitality. In an oft-cited Canadian history textbook, for example, the authors noted that if “American soldiers were willing to pay good prices for supplies, the habitants sympathized with them.”⁶² Historian James Kirby Martin, in his biography of Arnold, contended that “although the habitants

⁵⁹ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 344.

⁶⁰ Dearborn in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 141.

⁶¹ Stocking in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 557.

⁶² Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald B. Smith, *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Limited, 1988), 181.

enthusiastically welcomed *Les Bostonnais*, as they called the soldiers, they also charged dearly for whatever supplies the detachment needed." However, "Arnold did not complain; he was anxious to gain the habitant's confidence and allegiance."⁶³

Arnold in fact did not criticize *Les Beaucerons*; he merely recorded that "we have been very kindly received by the inhabitants who appear very friendly, and willing to supply us with provisions."⁶⁴ As a merchant who often traded with people in Quebec, Arnold likely realized that the inhabitants in the hinterland had very limited food stores and supplies of provisions, which typically would have to last them until the following year's harvest. With winter approaching, the *Canadiens* would not have had enough food in their stores to feed both their families and communities for the winter as well as Arnold's starving force. They charged heavily inflated rates because it would take a large, possibly community-wide trip to an urban trading center to re-stock their supplies. Indeed, the soldiers in Arnold's force had made similar complaints in their diaries about the frontier American settlers on the upper Kennebec.⁶⁵ This is further evidenced by the report that Etienne Parent travelled during the winter to Rivière-du-Sud to buy wheat seeds. While he was there he spread the rumor that another "Bostonnais Party" was going to be coming through the La Beauce into Canada soon and he must "promptly return" to Sainte-Marie parish. The *habitants* of La Beauce frequently travelled outside of their own parishes to restock provisions and purchase seeds for the upcoming year.

⁶³ Martin, *Benedict Arnold Revolutionary Hero*, 139.

⁶⁴ Arnold in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 82.

⁶⁵ Desjardin, *Through a Howling Wilderness*, 110.

In sum, the *Canadiens* did not price gouge the expeditionary force because they were English, but rather they sought a fair trade price for their goods considering the season. Historian David Nye points out that a “round trip” to market to buy or sell goods “in the late colonial period was extremely time-consuming and expensive.”⁶⁶ Arnold’s knowledge of this showed a level of sophistication in navigating this cultural landscape.

Natanis and Wabanaki Fluidity during the Invasion of Canada

Unbeknownst to the expeditioners of the Continental Army, they were under surveillance. They were being watched as they travelled through the communities of the lower Kennebec River, they were being watched as they suffered abuse by an unforgiving wilderness, and they were being watched as they approached La Beauce. One of the individuals watching Arnold’s expedition most intently was a Norridgewock Indian named Natanis.

Half a century before Arnold’s expedition through the Eastern Country of Massachusetts, the Norridgewock Indians of the upper-Kennebec River suffered greatly due to the imperial antagonisms between the British and the French over the indigenous homeland. A Jesuit priest, Father Sebastien Rale, learned the language of the Abenaki when he first arrived in New France and was stationed in the Chaudière River basin. After a brief stint in the Illinois country, he transferred to Maine in 1694, setting up and devoting his life to a Catholic missionary village the indigenous

⁶⁶ David Nye, *Consuming Power: A Social History of American Energies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 29.

residents called *Nanrantsouak* or Norridgewock. Rale gained prominence in the indigenous community at Norridgewock, even getting the permission to speak in the tribal council and other decision making meetings. For the English settlers of the District of Maine, his successful missionary work and general rapport with the Abenaki Indians “personified the sinister influence of Catholicism in the dawnland.”⁶⁷

Fearing for the safety of their own religion and settlements, the English raided Norridgewock in 1705 with 275 men intent on capturing or killing Rale. Though the priest escaped, the military set his church ablaze. In 1720 the Massachusetts Bay Colony placed a 100-pound bounty for the capture of Rale. Taking up the offer, Colonel Thomas Westbrook invaded Norridgewock with 100 men. The priest once again escaped with his life; however, Colonel Westbrook seized his papers, pillaged his church, and stole his Abenaki dictionary. Unhappy with the results of this mission, Westbrook led another raid once again the following year. In 1724 Rale’s luck at evading the English ran out when Johnson Harmon and Jeremiah Moulton led a force of 1,100 men that included rival indigenous peoples.⁶⁸ The village of Norridgewock was completely destroyed and Rale was killed along with thirty Norridgewock including women and children. The remaining 150 indigenous residents took flight, returning to a horrendous sight the following day. The English and their allies riddled the body of Father Rale with “hundreds of bullets” and shattered his skull with “blows

⁶⁷ Colin G. Calloway, *Dawnland Encounters: Indians and Europeans in Northern New England* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991), 75.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

from a hatchet.” The attackers then proceeded to break his legs and filled his “mouth and the eyes...with mud.”⁶⁹ The Norridgewock tribe, with heavy hearts, retreated from their home, many taking shelter in Canada and some in the Chaudière River basin where Rale began his missionary work in New France.⁷⁰

With raging warfare and subsequent treaties – which often contained one-sided and deceptive stipulations – Massachusetts Governor William Shirley met with delegates from the Norridgewock and Penobscot Indians living within the political confines of the District of Maine to “secure their ratification” of two treaties, Dummer’s Treaty (1729) and the Treaty of Falmouth (1749). In the two meetings he ordered, Shirley wanted the indigenous residents to explain the turmoil between English settlers and members of their tribal nations occurring along the borderlands frontier. At the close of the meetings Shirley reminded the tribal councilors that the number of indigenous peoples in the region do “not now consist of more than one third part,” than they did before the decades of armed conflict with the English.⁷¹ As ethno historian Colin G. Callaway argues this “thinly veiled threat...illustrated the relative positions

⁶⁹ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 81.

⁷¹ A Journal of the proceedings at two conferences [microform] : begun to be held at Falmouth in Casco-Bay, in the county of York, within the province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England, on the twenty-eighth day of June, 1754, between His Excellency William Shirley, Esq., captain-general, governour and commander in chief, in and over the province aforesaid, and the chiefs of the Norridgwalk Indians, and on the fifth day of July following, between His said Excellency and the chiefs of the Penobscot Indians (Boston: John Draper, 1754), Library of Congress.

from which the English and Abenakis were negotiating” by the outbreak of the American Revolution.⁷²

Thus, it is not surprising that the Norridgewock and Penobscot tribes, both located in the borderland region of the District of Maine, would be amiable toward the Continental Congress and Continental Army as they shared enmity toward the British. During the summer of 1775, as *Les Beaucerons* grew restless about the militarization of rural Canada, Penobscot Chiefs Joseph Orono and John Neptune, alongside a delegation of Penobscot Indians, travelled to Watertown, Massachusetts, to ratify a resolve of friendship with the patriot forces and to request that encroachments into their lands be addressed. In return for their agreement of amicability, the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts resolved to “strictly forbid any person or persons whatsoever from trespassing or making waste upon any of the lands and territories or possessions” of the Penobscot Indians.⁷³

Reuben Colburn was a key local figure hired by George Washington to craft the bateaux to be used by the Arnold expedition and gather intelligence about the Continental army’s proposed route through the Maine wilderness. In turn, he hired Dennis Getchell and Samuel Berry to scout the route. Thirty miles up the Dead River, the scouting party encountered Natanis. They reported to Colburn that “he positively declared that if we proceeded any farther he would give information of...our Designs” to “Gov. Charlton.” The men encamped and took the night to mull over whether or not

⁷² Callaway, *Dawnland Encounters*, 126.

⁷³ Bruce J. Bourque et. al., *Twelve Thousand Years: American Indians in Maine* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 212.

it was wise to proceed further. On the following day, September 8, they continued 30 miles further up river to gather as much intelligence as possible. Their “Indian Pilot” refused to venture onward with them, opting instead to stay at their encampment. While the two men explored onward, their pilot conversed with an “Indian Squaw” who warned him that all the young Norridgewock Indians that lived in the region of the Dead River were away negotiating “Commission from Charlton.” She further revealed that a “great Number of Mohawk,” strong allies of the British, were stationed in Beauce-Sartigan. Last, had Natanis not warned the scouting party through his threat of reporting them to Governor Carleton that they “would have destroyed [them] had if [they] had proceeded.”⁷⁴ Thus, Natanis’s actions and the information delivered by the unnamed Norridgewock supported the invasion of Canada by arranging safe passage and preventing the scouting party from falling into harm’s way.

As the Continental army entered the wilderness beyond the Eastern Country during the autumn of 1775, the solitude, isolation, and the chaos of raw nature caused them to look with suspicion upon any indigenous person not employed as their own guides. After reading intelligence reports describing Natanis as a possible spy for Governor Carleton, Benedict Arnold instructed his scouting party – against the orders of George Washington to protect the French and indigenous people they happened upon – to capture and, if need be, to kill Natanis if he were encountered while performing reconnaissance of the rivers and routes to be travelled by the rest of the

⁷⁴ Dennis Getchell and Samuel Berry to Reuben Colburn, Vassalboro, September 13, 1775, S-104 Misc. Box 2/44, Collections of the Maine Historical Society.

army.⁷⁵ The other soldiers spared him no quarter in their diaries. Upon approaching Natanis's cabin, which was situated along the Dead River, Captain Simeon Thayer noted that he "came to an Indian hut where on Sataness dwell'd, both as rougeish and malicious as ever existed."⁷⁶ Clearly, the intelligence reports of Natanis weighed heavily on the minds of the Continental soldiers as they traversed the wilderness. Surrounded by unfamiliar terrain in what they viewed as a chaotic landscape, they understood that an ambush by a handful of indigenous people would have posed a major threat to the expedition. Wilderness and the indigenous peoples' place within it certainly shaped the thoughts of the soldiers when they assessed the figure of Natanis.

Despite their disdain for Natanis, the soldiers were impressed by a small "Indian house" on a "Point of Land Beautifully situated" along the shore of the Dead River.⁷⁷ The river in the immediate vicinity of his home was "very deep and Still," likely an excellent spot to catch salmon and trout.⁷⁸ They also noted that he labored greatly in clearing "a Number of acres" of land around his cabin for agricultural and security purposes.⁷⁹ The soldiers were also rescued either directly or indirectly by Natanis when confusion set in as the scouting party travelled up the Dead River. It became unclear which route should be taken to best link up with the Chaudière at a fork in the river. Suddenly one of the soldiers discovered a large stake on the shore of the river that had

⁷⁵ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 313-4.

⁷⁶ Thayer in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 254.

⁷⁷ Arnold in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec* 52. Dearborn in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 135.

⁷⁸ Dearborn in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 135.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

been split open at the top. In this seam, the soldier, much to his delight, found a birch bark map that contained “a very perfect delineation of the streams” and watercourses upstream of their location. The map also contained marks that “denoted the hunting camps” or “real-abodes” of the indigenous people living in the area.⁸⁰ In a sense, seeing where Natanis lived and the ‘civilized’ nature of his cabin – which seemed far too domesticated for the wilderness – combined with their utilization of the sophisticated birch bark map – crafted presumably by Natanis himself or another Norridgewock Indian – to commence the process of softening their views toward him. In plain terms, it humanized the perceived enemy.

The shifting of Natanis’s identity from enemy to ally was completed as the soldiers made their way from the wilds of the District of Maine into La Beauce. It was during these darkest days of the march, as the troops poured into Beauce-Sartigan in an emaciated state that Natanis revealed himself to the entirety of Arnold’s expeditionary force. Lieutenant Archibald Steele reported that when he first arrived in Sartigan with Benedict Arnold, Natanis greeted him in “an abrupt but friendly manner,” shook his hand, and “intimat[ed] previous knowledge of him.”⁸¹ When the scouting party, including John Joseph Henry, arrived, Natanis informed them that he kept close watch on the expedition from the moment the first division arrived at the Dead River until they found the course that would lead them directly to La Beauce.⁸² The men of the

⁸⁰ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 314. Natanis or another Norridgewock Indian that lived in the area, Sabatis, were thought to be the progenitors of this map.

⁸¹ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 344.

scouting party asked Natanis why he did not make his presence known and introduce himself to the expedition. He retorted, “you would have killed me.”⁸³

Most of the *Canadiens* and Wabanaki living in rural Canada presumed that the indigenous-controlled wilderness of the District of Maine was impenetrable by such a large force. Shortly after his arrival in La Beauce, Arnold and several enlisted men and officers joined in a ceremonial meeting with the Wabanaki who had gathered. One soldier noted that they were “joined by about seventy or eighty Indians, all finely ornamented in their way with broaches, bracelets, and other trinkets, and their faces painted.”⁸⁴ The Wabanaki addressed Arnold as the Dark Eagle, and they agreed to join forces with him. One of their leaders exclaimed “that the brave men who had come through the woods must have pleased the Great Father and must therefore conquer their foes” – the British.⁸⁵ This conference bridged a cultural divide between invaders and inhabitants, as the French and indigenous peoples living in La Beauce developed a sense of trust and friendship towards Arnold and his new enlistees. Arnold offered those who would enlist wages and provisions. As a result of the ceremony and monetary compensation, the expedition gained over fifty new members, including “40 St. Francis Abenaki and ten Penobscot Indians.”⁸⁶

⁸² Interestingly, this places Natanis not far from the soldiers when they found the birch bark map indicating which direction they should take on the Dead River. This is anecdotal evidence that the map was intentionally left by Natanis as a means to safely guide the Continental army through the marshy watercourse.

⁸³ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 345.

⁸⁴ Melvin in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 440-1.

⁸⁵ Sullivan, *Benedict Arnold: Military Racketeer*, 103-4.

⁸⁶ Phillips, 1775, 469; Desjardin, *Through a Howling Wilderness*, 108.

Natanis and eighteen other Norridgewock Indians also joined with Arnold during the Siege of Quebec. The Penobscot and Norridgewock Nations were important early allies of the nascent United Colonies. A few decades later a Penobscot Indian named Sowanocket filed a Revolutionary War veterans' pension application, stating that he "acted as a guide and pioneer to the army under the command of Gen Arnold in their march through the wilderness to Quebec and remained with the American army till after the assault upon that city." He was stationed outside the walls of Quebec until mid-January when he was discharged.⁸⁷ For all of the suspicion surrounding Natanis, he served with valor during the Siege of Quebec and was wounded by a musket ball through his wrist. He was captured by Governor Carleton, and upon his eventual release returned to his cabin on the Dead River.⁸⁸

John Marsh and a Cosmopolitan Beauce

John Marsh illustrates the cosmopolitan nature of Beauce society during the eighteenth century as a person born in Bellingham, Massachusetts and then a resident of the Maine-Quebec borderlands. He first "resided and hunted" with the Penobscot Indians of the Eastern Country in 1751. It took him several years to become fluent in the languages and to the lifestyle of his new region, but, once he became "perfectly acquainted with their Language," he left the District of Maine, presumably in the company of several Penobscot Indians, and relocated to La Beauce where he earned a "very comfortable and advantageous" living trading goods with the French, Wabanaki,

⁸⁷ Sowanocket Pension, Collection 22 Box 9, Zebulon King Harmon Papers, 1776-1895, Collections of the Maine Historical Society.

⁸⁸ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 345.

and few English inhabitants in this rural region of Canada. Marsh would likely have been present during the reading of the letter from George Washington to the inhabitants of the region, and he certainly witnessed the hustle and bustle taking place in his parish as the Continental army staggered out of the wilderness in early November 1775. He also witnessed Benedict Arnold's efforts to massage relations with the French and Wabanaki, hoping to convince them to join his forces. The combined effect of these spectacles "Compeled" Marsh to a have a great "regard to his [home] Country," and he was convinced by the "Solicitation and even Command of said General [Arnold], to again Quit a Regular life and business and take upon...the disagreeable way of savage living" in the Continental army "to serve as a linguister during the Blockade the City of Quebec."⁸⁹ Arnold and his officers certainly valued Marsh's skilled navigation of the linguistic borderlands with his knowledge of English, Wabanki, and French.

The cosmopolitan nature of La Beauce contributed to its political unrest there. A close examination of census data and government reports shows that along with French Canadians many Acadians had taken refuge in the region. Marsh's petition also shows that there were New Englanders and Penobscot Indians trading on the frontier of Quebec as well. In addition, the diaries of American soldiers emphasize the diversity of the indigenous groups. La Beauce in 1775 was a populace comprised of French

⁸⁹ Marsh Petition, "John Marsh, Jr., Owner of the Orono Island that Bears his Name," *Sprague's Journal of Maine History*, Vol. 2, 202 - 205. Collections of the Androscoggin Historical Society.

Canadians, Penobscot Indians, various other Wabanaki nations, Anglo-Americans, and Acadians, all of them with political reasons to resent the British.

News of Continentals Ahead

The individuals making up this cosmopolitan Beauce society reacted in a variety of ways to the news of the Continental army arriving in their communities. Upon hearing of the rebels at Saint Joseph parish, Jacques Ducharme and Gervais Houle set forth from Pointe Lévy to Sainte Marie with an invitation from the *habitants* living there, letting them know that the Continental army would be received with open arms. Also contained in their message was intelligence to Colonel Arnold that the British government desired the militia to take up arms and fight against the Continental army to prevent their crossing the St. Lawrence River. Fearing that this request would either fall on deaf ears or that the parish militia would be defeated, the British army sent a small detachment to confiscate all of the canoes in Pointe Lévy to prevent the Americans from traversing the St. Lawrence River.⁹⁰

Ducharme and Houle arrived in Sainte-Marie one Sunday before mass and went straight to Claude Patry's house near the church. A crowd of rebel sympathizers, including Etienne Parant, gathered at Patry's. Hearing the report of the two men from Pointe Lévy, Captain Parant dispatched his son, Jacques, and another militiaman, Joseph Gagnon, to deliver the invitation and intelligence to St. Joseph parish alerting

⁹⁰ Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, 61.

them of *Les Bostonnais'* good will and that of the *habitants* of Ste. Marie and Pointe Lévy.⁹¹

Dispatches were sent from the Continental army into La Beauce. The *habitants* of Ste. Marie anxiously gathered around the houses surrounding the church both before and after mass on November 2, All Souls' Day, to hear Captain Parant and le sieur Dumergue announce the intentions of the military force from the United Colonies who would be arriving within the borders of their small communities within days.⁹² Militia Ensign Louis Paré read these manifestoes in front of the congregation at St. Joseph.

Upon arriving at Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce, several officers – and presumably Arnold – gathered at Claude Patry's home. Etienne Parant quickly showed his sympathy for the cause of the Continental army. He exclaimed, with a bit of braggadocio, that when rebel spies travelled through La Beauce during the past summer that he did everything in his power to assure their safe passage. After good victuals and good conversation, Parant opened his home up for several officers to spend the night.⁹³ Fraternizing with the leaders of the Continental army allowed the *habitants* to negotiate the borderlands on their own terms building friendships and securing local patrons for their victuals.

This suggests that the accommodation between revolutionaries and French *habitants* did center solely on material matters of trade and transportation. The American soldiers also interacted with the inhabitants on a social level as well. Indeed,

⁹¹ Ibid., 60.

⁹² Ibid., 61.

⁹³ Ibid., 60.

in his pension application Josiah Sabin noted that Arnold had left camp in Quebec to go “women hunting beyond the line.”⁹⁴ On November 4, Dr. Isaac Senter and another expedition member, for example, “visited an old peasant’s house, where was a merry old woman at her loom, and two or three fine young girls.”⁹⁵ Upon learning that her guests were Americans, the old woman “sung a French song to the tune of Yankee Doodle Dandy. [We] laughed heartily” and “made ourselves very happy,” Senter’s companion noted.⁹⁶ *Canadien* women graced the pages of Moses Kimball’s and Private Caleb Haskell’s diaries as well. On the following evening, November 5, Kimball recorded that they “stop’d at a clever old Frenchman’s house where they gave us rum & bread & butter, as much as we wanted. There was two pretty girls at the same house. Stayed till the next day.”⁹⁷ Haskell wrote that he was “put up at a house where we were kindly received. Here we found a woman who could speak English.”⁹⁸ None of the soldiers mentioned having a sexual encounter with a *Canadien* but it could have occurred. Unquestionably the soldiers were happy for an opportunity for companionship after six weeks in the “howling wilderness” between Fort Western and the Chaudière River valley. Drinking and mixed gender sociability between the inhabitants of La Beauce and expeditionary members again demonstrates that their relationship transcended strictly monetary considerations.

⁹⁴ Josiah Sabin in ed. Dann, *The Revolution Remembered*, 21.

⁹⁵ Senter in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 222.

⁹⁶ Anonymous in ed. Darley, *Voices*, 131; Senter in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 222.

⁹⁷ Kimball in ed. Darley, *Voices*, 166.

⁹⁸ Haskell in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 479.

As Arnold's expedition continued on toward Quebec, several men were left behind due to illness or injury. John Joseph Henry, for example, came down with a high fever and became gravely ill from eating too much after his arduous journey through the Eastern Country wilderness. Arnold gave him two silver dollars and called for a French inhabitant to come across with his canoe and pick up Henry. He carried the ill soldier into his house, and Henry slept for two days, unable to eat anything. On the third day of his convalescence, Henry was able to rise out of bed, and his hostess, the *habitant's* wife, set a place for him at the breakfast table. Ready to set back out on the trail, Henry offered the peasant man the two silver dollars that Arnold had given him. The man refused with "disdain in his countenance, intimating to me that he had merely obeyed the dictates of religion and humanity." The man then insisted on transporting Henry forty miles to aid him in catching up with the expedition. When offered the two dollars again, the man refused, stating that Henry may need them for food, lodging, or supplies before he was able to meet up with the rest of his detachment.⁹⁹ Interestingly, when Henry had first entered the villages of La Beauce he "expected there could be little other than barbarity." However, he "found civilized men, in a comfortable state, enjoying all the benefits arising from the institutions of a civil society."¹⁰⁰ The generosity of this humble *Canadien* family was illustrative of the relationship that had formed between Arnold, his men, and local habitants.

⁹⁹ Henry in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 347-8.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 346.

Military Support from *Les Beaucerons*

As the Continental army approached the fortifications of Quebec, Arnold's *Beauceron* allies assisted with crucial reconnaissance work. In a November 8 letter to General Richard Montgomery, who took command of the western prong of the Invasion of Canada when General Schuyler became ill, Arnold reported that the *habitants* had alerted him to the presence of "two frigates and several small armed vessels lying before Quebec, and a large ship or two lately arrived from Boston."¹⁰¹ This clearly provided both General Montgomery and Colonel Arnold with sensitive intelligence about the military situation at Quebec before their arrival. *Les Beaucerons* also created signal fires to alert the army crossing the St. Lawrence River of the movements of British ships.¹⁰²

In addition to military intelligence, Arnold engaged *habitant* militia leaders in St. Henry parish to perform work at a wage of two shillings per day for the construction of 200 ladders and to have them delivered to Pointe Levy.¹⁰³ He also hired them to craft shoes for those who had lost or ate theirs on the trek through the wilderness. The residents of Sainte Croix constructed 30 carts at Arnold's orders for the transportation of flour that the *habitants* seized from St. Nicolas's mill to be delivered to Sault-de-la-Chaudière."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Arnold in ed. Roberts, *March to Quebec*, 83.

¹⁰² Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, 74-5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

Others committed themselves to the Continental army by taking up arms. Several *Canadien* militiamen, despite obtaining commissions from Guy Carleton to protect Canada, also accepted officer commissions from Benedict Arnold.¹⁰⁵ Ignace Couture was exhilarated to hear that the rebels were on the doorstep of his parish of Pointe Lévy. He immediately set out through the neighboring parishes of the countryside to obtain stores of provisions. Once he secured those victuals he travelled into La Beauce to greet Arnold and the rest of the Continental army.¹⁰⁶ The *habitants* at Pointe Lévy supported the rebel army in a variety of ways. Jean Amelin and Joseph Couture crafted the parts for a battery while other residents collectively manufactured two thousand fascines for the construction of the same battery at a rate of 48 pounds per 100.¹⁰⁷ Abetting the Continental army did not end with material support; seventeen *Beaucerons* joined Arnold's army from Pointe Lévy for the rate of 48 pounds per month.¹⁰⁸

The Siege of Quebec

The stores of provisions at Pointe Lévy – first amassed by Ignace Couture then supplemented by the quartermasters of the Continental army with supplies from the various parishes throughout La Beauce – were transported to the expedition's headquarters by the *habitants* of the town.¹⁰⁹ *Habitants* from other parishes contributed to the rebels' food stores during their siege outside the walls of Quebec. For example,

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 54-5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

Les Beaucerons living in St. Charles and St. Vallier, who usually attended the gathering in Pointe Lévy during the autumn of 1775, sold provisions to the rebels.¹¹⁰ *Habitants* also ransacked the estates of their *seigneurs* in acts of defiance. Not only did they steal and auction off material goods, they also delivered wheat seized from *seigneurie* mills to the Continental army, often without accepting remuneration.¹¹¹

Careful negotiations and economic, social, military, and cultural accommodation by the Continental army, the *habitants*, and the indigenous populace in La Nouvelle-Beauce, carried Benedict Arnold's expeditionary force to the Plains of Abraham outside the fortifications of Quebec on December 5, 1775. Despite their reinvigorated condition—approximately one month after being delivered from the wilderness—the soldiers were once again in dire condition. Reduced to a force of just over 600 soldiers because of the defection of Colonel Enos, Arnold's division combined forces with General Richard Montgomery's 500 troops who arrived from their success at St. Johns and Montreal. These 1,100 Continental soldiers, still suffering from the effects of exhaustion and starvation and facing winter conditions, were lodged in cramped quarters in an unsanitary army camp.

Historian Elizabeth Fenn argues in *Pox Americana* that this created ideal conditions for the spread of smallpox.¹¹² Worried about the disease debilitating his force, Montgomery, the commanding officer of the combined forces, attacked the fortress on December 31 under the cover of a blizzard. The hurried invasion proved

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 74; *Ibid.*, 76-8.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 78-9; *Ibid.*, 61; *Ibid.*, 64.

¹¹² Elizabeth Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 63.

disastrous for the Continental soldiers. Social repercussions of this failed assault would also be felt by *Les Beaucerons*. Nature, a detrimental factor in the wilderness march to Quebec, again played a role in the strategic decision to attack the city, which cost the military commander his life and caused Arnold to be wounded. The British Regulars and Canadian militia killed 30 other soldiers and captured over 400 as prisoners of war.¹¹³

From Borderlands to a Bordered Land

Historians Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron have contended that frontier regions like the Maine-Quebec interface in the eighteenth century were often “the site of intense imperial rivalry and of particularly fluid relations between indigenous peoples and European interlopers—in other words, these were borderlands.”¹¹⁴ The indigenous peoples provided aid to the Americans, thus continuing the borderland narrative of playing off one imperial power against the other. *Les Beaucerons* showed that they had limited imperial loyalty and favored assisting the rebels for their communities’ benefit. The autonomous decisions of the indigenous and the French residents from southern Quebec exemplified this region as a borderland.

The Arnold expedition had to cross through both a natural wilderness and a geopolitical and a cultural borderland. In order to successfully navigate this region, they had to bridge myriad cultural divides: French, English, and Wabanaki languages, Protestant, Catholic, and indigenous religions, soldier and civilian social roles, and all

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹¹⁴ Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” 817.

manner of dynamic political allegiances. Together, soldiers, indigenous people, and *habitants* crafted ways to transcend these differences. The revolutionaries skillfully navigated the borderlands by practicing restraint toward potential hosts, hiring linguistic interpreters such as John Marsh, and paying fair market rates for provisions, supplies, and services rendered. The inhabitants, motivated by suspicion of the British, facilitated accommodation through compassion and Christian goodwill, and by socially mixing with the revolutionaries over food, drink, and dance. The Wabanaki, at first glance, seemed impressed by the courage and fortitude of the men and women of the expedition; they held a formal meeting and decided to join Arnold's ranks against a common foe. Their association with the Penobscot Nation, which allied with the patriot war effort, also greatly influenced this decision.

The wilderness of Maine was an important catalyst for many of these negotiations. The misery and afflictions the expedition suffered in the "howling wilderness" earned its members both the pity and admiration of the *Canadien* and indigenous peoples of La Beauce. Had it not been for the unique properties of this wilderness border between Maine and Quebec it is unlikely that Arnold would have been so immediately well received by the local populace. Historian Justin Smith argued that "the admiration for the courage and endurance of the Americans, not unmingled with awe" with regards to their expedition through this wilderness borderland, "contributed to make the natives friendly."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Justin H. Smith, *Arnold's March*, 243.

Indeed, several areas of Maine, Quebec, and the Maritimes were contested territories less than two decades before the American Revolution, with claims by multiple indigenous groups, the French Empire, and the British.¹¹⁶ If the French and Wabanaki people had decided to obey the issuance of martial law by Governor Guy Carlton, and had met Arnold and his men with force instead of food, the expedition would surely have been decimated as it trickled out of the wilderness.¹¹⁷ However, the reaction to General Washington's written request for food and aid was not automatic by any means. Looking at the western prong of the Quebec campaign, historian Robert Hatch has argued that "for the first time, many French Canadians dared to side openly with the British" against the western prong of the patriot invasion of Canada through Montreal by Montgomery. Hatch estimated that within days of hearing of the invasion, as many as one thousand French farmers went to Montreal to assess the possibility of taking up arms.¹¹⁸ This reaction of the *habitant* populace starkly contrasts with the actions of *Les Beaucerons* and Wabanaki peoples in the borderland region between Quebec and Maine.

It was not a forgone conclusion that the men in Arnold's expedition would obey orders to be respectful of the inhabitants of the Beauce region. The warm reception given to the patriot force by the small French parishes, combined with the agonizing trek through the wilderness, changed the patriots' feelings towards both the society and

¹¹⁶ Plank, "New England Soldiers in the St. John River Valley, 1758-1760," 59.

¹¹⁷ Flexner, *The Traitor and the Spy*, 73.

¹¹⁸ Robert M. Hatch, *Thrust for Canada: The American Attempt on Quebec 1775-1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 59-60.

the culture of the *Canadien* and Wabanaki peoples. Historian Thomas Desjardin concluded that it “created a warm bond between the Americans and the French hosts.”¹¹⁹ That the patriots, *Canadiens*, and Wabanaki engaged in economic, social, and cultural accommodation instead of warfare owed much to the grueling trek through the howling wilderness borderland of Maine.

Repercussions for La Nouvelle-Beauce

During the summer of 1776, Governor Guy Carleton commissioned a study by three individuals, Francois Baby, Gabriel Taschereau, and Jenkin Williams, to investigate how widespread the support for the American rebels was throughout Quebec. Carleton also tasked these men with punishing unfaithful French subjects and militia officers, with acknowledging and rewarding the steadfast loyalty of other subjects, with establishing militias where they were now defunct, and with reorganizing militias with disloyal members in the fifty-six parishes and missions that they visited.¹²⁰ Baby, Tashereau, and Williams punished the *habitants* primarily by restricting their ability to serve in any governmental capacity and publically stripping offending militiamen of their military rank.

It is important to acknowledge that there were consequences for *Les Beaucerons* for their assistance of the Continental soldiers. Yet, the commissioned report by Carleton’s agents Francois Baby, Gabriel Taschereau, and Jenkin Williams deemed most of the *habitants* supported the rebels “sans resistance,” or without any enthusiasm. The

¹¹⁹ Desjardin, *Through a Howling Wilderness*, 109.

¹²⁰ Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, xix – xxv.

majority had convinced the British to presume that they supported the rebels only due to coercion or for monetary gain. Thus, the penalties doled out by the British were mild, reflecting the uncertainty of exactly why individuals had supported accommodated the Continental army, and reflecting another accommodation accomplished due to the autonomy of La Beauce as a borderland region.

The most common punishments were for a handful of leading individuals to be punished as examples. Militia officers were discharged and replaced with loyal subjects, some individuals had to apologize to the community and the new militia for their actions and banned from holding government positions for life. All *Beaucerons* needed to declare loyalty to the British. For example, Pierre Poirier, likely of Acadian ancestry, and four others from Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce were required to “ask forgiveness from the King” in front of the entire community and to apologize to the loyal subjects living in the parish for “having scandalized them.” Joseph Lambert, the militia captain of Pointe Levy, was “blamed and denounced...openly” during the British investigation for commanding the militia to help the rebels. Due to being ostracized by the community, he refused to be present at his review and was declared unfit to hold any government commission. Lambert’s ultimate fate is unknown. However, a review of birth, death, marriage, and baptismal records indicates that there were two Joseph Lamberts living in Pointe-Levy in 1775.¹²¹ The family of one relocated to the more radical Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce, while the daughter of the second left Canada for Europe and was married in

¹²¹ Birth, Death, Baptismal, and Marriage Records accessed through Family Search, Beauce County, Quebec Genealogy. Familysearch.org.

Belgium. There was no record of death for either Joseph Lambert in the Beauce region of Quebec. Lambert's case exemplifies how fluidity of identity and allegiance in La Beauce became intolerable for the British.

On October 20, 1793, John Marsh wrote to the Massachusetts legislature to defend his claim to an island, named Arumsunkhungan, situated on the Penobscot River in the District of Maine. He had resided there beginning in 1777 and purchased it from the Penobscot Nation in 1783 for 30 bushels of corn. His ownership of this island in central Maine was in question because other English settlers believed that he cheated the Penobscot of it. Consequently, Marsh claimed he was obliged to leave the Beauce region and was not allowed to return, instead starting a trade business among the Yankees of Nova Scotia after the siege of Quebec. It was there that an Indian agent persuaded him to relocate to Arumsunkhungan on the Penobscot River, where in 1783 he obtained a deed to the island and renamed it after himself.

Though John Marsh's story is but one, it is exemplary of many others that reveal a cosmopolitan Beauce that was teaming with French Canadians, English Canadians, Acadians, Penobscots, St. Francis Indians, and Anglo-American colonists with differing identities and allegiances. Further this story reflects how this region of fluidity and exchange was altered by the invasion of Canada. The British charged those in La Beauce with the crime of sedition. Though most consequences were mild, they represent a hardening of the still amorphous border between the Eastern Country of Massachusetts and British controlled Quebec with a reinstatement of martial law, increased British patrols, and a reorganization of the militia around British loyalty. This

kept men like Marsh from resettling in La Beauce after the conflict and was an important first step toward a borderland consensus.

Chapter 4: They “willingly delivered provisions to the rebels”:

Local People, Local Resources, and Local

Environments in Canada, 1776

British officer John Burgoyne earned his military reputation as a light cavalry commander in France and Portugal during the Seven Years’ War. By the time hostilities broke out in Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1775, he had worked his way up to a major-general in the British army. He arrived in New England in May, shortly after the civil unrest and general mutiny in the North American colonies evolved into an armed conflict, and he assisted in garrisoning Boston during its siege by the Continental army. Though he had no experience with the environs, the people, or the peculiar situation of fighting in the Northeastern Americas, Burgoyne quickly realized that success in the northern theatre of the war demanded an ability to harness the human and natural resources of the surrounding localities.

His experience as a British officer in Europe informed him that Britain and Ireland did not have the martial resources—neither people nor war material—to quash the rebellion in North America. Instead, he deduced that the British army needed reinforcement along the east coast from the foreign mercenaries in the Germanic kingdoms. For operations in the interior of northeastern North America, Burgoyne mixed British regulars with English provincial and *Canadien* militiamen and, most importantly, “a large levy of Indians” to create a robust fighting force.¹

¹ John Burgoyne to Lord Rochfort, Boston, 1775, in *Political and Military Episodes in the Latter Half of the Eighteenth Century Derived from the Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. John Burgoyne, General, Statesman, Dramatist*, Edward Barrington de Fonblanque

Regardless of Burgoyne's inexperience with the circumstances of the Americas, he quickly learned that the thing that aroused the fears of the "rebels" more than any other measure was "engaging the Indians" in battle.² Thus, when Burgoyne planned for an expedition from Quebec to Albany in the summer of 1777, he requested that Governor-General Guy Carleton recruit 1,000 indigenous warriors and 2,000 French-Canadian militia³ to join his army of regulars and German mercenaries.⁴

Despite General Burgoyne's clear understanding of the importance of local people, local environments, and local circumstances to prevail in the Northeast, the pivotal roles of French *Canadiens*, indigenous people, wilderness landscapes, built environments, and social systems in Burgoyne's invasion of New York from the colony of Canada have received short shrift by historians. This chapter highlights the way local people – whether indigenous, *Canadien*, or from the United Colonies – became key players in the struggles of 1776 and 1777 throughout the Lake Champlain borderlands of what is now Quebec, New York and Vermont. This chapter especially highlights another essential player in the borderlands that has been ignored even more fully, the environment itself. The rough wilderness expanse between Montreal and Saratoga loomed large in the minds of soldiers who served in the campaign. Frequently they described their military experience as a war not only against the human enemy of the

(London: Macmillan and Company, 1876). Burgoyne also advocated for the use of enslaved and free blacks to fight the war in the southern colonies.

2 John Burgoyne to Lord North, 1775, in Fonblanque, *Political and Military Episodes*, 174.

3 John Burgoyne to Lord North, 1775, in Fonblanque, *Political and Military Episodes*, 178.

4 Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 145.

Continental army, but against a natural one with a militarized landscape full of natural obstacles, a struggle to obtain natural resources, and a campaign against diseases. This elucidates the fact that the American Revolution – and all warfare in general – pits human beings against nature and nature against human beings in profound of ways.

Early histories of the Burgoyne campaign revolved around the question of explaining its failure. However, to fully understand this failure, it is important to pick up where chapter two ended, with the attack by the Continental army on the garrison of Quebec on December 31, 1775. After the British repelled the assault, the environment took an prominent role in the subsequent siege of Quebec, the retreat of the Continental forces, and the pursuit of the Americans by General Carleton. These actions led directly to Burgoyne's campaign and shaped the ways the natural world became an agent in the affairs of 1777.

'We Being in Want of Wood': Harvesting Natural Resources during the Siege of Quebec⁵

Battle, as seen in the first two chapters of this dissertation, was far from the dominant experience for most soldiers during the American War for Independence. Often, these men – as well as women and children camp followers – in both the British and Continental armies lived in reprehensible conditions and struggled to obtain adequate housing, food, and supplies. Environmental Historian David C. Hsiung argues that in New England, during the first two years of the war in 1775 and 1776, the

⁵ Jacob Danford, *Diary of the Siege of Quebec, 1775*, February 28, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution, Film 390, Reel 1, January 19.

conflict primarily centered on procuring food and fuel from the landscape and denying those crucial resources to the opposing side.⁶ Though it is rather obvious that massive amounts of food, clothing, and alcohol were needed to support field armies and defensive garrisons, the need for wood is often overlooked when contemplating the lives of eighteenth-century soldiers.⁷ After the ill-fated attempt by General Richard Montgomery and Colonel Benedict Arnold to seize the fortress of Quebec, a six-month siege of the city ensued where, much like the siege of Boston, the daily lives of soldiers revolved around provisioning. Here, the agency of local people and local environment – both built and natural – become apparent as the Continental army successfully executed a war for natural resources in the Quebec hinterland.

The Continental army, despite losing their offensive against the garrison at Quebec, remained fairly well supplied from radicals and other enterprising individuals throughout the Canadian countryside. In General Carleton's assessment of the invasion of Canada, fervently researched by Francois Baby, Gabriel Taschereau, and Jenkin Williams, a great preponderance of the rural parishes surrounding Quebec supplied the rebel army with firewood, supplies, carts, and provisions despite their refusal to take up arms for the American cause.⁸ Further, as these *habitant* agents of resistance

⁶ David C. Hsiung, "Food, Fuel, and the New England Environment in the War for Independence, 1775-1776," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (December, 2007): 614-654.

⁷ J.R. McNeill, "Woods and Warfare in World History," *Environmental History* 9 (July, 2004): 388-410.

⁸ For more on *habitants* providing wood for fuel to the Continental army, see Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, 4; *Ibid.*, 7. For more on *Habitants* supplying the Continental army during the siege of Quebec in general, see Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, 11-12; *Ibid.*, 23-24; *Ibid.*, 26; *Ibid.*, 30; *Ibid.*, 32; *Ibid.*, 36; *Ibid.*, 47; *Ibid.*, 78. For more on *habitants* providing

travelled through the colony procuring goods, they also exaggerated the number of soldiers besieging the fortifications at Quebec by several thousand, which likely had the effect of making it easier for individuals to part with their material goods not having to fear a British reprisal. Other *habitants* did not actively seek out their neighbors to perform services or provide goods for the Continental army; instead these individuals simply brought what their family had in excess to central provision hubs such as Pointe Levy, to sell to official or unofficial quartermasters stationed there.⁹ Thus, there was a range of loyalty to the Continental army, or, as it is typically framed in the literature, disloyalty to the crown.

It seems, however, that much of the provisions freely given or sold to the Continental army by the *habitants* came through looting, theft, or coercion executed by *Les Beaucerons* themselves in the region south of Quebec City. Many *habitants* there invaded the homesteads, farms, mills, and various storage facilities of priests, seigneurs, and other royalists to obtain wheat, flour, wood, rum, and the other supplies necessary for waging war in acts of *petite resistance* against their social betters.¹⁰ The charges against Isaac Goudrau, an Acadian refugee living in St. Pierre, on the Ile d'Orleans, exemplified the acts of rebellion by the *habitants* of Canada against the elites of British colonial Canada. Francois Baby noted that Goudrau "has been to the rebels' camp very

work, carts, or other items of material support, see Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, 26; *Ibid.*, 36; *Ibid.*, 39; *Ibid.*, 47; *Ibid.*, 52; *Ibid.*, 54.

⁹ Gabriel, *Journal of BTW*, 78.

¹⁰ For more on the looting of clerical or seigneurial property, see *Journals of BTW*, 13; *Ibid.*, 23; *Ibid.*, 27; *Ibid.*, 54; *Ibid.*, 61; *Ibid.*, 64. For more on the acquisition of supplies due to coercion, see *Journals of BTW*, 36; *Ibid.*, 108.

often this winter. He would accompany the Bostonnais to act as their interpreter to requisition provisions from Monsr Boisseau's farm & wheat from the Monsr Dupre's mill and other places."¹¹ When delivering supplies to the Continental army, some of the *habitants* merely requested remuneration for their work, while others "willingly delivered provisions to the rebels' camp as long as they were paid in [hard] money."¹²

There were, however, *habitants* who chose not to get involved in the struggle between Great Britain and the United Colonies at all during the Siege of Quebec, preferring neutrality or loyalty to the new British government. In Cape St. Ignace, unspecified American or *Canadien* "rebels" assaulted "Ross, a Scot...repeatedly." In doing so "they seized six cartloads of food from him."¹³ Clearly, the *habitants* of rural Canada maintained and exercised a range of options that rarely extended to armed service on behalf of the Continental army but also that rarely hurt the rebel army economically. Thus, *habitant* loyalty in La Beauce was primarily inward looking, focusing on the best social or economic situation for their families and their parishes at any given time.

In obtaining resources for the army, the commanders of the Continental force also struggled to maintain viable amounts of hard money as most of the *habitants* refused to accept paper money printed in the United Colonies unless the fortress of Quebec fell into the hands of the attacking rebels.¹⁴ Thus, currency also became a

¹¹ Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁴ Captain Thomas Anslie in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 27.

resource that needed procurement from the countryside. In St.-Joseph-de-Beauce a resident referred to as Mach—a *Beauceron* who assisted the rebels throughout their journey through La Beauce and during the entirety of their siege of Quebec—coerced, likely under the threat of violence, that “Frans Nadau, the parish miller who works for La Gorgendiere’s heirs and is a great friend of the rebels, the wheat and money that he held for Mr. Taschereau.” The British agents investigating this matter became further disgusted by this act as Mach demanded not only money that Nadau held for Taschereau from the *seigneur’s* own enterprises but also hard money that Taschereau owed or was holding for other elites of the colony.¹⁵

To secure their advantage over the British in their ability to harvest natural and monetary resources from the countryside, the Continental army disrupted communication lines between the various parishes of La Beauce as well as the small communities surrounding Quebec. One *Canadien* spy stealthily travelled from Chamblee to the Isle d’Orleans gaining information. When he arrived at the gates of Quebec, Jacob Danford, a British subject employed in the Board of Ordinance in Quebec, noted that man was wrapped in a sheet from head to toe as a form of rudimentary camouflage. When asked about this espionage tactic he explained that when encountering *Canadien* or American patrols he dove into the fluffy snow having spread the sheet atop himself. Once he no longer heard nor saw the Continental

¹⁵ Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, 64. It is unclear from the Baby, Taschereau, and Williams journals whether or not this individual, who they refer to only as Mach is actually John Marsh the interpreter who served Arnold once the campaign reached La Beauce. Mach and Marsh appear to perform similar tasks for the Continental army and remain with the army for a similar amount of time.

soldiers in his vicinity, he continued on his way. In addition to reporting that the rebel force consisted of 800 soldiers with 100 more on the way, the spy exclaimed that the Continental soldiers and militiamen on patrol for the American army were under strict orders to prevent the *Canadien* populace from travelling from one parish to another.¹⁶ The local resistance movement in La Nouvelle-Beauce actively policed their communities to sever the local communication of the British.¹⁷

On the defensive side of the siege, Governor-General Guy Carleton needed provisions for not only his army of 1,800 men – comprised of 70 Royal Fusiliers, 230 Royal Emigrants, 22 artillerymen, 330 British militiamen, 543 *Canadien* militiamen, 400 sailors, 50 crewmen from trading ships, 35 marines, and 120 carpenters – but also for city residents, including those unable to perform military tasks such as the infirm, women, and children. Multiple officers estimated that on November 30, 1775 – approximately sixteen days after Colonel Benedict Arnold, and the Continental army under his direction, arrived on the Plains of Abraham outside the gates of the fortress – the individuals living within the walls of the city of Quebec numbered 5,000.¹⁸ However, due to strategic planning and the expectation of an impending siege, the estimated amount of provisions located in the storehouses of Quebec for the army and

¹⁶ Jacob Danford, *Diary of the Siege of Quebec, 1775*, February 28, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution, Film 390, Reel 1, February 28. Thomas Ainslie also notes this method of travel with two Canadian spies utilizing “new white blankets” in Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 53.

¹⁷ Jacob Danford, *Diary of the Siege of Quebec, 1775*, February 28, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution, Film 390, Reel 1, February 28.

¹⁸ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 16-18.

its residents would last for eight months – ideally until June, 1776.¹⁹ Contained within the walls of Quebec or nearby there also was a mill for fresh flour production and a distillery where rum and molasses could be procured.²⁰ Firewood for fuel as well as oats and hay for livestock forage, on the other hand, would soon become exceedingly scarce.²¹

It is unclear how much firewood Governor Guy Carleton needed to keep his soldiers and the residents of Quebec from freezing to death during the brutally cold winter months in the Northeast. However, the average New England household burned somewhere between 30 and 40 cords of wood per year between fuel for heat and cooking, with a preponderance of this consumption occurring during the six-month period between October and March of each year.²² In December of 1775, George Washington appealed to the General Assembly of Massachusetts to provide his headquarters at Cambridge with 10,000 cords of wood to get the Continental army through the frigid winter months.²³ Though the estimate is rather imprecise, one can assume about two-thirds of the annual wood requirement to fuel a New England home being used per person during the siege of Quebec. A clear and a conservative estimate

¹⁹ The siege was broken during the first week of May.

²⁰ Jacob Danford, *Diary of the Siege of Quebec, 1775*, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution, Film 390, Reel 1, January 24; *Ibid.*, January 29; *Ibid.*, February 4; *Ibid.*, February 5; Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 18; *Ibid.*, 22.

²¹ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 16-18; Jacob Danford, *Diary of the Siege of Quebec, 1775*, February 28, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution, Film 390, Reel 1, January 19.

²² William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 120.

²³ David C. Hsiung, "Food, Fuel, and the New England Environment," 645-646.

suggests that the amount of wood needed for one household, in times of want, could be used by ten to fifteen people. Thus, without access to the city's rural hinterland nor vessels sailing from Halifax, Boston, or Europe, Governor Carleton and the mixed British forces at Quebec needed to procure a minimum of 6,500 to 10,000 cords of wood to fuel the garrison of Quebec from November through the beginning of May the siege ended.²⁴

At times the temperatures dropped to dangerous levels that would have been colder than current temperatures in the Northeast, due to the Little Ice Age.²⁵ One officer complained that it became so cold that "no man after having been exposed to the air but ten minutes, could handle his arms to do execution. One's senses are benumb'd." The severity of the weather, however, also served as a defensive advantage, and officers anticipated a Continental army attack on the city only "in mild weather."²⁶ The *Canadiens* also noted that the unusually cold weather and taught their British counterparts that it was cold enough to "*pierre fendre* [break rocks]."²⁷ Garrison duty

²⁴ For reference a cord of wood is a volume unit of measurement. A cord is equal to 128 cubic feet of typically firewood. This is typically envisioned by a 4-foot by 4-foot by 8-foot stack of firewood. 10,000 cords of firewood thus would be 1,280,000 cubic feet of wood or a stack of firewood approximately four-feet high and covering about three and a half city blocks.

²⁵ The Little Ice Age (circa 1300 – 1850) was a period of global cooling that occurred in the wake of the warming that was experienced during the Medieval Period (circa 950-1250). There was a spike within this cycle of global cooling that occurred in 1770 and was prevalent during the Northern Campaign of the American War for Independence. For more on the Little Ice Age, see Brian M. Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300-1850* (Tandem, 2001).

²⁶ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 39. This is a colloquial term which translates to it is so cold that it could split rocks. For more British accounts regarding the severity of the weather during the Blockade of Quebec see also: Thomas Anburey, *Travels through the Interior Parts of*

facing such harsh conditions often weighed heavily on the minds of the British soldiers and for many triggered a sense of claustrophobia. One soldier on guard duty looked across the St. Lawrence River into the parish of Pointe Levy to see approximately fifty individuals on snowshoes in a supply chain with several of the *habitants'* sleighs following their trail loaded with provisions, presumably headed for the rebel's headquarters. He scrawled in his diary "the people all around us seem in motion."²⁸

Weather and climate shaped perceptions and the decisions made by officers and private soldiers alike who reasonably feared injury or death at the whim of nature.

With the besiegeds' inability to obtain needed resources from the local natural environments surrounding Quebec, the British commanders turned to second nature in order to harvest fuel wood for the city.²⁹ Upon arriving in Quebec during the Autumn of 1776 one officer noted that "this city suffered so much during the long siege, last winter...many houses were destroyed for fuel."³⁰ Quickly, however, the garrison consumed all firewood or burnable materials within easy reach. Thus, during the early months of the siege, attention already shifted towards the suburb of St. Roc, dispatching both harvesting and covering parties to forage through woodpiles, fence pickets, and

America in a Series of Letters: by an Officer (London: Printed for William Lane, Leadenhall-Street, 1789), 18. (Herein Thomas Anburey, *Travels*); James Phinney Baxter, *The British Invasion from the North. The Campaigns of Generals Carleton and Burgoyne, from Canada, 1776-1777, with the Journal of Lieut. William Digby, of the 53rd, or Shopshire Regiment of Foot* (Albany, NY: J. Munsell's Sons, 1887), 182. (Herein Digby Journal)

²⁸ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 47.

²⁹ Second nature as defined in Richard W. Judd, *Second Nature: An Environmental History New England* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014) is where "the porousness of the boundary between the natural and the artificial" diminishes and the "dialectic of nature and culture dissolved into an organic whole." x.

³⁰ Thomas Anburey, *Travels*, 17.

other burnable material located there for salvage.³¹ On one occasion, a militia unit of one sergeant, one corporal, and 18 privates received orders to take out “six of the King’s slays to bring in wood for the Recolles.”³² Thus, the task of finding wood and bringing it into the city rested largely on the British militia.³³

The Continental army responded to the harvesting of wood in St. Roc by sending their own parties into the suburb under the cover of snow and darkness. During these expeditions, the rebels stealthily moved amongst the buildings keeping out of eyeshot of the sentries guarding Quebec. They then would “set fire to a slow match communicating with combustibles, creep away again, & and are out of reach before the fire blazes.”³⁴ At first, the British sentries and scouts remained uncertain as to the causes of the fires in St. Roc. However, after observing the blazes occurring at approximately the same time night after night, they blamed the Continental soldiers. Despite this revelation, however, they remained ignorant of the purpose of these fires for quite some time. British officers reasoned that the rebels set the fires due to frustration rising in their inability to take Quebec, to gain strategic insights as to the position of sentries, and to create strong points to attack and defend from.³⁵ By January 19, however, one

³¹ Captain Robert Lester Orderly Book in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 206-7.

³² *Ibid.*, 213.

³³ In Danford, *Diary of the Siege of Quebec*, Collections of DLAR, Film 390, Reel 1. Danford notes throughout his journal that the inhabitants are let out of the gates to gather firewood. On these dates the orderly books and diaries of militia officers not that they were allowed outside of the gates, under the protection of armed guards, to gather firewood. Thus, it seems that by inhabitants Danford means militiamen.

³⁴ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 37.

³⁵ For more on misunderstanding the blazes in the suburbs of Quebec, see Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 36; *Ibid.*, 38

resident of Quebec, Jacob Danford noted that “the enemy set fire to some Houses in Saint Rocks in order to distress the garrison we being in want of wood.”³⁶ It had become clear that due to the frigid weather conditions and the dire need for firewood within the city that a preponderance of skirmishes would take place over nature resources.

By the end of January, the need for wood intensified within the walls of Quebec. To ensure the safety and efficiency of those harvesting wood “a brass six pounder on wheels” was deployed “to cover the wood cutters.”³⁷ Having exhausted the supply of foragable firewood in nearby St. Roc by the beginning of February, the British began to harvest their fuel from the St. Johns suburbs.³⁸ The rebels countered by February 7, when British Captain Thomas Ainslie noted “last night three houses were burnt in St. Johns suburbs, there is a quantity of cord wood there & some hay, the rebels know we are in want of both.”³⁹

As the competition to harvest firewood from second nature became more pressing, the precious commodity became highly regulated. For example, by December, in the British militiamen needed to appeal to their captains in order to prove their level of want. Officers then determined whether or not the individual truly needed the resource. Upon the captain’s careful “examination he will grant a Certificate,

³⁶ Jacob Danford, *Diary of the Siege of Quebec, 1775*, February 28, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution, Film 390, Reel 1, January 19.

³⁷ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 39.

³⁸ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 41. Ainslie noted on February 8 that they were beginning to run out of firewood in St. Roc and on the day before, February 7 he first discusses the soldiers going into St. Johns suburbs to harvest wood for fuel.

³⁹ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 41.

and those who are so in want” brought the document to one of three officers in charge of the firewood stores.⁴⁰ However, three months later, on March 26, the head of the militia amended these orders, instead a commander now needed to appeal directly to the quartermaster to allow men to go out and harvest their own fuel wood from beyond the walls.⁴¹

The terminology that the British used in describing their efforts in collecting wood for the garrison shows their lack of differentiation between gathering these necessary resources from either first nature – directly from the forests and trees – or from second nature – from fences, houses, and anything else combustible in the built environs surrounding Quebec. Before shifting their efforts from the St. Roc suburb to St. Johns, one officer made sure to note that although “there remains but very little wood in St Roc,” due to the collection activities by the soldiers, when the snow “melts 2 or 3 feet we’ll find a second crop.”⁴² Referring to this commodity as a crop that existed to be harvested tellingly highlights “the porousness of the boundary between the natural and the artificial” that prevailed in their minds.⁴³

Without question the soldiers engaged on both the American and British sides of the siege of Quebec experienced severe hardships due to extreme want, weather, and lack of wellness. In the face of these deplorable conditions, many soldiers felt that their

⁴⁰ Orderly book begun by Captain Anthony Vialar of the British Militia the 17th of September 1775, and Kept by Him till November 16th when Continued by Captain Robert Lester, in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 200-201.

⁴¹ Captain Roger Lester Orderly Book in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 240.

⁴² Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 41.

⁴³ Richard W. Judd, *Second Nature: An Environmental History New England*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), x.

best possible chance of survival lay in the arms of the enemy. Experiencing the intense environmental conditions of winter warfare in the Northeastern Borderlands, one's identity as a *Canadien*, British militiaman, Continental soldier, or British regular eroded as the instinct to preserve oneself became omnipresent. There were defections on both sides. In fact, the Continental soldiers captured by the British during Arnold and Montgomery's New Year's Eve attack on Quebec were given to opportunity to serve in the Royal émigrés regiment. At times, these individuals left the garrison and returned to the encampment of the Continental army. Spies, citizens, subjects, and soldiers all crisscrossed the siege lines under the cover of snow, wind, and darkness in hopes of finding the best means for survival in the face of horrendous living conditions. For many, identity rested most fully upon self-preservation, and rather than as a Briton, *Canadien*, or American.⁴⁴

On April 14, as the sentries overlooked the encampments, militiamen gathered resources, officers determined and doled out their orders, and signs of wildlife returned to the area around Quebec. In a diary entry that Jacob Danford must have penned with great relief, he chronicled that "this day saw Swallows": a sign of spring, a sign of better living conditions, a sign that the direst need for fuel wood had run its course, and a sign that one way or another, the seven-month siege was nearing its close.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ For more of desertion during the American Revolution see Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

⁴⁵ Jacob Danford, *Diary of the Siege of Quebec, 1775*, February 28, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution, Film 390, Reel 1, April, 14. For more references to the natural world being a rejuvenator to British soldiers and officers see, James Phinney Baxter, *The British Invasion from the North. The Campaigns of Generals Carleton and*

'Tis a Deadly Infection in Yanky Veins': The Vehemence of *Variola* during the American Retreat

For those serving in the Northeastern Borderlands, the fear of smallpox oftentimes became overwhelming. This is of little surprise, as the ravages of this disease left many soldiers scarred, disfigured, and, at times, even blind. Those who suffered from smallpox had two possible prognoses. They either died from their illness or they wielded the pockmarks of the disease as a symbol of their immunity for the rest of their lives. As noted above, much of the sufferings that occurred during a military campaign happened not on the battlefield, but instead in the dense encampments and on exhausting marches with little food. The Continental army's struggle with smallpox was no different, as the disease spread like wildfire through their camps and killed far more individuals during the beginning years of the war than did wounds from direct combat. Thus, the struggle against smallpox elucidates the fact that the the Revolutionary War was not merely a contest pitting soldiers against one another, but it was a contest that pitted human beings against the natural world; in this case, against the microbes ever-present in their natural and built environments.⁴⁶

Burgoyne, from Canada, 1776-1777, with the Journal of Lieut. William Digby, of the 53rd, or Shopshire Regiment of Foot (Albany, NY: J. Munsell's Sons, 1887), 113. (Herein Lieutenant William Digby Journal in ed. Baxter, *The British Invasion*) Friederike Charlotte Luise von Riedesel, Friedrich Adolf von Riedesel, trans. William Leete Stone, *Letters and Journals Relating to the War of the American Revolution and the Capture of the German Troops at Saratoga* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1867), 40. (Herein Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*).

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Fenn, in *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-83* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 16. notes that smallpox converted the American War for Independence from a military confrontation to a medical confrontation as well. For clarification, morbidity rate refers to the occurrence of communication for a disease from one host to another. In other words, how frequently it is transmitted from one

Smallpox is a unique disease in that it can only be transmitted from one human host to another, unlike influenza which can be transferred from animal hosts to human beings and back again. Under certain circumstances involving susceptible populations with a minimal history of exposure to the disease, morbidity rates have ballooned to over 85 percent while the mortality rates from confirmed cases neared 39 percent.⁴⁷ For populations that were fatigued and had poor nutrition during epidemics of the disease, such as those serving in the military campaigns of the northern theatre of the war, smallpox mortality rates climbed as high as 43 percent.⁴⁸ In Europe, specifically in the port cities where many military personnel were drawn from, a preponderance of the adult population were immune to the disease as they had survived an infection from childhood.⁴⁹ In North America, however, the native-born population in the United Colonies had rarely contracted the disease and thus, without inoculation which was controversial and banned in much of the Northeast, as well as the southern colonies, the individuals serving in the Continental army at the onset of the War for Independence were comprised of a population highly susceptible to *Variola*, the virus that causes smallpox. Thus, the effect and the agency of the disease had an asymmetrical impact due to the sharply contrasting immunity between European-born and American-born

human to another. Mortality rate refers to the rate of death once a disease has been inflicted on a host.

⁴⁷ F. Fenner, D.A. Henderson, I. Arita, Z. Jezek, and I.D. Ladnyi, *Small pox and its Eradication* (World Health Organization, 1988), 227. For reference, morbidity rates refer to how communicable a disease is while mortality rates refer to the prevalence of death due to disease.

⁴⁸ Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 21.

⁴⁹ Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 200.

combatants.⁵⁰ British officer Thomas Ainslie noted this differential immunity stating that “small pox does havock among them...tis a deadly infection in Yanky veins.”⁵¹

Further taking advantage of this differential immunity, Governor Carleton endorsed measures to send infected individuals into the encampment of the Continental army to frustrate the efforts of those besieging Quebec.⁵² Lieutenant John Shreve suspected Carleton of utilizing such measures. He wrote, “the British knowing the New Englanders were opposed to being inoculated, sent out spies to spread the disease in the American camp, which killed more Yankees than they did.”⁵³ Here, Carleton utilized the living bodies of infected soldiers, militiamen, and royal subjects of Quebec as biological weapons under the guise of individuals seeking refuge from British military tyranny. Again borderlands peoples and their wartime struggles played a pivotal role in British military successes after breaking the siege. As the Continental army welcomed provincials, *habitants*, and spies into their camps to deliver them from the trials and tribulations of living in a militarized landscape, they circulated infectious droplets throughout the American encampments.

⁵⁰ For an excellent discussion of differential immunity and its affects on military expeditions, see J.R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires, Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620 – 1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁵¹ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 22.

⁵² Ann M. Becker, “Smallpox in Washington’s Army: Strategic Implications of the Disease During the American Revolutionary War,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (April, 2004): 408.

⁵³ Lieutenant John Shreve, “Personal Narrative of the Service of Lieut. John Shreve of the New Jersey Line of the Continental Army,” *The Magazine of American History with Notes & Queries*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1879): 565.

As individuals shared increasingly crowded camps with poor sanitary and nutritional conditions, one individual infected with smallpox could quickly trigger an epidemic. Making matters worse, as individuals poured in from New England to reinforce the patriots during their retreat from Quebec, a fresh batch of hosts were delivered to the insatiable maw of *Variola*. As individuals shared tents, played cards, got in disputes, and mustered for patrol, they passed back and forth infectious droplets expelled from their lungs.⁵⁴ Soldiers breathing the air, wiping the sweat from their brow, or putting the hands up to their face to stifle a cough or sneeze unwittingly exposed themselves to the deadly disease. With an incubation rate of ten to fourteen days, smallpox often caught soldiers unaware they were communicable or surrounded by infectious individuals. Those infected by smallpox first began to experience bodily aches and pains, a head ache, and general feelings of fatigue, weakness, and malaise, none of which was unusual to a soldier serving in the biting cold of the Northeast. Approximately four days after catching the disease, individuals began breaking out in the characteristic sores and scabs of smallpox until they were covered in a series of throbbing raised pustules. As more and more soldiers became ill, the stench of the pox in the camp hospitals would become unbearable as hundreds of soldiers' pustules cracked and oozed.⁵⁵ For those unfortunate to be losing the war waging inside of their

⁵⁴ Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 199. Alfred Crosby notes here that the easiest and perhaps most common way to spread smallpox from one individual to another is through breathing.

⁵⁵ Dr. William Douglass, *A Practical Essay Concerning the Small Pox* (Boston: Printed for D. Henchman, over-against the old Brick Meeting House in Cornhil, and T. Hancock at the Sign of the Bible and Three Crowns in Ann-Street, 1730).

bodies between white blood cells and *Variola*, while they were waging a war in the colony of Canada, death arrived ten to sixteen days after their first symptoms appeared.

With the Continental army suffering under these abhorrent conditions, Colonel Benedict Arnold was replaced in April, with the command eventually assigned to General John Thomas by the end of the month. Upon inspecting the conditions of the soldiers bivouacked in front of the gates of Quebec, Thomas realized that the British were going to be able to break the siege as soon as shipments of fresh soldiers and supplies arrived from Europe once the ice cleared on the St. Lawrence River. Thomas began to prepare the army for an organized retreat; on May 6, however, 200 British regulars arrived in the colony of Canada. Governor-General Carleton stormed out of the gates of Quebec with these recently arrived soldiers buttressed by the men of his garrison and scattered the Americans through the countryside, abandoning their provisions, artillery, and their sick and dying.⁵⁶ Those infected with smallpox fled along with the rest of their companies as best they could, in effect breaking the ordered quarantine of the Continental soldiers infected with the disease. General John Thomas contracted the disease as his detachment made its way from the gates of Quebec to Fort Ticonderoga during the summer of 1776. Thomas succumbed to complications on June 2, 1776 near Chambly during his retreat along the Richelieu River. Just two weeks later, the armed forces of the United Colonies had retreated completely from the colony of Canada.

⁵⁶ Letter from Governor Carleton to Lord George Germain, Quebec, May 14, 1776 in ed. Alexander Fraser, *Fourth Report of the Bureau of Archives* (Toronto: Ontario Bureau of Archives, Department of Public Records and Archives, 1907), 100.

One week before his death, General Thomas described the abhorrent condition of the Continental army in the midst of its disorderly retreat:

The army here have now for 9 Days been entirely destitute of meal, that no contraction is provided, nor have any money to purchase provisions were they to be procured in this country. The want of provisions has made it absolutely necessary to order Col. Maxwell...to immediately Joyn me here in order to judge truly of my situation. You will be pleased to figure yourselves a retreating army, disheartened by unavoidable misfortunes, destitute of almost every necessary to render their lives comfortable, or even tolerable, sick, and as they think wholly neglected...it will not be possible to keep the army together, but we must be unavoidably obliged to abandon a Country of Infinite importance to the Safety of the Colonies, and to leave our friends here a prey to those whose Mercies are Cruelties.⁵⁷

Here we see the pandemonium under which the Continental army, ravaged with smallpox, retreated across the borderlands. Almost immediately their supply lines coming in from *Les Beaucerons* and other *habitants* of Quebec were disrupted, and without hard currency the officers could purchase no relief for their emaciated soldiers. Further, the French populace living in the colony of Canada would be left to answer for their past support of the rebels as the British

⁵⁷ John Thomas Letters and Orders, May 25, 1776, Misc. Bd. 1776, May 25, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

regained control over the parishes and communities south of Quebec. Indeed, Thomas intimated that the French would suffer greatly under British martial control.

The British army and the Continental army dealt with outbreaks of the disease much differently from one another. The British method of fighting the war against *Variola* was simply to stand guard until their lines were threatened with an attack from the disease and to remove susceptible individuals and inoculate them. Inoculation lowered the death rate for these individuals from fifteen percent if they were to obtain the disease naturally in a controlled setting to two percent.⁵⁸ The Continental army on the other hand, with their largely susceptible population of native-born soldiers, had a much more complex decision to make. Both allowing soldiers to contract the disease naturally and inoculating them had major concerns and liabilities. Both methods typically would remove fighting soldiers from the ranks for thirty days, if not permanently. Inoculating a fighting force as a whole would greatly weaken the army; however, inoculating in intervals could be more dangerous as on one unhealed scab on one soldier's body could ignite an epidemic. Thus, the Continental army's strategy in fighting against smallpox during the early stages of the War for Independence was to quarantine individuals once they either self-reported that they were sick or were discovered with the disease. This, of course, was greatly problematic as *Variola* can live outside of the human body in cloth tents, blankets, and uniforms for weeks, spreading from an infected soldier long after his body has been removed from the area. Further,

⁵⁸ Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 33.

the retreat through the Canadian countryside by the Continental army after the British broke the siege of Quebec, as mentioned above, ended all hopes of quarantining the disease. Thus, smallpox ravaged camps as the microbe came into contact with fresh recruits and reinforcements from the United Colonies, creating a powder keg of pestilence throughout the ranks of the Continental army.

In fact, contracting the deadly disease weighed so heavily on the soldiers' minds that those that the British captured during the action of December 31 asked for two things almost immediately. The first thing requested was for permission for Major Return Meigs to return to the encampment of the Continental army to retrieve the baggage of those who were captured. The second was to be inoculated for small pox, a luxury they did not have serving as officers in the Continental army. One British officer noted the despair of the captured soldiers who "dreading the small pox and apprehensive of taking the infection the natural way have requested to be inoculated — their petition is granted, & they are preparing for that operation."⁵⁹ Clearly the Continental army officers took note, as did British officer Thomas Ainslie, that Quebec "long had that disorder in town."⁶⁰ When Meigs and his fellow officers became prisoners, the stigma and controversy against inoculation that percolated through the United Colonies during the eighteenth century became irrelevant as they chose to gain immunity from smallpox in the same way that British soldiers did. As they regained

⁵⁹ Lieutenant Francis Nichols, "Diary of Lieutenant Francis Nichols of Colonel William Thompson's Battalion of Pennsylvania Riflemen, January to September, 1776," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (January, 1897): 504 - 514. Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 33.

⁶⁰ Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 22.

control over their bodies through the process of inoculation – despite losing control over their freedom – the boundary lines between colonies, empires, militaries, and allegiances eroded.

As the Continental soldiers retreated through the countryside in a famished and weary state, the morbidity and mortality rates of the disease likely increased, and with those healthy soldiers being surrounded at all times by death and pestilence smallpox effected not only the physical wellbeing of susceptible individuals but also the mental wellbeing of those who were spared the physical ravages of the disease. There was tremendous fear of smallpox, and soldiers felt that *Variola* had its own agency, through providence or some other means, to actively campaign against military forces or to specifically target individuals. Captain Zachariah Beal wrote to his wife, Abigail Goodwin Beal, while encamped at near Fort Ticonderoga, to review his experience in the army since May 1776. He described their grim situation as the Continental army retreated through the countryside:

att Sorell 45 miles fater into Canada att which Place we Emedately
Encamped & to my great Surprise I found our Cetuation truly Maloncoley
& Distressing the Enemy in our front the Pestul[ance] on our Right hand
& on our Left & to Complete our Distr[ess]...not a farthing of hard money
to help our Selves with...Could Buy nothing of the Inhabetance, in these
Circomstancess we tarred 5 Days when we ware ordered to march Back to
St Johns...Still Suronded with the small Pox our Men Seemed to Look
Quite Dejected we now began to anocalate which I Ded Among the Rest

hopping to Remain att that Place till we had got over it But 5 Days put an
End to our Rest for that time...But alas humain abillitys now fale us
though we ware favourd with one of The greatest, the aforementioned
Contagious infecttion now began to Spread over us Like a Sweeping
Torant & being Distitute of Every Necessery Propper for that Disorder,
Rendered our Situation truly maloncoley indeed...Soon thosands of men,
Sick with out the Lest Convenuancy or nesciery of Life Except There Tents
& alowence of Pork & flower.⁶¹

Within this broken prose, one gains a sense of the agency assigned to diseases by those serving in the Northeast Borderlands. Here smallpox flanked the Continental army, pursued the soldiers tirelessly, executed a decisive charge, inflicted blows amongst their forces and, ultimately, crushed the morale of those serving.

Beal continued, stating that during the retreat he suffered “unmerited fatigue” as they had to bury many of those dying from smallpox along the way. The arrived at Crown Point which he first described as “a very Plesant Situation” however, smallpox soon undermined any rejuvenation this new landscape provided. He decried that in “a few Days Changed itt to the most Dismall & Loathsom Place I Ever Saw, the Small Pox att the hath in genriall our men So Disvигured That itt was Difficult to Know them Even of our own Compnys by

⁶¹ Zachariah Beal to Abigail Goodwin Beal, Camp Near Mount Independence, September 28, 1776, Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society, 1981.009 (m), The Zachariah Beal Correspondence.

there Looks.” Those healthy enough rushed the sick to Fort George where Captain Beal “found more than 2 thousand men under the Doct Care, another Sean Which I forbare Discribing.” He stayed at Fort George for three weeks and during that time he assisted in the burying of “8 or 9 men aday.” Grateful of surviving a bout with small pox himself he told his wife that he was “a Living monument of [D]istinguishing Marcy while many of our frinds & acquaintance are gone to there Silant graves.” Abigail, or as Zachariah called her, Nabby, also received a dire warning from Captain Beal cautioning her to “Derst not Embrace” his letter “for [I] fear of Sending you the Small Pox.”⁶² Here one gains a sense of the effect that the combination of sickness, fatigue, and marching imparted on the Continental army. Also, if Beal was correct in his calculation, there were 2,000 soldiers suffering from the disease at the hospital in Fort George alone. In three weeks’ time, Beal himself witnessed nearly 180 soldiers dying from the disease or related complications.

Thus, the major sufferers of small pox were native-born individuals of North America who had either not been previously exposed to small pox by natural means or through inoculation. For the Continental army, this was a preponderance of the soldiers and officers enlisted in the fighting force. For the British, by contrast, those susceptible to the disease were typically confined to American-born individuals, such as loyalists, defectors from the Continental army, indigenous allies, or African Americans

⁶² Zachariah Beal to Abigail Goodwin Beal, Camp Near Mount Independence, September 28, 1776, Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society, 1981.009 (m), The Zachariah Beal Correspondence.

serving in the British lines. In the colony of Canada during the spring of 1776, the numbers of foreign-born soldiers in the British army far outnumbered the small percentage of Americans. Thus, the effects of small pox on the British army was infinitesimal compared to the severity with which it ripped through the lines of the Continental army. The effects and agency of small pox suffered by these soldiers was greatly exacerbated by the chaos of military endeavors, the high density of individuals in military camps and military hospitals, and the rush of new recruits and reinforcements into the Northeast Borderlands. Both small pox and the British army drove the American forces from the gates of Quebec back into the United Colonies during the retreat from Canada. The Continental army might have won the war for natural resources during the siege of Quebec in 1775-1776, but their British antagonists had a more decisive ally in smallpox.

Burgoyne's Plans to Quash the Rebellion, 1777

John Burgoyne arrived in Canada on June 1, 1776 to reinforce Governor-General Guy Carleton as his second in command to ward off the Continental army's invasion of Canada. With Burgoyne came massive reinforcements from Europe. The paltry 900 soldiers that defended Quebec against the rebel insurgence during the winter of 1775 through 1776 swelled to over 12,000 trained soldiers. Approximately 8,000 of these troops were British regulars, while the remaining 4,000 were German auxiliaries principally hailing from the Electorate of Brunswick.⁶³ A preponderance of these troops came when the Continental army's designs on Quebec reached their nadir in the spring

⁶³ George Stanley, *Canada Invaded* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973), 126-127.

of 1776. General Carleton, with smallpox as his ally, had already broken the siege against Quebec and had forced the Continental army's retreat back towards Fort Ticonderoga.

Despite Carlton's success in breaking the long siege, and the disruption of the *habitant* supply lines to the American forces, the problem of provisioning the British army did not end after they marched out of the gates of Quebec. Logistically, it was hard to count on local people to supply the British army with the goods needed to execute the war. This inability to harness the power of local people and local environments put the British at a distinct disadvantage, especially as the Continental army had superior networks in most of colonial North America.

To successfully mount his southern expedition from Quebec through the borderland wilderness towards Albany, New York, General John Burgoyne needed to find provisions for twenty-thousand troops for a six-month campaign. In addition, Governor Guy Carleton estimated that the number indigenous people, *Canadiens*, carpenters, sailors, and camp followers further increased the required supplies by thirty percent.⁶⁴ For example, the final plan for Burgoyne's expedition of 1777 included 2,000 Canadian militiamen.⁶⁵ The trans-Atlantic endeavor to provision the army was

⁶⁴ Memorandum of General Carleton Relative to the Next Campaign Communicated to Lieut. General Burgoyne to be Laid before Government, *Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign: His Papers*, ed. Douglas R. Cubbison (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 163.

⁶⁵ John Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada as Laid Before the House of Commons by Lieutenant-General Burgoyne and Verified by Evidence with a Collection of Authentic Documents and an Addition of many Circumstances which were Prevented from Appearing before the House by the Prorogation of Parliament, Written and Collected by Himself*

impressive. The Secretary of War's office sent shoes – as well as the materials to fix them – clothing, bales, casks, and camp equipment to Governor-General Carleton at Quebec to disperse to the soldiers stationed throughout the province and to accompany Brigadier-General John Burgoyne on his march to New York.⁶⁶

German officers complained vociferously about the cost of procuring goods in the Americas. Whether through the British Quartermaster or from local people, the cost basic supplies, according to Captain Pausch, “costs 5/6 more here than in Hanau.”⁶⁷ The German officers felt as this created undue expense and hardship on them to have to pay so dearly for boots and leather goods. Luxury items such as wine came at an even higher markup, with “a bottle of the poorest red wine...[costing] 36 kreutzers, and a bottle of Madeira 1 piastre!”⁶⁸

In addition to obtaining provisions and supplies for an estimated 26,000 soldiers, officers, camp followers, *Canadien* and provincial militiamen, and indigenous guides, scouts, and allies, Carleton and Burgoyne needed to find laborers to transport all of the

and Dedicated to the Officers of the Army He Commanded (London: Printed for J. Almon, 1780), 10.

⁶⁶ Lord Barrington to Guy Carleton, War Office, London, June 10, 1776, Great Britain, War Office, Secretary of War, Out Letters, 1756 – 1784, Collections of the David Library for the American Revolution, Film 418, Reel 19, No. 141. Originals are in The National Archives (Britain). (Herein DLAR Secretary of War); Lord Barrington to Guy Carleton, War Office, London, September 11, 1776, DLAR Secretary of War, Film 418, Reel 19; Robert Thompson to Guy Carleton, London, September 26, 1776, DLAR Secretary of War, Film 418, Reel 19; James Avison to Guy Carleton, London, March, 1777, DLAR Secretary of War, Film 418, Reel 19; Lord Barrington to Guy Carleton, London, War Office, May 1, 1777, DLAR Secretary of War, Film 418, Reel 19, No. 273.

⁶⁷ Georg Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch Chief of the Hanau Artillery during the Burgoyne Campaign*, trans. William I. Stone (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1886), 101. (Herein *Journal of Captain Pausch*).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

war material from the various British storehouses in Quebec through the wilderness landscape all the way to Albany. This required the requisition of horses, oxen, drivers, unskilled laborers, as well as wagons, carts, carriages, and the necessary tools for repairs and logistical maneuvers, to speak nothing of the corn, hay, and other forage needed to keep the animals of the supply train thriving for several months. The army itself did not perform this labor; instead the transportation of cannons, provisions, baggage, and food store typically fell to the local *habitant* populace of the colony of Canada through the seigneurial system of corvee labor.⁶⁹ Indeed, one of the benefits of the Quebec Act of 1774, was the continuation of the seigneurial system which allowed seigneurs to compel the tenants on their land to perform labor for them.⁷⁰

Despite the ability of the British army to exact labor from the *habitants*, several officers noted that to have their company's baggage, clothing, and provisions transported in the small two-wheeled carts of the *Canadiens* that they had to rent the cart and pay a driver out of their own pockets. The *habitants* charged a rate of one shilling per hour for this service. The officers grumbled in their diaries that this should be reimbursed by the King; at the current rate of expenditure the officers would either have to sacrifice the purchase of some provisions for their soldiers or they be forced to

⁶⁹ Ibid., 98-99.

⁷⁰ Traditionally the corvee in New France was rather limited. The *habitants* were required to provide labor for the seigneur's property during planting time, during hay-cutting season, and once again during harvest time. W. Stewart Wallance, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Canada, Vol. II* (Toronto, University Associates of Canada, 1948), 134. However, during times of war militia duty and corvee labor seem to be combined into a work related service for the militia.

“gird a saddle on his own back and carry his own baggage!”⁷¹ The inability of Carleton and Burgoyne to wrest material support for the war effort from the colonial populace would prove increasingly worrisome as the expedition moved forward.

An Over Estimation of *Canadien* Support

Both the British and Continental armies overestimated the support that they would receive from the inhabitants of Canada. For the United Colonists this was due in part to the warm welcome that the Arnold expedition had received in La Beauce in 1775, the Continental Congress overestimated the amount of assistance which would be given to the detachment of 5,300 soldiers under the Command of General John Sullivan sent to continue the attack on Canada in 1776. The retreating army from Quebec under the command of Arnold and the reinforcements under Sullivan rendezvoused at St. Johns and sailed away from the clutches of Guy Carleton across Lake Champlain to narrowly escape British forces. Due partially to a Canadian populace motivated by their own political, social, and cultural issues and partially to the ravages of small pox, by July of 1776 Guy Carleton successfully removed the Continental from Canada.

One British officer summarized the situation regarding the frosty relationship between the rural inhabitants of the colony of Canada and the British government and military quite accurately, writing that “the Canadians are by no means well affected to the English Government...I am confident, [the *habitants*] would assist the Americas, had we not such a powerful force in this province.”⁷² Though the officer later inaccurately

⁷¹ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 70-71.

⁷² Thomas Anburey, *Travels*, 22.

blamed the strong desire of the *habitants* to be back under French law and French rule and their inability to understand the English constitution and the British government's benevolence as a result of popish corruption, the officer did understand that power, and thus at some level coercion, was at the crux of the decision-making for the rural French and indigenous populations as both the Continental army and British army crisscrossed their way through the Northeastern Borderlands. The physical proximity of an army to any specific community increased the commitment of the local populace to support that army's cause.⁷³

Of the estimated 2,000 *Canadien* militiamen that Governor-General Guy Carleton was supposed to requisition for General Burgoyne, he was only able to obtain three companies, each consisting of a mere one hundred soldiers, approximately 15 percent of the planned amount. Moreover, Burgoyne was wary about the military prowess of the *habitants* employed for his service. He complained to Secretary of State Lord George Germain that that they "afford no promise of use of arms" and that the French peasants were "awkward, ignorant, disinclined to the service, and spiritless." He reasoned that this was due, in part, to the local population's disaffection with their seigneurs, especially concerning the actions taken against their social betters during the siege of Quebec. However, he also blamed "the poison which emissaries of the rebels have thrown into their minds."⁷⁴

⁷³ One notable exception here, as highlighted in Chapter 2, was *La Nouvelle-Beauce*, specifically Ste.-Marie-de-Beauce, St.-Joseph-de-Beauce, and Pointe Levy.

⁷⁴ Lieutenant-General Burgoyne to Lord George Germain, Quebec, May 14, 1777, in Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada*, xviii.

Further, the appropriation of corvee laborers fell short with an insufficient number of individuals being employed to repair roads, clear trees, build military infrastructure, or transport provisions. Governor Carleton also attempted to raise independent contractors to drive the horses hauling wagons, carriages, and the artillery, however, according to General John Burgoyne, they “could not be fully supplied...though no expense was spared.”⁷⁵ Two general characterizations of the French-speaking local population seem likely. First, the *Canadien* populace was unwilling to serve the British armed forces despite some social and economic coercion, preferring, instead, to remain neutral to avoid the possibility of dire consequences if the United Colonists returned the following year. Second, which is not mutually exclusive from the first, is that the *habitants* were already in a desperate social and economic crisis, with armed forces having ravaged their crops, their coins, and their communities for the last year. As a result, abled-bodied men, those who typically would be serving as corvee laborers or military contractors, needed to stay home rebuild their homes.

Habitant and Indigenous Levels of Loyalty

In the immediate vicinity of Quebec, British officers did take steps to protect *habitants* and their households from pillaging and looting by their armed forces. Militia Captain Robert Lester scratched in his orderly book that when a party of soldiers becomes detached from the garrison for any reason that the commanding officers of that detachment received strict orders to prevent those under their command from “plundering, or doing damage to the Inhabitants.” Any infractions would result in “the

⁷⁵ Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada*, 10.

men [being] severely punished” and the officer in charge being “obliged to pay for all Damages done.”⁷⁶ However, when the officers desired the *habitants* and other residents in Quebec, its outlying suburbs, as well as Montreal, to celebrate events such as the birthday of King George III, each citizen was required to construct a “*feu de joi* [bonfire]” outside of their homes.⁷⁷ One German officer noted that “those who did not illuminate their windows were in danger of having them broken by stones.”⁷⁸ Here allegiance to the British was coerced and compulsory rather than negotiated and earned. This is further evidence of the fact that the closer the British army was to the French, English, and indigenous inhabitants of the Northeastern Borderland, the stronger the affinity appeared to be for the crown. Further increasing the coercive nature of these celebrations the British and German soldiers and officers celebrated by firing their pistols in the air “from sunset till one o’clock the next morning.” The officer goes on to point out that due to the punishments for not celebrating the King’s birthday were effective, “consequently, those houses which were not illuminated were few and belonged to those who were too poor to do so, for they certainly were not Rebels.”⁷⁹ This passage intimates that those so close to the intimidating presence and military might of the British army would not dare rebel against their wishes. Though it is impossible to know how many *habitants* supported the United Colonies in the presence

⁷⁶ Captain Robert Lester Orderly Book in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 263.

⁷⁷ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 128.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

of strong British power, those with rebel sympathies were forced to remain hidden and profess their loyalty to the crown despite their true feelings or how they identified.

During their retreat through the colony of Canada, the Continental army took steps to ensure the British did not enjoy an easy campaign following them through the built and natural environments between Quebec and Fort Ticonderoga. The American officers understood that during the six-month blockade on the city of Quebec provisions became rather short for the soldiers garrisoning the fortress. Thus, in an effort to exacerbate matters, as they retreated across the French countryside, the Continental army denuded the landscape of grain and livestock both to support their army and deprive the British of sustenance.⁸⁰ This also created a situation of scarcity for those living in the colony without strong political allegiances.

One British officer decried the horrid treatment and “cruelty exercised” by a major in the Continental army “over the poor inhabitants” of rural Quebec. He “burn[ed] many of their habitations and small effect, and dr[ove] away their cattle.”⁸¹ As the British marched through the woods they found the cattle that the American troops did not slaughter or keep for themselves. General Burgoyne ordered the soldiers to seize the cattle and offer “an adequate price...for such cattle were wanted for the use of the [British] troops”⁸² With two armies attempting to provision themselves from the resources of the *habitants* as the armies travelled back and forth through the countryside

⁸⁰ Gabriel, *Journals of BTW*, xliii.

⁸¹ Lieutenant William Digby Journal in ed. Baxter, *The British Invasion*, 172.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 172.

from 1775 to 1777 it becomes easy to see how resources were consumed to fuel two insatiable war machines.

As time went on, however, the British military rarely sympathized with the plight of the local *Canadien* populace suffering from martial disruption. Lieutenant Digby wrote that, “the *Habitants* have no right to complain if the rebels shou’d oppress them – why did they suffer them to set foot in the Province.”⁸³ In other words, if the *Canadien* militia would have mustered themselves against the Continental army in the autumn of 1775, they could have avoided mistreatment.

This British attitude against the *habitant* (as well as indigenous) population smacks of hypocrisy. After the invasion of Canada in 1775 and the failed siege in 1776, the British policy towards the local populace seemed to change from a position of accommodation to a position of conqueror ruling over conquered peoples. Lieutenant William Digby noted that those *Canadiens* unwilling to perform corvee labor for a variety of reasons “were obliged to work in irons.”⁸⁴ Imprisoning and temporarily enslaving the *habitant* populace seemed to be one of the strategies of Governor Carleton and General John Burgoyne as preparations were made for the campaign season of 1777. Further, Lord George Germain, the British Secretary of State, wrote to Governor Carleton about this change in action against the local population, stating that even King George III felt that several of the “disaffected parishes” and other areas of the colony needed a strong British military presence akin to martial law. Specifically, the

83 Captain Thomas Ainslie Journal in ed. Wurtele, *Blockade of Quebec*, 78.

84 Lieutenant William Digby Journal in Baxter, *The British Invasion*, 120.

leadership in London believed this to be the case in “Quebec, Chaudiere...Point Levi, Montreal...Oswegatche, Trois Rivieres, St. John’s, Isle aux Noix, La Prarie, Vergere” to “Secure Canada from external attacks.”⁸⁵ Placing large parts of the colony of Canada under martial law, despite the effects on the local populace, the British politicians in London and military commanders on the ground hoped to not only ensure their hegemony in Canada but also to secure provisional supply lines for the northern theatre of the war.

British troops were stationed in the Abenaki village of St. Francis to enforce allegiance. With these soldiers came threats by Governor-General Guy Carleton that, if the Abenaki showed any sympathies to the patriot cause or if they aided the Continental army in any way, he would burn their village to the ground. The soldiers crisscrossing through their territory and the renewed imperial conflict in North America created difficult choices for the indigenous people inhabiting the Northeastern Borderlands. Many wished to remain neutral, but Carleton’s martial law and his coercion with the threat to their built environment made it clear that the British demanded assistance and allegiance instead of neutrality. Thus, the Abenakis, under pressure to fight for the British crown, relocated their community to the upper-Connecticut River valley. American General Philip Schuyler directed his subordinates to welcome these Abenaki with open arms and to make efforts to get their allegiance. In offering protection to these indigenous peoples, the Continental army gained a unit

⁸⁵ Extract of Letter from Lord George Germain to General Carleton, Whitehall, March 26, 1777, Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada*, xiv-xv.

of Abenaki rangers. Ironically, twenty years after Rogers' Rangers ravaged the Abenaki villages in the region on behalf of the British, individuals from this tribe and rangers from New Hampshire fought side-by-side against the British crown.⁸⁶

However, some British officers and soldiers became introspective and rethought this harsh stance against the *Canadien* and indigenous populations. One officer questioned whether or not European and Euro-American society was better off than the indigenous peoples he encountered throughout his journey. He noted that:

The savage never is in want; he lacks in no stores, because the earth and waters are reservoirs to supply them. Fish and game are to be had all the year. The savage has no house to secure him from the inclemency of the external air, or commodious fire places, his furs answering all these purposes. His labor is but for his own benefit; he sleeps when he is weary, and is a stranger to restless nights. Little does he experience weariness that arises from unsatisfied desires, or that uneasiness of mind which springs from prejudice or vanity. As far as I can perceive, the Indian is subject to no evils but those inflicted by nature. In what manner then do we enjoy a greater happiness?⁸⁷

Though this description of indigenous life in the Northeastern Borderlands lacks the nuance and understanding of the rich and vibrant cultures and conflicts that existed

⁸⁶ Colin Calloway, *Dawnland Encounters: Indians and Europeans in Northern New England, 171-173*; Colin Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 66.

⁸⁷ Thomas Anburey, *Travels*, 25.

before contact and colonization by Europeans, it does show that some soldiers and officers reflected upon the situation of the inhabitants of the communities they traveled through.

Sometimes, however, the armies crisscrossing through Canada interacted positively with local people. Before entering winter quarters, each soldier was issued several articles of warm clothing. In Montreal, General Carleton had ordered long blue-cloth overalls, blue woolen caps, blue corduroy mitts, durable white corduroy under-jackets, white woolen overcoats with blue braids, and gray capes with blue wool ribbon. This mandatory uniform was paid for by the British army; however, its cost was deducted from the soldiers' pay each month from September through March. In total, each of these uniforms cost 33 shilling and 9 pence. Assuming that all 12,000 soldiers stationed in the colony of Canada were ordered this uniform, a total of 20,250 pounds were injected into the Canadian economy.⁸⁸ Further, as winter turned to spring and the British army planned for its invasion of New York, long-sleeved, loose fitting linen coveralls were ordered to be made. These uniforms were adapted to the humidity of the summer and also protected the soldiers from mosquitoes and other biting insects that were both nuisances and purveyors of diseases.⁸⁹ Thus, the need for officers to procure uniforms for the changing seasons – as well as to protect against the fauna – bolstered the wartime economy of the region.

⁸⁸ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 93-94. Adjusting for inflation, this would amount to nearly 3 million pounds in 2017 currency according to the historical UK inflation rates and calculator at: <http://inflation.stephenmorley.org>.

⁸⁹ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 106-107.

Hessians and *Canadiens*

As the autumn of 1776 turned to winter, the British regulars and German Hessians and Brunswickers needed to prepare winter quarters to rest and make preparations for the campaign season of 1777. The German soldiers set up their base of winter operations in and around the area between Quebec and Montreal. They ranged as far south as Chambly and Montreal and occupied the region between the St. Lawrence River and the Richelieu River heavily.⁹⁰ Thus, General Frederich von Riedesel, having his soldiery scattered throughout the farmlands of the Richelieu River and St. Lawrence River watersheds, encamped at Three Rivers, approximately halfway down the St. Lawrence from Montreal to Quebec.

At first glance, Hessian officers viewed *habitants* simply as a class of poor farmers who occupied the lowest rung on the social ladder in Quebec. Thus, they believed that they could treat these French-speaking colonists with the same disdain that the lower classes of Europe suffered. The German gentry, who lived amongst the various parishes surrounding Quebec and Montreal in between the 1776 and 1777 campaign seasons, were surprised to find that in the Northeastern Borderlands those living in these small communities far from formal British spheres of power derived a sense of independence and threw off the yoke of stratified society. One officer wrote that *habitants* “cannot endure rough treatment, such as knocks and blows; and no one will

⁹⁰ As William Leete Stone observes in Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, the German soldiers were quartered in Three Rivers, Chambly, Champlain, Batiscamp, Fort St. Anna, Cape-de-la-Madelaine, Pointe-du-Lac, Berthier, Masquinonge, St. Francois, Sorel, Riviere-du-Loup, Machiche, St. Charles, St. Denis, St. Tours, Buloville, and Montreal, 35.

more bitterly complain of that kind of usage than they.” He hypothesized that this attitude derived from “their finer feelings” as they themselves will tell anyone who would listen “that a *pauvre Canadien* also has...feelings” and if one crosses their sensitivities they “will make you the judge of their troubles and sufferings” or “act treacherously.” After several apparent failed attempts at interacting with the *habitants*, he surmised that “they wish to be treated in a courteous manner” and if they encountered kindness and fair handling they gladly obeyed any order or request.⁹¹ Living in these rural communities allowed individuals to be fluid with their allegiances and assistance to European or American interlopers. This gave them the ability to use the war for their own personal and communal interests.

Despite these mistreatments and conflicts, General Friedrich Riedesel wrote to his wife, Friedericke – who was making preparations to accompany the general during his tour of duty in North America – that the *habitants* were respectful and obliging to his requests and that they treated him with kindness and affection. Through these letters to his wife one sees how the German commander adapted to the culture landscape of the Northeast. He surmised that he did “not believe that our [German] peasants, under similar circumstances, would conduct themselves as satisfactorily.”⁹² Captain Georg Pausch noted also that the *Canadiens* welcomed the German troops in “a polite and friendly manner,” However he also found, much like the officers in the Continental

⁹¹ Letter from Canada, by an unnamed German Staff-Officer, *Letters of Brunswick and Hessian officers during the American Revolution*, trans. William L. Stone (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell’s Sons, Publishers, 1891)

⁹² General Frederick von Riedesel to Friedericke von Riedesel, La Prairie, June 28, 1776, in Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 33.

army, that everything the soldiers and officers wanted to purchase from the local populace had to both be “well paid for” and also paid for in hard money.⁹³

Riedesel and Pausch also learned much from a military standpoint from living in these *Caandien* communities. First, the German officers noted that the American soldiers they fought – as well as the *Canadien* militia that served along side of them – were “excellent marksmen,” especially at longer distances. Thus while wintering in the colony of Canada Riedesel and Pausch drilled their soldiers and artillery in firing with precision at long distances. Further, Riedesel likely also discussed prior military actions in the region with both the inhabitants of Canada and the British officers stationed there and learned that an army had once invaded as far as Schenectady during the winter on snowshoes, and that it was not beyond the capacity of the Continental army to send a small force by that means into Canada to harass the Germans troops in their winter quarters. Fearing the worst from these conversations, Riedesel outfitted his soldiers with snowshoes to be prepared in case of a winter attack by the United Colonies.⁹⁴

As the winter set in, the troops and the *habitants* began intermingling on a social level. Much to the surprise of the Hessian and Brunswick troops, from the richest inhabitants down to the poorest that the Canadians living in that region became friends with the soldiers wintering in their communities. In fact, the greatest obstacles to friendly relationships between the *habitants* and the Germans were not based around religion, economics, or seeing the soldiers as an invading force like during the invasion

⁹³ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 66.

⁹⁴ C.E. Bennett, A.M., *Advance and Retreat to Saratoga: Burgoyne Campaign*, (Saratoga, NY: Robson & Adee, 1927), 5.

of Canada in 1775 in La Beauce, but rather it was the language barrier. Captain Pausch noted that “by reason of this circumstance, we are among this people like a Pelican in the wilderness.”⁹⁵ His reflection regarding the German soldiers as seabirds being lost in a wilderness landscape not only shows the level of difficulty in communicating with the French residents but also hints at the overall mental burden for the Germans in an unfamiliar colony.⁹⁶

In an effort to promote good relations with the local people and to give his officers a form of entertainment, General Riedesel held public dinners and dancing balls each week. He felt that this would keep them out of the public houses and other corrupting influences.⁹⁷ However, it seems despite the General’s best efforts that many of the *Canadien* women – and possibly men – were far too tempting for the German soldiers and sexual relationships blossomed. Captain Pausch noted that these relationships had a positive overall effect on the men, as the company of a sexual partner often gave them “comfort” and “solace” in an unknown land. Overall, those engaged in relationships with local inhabitants remained “happy and contented.”⁹⁸

As we will see in the next chapter, the German troops fared much better when stationed in the *Canadien* communities than they would during the march to Saratoga in the campaign to come. In addition to procuring both supplies and friendships from the

⁹⁵ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 67.

⁹⁶ For a rich discussion of German ideas regarding the environment and society of Canada, Charlotte Roi Epping, *Journal of du Roi the Elder* (New York, D. Apppleton & Co., Agents, 1911).

⁹⁷ General Frederich von Riedesel to Friedericke von Riedesel, Three Rivers, April 16, 1777, in Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 64.

⁹⁸ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 96.

French inhabitants of the region, many German soldiers developed relationships with the indigenous peoples living in the region. At first these acquaintances began with Germans trading specie and consumer goods for fresh meat, including mutton and beef. In fact, one officer noted that due to the trading relationships with the *Canadians* and the indigenous populace that neither officers nor enlisted men wanted for anything except the luxury of coffee, tea, and fine wine. However, as Captain Pausch humorously recorded, they substituted for these items by drinking “rum and water together – officers as well as men; and for a change, water and rum!”⁹⁹

Many women and their families followed German officers to North America. The Brunswickers alone had seventy-seven camp followers who were the wives of commissioned officers.¹⁰⁰ Despite being in “a strange land among unknown people” these women and children also fostered relationships and became part of the *Canadien* communities where they were living.¹⁰¹ Women dined with one another and exchanged both pleasantries and good conversations over tea. Frederike von Riedesel often dined in the convent at Three Rivers after learning that her husband sent them food and drink as tokens of good faith. While visiting the nunnery, they would dress themselves in costume as a nun and perform dances and sing to pass the time.¹⁰² As the winter turned to spring they tended and walked in ornamental and kitchen gardens. Children found

⁹⁹ Ibid., 86-87.

¹⁰⁰ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 77. For more information regarding camp followers, see Holly Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and the Community during the American Revolution* (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

¹⁰¹ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 85.

¹⁰² Ibid, 87.

activities and education at nunneries where there were often seminaries for young women.¹⁰³

Desertion was a major issue throughout 1777. Interestingly, despite being over 5,500 kilometers from their homeland, German mercenaries also defected in large numbers. Captain Pausch appreciated that he and his men wintered in Montreal where he could keep track of all of his soldiers and officers on a daily basis instead of having them scattered throughout the Canadian countryside like some of his fellow commanders. He noted, “with my men scattered singly among the inhabitants of the shanties, I should have lost half of my young men.”¹⁰⁴ Clearly, for some soldiers the relationships fostered in rural Canada were worth risking their lives for at a court-martial for leaving their posts.¹⁰⁵ Thus, in the borderlands of Northeastern North America, German mercenaries soldiers, fighting for neither King nor country, often had more in common with—and more attachment to—the residents of rural Quebec than they did with the British soldiers and officers with whom they served. These relationships seem unique to the German soldiers, as there were far fewer situations of British soldiers or Continental soldiers defecting to these communities during or after the war. In fact, as described in Chapter 2, quite often the opposite happened with men like John Marsh being ostracized La Beauce as the Northern Campaign of the American War for Independence subsided.

¹⁰³ General Frederich von Riedesel to Friedericke von Riedesel, Three Rivers, April 16, 1777, in Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 65-6.

¹⁰⁴ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 99.

¹⁰⁵ For more on German deserters during the Burgoyne Campaign, see Lieutenant William Digby in Baxter, *The British Invasion*, 256.

The Expedition Delayed

While his British, Hessian, and Brunswicker troops wintered in Canada, Burgoyne returned across the Atlantic to winter in much more comfortable quarters in London. While there, he sowed doubt in the mind of Secretary of State George Germain about the ability for Carleton to lead the British troops through the Northeastern Borderlands during the campaign season of 1777. As his second-in-command, Burgoyne felt that driving the Continental army out of Quebec was not bold enough, and that Carleton should have taken more decisive action to dislodge the American-held borderland fortification of Fort Ticonderoga, especially after defeating Benedict Arnold's ragtag navy at the Battle of Valcour Island on Lake Champlain on October 11, 1776. Both Germain and King George III became convinced that Burgoyne should lead an expedition from the north into New York in an attempt to sever the connections between New England with the rest of the United Colonies.

Burgoyne's design for the expedition was to traverse Lake Champlain and capture Ticonderoga. From there, he would maneuver his fighting force through the wilderness to Albany, where they would meet with another army under the Commander-in-Chief of the British army in North America, Lieutenant-General William Howe, marching northward from New York City. A third prong of the attack would be led by Barry St. Leger, who would rout the rebels living along the Mohawk River, rouse loyalist and Iroquoian support for the British war effort, and rendezvous with Burgoyne and Howe in Albany. If all went as planned, Burgoyne's campaign of

1777 would isolate the radical insurgents from New England and force them to fight for themselves against the might of the British Empire.

Burgoyne arrived in Canada in May, but he and Governor Carleton were unable to procure enough supplies to support the large expedition. Their inability to convince local people to supply the war effort was made more critical as a result of the scorched earth retreat by the Continental army from Quebec. Thus, even before the expedition from Montreal to Albany commenced in June 1777, delays due to a lack of logistical support plagued the enterprise. The British army needed to obtain over 400 horses for the transportation of the artillery train and 1,000 horses with 500 carts to transport provision and baggage from local residents. Complicating the matters of finding these nearly 1,500 animals, their drivers, and the respective equipment for carts and harnesses, plans also had to be made for the management and orderly transportation of such a force. It already being June, each day without horses and without transporting the army through the wilderness was one less day that military action could be taken during the campaign season. Indeed, if an expedition was going to take place during this year, horses would have to be acquired locally. Writing to England for the animals, waiting for 1,500 horses to be gathered, and finally for them to be transported across the Atlantic would consume most of the summer. Finally, on June 7, corvee laborers with their carriages, carts, and horse teams were procured to transport the baggage for the army.

However, as the army was delayed for approximately one week after setting out from their winter quarters, it meant that one week's worth of provisions was drawn by

the troops. This included flour, bread, and alcohol for over 20,000 individuals removed from the stores of the quartermaster. Further, many of these supplies could not be procured locally by the British army. Much of the food, supplies, tents, and uniforms had been sent from Europe and could not be replaced except by trans-Atlantic journey. This delay – combined with several others throughout the duration of this expedition – would be detrimental to the overall success of the mission as Burgoyne’s European-style war machine, in the face of the unforgiving landscape of the Northeast Borderlands, broke down.

Chapter 5

**“I myself felt humiliation until I considered that those advantages
proceeded from the nature of the country”:**

Wilderness’ Victory at Saratoga¹

In 1780 General John Burgoyne set out on a public relations campaign in London to clear his reputation from the disastrous campaign that he had led in North America in 1777. Largely as a result of his surrender, France had joined the war as public allies with the American cause, which transformed an obnoxious civil war within the thirteen United Colonies into an international struggle against a leading European super power. Burgoyne desperately sought to restore his honor before the public and among his peers in Parliament. He sought to convince his countrymen that the local people, local environments, and local circumstances were to blame for his failure in the Northeastern Borderlands. He cast the blame for the expedition’s failure upon the unwillingness of *Canadiens* to support British armed forces (either as militiamen or as corvee laborers), the tendency for indigenous allies (as well as *Canadiens* and other provincial soldiers) to desert the army and retreat to their homes, and the scarcity of provisions for his large army in crossing the wilderness.² Further exacerbating matters were terrible weather, contrary winds, the challenges of the poorly-charted landscape, and dangerous and

¹ Earl of Balcarras examined by General Burgoyne regarding the failure at Saratoga in, John Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada as Laid Before the House of Commons* (London: Printed for J. Almon, 1780), 82.

² Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition*, (London: Printed for J. Almon, 1780), 10; *Ibid.*, 17; *Ibid.*, 24-25.

eroded roads.³ For Burgoyne, these problems proved insurmountable. They occurred even before the expedition began its long march to Albany as the refusal of local support was compounded by what famed military theorist Carl von Clausewitz later identified as the chances of war.

Similar to Burgoyne himself, the scholarly literature on the British invasion of New York in summer 1777 has been primarily interested in explaining the British failure. Some historians blame Governor Carleton's lack of control over the subjects of his colony to provide essential war material for Burgoyne's expedition. Others argue that it was the amount and type of artillery carried, especially when combined with the superfluous baggage transported by the officer corps that slowed his advance and caused the failure.⁴ However, recent scholarship has focused more criticism on Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, who helped to design the North American strategy in 1777 with Burgoyne. Germain also played an instrumental role in replacing Carleton as the expedition's commander with Burgoyne after consulting with him in London in the winter of 1776 - 1777. Of course, the US literature on the topic has traditionally sought a hero who stymied the British once the Battle of Saratoga was underway. Most have praised, as with the invasion of Canada in 1775, Benedict

³ Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition*, 10; *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴ C.E. Bennett, A.M., *Advance and Retreat to Saratoga: Burgoyne Campaign*, (Saratoga, NY: Robson & Adee, 1927), 9-10; *Ibid.*, 26. Martin van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 5-39; Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels: The American Revolution Through British Eyes* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 163.

Arnold's leadership on the battlefield as well as his reckless abandon and contumaciousness in the face of General Horatio Gates' orders.⁵

What the standard histories of the conflict consistently fail to recognize is the agency of local people, whether they be *Canadien*, indigenous, or United Colonists. Furthermore, the role of the environment, something that Burgoyne recognized as a key determinant in the failure of his expedition, is obscured in military histories that treat the landscape as merely a backdrop on which events take place. This chapter argues, as did Burgoyne in his defense before Parliament in 1780, that local people, local environments, and local circumstances were the major causal forces shaping the outcome of Burgoyne's expedition from Montreal to Albany in 1777.

Burgoyne Courts Indigenous Allies

On June 21, 1777, after varied logistical delays, General Burgoyne encamped at the Bouquet River to hold a conference with the Iroquois in an attempt to garner their friendship. He asked them to support his expedition to Albany, and, especially, to assist in the campaign against the United Colonies. Governor-General Carleton had already

⁵ For narratives that blame George Germain, see Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 178; George Otto Trevelyan, *The American Revolution* ed. Richard B. Morris (New York: David McKay Company, 1964); John Pancake, *1777: The Year of the Hangman* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1977); Don Higginbotham, *The War for American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1783* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1971), 176-187. For those narratives that celebrate Arnold, see Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763 - 1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); James Kirby Martin, *Benedict Arnold Revolutionary Hero: An American Warrior Reconsidered* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Joyce Lee Malcom, *The Tragedy of Benedict Arnold: An American Life* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2018).

made inroads with several indigenous tribes in Canada and obtained pledges from a total of 500 warriors from the tribes of St. Regis, Sault St. Louis, Lake of the Two Mountains, and St. Francis.⁶

In addition to gaining warriors, scouts, and guides for his expedition, in his oration to the Iroquois, Burgoyne also laid out the rules for what he considered to be civilized and gentlemanly warfare. In battle, Burgoyne forbade the killing of women, children, and the elderly. He also regulated the collection of war trophies and scalps. He stated that no person shall be scalped that was not killed by an indigenous person in a fair military engagement. The wounded were not to be scalped nor to be dispatched in order to be scalped. Additionally, Burgoyne demanded that no violence be perpetrated by his indigenous allies outside of standard European-style military encounters.⁷

One Iroquois chief rose and noted the nature of the diplomatic and military struggle in the Northeast Borderlands, stating that the Continental Congress had attempted to sway their allegiance from their “British father” with orations and trade goods. However, due to the “love” of King George III and their long-standing alliance with the British, his people were ready to make war against the American army and those residing in the region that supported the rebel cause. He noted that the Iroquoian “hatchets have been sharpened upon [their] affections” to the Crown.⁸

⁶ Sir Guy Carleton to Lord George Germain, Quebec, June 26, 1777 in *Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign: His Papers*, ed. Douglas R. Cubbison, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012)

⁷ John Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition*, xxiii-xxiv.

⁸ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

Upon gaining the allegiance of these warriors General Burgoyne issued a proclamation to those in the United Colonies that he would unleash a ferocious war upon their army, their militias, and their communities. He exclaimed that his soldiers had set forth from Montreal with the intent of restoring the British constitution to the colonies and preventing the “arbitrary imprisonment, confiscation of property, [and] persecution and torture” that British colonists suffered at the tyrannous hands of the Continental Congress and their agents. He then issued a veiled threat to the provincials living in the region:

[To] the domestick, the industrious, the infirm, and even the timid inhabitants I am desirous to protect provided they remained quietly in their houses, that they do not suffer their Cattle to be removed, not their Corn or forage to be secreted or destroyed, that they do not break up their Bridges and Roads; nor by any other acts directly or indirectly endeavor to obstruct the operations of the Kings Troops, or supply or assist those of the Enemy.

He went on to promise that “every species of Provision brought to my Camp will be paid for at an equitable rate in solid Coin.”⁹

Burgoyne threatened that provincial colonists who failed to follow such conduct would force him to,

⁹ Lieutenant James Hadden, *Hadden's Journal and Orderly Books: A Journal Kept in Canada and Upon Burgoyne's Campaign in 1776 and 1777*, by Lieut. James M. Hadden, Roy. Art (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1884), 59-61.

give stretch to the Indian Forces under my direction, and they amount to Thousands, to overtake the harden'd Enemies of Great Britain and America...wherever they may lurk. If notwithstanding these endeavours, and sincere inclinations to effect them, the phrenzy of hostility shou'd remain, I trust I shall stand acquitted in the Eyes of God & Men in denouncing and executing the vengeance of the state against the wilful outcasts.¹⁰

Several of Burgoyne's motivations emerge in this proclamation. The first, and most obvious, is that Burgoyne realized the power of employing indigenous people in a colonial war. Drawing on the long history of borderlands conflict over the duration of the colonial period, Burgoyne understood that colonists feared indigenous warfare.

Less obvious is Burgoyne's understanding that he would likely need to rely on the agricultural production of local people to provide his army with livestock, forage, and other foodstuffs during the campaign. Trying to draw a contrast with the Continental army, which, at times, offered paper currency of questionable value for supplies, Burgoyne appealed to material self-interest by offering hard money as well as lawful allegiance. Further understanding the agency that local people could wield in an arduous expedition, Burgoyne appealed to provincials in the area to keep the roads and bridges intact. Knowing that local people understood the landscape best, as well as the

¹⁰ Hadden, *Journal and Orderly Books*, 62.

best routes to traverse the terrain, he feared the consequences of the destruction of strategic infrastructure in the borderlands between Montreal and Albany.

In England, there were mixed reactions to Burgoyne's use of the Iroquois to coerce colonists into submission. Edmund Burke poked fun at Burgoyne's oratory to the indigenous leaders at Bouquet, lampooning him as a lion keeper during a riot at a London zoo. Burke envisaged Burgoyne throwing "the dens of wilds beasts" wide open to appeal to the "gentle lions," "humane bears," and "tender-hearted hyenas" to "go forth" on a mission against the Americans. Burgoyne then naively reminded the beasts that they were "Christians, and member[s] of a civilized society," and it was of the utmost of importance that they "take care not to hurt any man, woman, or child!"¹¹ In essence, Burke felt that Burgoyne's reliance on indigenous people was a dangerous game that, in the end, would prove to be a liability to his expedition.

In the United Colonies, however, the response to Burgoyne's use of indigenous allies mixed fear and anger. Burgoyne, who understood the power that indigenous people held over colonial frontiers, devised a scheme to wage psychological warfare against the Continental army, the militia charged with defending the Northeastern Borderlands, and the provincials who lived there. In an open letter to the United

¹¹ O'Shaughnessy, *Men Who*, 147. There were great misunderstandings about indigenous life in the Americas for Europeans. Friederike von Riedesel in her diary of travelling from Wolfenbittel to Bristol noted that those around her drummed up fears of "being eaten by the savages" and that in America the people subsist on "horse-flesh and cats." Friederike Charlotte Luise von Riedesel, Friedrich Adolf von Riedesel, *Letters and Journals Relating to the War of the American Revolution and the Capture of the German Troops at Saratoga*, trans. William Leete Stone (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1867), 38. (Herein Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*)

Colonies he offered his protection to the provincials of the region as long as they hid quietly in their homesteads and did not allow the Continental army to obtain or destroy their livestock, vegetables, or forage. However, those who assisted the Continental army, either directly or indirectly, would feel his wrath. He took special note to address those who felt they were out of his reach due to “their distance from the immediate situation of [his] camp.” He threatened that he “have but to give stretch to the Indian forces under [his] direction” numbering in the “thousands” and any “Enemies of Great Britain and America, [which he] consider[s] the same” would be overrun.¹² The British soldiers and officers serving under Burgoyne, however, understood his point and the usefulness of indigenous peoples quite clearly. Lieutenant William Digby noted that the indigenous “custom of scalping” appeared “cruel and barbarous” as well as “shocking” to Europeans and Euro-Americans.¹³

In fact, to those living in the United Colonies, Burgoyne’s use of indigenous people, *Canadiens*, and German mercenaries made the British army seem like a foreign invading force rather than merely a parent disciplining an errant child, as British and loyalist propaganda portrayed. The disdain and perceived immorality of waging this type of warfare against the United Colonies is seen in the Declaration of Independence where Jefferson complained of the King of England “transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny” and setting loose “on the inhabitants of [American] frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages,

¹² Copy of Manifesto Issued by Lieut. Genl. Burgoyne, in ed. Cubbison, *Burgoyne and the Saratoga Campaign*, 201-2.

¹³ Digby Journal, 121.

whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.”¹⁴ Here, in 1776, the Continental Congress repudiated military tactics similar to those utilized by Burgoyne in 1777, to justify to the rest of Western society the necessity of becoming an independent nation to free itself from British tyranny.

Those with an ardent resolve against Burgoyne made fun of his use of indigenous peoples as well as his bombastic warning to the colonists of the region. In a letter addressed to the general, one colonist wrote that “the mountains shook before thee, and the trees of the forest bowed their leafy heads. The vast Lakes of the north were chilled at thy presence, and the mighty cataracts stopped their tremendous career and were suspended in awe at thy approach.” Here, the author satirically proclaims that even the natural environment quivered at the thought of the great John Burgoyne advancing into the colony of New York. The author continued, reasserting Burgoyne’s claim that his goal was to restore “the rights of the Constitution to a forward, stubborn generation. And it is for this, oh! Sublime, Lieut Genl! That you have given yourself the trouble to cross the wide Atlantic, and with incredible fatigue traversed uncultivated wilds; and we ungratefully refused the profered blessing?” Finally, the author shames Burgoyne’s use of indigenous allies, stating that “to restore the rights of the Constitution you have called together an amiable host of savages and turned them loose

¹⁴ O’Shaughnessy, *The Men Who*, 147; Declaration of Independence,: A Transcription, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>, accessed 9/4/2017. This transcription of the Declaration of Independence is from the Stone Engraving of the parchment Declaration of Independence on display in the Rotunda at the National Archives Museum.

to scalp our women and children and lay our country waste.”¹⁵ Rather than cause the colonists to cower in their homes, Burgoyne hardened their resolve against what was perceived as further British tyranny.

‘The Country Being but Little Altered since its First State of Nature’: Learning to Soldier in the Borderlands¹⁶

Burgoyne carefully assessed how best to command troops in the specific environmental and military conditions of North America, and from the beginning of his tenure in the colony of Canada he stressed mobility and flexibility to overcome the obstacles that fighting in the Northeastern Borderlands presented. He asserted that the light infantry should be increased dramatically for agile maneuvering and that these troops should become the standard military unit that the British army organized itself around.¹⁷ When attacking strongpoints, artillery would be utilized to dislodge the rebels from their defensive positions, and then the light infantry would combine firepower and shock tactics to execute the final decisive blow.¹⁸ Seeing the British army struggle in the unsettled landscapes of North America, Burgoyne drew upon his successful experience as a light cavalry commander in Portugal during the Seven Years’ War and postulated how cavalry tactics could be adapted to the situation in the Northeast.

¹⁵ James Phinney Baxter, *The British Invasion from the North. The Campaigns of Generals Carleton and Burgoyne, from Canada, 1776-1777, with the Journal of Lieut. William Digby, of the 53rd, or Shopshire Regiment of Foot*, (Albany, NY: J. Munsell’s Sons, 1887), 230-231.

¹⁶ Digby Journal, 165.

¹⁷ Light infantry units during the eighteenth century were comprised of smaller more agile soldiers who were excellent marksmen. They were experts in skirmish warfare and utilized irregular ranks to fight independently and ahead of the main line.

¹⁸ O’Shaughnessy, *The Men*, 138.

The soldiers and officers on the expedition from Montreal to Albany also thought about the unique terrains and climes of the Northeast Borderlands. Having to serve in often adverse conditions against an unforgiving environment they knew best the travails and drudgery in wilderness landscapes. Lieutenant Digby noted,

the idea of service to those who have not had an opportunity of seeing any, may induce them to believe the only hardship a soldier endures on a campaign is the danger attending an action, but there are many others, perhaps not so dangerous, yet, in my opinion, very near disagreeable, — remaining out whole nights under rain and almost frozen with cold, with very little covering, perhaps without being able to light a fire; [due to] fearing the enemy's discovering the post.¹⁹

In this passage Digby explains that battle was relatively rare in military service, and that altercations against a natural enemy were most prevalent for soldiers in the American War for Independence.²⁰ Harsh weather, inclement temperatures, a lack of supplies, and fear of ambushade by the enemy in the howling wilderness remained omnipresent in soldiers' daily perceptions.

One officer noted that in open-field combat British military training and tactics reigned supreme over the ragtag fighting force of the rebels. However, in

¹⁹ Digby Journal, 138.

²⁰ For more on the rarity of battle during the American Revolution, see James Kirby Martin ed. *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

the wilderness, American soldiers and militiamen had the advantage because they were “fitted by Disposition, and practiced for the stratagems, and Enterprises of little War.”²¹ Thus, the British had to adapt their style of warfare to the borderland landscape. The officer continued stating that on their march, “detachments are constantly to fortify in the best manner the circumstances of the place, and the implements at hand will permit felling Trees with their points outward” and “breast works of Earth and Timber are generally to be effected in short time.” He went on to warn that “neither the Distance of Camps nor the interference of Forests and Rivers are to be looked upon as securities against their attempts” and that supreme caution must be exercised “in, or near Woods to place advanced Centinels, where they may have a tree, or some other defense to prevent their being taken off by signal [single] Marksmen.”²² Clearly, the physical setting demanded martial adjustments, especially in response to the unique and rigorous demands of the Northeast Borderlands.

Many European and American soldiers learned about survival in the wilderness from indigenous guides. Lieutenant Digby noted one remedy for scurvy he learned during the borderlands expedition, “the tree spruce, which grows there in great plenty, as indeed in most parts of America, is an excellent antiscorbutic, and when made into beer is far from a disagreeable flavour.”²³ Soldiers also learned new techniques for how

21 Journal of an Officer of the 47th Regiment (British), Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Ms. S-397, Original diary held by the United States Military Academy at West Point.

22 Ibid.

23 Digby Journal, 122.

to navigate through an unsettled landscape and to track individuals and armies through the woods. One officer expressed amazement at indigenous peoples' ability to traverse the wilderness:

they carefully observe the trees, especially the tall pines, which are for the most part void of foliage, on the branches that are exposed to the north wind, the trunk on that side having the bark extremely rugged, by which they ascertain the direction to be taken; and for the more easy discovery of their way back again, their tomahawks are continually blazing the trees, which is cutting off a small piece of the bark, and as they march along they break down the underwood.

Further, "they are possessed of a sagacity equally astonishing, for they will discern by the footsteps, that to use [you?] would appear extremely confused, nearly the number of men" that passed through."²⁴ Travelling alongside indigenous guides, the soldiers on the expedition clearly learned valuable skills to navigate and survive in the wilderness of the Northeast.

Burgoyne's march through the borderlands from Montreal, although not completely isolated due to being broken up by forts and small frontier settlements or trading posts, posed dire challenges. The rudimentary roads and communications that had been used by the rebels in their own journey north from Fort Ticonderoga and Fort George were in great disrepair – often due to purposeful destruction by the rebels

²⁴ Thomas Anburey, *Travels through the Interior Parts of America in a Series of Letters: by an Officer* (London: Printed for William Lane, Leadenhall-Street, 1789), 86.

during their retreat – and in many cases, Burgoyne’s expedition had to cut and build roads through dense forests. The soldiers were assailed by swamps, fallen trees, thickets of brush, and steep ravines, all which required intense labor to overcome. In the portion of the expedition from Fort Ticonderoga to Fort Edward alone (about 50 miles), the soldiers, corvee laborers, and contractors built over forty bridges and created corduroy roads to traverse, even over swamps, the largest of which was over two miles in length. Burgoyne noted that “it was attended with great labour” and that the creation of such a military infrastructure in the wilderness meant that the “troops were improved in the very essential point of wood service.”²⁵

Despite learning all that they could about soldiering in the cultural and environmental landscapes of the Northeast and adapting their methods of waging war against both human and natural enemies, British and German troops still largely viewed the environments that they traversed as impenetrable. In fact, while travelling through the colony of Canada into the Lake Champlain region of Vermont, Captain Georg Pausch, the head of the Hanau Artillery stationed in North America, noted that each boat in the combined British forces used a *Canadien* pilot at the helm.²⁶ In fact, without the aid of a local guide that understood how to navigate the Northeast Borderlands, one unit became entirely lost on the Richelieu River. Unable to find their winter encampment, the officers ordered the craft to drift from island to island looking

²⁵ Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada*, 17.

²⁶ Georg Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch, Chief of the Hanau Artillery during the Burgoyne Campaign*, trans. William I. Stone (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell’s Sons, 1886), 65. (Herein *Journal of Captain Pausch*).

for a sign to help them recover. Despair and terror set in as one of the commanding officers died from dysentery while encamped on one of these small islands. After they had lost all hope, several *Canadiens* with bateaux and canoes found the men and guided them to the Isle aux Noix. From there, with the assistance of local guides, they found their way to St. Johns and then rendezvoused with Captain Pausch at Longueil for their wintering assignment.²⁷

Indeed, for most of the soldiers the forested landscapes were unnavigable without indigenous guides. One soldier noted that “it is surprising with what a degree of certainty an Indian will make his way from one country to another through the thickest of woods allowing the sun to be constantly hid from his sight.” Europeans who were “not used to such a country would soon be lost, and the more attempts made to extricate himself, perhaps, would only serve to entangle him the deeper.”²⁸ British officers relied heavily on indigenous peoples, convinced that it’s the forested landscape was impenetrable without this assistance.

The Murder of Jane McCrea: Identity and Insecurity in the Borderlands

As the combined Anglo-German force made its way through the wilderness between Montreal and Albany, the indigenous allies on the expedition made scouting advances into local communities to ascertain the activities of militias, to assess the provisions and supplies available, and, in some cases, to bring loyalists into the encampment of the British army to assist the expedition. During one of these

²⁷ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 91-92.

²⁸ Digby Journal, 154.

excursions, things went terribly wrong for one young woman and also, by extension, for General Burgoyne's entire campaign.

The accounts of Jane McCrea's life, death, and family are as varied as the diaries, letters, and memorials written about her. [See Appendix F for a sensationalistic painting of her death, much later copied as a popular engraving] One British officer described McCrea as being eighteen years of age with an amicable personality. Her parents were rebels, but she was engaged to marry a provincial officer in the British army. These accounts state that she was staying with a loyalist neighbor awaiting an indigenous escort to the British lines where she would marry David Jones, a member of the loyalist militia.²⁹

McCrea lived with her brother John in a small community near Saratoga when she fell in love with Jones. At the outbreak of the war her brother joined the American cause and volunteered to serve for the United Colonies. Her fiancée, along with other loyalists in the community, fled to the Canada to assist the British in quelling the opposition. Much like the location of her home, McCrea's life was caught in the crossroads of the Northeastern Borderlands. This was a place where allegiances and identities remained fluid, and a place where local peoples and local environments played instrumental roles in the unfolding drama among empire, colonies, and nation.

²⁹ For an extensive list of these memorials and patriot propaganda regarding the death of Jane McCrea, see William L. Stone, *Ballads and Poems Relating to the Burgoyne Campaign* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1893).

Jane decided that her best life would be lived alongside her fiancée Lieutenant Jones, so she took it upon herself to find him at the garrison at Fort Ticonderoga.³⁰

McCrea reached as far as Fort Edward and was staying at the residence of another loyalist by the name of Sara McNeill. By this time, Burgoyne had given the indigenous forces under his direction freer reign to police borderland communities.³¹ A party of indigenous men under the leadership of a Wyandot named Le Loup made a sortie against the small village of Argyle on July 26, 1777. Around midday, John Allen prepared to eat dinner with his wife, three children, his sister, and three enslaved people in his household. The scouting party arrived at Allen's home and asked for some food. Allen refused their appeal, and all of the household was murdered. Several other townspeople, namely the Bames family and John White, fled towards the American-held Fort Edward, but were killed on the roadside.³² The scouting party then ambushed American Lieutenant Tobias van Vechten and four other soldiers.³³ Next, Jane McCrea, as well as her host, Sara McNeill, were captured and separated from one another.³⁴

³⁰ Benson Lossing, *the Life and Times of Philip Schuyler*, Vol. 2 (New York: Mason Brothers, 1873), 250-253.

³¹ Hadden, *Journal and Orderly Books*, 62; Graymont, *The Iroquois*, 151.

³² Robert G. Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 340; C.E. Bennett, *Advance and Retreat to Saratoga*, 24-5; Graymont, *The Iroquois*, 151-152.

³³ Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), 277.

³⁴ Pancake, *1777*, 152.

Her life, according to Digby's account, was taken when she "fell a sacrifice to the savage passions of these blood thirsty monsters."³⁵ Another officer noted that it was by chance that McCrea fell in with an indigenous scouting party, and that they were going to usher her safely back to camp. However, "a dispute arose between...two Indians, whose prisoner she was, and words growing very high, one of them, who was fearful of losing the reward for bringing her safe into camp, most inhumanly struck his tomahawk into her skull and she instantly expired."³⁶

It is likely that Jones recognized McCrea's scalp being transported through camp by an indigenous warrior. Despite the lack of clarity surrounding her murder and the discovery of her scalp in camp, responses to it are well documented. A messenger relayed the news to General Burgoyne while he was encamped at Fort Anne. He sprung immediately from his lodgings and, along with another senior officer, General Simon Fraser, rode to where the indigenous allies were quartered and called their leadership into council. He demanded that McCrea's murderer be brought forward, so that he could be executed for his crime.³⁷ However, the indigenous leadership refused to allow their warrior to be killed for waging war against frontier villages in ways that, in the past, Burgoyne himself had encouraged as tactics to keep his enemies at bay. Informed by his French interpreter, Luc de la Corne, that he would have a massive mutiny on his hands, and that he would lose the invaluable assistance of the indigenous guides and scouts if he pushed the issue further, Burgoyne pardoned the culprit fearing "the

³⁵ Lieutenant William Digby in Baxter, 236-237.

³⁶ Thomas Anburey, *Travels*, 106.

³⁷ Graymont, *The Iroquois*, 151.

weight they would have thrown into the opposite scale, had they gone over to the enemy.”³⁸ Instead of acquiescing to Burgoyne’s insistence on corporal punishment, indigenous leaders compelled the general to begrudgingly pardon the man for his crime. In a region and in a conflict where allegiances could be fluid, the British army had much to lose and much to fear if the Iroquois were to fight against the crown as rebel allies. The patriots’ propaganda campaign against General Burgoyne noted that McCrea was engaged to a loyalist; however, her family were patriots and had fled the region in preparation of being mistreated at the hands of the British army after hearing of Burgoyne’s proclamation.

The patriots made McCrae’s death a symbol of the ferociousness of warfare in the borderlands. More importantly, her death became a symbol of General Burgoyne’s barbarity in employing indigenous people as allies against colonists in the region. Burgoyne’s inability to keep his allies from murdering and scalping civilians, especially civilians who remained loyal to King George III, caused soldiers, subjects, and citizens in New York to become deeply disturbed. If one loyal to the crown could be struck down in cold blood, anyone – whether patriots minding their own business, neutral

³⁸ Earl of Harrington testimony in Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada*, 65-66; Pierre Tousignant, Madeleine Dionne-Tousignant, “La Corne, Luc de, Chaptés de La Corne La Corn Saint-Luc” in ed. Frances G. Halpenny, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Vol. 4, (1771-1800). Luc de la Corne, or Saint Luc, highlights the fluidity of allegiances in the Northeastern Borderlands during the eighteenth century. St. Luc served as the interpreter for Louis-Joseph de Montcalm. Due to a series of events preventing his return to France he settled in Montreal in 1761. This is likely where Burgoyne found him and enlisted him into his service as an interpreter between him and the indigenous allies accompanying the journey.

parties in the face of the war, or even loyalists providing supplies for Burgoyne's army – was at risk.

Provincials living in the Northeast Borderlands were sharply polarized by the death of Jane McCrea. Those who wished to remain neutral had a difficult choice to make between remaining disinterested in the face of atrocity, supporting the British as loyalists by throwing their lot in with the perpetrators of what was viewed as a deeply disturbing and barbaric action, or siding with the patriots, who seemed to be on the principled side of this issue. Historian Barbara Graymont notes that after the McCrea incident “volunteers came to Gates's army in droves.”³⁹ Loyalists had an even harder choice to make. Should they remain loyal to the crown, in some ways condoning the actions taken by Burgoyne's indigenous allies against a member of their community, or should they change sides and abandon their principles, despite their misgivings about independence and join the cause of the United Colonies against what was perceived as British tyranny. The death of Jane McCrea increased support for the rebel cause and hardened the resolve of ardent patriots living in the region while converting many neutrals and loyalists to the American cause.⁴⁰

Woods Rebels and a Militarized Landscape

Unlike most British generals, Burgoyne did not dismiss the effectiveness of the fighting forces of the United Colonies, including both the Continental army and the

³⁹ Graymont, *The Iroquois*, 151. In *The Common Cause*, Parkinson notes that played a role in the resurgence of the militia in the Northeast. Pancake argues that this incident caused the Continental regulars to turn out for Schuyler, 1777, 154.

⁴⁰ Graymont, *The Iroquois*, 151; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, 345.

rebel militias. Tactically, he felt these soldiers utilized the natural environments in which they served to their highest advantage. In wilderness landscapes, Burgoyne noted that “every private man was his own general, who will turn every tree and bush into a temporary fortress.” Behind the cover provided by the natural landscape, rebel soldiers could fire their weapons with “deliberation, coolness, and certainty which hidden safety inspires.” After making the shot, they then seized personal initiative and familiarity with the environment to stealthily move from one firing position to the next.⁴¹

By contrast, even when traversing wooded swampland on murky rutted roads, the British army “marched in the greatest regularity, as from intelligence received, the general [Burgoyne] had no doubt [that] he should be attacked on his march, our road leading thro. thick woods.”⁴² Burgoyne remained very cautious on his expedition, having learned during the prior year, as second-in-command under Carleton, the Continental army stationed scouts in the woods to fire shots at the pursuing British army to cover their retreat to Fort Ticonderoga.

Many British officers and soldiers commented on the militarization of the landscape by rebel fighting techniques that included “lurking parties” of Continental soldiers “hovering about the woods,” which gave nature a pernicious character. One officer contrasted his time serving in North America during the American War for

⁴¹ John Burgoyne quoted in Edward Barrington de Fonblanque, *Political and Military Episodes in the Latter Half of the Eighteenth Century, Derived from the Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. John Burgoyne, General, Statesman, Dramatist* (London: MacMillan and Co, 1876), 208-9.

⁴² Digby Journal, 118.

Independence to fighting in the Seven Years' War in Germany. He noted that "this war is very different to the last... in this the life of an individual is sought with as much avidity as the obtaining a victory over an army of thousands."⁴³ The United Colonists's adroit execution of *petite guerre* tactics weighed heavily on the minds of the British. For the British soldiers, who were already full of consternation about an expedition into the howling wilderness, fear of being killed while laboring in the forests to cut trees or fix roads caused fear and paranoia.⁴⁴

Once the wilderness became militarized, the British eyes began to fear the enemy discovering their position. Often times they would not light a fire for cooking or for warmth due to "not knowing the moment of an attack; but always in expectation of one." Lieutenant Digby exemplified this palpable fear of the wilderness, "we had about 30 miles to march and for the first six, we every minute expected to be attacked, and which I must say we were not so well provided for." This paranoia limited their ability to garner provisions from the natural environment. Encamped a few miles from Fort Anne, British soldiers refused to drink water from a natural spring as rumors swirled that the rebels had somehow poisoned its source. Only after the surgeon, Dr. Sangrado, tried an experiment on the water to prove it was potable, did the soldiers quench their thirst.⁴⁵

⁴³ Thomas Anburey, *Travels*, 96.

⁴⁴ In *Travels*, Anburey noted that the effects of traveling through this militarized landscape took both a physical and mental toil on the troops, 99. For more on the American tradition of using *petite guerre* tactics from the colonial period through the War of 1812 see, Grenier, *The First Way of War*.

⁴⁵ Digby Journal, 139; *Ibid.*, 220; *Ibid.*, 239.

In addition to fearing the militarized landscape, the British were disgusted by “such a cowardly and cruel manner of carrying on the war.”⁴⁶ British officers ordered that rebels guilty of shooting officers from behind the cover of the wilderness should be taken alive and “spared for the hands of the hangman,” as a “soldier’s death” was “far too honourable for such a wretch.”⁴⁷

The rebels’ weaponization of nature slowed Burgoyne’s expedition through the Northeastern borderlands. General Riedesel noted that all of the army’s marches “were attended with exceeding hardship, as all the roads and bridges had to be repaired, and we were obliged to make very cautious reconnaissances.”⁴⁸ Lieutenant Digby more specifically highlighted the effectiveness of the Continental army in turning nature into an enemy. He wrote, “we marched from Skeensborough, and tho but 15 miles to Fort Anne, were two days going it; as the enemy had felled large trees over the river which there turned so narrow as not to allow more than one battow abreast.” On land, the situation was similar. With the trees felled by the retreating American soldiers, the British were “obliged to cut a road through the wood, which was attended with great fatigue and labour, for our wagons and artillery.”⁴⁹ In fact, the roads were so poor and the paranoia about likely ambushes so great that Burgoyne complained to Parliament in 1780 that the poor “situation of the transport service” meant that “the army could barely be victualled from day to day.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid., 130.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 131.

⁴⁸ Riedesel, *Journals and Letters*, 98; Ibid., 99.

⁴⁹ Digby Journal, 233.

The British army seemed to work non-stop in their efforts to repair the bridges, destroyed roads, and ditches that the Continental army left for them during their retreat. One officer noted that the army came upon a “swampy ditch” that was in need of repair before the army continued on its march. The soldiers toiled expeditiously, and soon thereafter the army continued on its way. However, after marching a short distance they “encountered another demolished bridge” that needed to be rebuilt. Thus, the march from Fort Ticonderoga to Saratoga commenced.

The Continental army shrewdly delayed the advance of the British force by transforming an ordered landscape with roads and communications into a disordered and chaotic terrain that needed repair for a large army to pass. Due to the fear that woods rebels lurked behind every tree in this newly militarized landscape, the British officers proceeded with caution. Delays due to anxiety and delays due to the time it took to physically repair and reorder the landscape depleted provisions for the British army. Throughout the expedition General Burgoyne expressed his misgivings about this situation. The inability to build a sufficient store of provisions caused the army to become delayed for days at a time. In the worst instance, the expedition halted from August 16 until September 13 as Burgoyne decided to sever his communication with the colony of Canada and bring all of his supplies to the Hudson River.⁵¹

Despite these challenges, the British army adapted to the local landscape in ways similar to the Arnold expedition through the Eastern Country wilderness during its

⁵⁰ Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition from Canada*, 19.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 55-61.

invasion of Canada in 1775. Daily rations were supplemented with local flora and fauna. One officer noted that “there were many deer in the woods about, some of which we shot, also great flocks of wild pigeons, which, as our provisions . . . were almost finished, helped out his majesties allowance of beef and pork very well.”⁵²

Another noted that the lakes and rivers abounded “with great quantities of a variety of fish; sturgeon, black bass, masquenongez, pike of an incredible size, and many others, among which is a cat-fish” whose “flesh is fat and luscious, greatly resembling the flavor of an eel.”⁵³ Though the British soldiers were unable to replace all of their daily allowance from local wildlife, it softened the blow of the long and difficult march.

‘The Ever Prevalent Diarrhea:’ Disease Cosmology and the Wilderness Environment⁵⁴

The landscape of the Northeastern Americas contained larger threats—perceived and real—than those of ‘woods rebels’ lurking behind every tree and crevice. The climate, environs, and weather posed unique health concerns for those marching through the wilderness. Sometimes these health concerns manifested themselves physically in the form of fevers, discharges, and diarrhea, and other times they manifested themselves in the form of mania and even madness. European ideas revolving around types of landscapes and climates played a crucial role in the everyday lives of soldiers during the Burgoyne expedition.

⁵² Digby Journal 154. For more on eating wild pigeons, see Anburey, *Travels*, 80-1.

⁵³ Thomas Anburey, *Travels*, 80.

⁵⁴ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 109.

Frequently, the officers and soldiers complained about the heat and humidity during the summer and autumn march. Camp life, with several soldiers packed in each tent and hundreds of tents and cooking fires crowded around one another exacerbated the temperature, leaving no escape from the torridity of the local climate.⁵⁵ Although as thinly clothed as possible, the soldiers wore large baggy pants and long sleeve shirts “to prevent the bite of the moscheto, a small fly which was then very troublesome.”⁵⁶ The sweltering temperatures and humidity caused fear of “fevers and fluxes,” which were “so common when encamped in a warm climate, and lying nights on the ground under heavy dew.”⁵⁷ General Frederich von Riedesel additionally blamed the temperature and humidity for spreading eye disease.⁵⁸ Further, officers noted that drills and rigorous and laborious tasks were “detrimental to the health of the men.”⁵⁹

Though the soldiers often blamed the dampen environment and warm humid climate for the fevers, such complaints generally appeared alongside comments about mosquitoes. Historian J.R. McNeill argues that “where and when people congregated in the presence of anophelines, malaria was likely to break out.”⁶⁰ Indeed, the brackish swamps the soldiers labored in to repair the bridges and roads destroyed by the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁶ Digby Journal, 122.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 122. Captain Pausch complained that he often had ten to twelve men as well as two to three officers sick due to fluxes such as dysentery. He also noted that many troops had to be left behind due to fluxes and that in at least one case a soldier died from severe diarrhea. Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 79; Ibid., 91; Ibid., 96; Ibid., 109.

⁵⁸ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 44.

⁵⁹ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 100.

⁶⁰ J.R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620 – 1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61.

Continental army bred the insect vectors of malaria. Mosquitoes injected the plasmodium parasite into the human bloodstream where it spread through the body causing a variety of non-descript symptoms such as fevers, chills, sweats, body aches and pains, general malaise, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea until the immune system wages its war against the assailants. If the immune system loses the initial battle, the “sortie by a few dozen parasites becomes a few trillion invaders and in severe cases organ failure and death occurs.”⁶¹

Whether or not they realized the linkages between their ailments and the mosquitoes feasting upon them, one way the soldiers dealt with biting insects was to burn cedar. Fredericke von Riedesel exclaimed that this practice to keep the “midges” away as insects cannot stand the odor of cedar as it is being burned. However, doing so had its own risks as “its smoke was very injurious to the nerves, so much so, indeed, as to cause women with child to bring forth prematurely.”⁶² Thus, the Hessians were forced to weigh the consequences and consider their understanding of insect-borne illnesses and those involving cedar as a preventative.

If the hot and humid summer was a burden, autumn brought no reprieve. One evening Lieutenant Digby was “seized with a violent shivering and lightness in my head, which was attributed to cold, I must have got the preceding night on guard. About 10 o clock I was quite delirious and out of my sense, after which I cannot tell

⁶¹ McNeill, *Mosquito Empires*, 52-3; There are two main varieties of malaria. The least severe has a mortality rate of approximately 1% while the second has a mortality rate of 10%. World Health Organization, “Malaria: Fact Sheet,” <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs094/en/> accessed December 2016.

⁶² Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 115.

what happened. I was blistered on my back, and all the next day continued in the same distracted situation.”⁶³ It was not until “a good physician...had [him] removed into his tent which had a stove” that Digby recovered.⁶⁴ Planning for cold weather to set in during the autumn evenings, the officers provided “warm clothing, such as under waistcoats, leggings, socks &c. &c., and smoking tobacco” as a “preservative of the health against dews, which arose from the many swamps and marshy, drowned lands that surrounded” the expedition.⁶⁵ In addition to changing the clothing of the soldiers and having them smoke tobacco, it was felt that an exercise regimen promoted health and prevented sickness in the colder months.⁶⁶ Further, Frederike von Riedesel expressed great concern to King George III regarding the cold climate of America and her husband’s ability to stay healthy in it. Riedesel responded that “he was born in a cold clime, the cold would not trouble him.” The King agreed and added that the North American air remains “very healthy and clear” promoting an excellent constitution.⁶⁷ However, this proved not to be the case. General Riedesel noted in a letter to his wife that he “committed the blunder of leaving open the window of my sleeping room, in consequence of which I drew into my system a rheumatic fever.”⁶⁸

⁶³ Digby Journal, 149.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 150.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 150. For more on equipment as preventative measures against sickness in the cold weather, see Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 95.

⁶⁶ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 100. For more on the belief that exercise increasing the health of soldiers see also, Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 33.

⁶⁷ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 60.

⁶⁸ General Frederich von Riedesel to Friedericke von Riedesel, Chambly, June 10, 1777, in Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 67.

The prevalence of disease on the expedition was remarkable. Captain Pausch noted that he often had up to 30 men suffering from scurvy.⁶⁹ Additionally, Fredericke von Riedesel, who often shared living quarters with the officers of the hospital, noted that all of the other rooms in the house, as well as the adjacent entry ways and hall ways, were filled with soldiers suffering from “camp sickness,” which she related to a “type of dysentery.”⁷⁰ In another incident, she bunked in the cellar of a house with several camp followers, the servants of officers, and wounded soldiers. Due to the unwillingness to leave the cellar from fear of exacerbating their sickness by further expose to nature, throughout the night individuals evacuated bodily fluids where they stood. This, combined with the pungent odor of festering wounds, created “a horrendous stench” that overwhelmed von Riedesel and disrupted her sleep. The next day she ousted everyone from the cellar and organized a cleaning crew to remove the effluent that she feared would cause sickness. She then “fumigated” the basement by “sprinkling vinegar on burning coals.”⁷¹ For Europeans such as Riedesel, getting rid of odors and smoking out miasmas promoted good health. Although their technical understanding of sickness was rudimentary, their approach to disease management was often effective.

⁶⁹ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 95. For more on scurvy during Burgoyne’s expedition, see Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 69.

⁷⁰ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 120. Throughout Frederick and Fredericke von Riedesel’s letters, memoirs, and diaries they comment on how the wind, cold, and dampness causes sickness either in General Riedesel himself or in his soldiers. See also Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 19; *Ibid.*, 29; *Ibid.*, 116.

⁷¹ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 128-129.

For example, one officer, an adjutant of General Phillips, was shot through both cheeks with a small musket ball which shattered his teeth and grazed his tongue. Unable to eat solid food, he was forced to subsist on broth and other liquids. Fredericke Reidesel, thinking that acidity would clean out the wound and prevent infection, gave him a bottle of wine. He held some in the bottom of his mouth to soak his wounds, and, according to Riedesel, this remedy led to a full recovery.⁷²

In addition, many army hospitals were filled with patients being treated for mental illness. According to the European disease cosmology of the eighteenth century, spending time in swampy, humid environments could cause a variety of illnesses.⁷³ The mental stress of being overwhelmed by a militarized natural landscape could cause physical sickness. Fredericke von Riedesel noted on at least one occasion that her husband became sick due to distress.⁷⁴ However, much of the time, the inability for soldiers to cope with the rigors of military service and their disease cosmology of the landscape manifested in mental illness.

Captain Pausch noted that doctors in the military hospitals informed him that patients “talked day and night of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, cousins, and aunts – besides, also talking over and repeating all kinds of...deviltry – calling now this one, and now that one by his baptismal name until they had to stop for actual want of

⁷² The officer this happened to is unknown. Riedesel states that his name was Major Plumpfield which historians have posited was Captain Thomas Blomefield. Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 132.

⁷³ For more on conceptualization of disease over time see Martin Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

⁷⁴ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 83.

breath!” They also relayed to Pausch that the only cure for this mental disease was “peace” and “comfort,” and accordingly the Captain attempted to soothe the sick soldiers of his company daily.⁷⁵ He went on to say that those soldiers who are “alive and well” formed close relationships with the *Canadien* girls and women and found “plenty of solace” in this companionship.⁷⁶ Here, relationships between the nurses of the military hospitals and the soldiers suffering from mania and madness, seemed to heal their ailments, at least long enough for them to be discharged and brought back into the service. The presentation of these forms of mental illness, combined with the relief brought by a trigger-free environment, suggests the stress brought on by the militarized landscape, where woods rebels, sickness, climate, weather, and military combat could all be lethal.

St. Leger’s Expedition

Much like the invasion of Canada by the Continental army in 1775, the British attack on New York from Canada was designed to be a three-pronged invasion. General Burgoyne would enter through Lake Champlain while a force commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Barrimore “Barry” St. Leger would sweep further to the southwest through Oswego. St. Leger’s expedition aimed to bolster loyalist and indigenous support – as well as to provide cover for Burgoyne’s eventual march to Albany.

The St. Leger expedition was unique in that the preponderance of its soldiers were not British regulars, but were local people from Canada and, New York and

⁷⁵ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 96.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

indigenous people primarily from Iroquoia. On July 25, a mixed army of 300 British regulars, 80 Hessians, 650 *Canadien* and loyalist militiamen, and 1,000 indigenous warriors marched towards the American-held garrison of Fort Stanwix. Included in the party was John Butler, a prominent loyalist who knew several Iroquoian languages and built a relationship with the Haudenosaunee in the fur trade, Mohawk military and political leader Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant), Kaiiontw'kon (Cornplanter), a Seneca war chief and diplomat, and Sayenqueraghta (Old Smoke), a Seneca war chief and veteran of Pontiac's War (1763-1766) that defeated the British at the Battle of Devil's Hole.

Much like Burgoyne's expedition, St. Leger's found that the rebel army had militarized the landscape by felling trees across water passages to prevent easy mobility.⁷⁷ The lieutenant-colonel sent a small party to harass the American forces situated nearby while the preponderance of his force cleared the trees to transport his artillery. Due to this delay, and intelligence received from the Oneida, the rebel commander at Fort Stanwix, Colonel Peter Gansevoort, received reinforcements as well as a bateaux full of provisions, giving him 6-weeks worth of supplies to ride out a British siege.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Colonel Peter Gansevoort discussed this tactic in a letter to General Philip Schuyler, Fort Schuyler (Stanwix) July 4, 1777, National Archives Microfilm Collection, Series M247, Roll 77, 63-66.

⁷⁸ Pancake, 1777, 139. The Oneida and the Tuscarora of the Iroquois Confederacy officially claimed neutrality at this point in the war, however, many had offered their assistance to the Continental army in the fighting occurring in the Northeast Borderlands.

On August 2, St. Leger engaged Fort Stanwix without his artillery or the preponderance of his regulars or militiamen, as they were ensnared by the militarized landscape.⁷⁹ Thus, 250 of the combined British forces along with the nearly 1,000 Iroquoian warriors encircled the fort. On August 5, several Mohawk messengers arrived in the British camp and relayed an urgent message from Konwatsi'tsiaenni (Molly Brant), a Mohawk leader and sister to Thayendanagea, that the rebel militia and a group of Oneida warriors under the command of Nicholas Herkimer from Tyron County, New York, was enroute to relieve the garrison at Fort Stanwix.⁸⁰

Aware of the impending perilous condition if Herkimer were to arrive while most of his infantry and all of his artillery were entangled in the brush and trees of Gansevoort's abbatisses, St. Leger dispatched most of the Iroquois and a small number of loyalist rangers to ambush the rebel militia. On August 6, near Oriskany Creek, the loyalist, Mohawk, and Seneca forces decimated the 700 militiamen and 100 Oneida under Herkimer. The patriots rallied and hand-to-hand fighting with hatchets, tomahawks, bayonets, and other weapons raged on for several hours. Neighbors often recognized one another in the storm of bullets and blades, increasing the personal nature of the conflict and raising the level of brutality as individuals punched, clubbed,

⁷⁹ An abattis is an improvised obstacle on the battlefield consisting of trees which have been felled. Their tops are sharpened and then pointed towards the possible lines of enemy advancement.

⁸⁰ Robert S. Allen, "Molly Brant" in ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, *American Nation Biography*, Vol. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 433; Graymont, *The Iroquois*, 134-143.

stabbed, and maimed one another. In the end the mixed British force inflicted nearly 500 casualties while suffering approximately 90 of their own.

Weeks later, a Continental army relief column led by now General Benedict Arnold marched through the area and was assailed by a grisly scene, as none of the fallen soldiers had been buried.⁸¹ Using counter-intelligence measures Arnold was able to relay to St. Leger's camp an exaggerated figure of the troops he was bringing to Fort Stanwix with. Upon hearing this, the British and Iroquois, who were at extremely low morale after the casualties suffered at Oriskany, abandoned their siege of the fort and fled to Quebec.⁸²

The battles at Fort Stanwix and Oriskany epitomize the breakdown of accommodation in the Northeast Borderlands as loyalist and patriot neighbors engaged one another in a brutal bloodbath of hand-to-hand combat. Further, these battles marked a distinct divide in the Iroquois Confederacy with the Onedia allying with the patriot militia and the Mohawk and Seneca warriors waiting in ambush in friendship with the loyalists. This shows that both Euro-Americans and indigenous people made choices in the face of a military conflict that transcended their identities as residents of New York, Tyron County, or as members of the Iroquois Confederacy.

⁸¹ Jephtha Root Simms, *The Frontiersmen of New York: Showing Customs of the Indians, Vicissitudes of the Pioneer White Settlers, and Border Strife in Two Wars*, Vol. 2, (Albany, NY: George C. Riggs Publisher, 1883), 110.

⁸² Journal of an Officer of the 47th Regiment. August 28, 1777, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Ms. S-397.

The European War Machine Breaks Down: The Battle of Bennington

From its commencement, a foreshadowing of doom loomed over Burgoyne's expedition due to logistical issues. Despite his calls to increase the amount of light cavalry to make the army more agile and his understanding of the need to be flexible and mobile, Burgoyne did not lighten the army's load. The artillery train itself, consisting of 138 pieces of cannon with the accompanying equipment to besiege a fortress, required 1,500 horses and hundreds of carriages and drivers. These field pieces, Burgoyne argued, were necessary to rout the rebels from their fortifications and to defend these assets once they were acquired. After one month of trying to gather horses and drivers under contract for his expedition, Burgoyne only secured 400 horses and 500 wagons—just of 25% of the amount required for the artillery alone. It is likely Burgoyne estimated that any remaining horses, drivers, and other things needed would be provided through corvée labor. In addition to the cumbersome task of transporting the provisions, tents, gear, and armaments for the soldiers, the official reports for the Burgoyne expedition stated that 225 women and 500 children followed the army from Canada to Saratoga. In fact, one report claimed the number of camp followers as high as 2,000.⁸³ With the addition of camp followers, laborers, and indigenous allies, Burgoyne's expedition at times neared 20,000 individuals.

Such large numbers traversing through the militarized wilderness, oftentimes the expedition stalled as it waited for the arrival of essential supplies. In retrospect, Burgoyne noted that for every hour that a general spent pondering and planning the

⁸³ O'Shaughnessy, *The Men*, 146.

military stratagems that his force would use in battle, he devoted twenty other hours to evaluating how the army would eat.⁸⁴ Burgoyne's travails about feeding his men started almost as soon as the expedition commenced. As early as July 10, one officer of the 47th British Regiment noted that his "corps (under Brigadier General Fraser) has the further merit of having supported fatigue, and Bad weather without Bread and without murmur."⁸⁵ As the expedition crossed into New York, Burgoyne's supply lines extended further away from its resource base, and at times the general was only able to muster enough food forward each day to allow the soldiers to draw their daily rations. Thus, his quartermaster was unable to stockpile provisions nor was the British army able to advance.⁸⁶

Exacerbating matters, Burgoyne eschewed a strategy of establishing fortifications along the Hudson River to keep in communication with Fort George, Fort Ticonderoga, and Canada. He feared that by taking the time and resources to establish these fortifications and to garrison them that his main force would be too depleted. In the most extreme example, army was delayed from August 16 until September 13 as Burgoyne waited for communications and supply lines to be dissolved and supplies brought to the main guard of the army. Afterwards, Burgoyne crossed the Hudson River with forty days' provisions for his soldiers and artillery.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition*, 56.

⁸⁵ Journal of an Officer of the 47th Regiment (British), Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Ms. S-397.

⁸⁶ Burgoyne, *A State of the Expedition*, 19.

⁸⁷ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 97.

From nearly the beginning of the American Revolution, the United Colonies stored military supplies at various places where they could be easily accessed by the Continental army or local militias.⁸⁸ As the action throughout New England and New York intensified, these outposts moved further towards the Northeastern Borderlands, both to meet the threat of an invasion from the colony of Canada and to prevent these depots of war material from falling into the hands of the British. Bennington, Vermont, situated to the east of Albany and Saratoga, became one of these important supply posts in the borderlands.

Thus, while short on provisions and in need of war material to support a major engagement in or near Albany, General Burgoyne cast his eye on Bennington. Though there were many things that he desperately needed from the raid, the most pressing was horses and forage to support them. Further, provisions were running short as the many delays effected by the militarization of the wilderness landscape. The amount of time Burgoyne spent repairing roads, clearing trees, and building bridges did not allow a stockpile of food, as soldiers consuming it as it arrived. He needed to procure provisions from local people to mount a successful attack against the American army. Burgoyne ordered a detachment under Lieutenant-Colonel Baum to encourage loyalists to join his ranks and also to overwhelm them and destroy the enemy's supply lines.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ For early conflicts surrounding these depots, see Peter Charles Hoffer, *Prelude to Revolution: The Salem Gunpowder Raid of 1775* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

⁸⁹ C.E. Bennett, *Advance and Retreat to Saratoga*, 34; Pancake, 1777, 135-138.

The first enemy encountered by Baum was not the local militia protecting the supply depot at Bennington. Instead, the British detachment faced a natural enemy on August 15, 1777, as a severe storm delayed their advance and required entrenchment in a defensive position until the weather cleared up. This delay allowed John Stark, a brigadier-general in the New Hampshire militia, to return from an expedition near Albany to reinforce Bennington and prepare for the assault. That evening, a militia regiment from the Berkshires further bolstered Stark's numbers.⁹⁰

By the morning of August 16, Stark's force had swelled to 1,600. Wishing to take Baum by surprise after the storm delayed his advance on Bennington, Stark used the cover of the forested landscape to encircle the British forces in a three-pronged attack with two detachments flanking to the left and right of Baum's position on a hill while Stark led the frontal assault to distract the British from the flanking maneuvers. Although the operation began in the morning, the sodden ground caused the flanking maneuver to take several hours.

During this time, another detachment from the British force under Colonel Heinrich von Breyman was dispatched to assist Baum with his assault. However, lack of food and forage finally caught up with Burgoyne's army. While transporting two field pieces through the swampy and rolling terrain between Fort Edward and Bennington, Breyman's horses collapsed. Breyman himself claimed, in his defense for not arriving at Bennington in a timely fashion, that lack of forage had

⁹⁰ Pancake, *1777*, 137-138.

caused the horses to give out. Further exacerbating matters, his unfamiliarity with the terrain and lack of indigenous guides caused his detachment to become lost for several hours.⁹¹

By the end of the day's fighting, the American militia reigned victorious over the British at Bennington. Breyman's force made it to Bennington, but as Burgoyne later explained, "the succor arrived too late."⁹² It was poor intelligence combined with an environment that proved to be more of a natural enemy than a natural ally that caused Baum's defeat. During Baum's delay Bennington was reinforced. Local people and the local environment were instrumental in shaping the battle of Bennington and the patriot victory.

The victories at Bennington and Fort Stanwix combined with the outbreak of civil war at Oriskany to demoralize Burgoyne's troops. After these defeats, the *Canadien* militia, as well as the indigenous guides and allies decided that the risks were too great and the rewards were too little, and they began to desert the British army at alarming rates. On August 22, a scalp bounty was issued by Burgoyne offering "20 Dollars for ev'ry Deserter, they shall bring in and in case any Deserters should be killed in the pursuit, their scalps are to be brought off."⁹³ In the state of near desperation after the losses at Stanwix and Bennington, Burgoyne had two options: to turn around and

⁹¹ C.E. Bennett, *Advance and Retreat to Saratoga*, 35.

⁹² John Burgoyne, *Orderly Book of Lieut. Gen. John Burgoyne: From His Entry into the State of New York Until His Surrender at Saratoga, 16th Oct. 1777; From the Original Manuscript Deposited at Washington's Head Quarters, Newburgh, N.Y.* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1860), 83.

⁹³ Journal of an Officer of the 47th Regiment (British), Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Ms. S-397.

regroup his fighting force in Canada for an expedition the following season or to press forward in an attempt to reach Albany with a decisive military action against the Continental army. He chose the latter.

Saratoga and its Aftermath

The disruption of Burgoyne's war machine by the wilderness was compounded by the failures to secure provisions at Bennington and the inability of St. Leger to siege Fort Stanwix. These incidences, combined with the massacre of Jane McCrea, became rallying cries for the United Colonies and bolstered the patriots' cause. Militiamen and Continental soldiers alike poured in from the communities surrounding the Northeastern Borderlands to aid the Continental army.⁹⁴

Knowing that Burgoyne's army was approaching her home in Schuylerville, New York, Catherine Schuyler, wife of Continental army General Philip Schuyler, raced from Albany to gather family valuables that would likely be looted or destroyed by British forces. When she arrived at home she prioritized what needed to be saved and loaded her carriage with these keepsakes. While executing this difficult task, she received an express letter from her husband requesting that she raze the crops and burn the wheat on their farm to prevent it from falling into the quartermaster stores of the British army. General Schuyler also noted in his express that the Continental army lacked horses. Catherine Schuyler burned the wheat field, dispersed their horses, and transported the family valuables in a cart drawn by a team of oxen.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Graymont, *The Iroquois*, 151; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, 334; Pancake, 1777, 154.

⁹⁵ C.E. Bennett, *Advance and Retreat to Saratoga*, 41.

After the failure to secure supplies at Bennington, the British army approached Saratoga with severely diminished provisions. Mrs. Schuyler's militarization of her family's estate must have further crushed the soldiers' and officers' morale. Catherine Schuyler's war upon the land denied something far more valuable to the British than the goods she carted off in her wagon. She denied them essential means to subsist for the duration during of the campaign season of 1777.

The first Battle of Saratoga, known as the Battle of Freeman's Farm, began on September 19, 1777. Captain Daniel Morgan, who had led the first detachment of soldiers during the march through the Maine wilderness in 1775, led the patriot advance up the Hudson River. Henry Dearborn, who accompanied Morgan two years prior to Quebec, was hand-selected by him as an officer in New York.⁹⁶ During the height of the action, General Burgoyne ordered the Brunswickers under General Riedesel to create a diversion by marching under the loud beat of drums and cheering to attack the enemy's right flank. However, the terrain surrounding this section of the Continental army's line prevented Riedesel's maneuver. The rebel forces abutted their right with dense swampy forested landscape. [For a battle map of the British army's position at Saratoga see Appendix G]

The German infantry sent scouts through a cornfield under fire from the Continental army to attempt to find another route to flank their line. In an attempt to assist Riedesel's action, Captain Pausch had his artillerymen drag their cannon up a hill to get a better vantage point and use their high ground to fire upon the enemy line.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 43.

Harried by grapeshot, the Continental army retreated into the woods to prevent further casualties. In the meantime, the American left wing held strong under the leadership of General Benedict Arnold and several of his ablest officers from the 1775 - 1776 campaign in Canada: Daniel Morgan, Henry Dearborn, and Enoch Poor. Fifteen minutes later, darkness set in and the battlefield became quiet.⁹⁷ The British achieved victory at the Battle of Freeman's Farm, but it was at a great cost, and they failed to rout the rebel army from their superior position. Indeed, Burgoyne's troops remained unable to reconnoiter the Continental army's camps or entrenchments due to the dense forests and swampland separating the two forces.⁹⁸

At daybreak on September 20, Burgoyne ordered a resumption of the fighting. To make sure the soldiers took to the field as early as possible, daily rations were given out early in the morning as was powder and shot. These preparations were carried out amidst a dense morning fog that had blanketed the encampment and battlefield. Everything was set in motion, and Burgoyne ordered his men to be ready to commence fighting as soon as the fog lifted. However, the morning fog did not disappear. The exhilaration from the prior afternoon's engagement began to wane, and the soldiers' adrenaline rush turned into fatigue. By Burgoyne decided to delay his attack. Once again the chances of war and the agency of the environment delayed Burgoyne's army.⁹⁹ This was extremely fortuitous for the Continental army. After the day of action on

⁹⁷ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 137-138.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹⁹ C.E. Bennett, *Advance and Retreat to Saratoga*, 47.

September 19, the American forces were short on supplies, most importantly gun powder.

During the interlude between the Battle of Freeman's Farm and the Second Battle of Saratoga, the Battle of Bemis Heights, which occurred on October 7, 1777, General Burgoyne realized his precarious position as his army's provisions were running low and soldiers as well as camp followers began going beyond the British lines to scour the countryside for relief. One day, several men and women ventured out of camp in the morning to gather vegetables from a local farm. While they were digging for potatoes, Continental scouts fired upon them. Some were killed and others were taken prisoners where they were likely pressed for information regarding the status of the British army. Burgoyne thus ordered that any person venturing beyond the British lines was to be hanged on the spot. Burgoyne's order stated, "the General will no longer bear to lose Men for the pitiful consideration of Potatoes or Forage – The life of the Soldier is the property of the King." They were much more valuable to the army as living soldiers on reduced rations than they were as possible prisoners with full bellies.¹⁰⁰

Burgoyne's line during the respite between the two battles of Saratoga elucidates the precarious position of volunteer soldiers from the Northeast Borderlands. Though a preponderance of the indigenous allies had left the battlefield, those that remained along with the English and French Canadian militia were stationed at the front of the

¹⁰⁰ Lieutenant James Hadden, *Hadden's Journal and Orderly Books: A Journal Kept in Canada and Upon Burgoyne's Campaign in 1776 and 1777*, by Lieut. James M. Hadden, Roy. Art (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1884), 160.

line to prevent their retreat in the event of an attack, and, more importantly, to prevent their desertion as the situation for the British army began to deteriorate.¹⁰¹

The German and British officers made several attempts to gather information regarding the position of the Continental army. They tried creating communications between their encampments and outposts by cutting roads through the woods; however, the American soldiers fired upon the work crews causing them to scatter. In a final attempt, the British drew on the knowledge of local inhabitants and sent fifteen to twenty soldiers with several provincials as guides to climb the mountains surrounding Saratoga to determine the enemy's position. This effort, according to one officer "was fruitless, because the woods prevented their seeing across the Hudson [River]; and thus, without discovering or seeing anything, they returned."¹⁰² With the retreat of his indigenous allies in September, Burgoyne's army remained blind to the maneuvers, fortifications, and numbers of the Continental army. Further, during this inter-battle period, without the protection of a large force of Iroquois scouts, Burgoyne's provision storage was attacked by the Oneida allied with the American forces. One diarist noted that the British force was "Sadly reduced and weakened" by the "battle and skirmishes Continually [taking] place between The two armies."¹⁰³

At Bemis Heights, the forces of the United Colonies under the command of General Horatio Gates utilized the natural contours of the landscape in their

¹⁰¹ Pausch, *Journal of Captain Pausch*, 148.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 148; *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁰³ Elijah Crooker Papers, Coll-S-1272, Misc. Box 60/7, Collections of the Maine Historical Society.

encampment. The Continental army's right flank received protection from the Hudson River, while the front of the right side was insulated from attack by a large area of marshland. Further utilizing the natural resources at hand, the officers directed the soldiers to cut down trees and construct an abattis to protect the rear of the army. Gates positioned the left side of his army atop a hill and secured the flank with an abattis on the uphill slope protecting it from attack.¹⁰⁴

Provisions ran extremely low for Burgoyne's forces as September faded into October. On October 3 the soldiers were placed on reduced rations.¹⁰⁵ Several officers noted in their diaries that the British army was in constant need of supplies and was forced to send out expeditionary parties to obtain forage.¹⁰⁶ The Continental army slowly began to envelop the British forces, cutting off their communication with their supply train. General Riedesel noted that after this action they were forced to reduce their "daily rations to one pound of meat and one of bread."¹⁰⁷ On October 9, seeing little hope of success in the current expedition, the remaining indigenous allies departed the army.¹⁰⁸

On the morning of October 13, 1777, the Continental army successfully encircled Burgoyne's army. In doing so, they once again utilized the natural contours of the landscape to their advantage. For the British forces to mount an attack with any success

¹⁰⁴ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 98-99.

¹⁰⁵ Journal of an Officer of the 47th Regiment (British), Ms. S-397, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁰⁶ Riedesel, *Letters and Journals*, 100.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

they would have to cross an area of marshy lowlands and then traverse a steep incline. In making this maneuver, they would be forced to move away from the river at their rear, in which case the Continental troops stationed on their rear flank would be able to cross the river and decimate the British forces while they were encumbered by the swampy landscape. Thus, there was little hope for a successful attack and perhaps even less confidence in a successful retreat. With only five days' rations remaining, even a successful attack followed by a quick retreat would see the soldiers and camp followers succumbing to starvation as they attempted to withdraw to Fort George.¹⁰⁹ Here, Burgoyne's inability to plan for a possible retreat by creating a communication and provisioning line between his location at Saratoga and Fort George become critical.

Burgoyne was forced to call a council of war to determine whether or not there was precedent in the history of military affairs for him to surrender to General Gates, to determine if an army surrendering under such circumstances could be considered honorable, and whether or not the current situation was grounds to surrender.

Participants and spectators from the United Colonies and Canada to Europe almost immediately viewed Burgoyne's surrender as a watershed moment for the patriot movement. France, seeing that the American forces had the ability to possibly win their independence, entered the war against Britain, providing not only necessary supplies and support but also reinforcement to General Washington's dwindling Continental army. However, the ramifications of Saratoga were no less important in the Northeastern Borderlands. With France entering the war, the situation for the *habitants*

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 105.

became more complicated as the possibility of French control in the colony swirled about local coffee houses and parish pews. The nations with living and hunting territory along the St. John River sent a clear message to the British officers and to the royalists living in the area. In August of 1778 they wrote:

The chiefs, sachems, and young men belonging to the River St. John's have duly considered the nature of this great war between Old England and America. They are unanimous that America is right and Old England is wrong.

The river, on which you are with your soldiers, beings from most ancient times to our ancestors, consequently is ours now, and which we are bound to keep for our posterity.

You know we are Americans; that is our native country. You know the King of England with his evil counsellors has been trying to take away the lands and liberties of our country, but God the King of Heaven, our King, fights for us and says America shall be free. It is so now in spite of all Old England his comrades can do.

The great men of Old England in this country told us that the Americans would not let us enjoy our religion. This is false not true, for America allows everybody to pray to God as they please. You know Old England never would allow that but says you must all pray like the King and the great men at his court. We believe America now is right. We find all is true that they told us, for our old father the King of France takes their

part. He is their friend, he has taken the sword and will defend them. Americans is our friends, our brothers and country-men; what they do we do, what they say we say, for we are all one and the same family.

Now as the King of England has no business nor ever had // any on this river, we desire you to go away with your men in peace and to take all those men that has been fighting and talking against America. If you don't go directly, you must take [care] of yourself, your men, and all your subjects on this river, for if all or any of you are killed it is not our faults, for we give you warning time enough to escape. Adieu for ever!¹¹⁰

The Burgoyne campaign into New York failed for several reasons. The Continental army created a chaotic wilderness of an otherwise ordered landscape causing prolonged delays. European disease cosmology, as well as the material reality of suffering from disease during a wilderness war, decreased the British ranks. Finally, the shrewd use of natural resources and the contours of the natural environment by the American forces caused Burgoyne to surrender.

It is impossible to know if the Saratoga campaign in 1777 could have turned out differently had General William Howe sent his army up the Hudson River to communicate and rendezvous with Burgoyne instead of opting for an invasion and occupation of Philadelphia, or if Barry St. Leger would have met Burgoyne near

¹¹⁰ To the British commanding officer at the mouth of the River St. John's, *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783, Colonial Office Series*, Vol. 15, ed. K.G. Davies (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972-1982), 185.

Saratoga if he had not called off his advance to retreat to Quebec. What is clear, however, is that the Continental army's better understanding and utilization of the natural environment and local people was instrumental in Burgoyne's failure. With the death of Jane McCrea the allegiance of many local people turned. Many in the Northeast Borderlands who were undecided or neutrals and even many with loyalist leanings became supporters of the patriot cause in the wake of Burgoyne's surrender. Indeed, despite indications of loyalist allies in the region, the British expeditionary force dispatched to Bennington for provisions, supplies, and forage was repulsed by locals who flocked to the town to protect the military stores held there.

Local people also undermined Barry St. Leger's siege of Fort Stanwix after the retreat of his Iroquois allies. Further, many indigenous peoples refused to continue past the Hudson River with the Burgoyne expedition, and the army became blind due to their inability to perform effective reconnaissance through the forests surrounding Freeman's Farm and Bemis Heights.

After the loss at Oriskany, the failure of the siege of Fort Stanwix, and Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, the morale of the Seneca and Mohawk reached its nadir as warriors travelled back to their communities to mourn their dead and debate their future in the conflict between the British and the rebellious colonists in America. The British further exacerbated this crisis in Iroquoia by shifting the war effort southward along the eastern seaboard. There, with their supremacy of the seas, the British would no longer have to launch large-scale land operations through the wilderness of the Northeast Borderlands.

Chapter 6

Pay Them in Their Own Coin':

The Destruction of Environment and Culture in the Northeast Borderlands

On September 14, 1779, Captain Henry Dearborn entered Genessee Castle, the stronghold of the Seneca living in the Finger Lakes region of Iroquoia. Here, much to his horror, he discovered the body of a fellow officer whom the British captured in 1775 during the New Year's Eve raid against Quebec City. Since being released from British custody in November 1777, Thomas Boyd of the Pennsylvania Rifles served as the first lieutenant for the 1st Pennsylvania regiment. Boyd and a group of nearly thirty scouts were captured several nights before Dearborn's gruesome discovery, while attempting a reconnaissance mission of a Seneca village during Major General John Sullivan's campaign of environmental destruction against Iroquoia in the summer of 1779.¹

The Continental army under Sullivan conducted these military operations not only against the Seneca living in the Northeast Borderlands but also against their crops, orchards, homes, and villages methodically destroying forty towns throughout the Finger Lakes region of Iroquoia. George Washington and the Continental Congress hoped that the successful execution of this scorched earth campaign would thrust the Iroquois onto the British as dependents for food and shelter. This in turn would put an

¹ Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army during the War of the Revolution, April, 1775, to December, 1783* (Washington D.C.: W.H. Lowdermire & Co. 1893), 114. Lloyd A. Brown and Howard H. Peckham, *Revolutionary War Journals of Henry Dearborn, 1775-1783* (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, 2007), 186.

end to the back-and-forth frontier violence in New York that peaked with the loyalist and Iroquoian raids of during the 1778 campaign season.

The scene before Dearborn's eyes was "was the most horrid spectacle" he witnessed throughout his career in the Continental army.

Lt. Boyd & one other man [were] Mangled in a most horred manner. From appeerences it seems they ware tyed to two trees near which they lay, & first severely whip'd, then their tongues ware cut out, their finger nails pluck'd off, their eyes pluck'd out, then speer'd & cut in many places & after [the Iroquois] had vented their hellish spite and rage, cut off their heads and left them.²

Continuing further, Dearborn and his fellow soldiers discovered the remainder of Boyd's scouting party, all scalped. An Oneida named Thaosagwat Hanjost, who was of "considerable note" militarily and politically to the Iroquois nation was among the desecrated and completely dismembered.³ The Continental army also discovered two "dogs [tortured and] hung up on poles about 12 or 15 feet high." Their indigenous guides informed them that this ritualized sacrifice was intended to provide an offering

² Henry Dearborn Papers, 1779-1838, Dearborn's Journal during the Sullivan's Campaign, 17 June - 18 October, 1779, MS N-1106, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, (Herein Dearborn Journal, MHS). For a more detailed understanding of the torture of Boyd, see Frederick Cook, *Journals of the Military Expedition of John Sullivan against the Six Nations of Indians in 1779* (Auburn, NY: Knapp, Peck & Thompson Printers, 1887). Collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. For an indigenous perspective, see James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mary Jemison* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

³ Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 217.

of a jacket and a tobacco pouch to their deity. A captive female colonist the Seneca left behind at Genessee explained that the dogs were “hung up...immediately after the Battle at Newtown,” when the Continental army achieved victory over an Iroquoian and loyalist militia ambushade during Sullivan’s expedition.⁴

Dearborn was not alone in his revulsion and fear of the ritualized violence performed on the soldiers and animals before him. The soldiers of the expedition intensely feared the wilderness and built environment of Iroquoia. Even before the Battle of Newtown, while traversing the wilderness and agroecosystems of the region, the soldiers remained on high against the “savages of the wood” and “skettering Indians skulking about.” They often lived in fear of being ambushed and were frequently commanded “for their greater security” to “st[and] under arms from 3 o’clock, A.M., until daylight...with orders to hold themselves in readiness at a moment’s warning.”⁵ This fear of the wilderness and the possibility of the Mohawk and Seneca lurking about became so intense that the expedition began shooting blindly into the wilderness. Lieutenant-Colonel Adam Hubley noted that his commander “fixed several six pounders on the opposite shore in order to scour the woods and thickets, and prevent any ambushade from taking place.”⁶ Fear of the militarized landscape of Iroquoia became paranoia as the soldiers literally attacked the wilderness that surrounded them.

⁴ Dearborn Journal, MHS.

⁵ Adam Hubley, Adam Hubley journals, 1778-1780, Am.6429, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁶ Ibid.

The discovery of the ritualized violence performed against Boyd, combined with the terror of the Iroquoian wilderness prompting General John Sullivan to end his expedition against the Seneca prematurely and return to Pennsylvania, declaring himself victorious. Originally, the architects of the expedition, General George Washington and General Philip Schuyler, aimed to attack Fort Niagara during the autumn of 1779. During July of that year, Schuyler interrogated Nathan Kingsly, an escaped captive of the Iroquois. After determining that he was a man of sound mind and intellect, Schuyler asked him to relay any information he remembered regarding British or indigenous military maneuvers towards Niagara. Schuyler reported to John Sullivan that a mere four companies of British regulars had traveled via bateaux to Niagara. Further, Sir John Johnson dispatched approximately 120 troops for the fort and that forty indigenous people joined them.⁷ Henry Dearborn confirmed this expectation, noting that his troops and several other brigades “ware order’d to march...under the Command of the Honbe. Majr. Genl. Sullivan, on an Expedition against the Savages between Wyoming & at Niagara.”⁸ The scope of Sullivan’s mission was clearly defined: to destroy the villages of the Iroquois from Wyoming to Niagara.

Even as late as September, mere days before the discovery of Boyd’s tortured remains, General Washington cautioned Sullivan to execute the mission “as conclusive as the state of your provisions and the safety of your” men allowed. He specifically

⁷ Philip Schuyler to General John Sullivan, July 21, Saratoga, General John Sullivan Papers 1769-1778, Box II, Folder 23, New Hampshire Historical Society Manuscript Section.

⁸ Henry Dearborn Papers, 1779-1838, Ms. N-1106, The Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

reminded Sullivan of the two-fold expectations of the campaign into Iroquoia. The first was “the necessity of pushing the Indians to the greatest practicable distance from their own settlements, and our frontiers, to the throwing them wholly on the British enemy.” The second measure was “the making of the destruction of their settlements so final and complete, as to put it out of their power to derive the smallest succor from them, in case they Should attempt to return this Season.”⁹ Sullivan, feeling great distress at the pressures of executing warfare in the wilderness and within a borderlands where negotiation was implemented through extreme violence, decided that the army’s provisions were too low to continue forward to Niagara and retreated to Easton, Pennsylvania. The ritualized violence of the Seneca, alongside the environment of the Northeast Borderlands, were major forces repelling the Continental army. [For a map of the Sullivan expedition see Appendix H]

Saratoga and the Breaking Down of the Borderlands

The Seneca and Mohawk, having suffered many casualties during the Battle of Oriskany during the summer of 1777, after expecting to only be utilized as a psychological weapon against the rebels at the Battle of Fort Stanwix, returned to their communities to mourn loved ones and determine their next course of action. Enthusiasm for the war effort reached its nadir in Iroquoia as then Mohawk and Seneca faced off against their Six Nations’ brethren, the Oneida, in an intimate and brutal

⁹ George Washington to General Sullivan, September 15, Head Quarters at West Point. General John Sullivan Papers 1769-1778, Box II, Folder 24, New Hampshire Historical Society Manuscript Section.

battlefield that escalated the conflict in Indian Country into a civil war.¹⁰ As historian Barbara Graymont argues, “the unity of the Iroquois Confederacy had been sundered by the campaign of 1777.”¹¹ Further hindering Iroquoian support of the British war effort was the first major defeat of the British regulars at Saratoga. This raised the question of who the victors of the conflict between the Americans and the British would be and incited doubt as to British supremacy of the Northeast Borderlands, especially if the Americans garnered the support of the French crown.¹²

The consequences of wilderness warfare conducted in the Northeast Borderlands had major implications for Euro-American military priorities and thus allegiances and friendship with the local populace. Even before the failure at Saratoga, the British began focusing its war effort against the Mid-Atlantic colonies and shifting the theatre of the War for American Independence southward and eastward. General William Howe decided that the best chance for British martial success in 1777 was to take Philadelphia by sailing his army from New York to Pennsylvania instead of attempting an overland expedition to Albany to reinforce Burgoyne. Here, the British relied on its supremacy of the seas instead of engaging in military campaigns through what they considered the impenetrable wilds of the Northeast. Once the French entered the war on behalf of the Americans, the British focused primarily on occupying the cities of the eastern seaboard and defending their colonial holdings in the Caribbean. They began pulling troops out

10 Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 156.

11 Ibid., 157.

12 Mary Jemison noted that thirty-six Seneca were killed in this engagement. See James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 53.

of inland fortifications, including their garrison at Fort Ontario. The large amount of resources needed to fight an inland war and the inability for the British to sufficiently negotiate resources from the local populace inevitably led to war fatigue among the military command and in Parliament.¹³ The Iroquois felt abandoned by their European ally after the defeat and capture of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga and the shifting of British interests to the south.

In the wake of Saratoga, Konwatsi'tslalenni, (Molly Brant), a prestigious Iroquoian diplomat and an instrumental figure in the American and Oneida defeat at Oriskany, sought asylum in Cayuga after American colonists and Oneida warriors attacked her home in Canajoharie.¹⁴ Alongside many Seneca and Mohawk refugees, Konwatsi'tslalenni debated whether the Iroquois should withdraw from the conflict between the Americans and the British and to take up their traditional stance as a neutral party. Personal and tribal losses during the wilderness campaign of 1777 weighed heavily on the Iroquois' minds. However, with the victor of the contest for America unclear, they also conceived of situations where it would be beneficial to the Six Nations to join into an open alliance with the Continental army rather than continue the Covenant Chain with the British.¹⁵ Their decision and her influence in the matter

¹³ J.W. Fortescue, *The War for Independence: The British Army in North America 1775-1783* (London: Greenhill Books, 2001), 97.

¹⁴ Konwatsi'tslalenni was the sister of Mohawk military leader Thayendangea (Joseph Brant), and she was also the widow of British Indian Affairs agent Sir William Johnson. Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 46; *Ibid.*, 146. Colin Callaway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 134.

¹⁵ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 157.

held great consequences for not only the Euro-American belligerents in the conflict, but for the fractured longhouse as well.

A council was called and the great leaders of the Six Nations made their appeals. Many desired neutrality. Konwatsi'tslalenni, having decided that allegiance to the British remained the best path forward for the Iroquois, utilized her status as the head of the Six Nations' Matrons to rebuke her male counterparts. She made an impassioned speech, reminding her colleagues of the promises of fidelity and allegiance to both the King of England and to her late husband, Sir William Johnson. Because leaders of the Six Nations often sought out her advice as a leading clan mother, her words carried great weight. Konwatsi'tslalenni's zealous appeal for continued friendship with the British persuaded the council to continue its loyalty to the Crown. After much debate during the autumn and winter of 1777, the Covenant Chain was tempered. The British quickly learned of her continued stature and influence among the nations of the Iroquois and recruited her to relocate to Niagara to rally the warriors against the American communities of the Northeast Borderlands.¹⁶

In a letter to the Continental Congress dated January 10, 1778, Philip Schuyler relayed the palpable tensions between American colonists living in New York and the Iroquois. He explained that the borderlands were breaking down and despite the fact that "the Oneida and Tuscaroaras are still very friendly" they remained "under guarded Apprehensions of falling Victims to the Rage of their savage Neighbors" themselves. With the inability to rely on these two nations of the now fractured Iroquois

¹⁶ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 160-161.

Confederacy, Schuyler argued that “there can be no safety for the Defenceless Inhabitants” living on the frontier. The best course of action for the common defense and the support of their Iroquoian allies was “carrying the War If possible into their country.”¹⁷

Schuyler was not alone in his appeal. New York politician Robert Yates wrote to the President of the Continental Congress, Henry Laurens, regarding the erosion of accommodation between New Yorkers and their Iroquoian neighbors. He relayed a message from the colonial congress that they were “of the opinion that we should not only in the most peremptory Terms command them to bury the hatchet they have taken against us to evince their contraction for past misconduct” but also demand that they atone for their violence by “joining our Arms and immediate committing hostilities on the” British. Yates knew this appeal would be unacceptable to the Iroquois. He closed his letter with the hope that Congress would allow the colony of New York to address their indigenous neighbors in this way and that the Iroquoian refusal would be countered by the Continental army “mak[ing] the attempt on Niagara.”¹⁸

By January of 1778, less than three months after the British defeat at Saratoga, American and Iroquoian politicians, military leaders, and diplomats had abandoned

¹⁷ Draft of letter from Philip Schuyler to American Continental Congress, requesting permission to alter James Duane’s speech, The New York Public Library, New York, NY, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Schuyler Papers, Box 14.

¹⁸ Letters and papers relating to the Canadian affairs, the Sullivan Expedition, and Northern Indians, 1775-1779, Letters from Robert Yates to Henry Laurens, about the breaking of agreements by some Six Nations Indians, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. Diplomatic Branch, Papers of the Continental Congress, January 12.

any genuine gestures towards rapprochement and accommodation with one another. Though there was opportunity for peace in the Northeast Borderlands following the campaign of 1777, after almost four years of warfare in the region, the outbreak of violence in the small communities of New York and Iroquoia was eminent.

Escalating Violence and the Changing Nature of Warfare in the Northeastern Borderlands

Patriot and loyalist forces fought one another in this region since the outbreak of the war, raiding each other's communities and committing acts of brutal justice. The frustrations and fractures within the Iroquois Confederacy in the wake of Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga escalated this conflict into "a larger war of conquest" by the Continental and British Armies and a "ferocious war of anticolonialism" by the indigenous residents of the Northeast Borderlands.¹⁹

Beginning in the spring of 1778, the Seneca, Mohawk, and loyalist Rangers executed a series of raids on the New York frontier. The patriot militias of the region were no match for the combined arms of these raiders. In May, Mohawk warriors under the command of Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant) attacked the community of Cobleskill. In July, 1,000 Seneca warriors under Ki-on-twog-ky (Cornplanter) and loyalist rangers commanded by John Butler descended on the communities of the Wyoming Valley. This force killed 340 inhabitants and captured approximately a dozen more. Over 70 militiamen, women, and children were scalped by the invading force. In September, a

¹⁹ John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 162.

force of 450 Mohawk and loyalist Rangers under Thayendangea and William Caldwell destroyed 63 houses, 57 barns and 4 mills. Afterwards, they raided other communities in the region, attacking infrastructure and killing any who tried to defend their homes.

Realizing that their safety relied on their offense, the Continental army executed their own raids against the Iroquoian villages of Unadilla and Onquaga, the base of Thayendangea's military operations during 1778. Arriving at Unadilla on October 6, a force of 214 Continental soldiers and 53 militiamen found the community abandoned. Capturing one individual, they learned that the villagers had fled to Onquaga hearing of the American advance.²⁰ On October 8, the Americans found the town of Onquaga abandoned as well and spent the next two days destroying the two villages. The commander of the expedition, William Butler, described the village as "the finest Indian town I ever saw; on both sides of the River there was about 40 good houses, Square logs, Shingles & stone Chimneys, good Floors, glass windows &c." In addition to burning the infrastructure, Butler and his soldiers reported removing of 49 horses, 52 head of cattle, and burning 4,000 bushels of corn.²¹ Here the frontier warfare moved from a battle against an enemy to a battle of conquest with the objective of removing the Seneca and Mohawk from Iroquoia.

Reeling from the destruction of Unadilla and Onaquaga in November, Thayendangea, Ki-on-twog-ky, and Butler's son, William, executed a raid on Cherry

²⁰ Daniel Barr, *Unconquered: The Iroquois League at War in Colonial America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 152; Francis Whiting Halsey, *The Old New York Frontier* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1902), 234.

²¹ Halsey, *The Old New York Frontier*, 236; Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 181.

Valley with a combined force of over 500. The attack quickly spiraled out of the control of the Mohawk and loyalist commanders as many of the warriors and soldiers began spreading out over the settlement instead of focusing their attack on the garrison in the community. The properties and lives of both patriot and loyalist were destroyed by the combatants as Thayendangea and Butler attempted to cool the fury of the warriors and help other inhabitants escape. Despite their inability to successfully siege the fort, the forces destroyed the entirety of the town. The raiding party killed sixteen soldiers and thirty-two inhabitants. A preponderance of the dead were women and children. Seventy individuals were taken as captives. Barbara Graymont notes that until this series of, the combined military actions by the loyalists and Iroquois “had been fairly human, as wars go.”²² The nature of these attacks changed in the wake of the defeat of the British at Saratoga. There was no longer space for negotiated power – space enough for colonists and indigenous people to live fairly amiably as neighbors, or for the protection of non-combatants in the warfare in the Northeast Borderlands. The escalation of violence and changing nature of warfare in the borderlands during 1778 prompted the colony of New York to appeal to the Continental Congress to invade Iroquoia.

²² Grenier, *First Way of War*, 165-166; Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 165-189; Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 125-126.

‘The Country May not be Merely Overrun but Destroyed’: A War of Conquest against the Environment and Culture of Iroquoia²³

The destruction of Wyoming, Cherry Valley, and the neighboring communities in 1778 became a thorn in the side of George Washington. The British war effort had largely shifted to the eastern seaboard; however, with aggression on the western frontier, the American colonies were being squeezed in the pincer of their two most formidable enemies: the British army and the Iroquois. Further, the settlements in western New York held valuable resources for the Continental army. When the army failed to seize the granary of Quebec in 1775 and 1776, it relied heavily on the provisions raised by the local people living in this borderland region. Due to the destruction of infrastructure and crops, New York often failed to meet its quota to support the military. The control of the New York frontier by the Iroquois pushed American civilization eastward and expanded the wilderness margin in the region, mentally and geopolitically. This changing dynamic increased levels of fear and created a sense of urgency.

In one of the most dynamic and complex operations of the war, General Washington devised a three-prong expedition that would sweep Iroquoian resistance out of New York and achieve one of two goals. By bringing large-scale warfare into the communities of Iroquoia, Washington and Congress hoped that the indigenous populace would be humbled in the face of the American war machine and either change

²³ Worthington Chauncey Ford, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. VII. 1778-1779 (New York: Putnam's Sons Knickerbocker Press, 1890), 441.

allegiances or become neutral. If the Iroquois resisted this first scheme, then Washington surmised that executing total war against the agroecosystems, infrastructure, and populace of the region that the Continental army would thrust the Iroquois on the British, straining their provisions and consuming valuable resources. Further, the conquest of Iroquoia would open up the resource-rich region for settlement particularly in the fertile Finger Lakes region.

By 1779 it became clear to Washington that conducting warfare through the wilderness required a change from standard European-style campaigns. General John Burgoyne's campaign failed in part due to their luxurious baggage train. General Washington warned General John Sullivan against such extravagances, writing that "you will disencumber yourself of every article of baggage and Stores which is not necessary to the expedition. Not only its Success but its execution at all depends on this." He noted that wilderness campaigns were "a kind of Service in which both officers and men must expect to dispense with conveniences and endure hardships — They must not and I trust will not expect to carry the Same apparties which is customary in other operations." To do so would not only court defeat but also prevent him from penetrating "any distance into" the wilderness of "Indian Country."²⁴

Given the trials and tribulations suffered by the Arnold expedition, Washington became obsessed with learning every possible detail he could concerning the route to be taken. In preparing for the invasion of Canada in 1775, Washington himself collected

²⁴ George Washington to General John Sullivan, West Point, July 29, 1779, General John Sullivan Papers 1769-1778, Box II, Folder 23, New Hampshire Historical Society Manuscript Section.

little intelligence about the howling wilderness beyond the Eastern Country of Massachusetts. It seems, by and large, he outsourced his intelligence gathering to local individuals such as Reuben Colburn, the contractor who built the bateaux, and John Getchell, one of the expedition's guides. Both relied on the map and journal of British engineer John Montresor. [See Appendix C] Though these sources provided Arnold with valuable information, the contextual information required to execute a European style campaign through the wilderness was not effectively conveyed.

This time, Washington decided that taking ownership of intelligence gathering and relaying that information to his subordinates firsthand was the most effective mean to execute wilderness warfare in the Northeast. Beginning in the summer of 1778, he made general inquiries regarding how to accomplish the mission. In a letter to Major Horatio Gates he queried "what Troops you had in contemplation for the Expedition into the Country of the Seneca's. What number you conceive adequate to the Service. What were your prospects of supplying them with Provisions, Stores, and other Necessaries. And with what convenience and readiness the means of transportation can be provided."²⁵ He became interested in "the face of the Country, whether wet or dry, level or broken, and how furnished with herbage."²⁶ Washington fixated on details at the micro-level including the "rapidity and depth of water" and the presence of

²⁵ To Major Horatio Gates, August 2, 1778, *The Writings of George Washington for the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745 - 1799*, Vol. XII, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 260.

²⁶ *Ibid*, To Brigadier General Lachlan McIntosh, January 31, 1779, Vol. XIV, 59.

“fallen trees in the rivers.”²⁷ In letter after letter, Washington inquired about the state of the wilderness landscape between Easton, Pennsylvania and Iroquoia. After careful analysis Washington identified the Susquehanna River as the chosen means to march between Easton and Iroquoia. Sullivan insisted the the Mohawk River was the best route; however Philip Schuyler and Washington deduced from their intelligence that the landscape of the Mohawk would make supplying the army with adequate provisions impossible.²⁸

The military methods for executing the conquest and removal of the Iroquois from the Northeast Borderlands involved extreme violence against the landscape and people of the region. As historian Liam Riordan argues, “Washington required a ferocious effort of unabated destruction.”²⁹ This expedition was Washington’s first major offensive since the attack on Trenton in 1776. The stakes were high as he committed over 5,000 soldiers as well as the necessary armament, foodstuffs, and other provisions required to send a large fighting force into the wilderness. Washington did not want to simply effect a temporary evacuation of Iroquoia or execute “the destruction of a few settlements which they might speedily reestablish.”³⁰ For Washington, success meant the “capture of as many prisoners of every age as possible”

27 Ibid, To Philip Schuyler, May 8, 1779, Vol. XV, 113.

28 John Sullivan to George Washington, April 15, 1779, General John Sullivan Papers, ACC# 1928-1, New Hampshire Historical Society Manuscript Section.

29 Liam Riordan, *Many Identities, One Nation: The Revolution and Its Legacy in the Mid-Atlantic* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 78.

30 Jared Sparks, *The Writings of George Washington; being his Correspondence, Addresses, Messages, and Other Papers, Official and Private*, Vol. VI. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1858), 184.

since “hostages are the only kind of security to be depended upon.” He hoped that Sullivan’s “attacks [would] distract and terrify the Indians,” and “in their confusion, they may neglect in some places to remove the old men women and Children and that these will fall into our hands.” Washington also commanded Sullivan to “depress them as much as possible, by destroying their villages, and this years crops.”³¹

Washington’s orders to Sullivan were quite clear. He wanted Indian “country [to] not be merely *overrun* but *destroyed*.” For him, the future of America relied upon “their inability to injure us; the distance to wch they are driven and in the terror with which the severity of the chastisement they receive will inspire them.”³² Alerted of the expedition in advance, the Seneca abandoned the communities which Sullivan’s regiments attacked. In many places, the fires remained warm, the corn and apples ripened in the fields, and the remainder of the vegetable lay in wait of harvest. According to Sullivan’s tabulation, in total the Continental army destroyed 40 towns and 160,000 bushels of corn with countless numbers of other foodstuffs consumed, brought into the quartermaster’s stores, and destroyed.³³

³¹ George Washington to Philip Schuyler, Head Quarters, Middle Brook, March 21, 1779; George Washington, Instructions to Major General John Sullivan, Head Quarters, Middle Brook, May 31, 1779, in ed. Sparks, *The Writings of George Washington*; Max M. Mintz, *Seeds of Empire: The American Revolutionary Conquest of the Iroquois* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Colin Calloway, *American Revolution in Indian Country*, 51.

³² George Washington, Instructions to Major General John Sullivan, Head Quarters, Middle Brook, May 31, 1779, in ed. Sparks, *The Writings of George Washington*.

³³ Major General John Sullivan’s report, reprinted from *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, Tuesday, October 19, 1779, in *Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan against the Six Nations of Indians in 1779*, ed. Cook (Auburn, NY: Knapp, Peck and Thompson, 1887), 303.

The soldiers of the expedition were covetous of the agroecosystems and curious about the culture artifacts of Iroquoia. Lieutenant Erkuries Beatty noted that “Our Brigade Destroyed about 150 Acres of the best corn that Ever I saw (some of the Stalks grew 16 feet high) besides great Quantities of Beans, Potatoes, Pumpkins, Cucumbers, Squashes & Watermellons.”³⁴ However, they did not destroy all of the indigenous agriculture they came in contact with. The foodstuffs consumed in Iroquoia provided the expedition with much needed nutrition and allowed General Sullivan to place the army on half provisions without complaint. William Batron noted in his diary that the expedition “feasted sumptuously” on beans, squashes, potatoes and other vegetables, “it being a good substitute for bread.” Further, the quartermaster ordered the army to gather as much corn as he could haul, and to destroy the rest.³⁵

Soldiers clearly recognized the fecundity of the landscape and the promise of future settlement. Adam Hubley described “the situation of this village was beautiful; it contained fifty or sixty houses, built of logs and frames, and situate on the banks of Tiago branch, and on a most fertile, beautiful, and extensive plain. He “chiefly calculated” the rich soil as perfect for meadow grass.³⁶ Here, while removing the habitations of indigenous people in a war of conquest, the Continental army began reimagining Iroquoia in terms of European-style settlement.

While destroying buildings, burning corn, cutting down fruit trees, and pillaging furniture, the soldiers also engaged in the desecration of Iroquoian burial sites.

³⁴ Lieutenant Erkuries Beatty journal in ed. Cook, *Journals*, 27.

³⁵ Lieutenant William Barton journal in ed. Cook, *Journals*, 7.

³⁶ Adam Hubley, *Diary*, Collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Lieutenant Beatty exclaimed that “there was about 100 graves...which our men had Dug up” The Iroquois, he continued, “bury their Dead very curiously.”³⁷ While engaging in this cultural despoliation the soldiers belittled the dead and burial practices of the Six Nations. Major James Norris recorded in his diary that “whether through principle of Avarice or Curiosity, our Soldiers dug up several of their graves and found a good many laughable relicts.” The men kept souvenirs of their graveside pillaging including pipes, tomahawks, and beads.³⁸ Here, the violence against Iroquoia extended beyond their agroecosystems and community infrastructure and targeted their greater society, history, and culture. The Continental army saw no place for the Iroquois in the nascent United States of America. In disinterring bodies, burning villages and mills, and destroying and consuming crops, the Continental army abandoned the practice of navigating the borderlands and wilderness of the Northeast. Rather, they aimed to remove the Iroquois, conquer both the borderlands, and develop the wilderness into a civilized pastoral world.

The Battle of Newtown and the Torture of Boyd: Military and Ritualized Violence to Protect Iroquoia

On August 29, 1779 Thayendangea and John Butler executed an ambush on the Sullivan expedition in an effort to increase the soldiers’ fear of the landscape and to keep the campaign from moving further into Iroquoia. It was the only major military engagement of the campaign. Informed of the expedition’s arrival, the Butler and

³⁷ Beatty Journal in ed. Cook, *Journals*, 26-29.

³⁸ Major James Norris in ed. Cook, *Journals*, 229.

Theyendangea erected earthworks at musket's range on the side of the hill running along the Chemung River. Despite their best efforts at camouflaging their fortifications, the advanced guard under Daniel Morgan discovered their strongpoint. The Continental army opened fire on the defenders and the force of about 1,200 individuals lost the element of surprise. The ambush failed. The Iroquois and loyalist forces killed 11 and wounded 32, but lost 33 of their own. Though the Battle of Newtown was not significant in terms of casualties, the inability for the Iroquois and loyalists to successfully execute a surprise attack broke the morale of the Iroquois Confederacy and they abandoned hope for derailing the Sullivan expedition through military means.³⁹

The violence against the bodies of the Iroquois in the wake of the Battle of Newtown was especially notable. Wilderness warfare in the Northeast Borderlands took on a frightful brutality as the theatre shifted into a war of conquest. Following the action at Newtown the Continental soldiers scalped the loyalist and Iroquoian dead. Though no soldier explicitly stated it, they imply that the female dead were also scalped. In fact, Pennsylvania had placed a scalp bounty on the heads of any Seneca, regardless of sex, as a means to bolster enlistments and pay during the Sullivan expedition.⁴⁰ The desecration of Iroquoian corpses did not end there. Sergeant Thomas Roberts and his soldiers went looking for scalps and plunder from the conflict on August 30. They "found 4 Indians and Sculpd them and Brought them into camp." The

³⁹ Allan W. Eckert, *The Wilderness War: A Narrative* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1978), 444-445.

⁴⁰ Rufus B. Stone, "Sinnontouan, or Seneca Land, in the Revolution," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 48 (1924): 211.

next morning, they took “2 Indians and Skin thear Legs & Drest them for Leggins,” crafting two pairs of breeches for their officers.⁴¹ Lieutenant William Barton was pleased to receive this gift from his men and wore them throughout the campaign. The other pair was given to an unidentified Major.⁴² Lieutenant Rudolphus Van Hovenburgh felt shame after this incident. He disguised it from his posterity but recorded it for himself in his diary writing, “Sm. Skn. By our S. fr. Bts.” This was shorthand for “some skinned by our own soldiers for boots.”⁴³

In other instances, however, soldiers’ official reports and diaries lamented the campaign’s brutality. At least two officers, Henry Dearborn and General Edward Hand, ignored Sullivan’s orders to destroy mature fruit bearing trees. The officers “would see no apple or peach tree” destroyed, “so that they were left to blossom and bear.” One officer noted in his diary that this showed the great character and morality of the two men.⁴⁴

The endorsement and celebration of atrocity in this campaign – the literal crafting of clothing from the bodies of the enemy – combined with land speculation and the moral lament at the destruction of fruit trees highlights the ways Iroquoia was sought out as, and turned into a, commodity by the Continental army. This

⁴¹ Sergeant Thomas Roberts in ed. Cook, *Journals*, 244.

⁴² Barton in ed. Cook, *Journals*, 8.

⁴³ Lieutenant Rudolphus Van Hoverburgh in ed. Cook, *Journals*, 280. This soldier was not simply hiding the horrors of war from those who would be reading his journal. On page 281 he recounts the torture of Boyd in great detail noting “his hed Skin’d his nails pull’d out by the Roots, his hed cut off from his body his private parts skin’d.”

⁴⁴ The most interesting of these is in Sullivan’s official report in ed. Cook, *Journals*, 299; John Barnwell, “The Journal of John Barnwell” *Virginia Magazine of Biography*, Vol. 5 (1898): 396.

commodification elucidates the changing nature of warfare in the wake of Saratoga from a war of self-preservation to a mission of conquest against the cultural and environmental landscapes of the Northeast Borderlands.⁴⁵

It was after Newtown that the Iroquois performed the ritual sacrifice of two dogs to their god of war and tortured Lieutenant Boyd and Sergeant Michael Parker as an extension of their offerings. The treatment of Boyd and Parker was as well as a ritual of vengeance against the Continental army for the atrocities of the Sullivan expedition. According to Graymont, through “their pain and their sufferings they removed the pain and torment from the spirit of those who had been slain by the rebel army.”⁴⁶ Indeed, Boyd himself captured, interrogated, and scalped the Iroquois he had encountered during his travels.⁴⁷

The Iroquois desired to send a message to the Continental army through the ritualized violence against Boyd and Parker. Si-gwa-ah-doh-gwih (Little Beard), the Seneca leader who performed the ritual, used each act of violence against the Continental soldiers as a means of communication.⁴⁸ When he was finished, the bodies were left in a prominent location in the middle of Genesee Castle to be discovered.

⁴⁵ For more on the escalation and restraint of violence in Euro-American warfare, see Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians & Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1550-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴⁶ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 217.

⁴⁷ For more on the use of ritualized and escalated violence by indigenous people confronting violence against their land and culture by American expansion, see Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴⁸ For more on torture as a means of communication beyond ritual and revenge see, Adam Stueck, “A Place Under Heaven: Amerindian Torture and Cultural Violence in Colonial New France, 1609-1729,” PhD Diss, Marquette University.

Though soldiers feared dying on the battlefield or in the wilderness as part of their military service, no soldier wanted to risk the despoliation of their body nor the pain and suffering endured by Boyd and Parker before they died. For General Sullivan, Si-gwa-ah-doh-gwih's message was clear. Any further incursion into Iroquoia would result in the torture of captives. Despite explicit orders to continue to Niagara, Sullivan declared the mission a success at Genessee Castle and, despite being surrounded in a world of plenty where foodstuffs were destroyed as part of the mission, turned around, citing a lack of provision. Sullivan and Washington declared the mission a success; however, the Iroquois were victorious in turning back the Continental army through ritualized violence when the standard violence of military conflict failed.

The Sundering of the Six Nations and the Rise of Reservations

Hearing of the successes of the Sullivan expedition, George Washington noted in his general orders of October 17, 1779 that Iroquoia "has been over-run & lain to waste, and they themselves compelled to place their Security in a precipitate Flight to the British Fortress at Niagara."⁴⁹ Here the Iroquois received warm clothing, foodstuffs, and shelter. Within two weeks of the end of Sullivan's expedition there were over 5,000 Iroquois expecting assistance from the British at Niagara. A humanitarian crisis ensued until provisions arrived from Canada. To protect their own supply lines, the British counseled the Iroquois to seek shelter in one of the communities that were spared by

⁴⁹ John C. Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington for the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745 - 1799*, Vol. 16 (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 478.

Continental army after Sullivan returned to Easton. By the end of November, the number of refugees dropped to under 2,900.⁵⁰

The brutality of the winter of 1779 - 1780 exacerbated the conditions for the Iroquois who, despite receiving provision from Fort Niagara remained destitute. Five feet of snow fell quickly and remained for most of the season. The temperatures plummeted, and the biting cold and wind became dangerous for humans and non-humans alike. Deer and other game animals were frozen to the ground in large quantities. The lack of animals to hunt, combined with the loss of harvests due to the Sullivan expedition meant that many Iroquois died from starvation or hypothermia. According to Mary Jemison, the winter "was the most severe that I have witnessed," and the death of animals with which the Iroquois subsisted "reduced them almost to a state of starvation through [1779] and three or four succeeding years."⁵¹

Though General Sullivan did not achieve the primary objectives of the mission, he did severely disrupt life for the Iroquois. They became increasingly dependent on the British, which ended any possibility for negotiating an accommodation with the Continental army. Though they conducted raids on the frontier in the subsequent years, irreparable damage had been done to their homeland and to their League. A region previously unmapped and unexplored came under the covetous eyes of colonists, who

⁵⁰ Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 221-222.

⁵¹ James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mary Jemison* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 60.

were impressed by the richness of the soil, the fecundity of the fruit trees, and the ability for the region to grow large amounts of grain and meadow grass.

Though the civil war that divided the League of the Iroquois began with the fighting at Oriskany, the friendship of the Oneida and Tuscarora with the patriot forces who desecrated the villages, agroecosystems, burial grounds, and bodies of the Seneca solidified this divide. Fearing reprisals from the loyalist militia and the other nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, the Oneida abandoned their villages and fled to the safety of the American garrison at Schenectady.⁵²

At war's end, the erection of the international boundary saw the Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga, and Onondaga choosing land for themselves in Upper Canada near Lake Ontario after the British had ignored them during peace negotiations. The Oneida and Tuscarora remained in New York, but land-hungry colonists steadily encroached on their territory.⁵³ Due to the loss of the borderlands environment, the Iroquois' were no longer able to play the British off against the Americans and vice versa. Indigenous people on both sides of the border adopted Western-style agricultural practices. Their loss of land and autonomy cause greater dependence on the American or British government as they increasingly were relegated into reservations.

⁵² Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 53.

⁵³ For more on indigenous removal and resettlement in the wake of the American Revolution, see Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Navigating the Cultural and Environmental Landscape of the Northeastern Borderlands

Decades after the War for American Independence ended, President James Madison appointed Henry Dearborn as commanding general of the northeastern theatre during the War of 1812. This region extended across the Northeastern Borderlands from Niagara in the west to northern New England in the east and made Dearborn the architect of military expeditions into Canada. He, of course, could draw on his extensive experiences navigating the cultural and natural landscapes in this bioregion, since he had served as a captain in the Continental army under General Arnold during the invasion of Canada in 1775, was at the American victory at Saratoga in 1777, and joined the expedition under General Sullivan into Iroquoia in 1779. Despite his intimate knowledge of the northeast, Dearborn's army remained plagued by logistical delays, provisional shortages, and intense privation in the wilderness that rings familiar with the wilderness campaigns of the previous Anglo-American war.¹ Further, Dearborn feared that "a serious & open revolt" by the Federalists of New England as he struggled to obtain militia willing to serve in the War of 1812.² Due to the specter of insurrection, Dearborn waivered in his efforts to invade Canada and his

¹ John R. Elting, *Amateurs, to Arms! A Military History of the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1991), 119.

² Henry Dearborn quoted in *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 180; *Ibid.*, 182.

attention remained focused on fortifying the New England coast against the British navy. These environmental and cultural factors contributed to his halting leadership and led to defeat in engagements with the British. Dearborn would be recalled, by President Madison on July 6, 1813, after which he resigned his command.³

Reeling from his dismissal, Dearborn wrote to Madison appealing this decision arguing that an “officer of my grade” should not be removed from his command without the “sentence of a court martial or the opinion of a Court of Inquiry” which he demanded. He went on to note that only the “most obvious unequivocal and outrageous conduct” warranted such drastic action.⁴ Clearly, Dearborn believed that the extenuating circumstances of conducting warfare in the Northeastern Borderlands were to blame for his litany of failures. Indeed, during February 1813, Dearborn had appealed to Madison in defense of his Brigadier-General Alexander Smyth requesting “a regular military inquiry into all circumstances that materially effected [sic] his military execution & command” to determine if he should be arrested and court martialled.⁵ Dearborn knew that Smyth’s men suffered from inadequate nutrition, environmental exposure, and deplorable sanitation, all leading to a war against typhoid for the American troops.⁶ Further exacerbating matters, the American forces were

³ Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812, The Forgotten Conflict* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 88.

⁴ Henry Dearborn to James Madison, Roxbury, August 17, 1813, Paper of James Madison, Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/resource/mjm.15_0624_0626/?sp=1.

⁵ Henry Dearborn to James Madison, Albany, February 14, 1813, Papers of James Madison, Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm016936/>.

⁶ Taylor, *Civil War of 1812*, 193.

composed of local volunteers and militiamen who often refused to march or take action under command.⁷ The agency of local human and non-human actors reigned supreme in this bioregion.

In the four decades since Dearborn had set out into the Northeastern Borderlands as a 24-year-old captain in the Continental army, little had changed for American and British military commanders attempting to operate in the region. The natural and cultural environments encountered during war often created unanticipated circumstances that derailed generals with exceptional military experience and carefully-constructed geopolitical and martial plans.

Dearborn's Experience in the Northeastern Borderlands as Exemplar

During the invasion of Canada in 1775, Dearborn encountered an ominous wilderness in the Northeastern Borderlands. Nature incited fear and trepidation in him as he imagined the struggle to survive within the isolation and chaos of this landscape. Through discussing and writing about his interfaces with the non-human world, Dearborn mentally ordered the environment by sorting the familiar and unfamiliar flora, fauna, and non-biota of this bioregion. One way he made sense of his surroundings was to keep a keen eye open for places where the landscape could be tamed by future colonial expansion. In doing so, wilderness became a place of pleasure – alongside privation – where the natural world imparted a sense of wonder, awe, and rejuvenation. This ordering also provided the soldiers with valuable provisions as they learned how to harvest provisions and supplies. Despite their

⁷ Ibid., 196.

increased confidence through learning how to soldier in a howling wilderness, a late-season hurricane deluged the Continental army washing away vital supplies and provisions and making game animals and fish scarce. This provoked defection by Colonel Roger Enos' rear division, leaving Dearborn and the rest of the expeditionary force with minimal provisions. Due to their dire circumstances, the men of Dearborn's company slaughtered his Newfoundland dog for sustenance and made a simple broth from the soles of their shoes, attempting to survive their wilderness condition.

Staggering towards the agrarian communities of rural Quebec in an emaciated state, Dearborn was overjoyed with the warm welcome his men received from *Les Beaucerons* and the Wabanaki population. They provided the expedition with supplies, transportation, companionship, and military support. Dearborn himself was nursed back to health by a family of *habitants* after falling ill with a fever. This cultural accommodation was mutually beneficial as the local populace used the Continental army's war effort to achieve their own political, economic, and social goals through their control of natural resources. For his part, Dearborn was able to marshal his men to the gates of Quebec with their valuable assistance. There, the *Variola* virus exploited the deplorable sanitation and crowded camp conditions of the American forces and smallpox spread through the ranks. Fearing the complete depletion of their army, General Richard Montgomery and Colonel Benedict Arnold executed a failed assault on the British garrison where Dearborn was captured.

The incarcerated officers, having not been exposed to smallpox earlier in life, feared contracting the disease during their imprisonment. Immediately, Dearborn and

his compatriots, requested that the British physicians inoculate them, a practice that was banned in the Continental army at the time. Throughout the seven-month siege, he watched as firewood and food became scarce and the British and Continental armies struggled against the brutal cold of the bioregion, skirmishing over precious provisions.

After breaking the Continental army's siege, General Guy Carleton released Dearborn on parole in May 1776. However, he remained in Quebec until March 1777 when he was part of a prisoner exchange. Continuing his service in the Northeastern Borderlands, Dearborn fought against General John Burgoyne's expedition into New York near Fort Ticonderoga and helped weaponize the wilderness communications between the military outposts of the Northeastern Borderlands. Dearborn's detachment joined General Horatio Gates at Saratoga in the autumn of 1777 awaiting Burgoyne's expeditionary force. Here, he noted that deserters, weary of wilderness warfare, flowed into the Continental army's encampment daily. This was exacerbated as weather delayed the British provisioning party at Bennington and the provincial militia repelled their assault. Frustrated by these failures, and the outbreak of violence amongst fellow Iroquoian nations at the Battle of Oriskany, Burgoyne's indigenous and *Canadien* allies abandoned him at Saratoga. Left blind in an impenetrable wilderness, the British army suffered raids against their scouting parties from the Oneida of the Continental army's line providing the American force with supplies and prisoners. Unable to successfully navigate the human and environmental landscape of the region, Burgoyne ultimately

surrendered his forces. Dearborn exclaimed that this was “the greatest consequence ever known” in the history of warfare.⁸

Unable to make much progress fighting within the bioregion of the Northeastern Borderlands, the British turned their war effort outside of the region and into the mid-Atlantic and southern United States. Loyalist militias and indigenous residents expanded their scorched-earth raids on the frontier, having been largely abandoned by the greater geopolitical stratagems of the British leadership. In 1779, Dearborn was pleased to be a part of the retaliatory force under the command of General John Sullivan to remove the Seneca and Mohawk from Iroquoia. On July 4, Dearborn and his fellow officers drank a toast to the United States on its birthday where they wished for “civilization or death to all American savages.”⁹ Here, the war effort changed from throwing off the yoke of British oppression to achieving conquest over the cultural and environmental landscapes of Indian Country. Indeed, Dearborn’s preoccupation with colonial expansionism into the bioregion fueled his decision making during this expedition. As he pillaged villages and razed the Seneca’s agroecosystems, Dearborn ignored Sullivan’s orders to cut down fruit trees, understanding that it took saplings several years to bear fruit. This restraint of violence against the natural environment is a striking juxtaposition against the extremities of violence that characterized this campaign against the cultural environment including the disinterring of corpses and desecration of corpses.

⁸ Lloyd A. Brown and Howard H. Peckham, *Revolutionary War Journals of Henry Dearborn, 1775-1783* (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Book, 2007),

⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

Dearborn's experiences in the Northeastern Borderlands bioregion during the American Revolution exemplifies the unique ways that cultural and environmental landscapes intersect with military operations and geopolitics. Often, battles hinge on the decisions of generals to charge, counterattack, and retreat. However, by looking at entirety of the lived experience of soldiers, the causal forces of human ecology to steer war efforts are revealed.

At the Confluence of Human Ecology and Geopolitics: The Northern Campaign of the War for American Independence

During the War of American Independence, both the British and Continental armies operating in the Northeastern Borderlands sought to execute large-scale military operations in wilderness landscapes, to secure allegiances and assistance from the indigenous and provincial population, and to control access to valuable agricultural and environmental resources. Despite the best efforts of these opposing Euro-American military forces, local inhabitants dictated the terms of survival.

The dynamic human ecology of the Northeastern Borderlands – the relationships between humans and the natural, social, and built environment – reshaped the war effort and, in turn, transformed the borderlands. At the beginning of the war, it was a place of fluid identities and loyalties where individuals operated autonomously to achieve their own political, economic, and social prosperity. Frustrated by the problem of moving their war machines in the region, military and political leaders forced fealty in the borderlands, exchanging cultural accommodation for coercion.

This dissertation reveals the intertwined relationship between cultural and environmental landscapes on the one hand and the execution of warfare on the other. It highlights the distinct human ecology of the Northeastern Borderland as a bioregion that helps us to transcend the nationalistic study that dominates traditional political and martial narratives that inform our understanding of history. More precisely, it delineates how soldiers become immersed in the environments where they served and left rich records of observation, interpretation, and interaction with the human and non-human world. It uncovers the ways in which indigenous and colonial settler populations utilized their knowledge of local environments and control of natural resources to force negotiation and accommodation to reshape geopolitics to benefit their communities. Struggling to gain complete control over the borderland bioregion from a social and environmental standpoint, the British and Continental armies – as well as their local indigenous and provincial allies – reshaped these natural and cultural landscapes of the northeast by weaponizing the wilderness and attempting to change the fluidity of the borderlands into more rigid bordered lands. Here, scorched-earth campaigns and cultural removal were means to exercise power over the inchoate and amorphous environmental, colonial, and indigenous landscapes of the northeast.

Soldiers struggled against the wilderness as they labored to transport themselves, their provisions, and war material of large field armies through a challenging landscape. By sorting out the familiar from the unfamiliar, soldiers gained control over their surroundings and made the wilderness less imposing and more useful to their expeditions. As they learned to survive in what they initially understood

as a landscape of complete isolation, they began to appreciate the visual aesthetic of the region that they traversed and developed a sense of wonder. Accepting the wilderness as God's creation provided comfort and rejuvenation despite intense privation through the work of soldiering.

Despite comfort through experience, rigorous military planning, help from indigenous and colonial guides, and the most accurate maps of the era, the bioregion exerted a causal force of its own that thwarted the British and Continental armies and their local allies throughout the war. Extreme weather made moose, deer, fish, and other game animals scarce, which the expeditions and local communities depended upon. The severe climate of the northeast consistently caused delays in logistical operations, ruined provisions and supplies, and impeded the execution of skirmishes and major battles alike. The British army's differential immunity to smallpox – due to prior exposure compared to the demography of American-born Continental soldiers – led *Variola* to be an unwitting ally of the British that executed sorties of its own against the Continental army. Fevers and fluxes, miasmas and malaria, all played essential roles in the disease cosmology of European and American soldiers serving in the bioregion of the northeast. Causing diarrhea and dehydration, madness and mania, these diseases – and perceptions of them – relegated soldiers to field hospitals, provoked waves of desertion, and induced military leaders to dismiss those who were liabilities to their campaigns.

The dynamic human ecology of the borderlands profoundly shaped military operations in the northeast. Indigenous and colonial residents served as purveyors of

landscape knowledge and controlled the admittance of interlopers into the region. Birch-bark maps, trail blazes, transportation corridors, and on-the-ground guiding provided passage through what was perceived outside to the region as an impenetrable wilderness. Colonial and indigenous populations could also provide safe harbor for spies and military agents within their communities, preventing their arrest, providing them with valuable intelligence, and pointing them in the right direction. Food and firewood, labor and livestock were granted – or withheld – by locals depending on which action best served the specific political, economic, social, and cultural goals of individuals and their communities. Resource allocation gave local actors decisive power in many military endeavors, as who they assisted, how much assistance they gave, when they ended their assistance, and the levels of resistance and violence they utilized directly contributed to the failure of all three wilderness expeditions examined here.

For their part, the Continental and British armies also sought to weaponize the human and non-human actors of the borderlands. The British army employed provincials as vectors of disease, transmitting smallpox in and out of the Continental army's encampments. *Petite guerre* tactics by indigenous warriors, militiamen, and soldiers disrupted the semi-ordered forested communications among the military leaders and garrisons of the Northeastern Borderlands by taking advantage of wilderness conditions. Officers and soldiers alike developed intense fears of the bioregion, sometimes firing muskets, rifles, and cannons into the dark and foreboding unknown hoping to kill those they suspected of skulking around threatened an

ambuscade that would end their expeditions into the howling wilderness. Soldiers and officers repeatedly refused to cook their meals by fire and even to drink water from the springs and streams when they felt like the wilderness was being used against them. The stress of living in a weaponized wilderness led to physical and mental illness among both soldiers and officers, costing these expeditions valuable time and often with lasting debilitating effects of soldiers. These situations highlight the primacy of fighting a natural enemy while engaged in a to defeat a human one.

When accommodation in the borderlands broke down in 1778 due to the inability of either side to gain supremacy over the natural and cultural landscapes of the bioregion, the hybrid landscapes of the borderlands increasingly became the target of rigorous raids by indigenous warriors and loyalist militias as well as the Continental army. The British architects of the military war effort in the Northeastern Borderlands “abdicated control of the war’s behavior and outcome to Indians and backwoods Loyalists.”¹⁰ General Washington retaliated by ordering General Sullivan to “pay them in their own coin.”¹¹ They burned homes, attacked agroecosystems, and committed brutal acts of violence against one another in efforts to disrupt the others’ ability to provision their militaries and communities and to rid the borderlands of each other. The

¹⁰ John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607 – 1814* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 164.

¹¹ General George Washington to Benjamin Harrison, Head Quarters, Middlebrook, 5 May, 1779. Quoted in *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol. VII, 1778-1779, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (New York: Putnam’s Sons Knickerbocker Press, 1890), 441.

Continental army even attacked the cultural and historical landscape in Iroquoia by disinterring corpses and destroying burial sites.

Evolving circumstances within the human ecology of this bioregion shaped the failures of Arnold, Burgoyne, and Sullivan to successfully execute their missions. This accentuates Karl Marx's famous phrase that "man makes his own history," yet "he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds close at hand."¹² In the Northeastern Borderlands the local ecological agents of change – both human and non-human – shaped and recast the war and its outcome.

Bioregionalism as a War and Environment Construct

Despite the unique characteristics of the Northeastern Borderlands, this case study of the northern theatre of the War of American Independence suggests broader methodological themes useful to scholars interesting in war and the environment. In general, more research is needed in this emerging field so that we might access the agency of enlisted soldier, local populations, and the non-human world. Concepts like human ecology and bioregional environment privilege the lived experiences of indigenous people, common soldiers, borderland subjects, and everyday citizens. The dialectical relationship between human actors and the natural world in a shared bioregion highlights how they can obfuscate and reshape the best laid geopolitical stratagems of distant and powerful military and political leaders. Looking at conflict during the eighteenth century in these ways contributes to expanding scholars'

¹² Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trans. Daniel de Leon (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1913), 9.

temporal focus of war and environment studies to conflicts prior to the United States Civil War (1861- 1865).

Within the study of the American Revolution, the bioregions of the mid-Atlantic and southern theatres of the war contain colonial, indigenous, and enslaved populations with fluid loyalties and identities in regards to the British and Continental forces. Cornwallis's extensive campaign through the south, which ended in defeat at Yorktown in 1781, for example, was partially executed in the sparsely populated backcountry, had extensive provisioning problems, and suffered greatly from diseases. This is but one expedition with direct comparisons to the military conflict in the Northeastern Borderlands.

The establishment of a vague and uncertain international boundary at the close of the war in 1783 contributed to a gradual process of shifting the Northeastern Borderlands into a bordered land. During the peace process, the British completely ignored their alliances with indigenous people and delivered all the lands east of the Mississippi to the United States. Officials in British North America and the United States sought to contain indigenous people on reservations as a means to pacify and manage them. The Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Seneca were granted land on the Grand River Reserve in Upper Canada in 1784, while the Oneida and Tuscarora were settled in upstate New York.

Despite these geopolitical developments, Mohawk and Seneca persistence in the Northeastern Borderlands continued as they sustained their war effort long after General John Sullivan departed Genesee Castle. Indeed, as soon as the snow cleared,

Thayendanegea and his allies resumed raiding the settlements located in the Mohawk and Susquehanna river valleys.¹³ Settling a score against the Oneida, in mid-July he attacked their village of Kanonwalohale slaughtering livestock, burning crops, and thrusting the Oneida upon the American-held Fort Stanwix as refugees. Finding his hometown of Canajoharie occupied by American colonists, Thayendanegea burned it to the ground as well. By the end of August, 1780, he had destroyed 150,000 bushels of wheat that likely would have supported the Continental army's war effort.¹⁴ After feeling betrayed by the British at the war's end, Thayendanegea remade indigenous alliances in the Northeast Borderlands. Helping to create the Western Confederacy in 1786 to resist the United States' encroachment into the Northwest Territory, he stated that, "the English have sold the Indians to Congress."¹⁵

Indeed, for the indigenous residents of the Northeastern Borderlands, the war raged on until at least August 20, 1794, when the final battle for sovereignty in the Indian Country occurred between the Western Confederacy and the United States. The Battle of Fallen Timbers lasted less than an hour, as the American cavalry routed the indigenous forces with a decisive bayonet charge. The warriors, under the command of Weyapiersenwah (Blue Jacket), a Shawnee military leader, retreated to the British-held Fort Miami but were locked out by Major William Campbell, who refused to assist them for fear of inciting open-warfare with the United States. The indigenous people were

¹³ James Paxton, *Joseph Brant and his World: 18th Century Mohawk Warrior and Statesmen* (Toronto: James Lormier & Company, 2008), 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵ Daniel O'Connor, *Three Centuries of Mission: The United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1701 - 2000* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 244.

forced to flee their villages, where the American forces attacked their agroecosystems and decimated their cultural landscape.¹⁶ The human ecology of the bioregion underwent a fundamental transformation as Iroquoia and the Ohio Country were increasingly brought under the new ecological regimes of United States society and its aggressive expansionism.

This dissertation offers a starting point to advance the subdisciplines of military and environmental history as mutually informed by one another so that we can better understand the variegated ways that the agency of the natural world shapes military endeavors and the reshaping of shared landscapes of humans and nature.

¹⁶ Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 287.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A

Information on the Diarists of Invasion of Canada

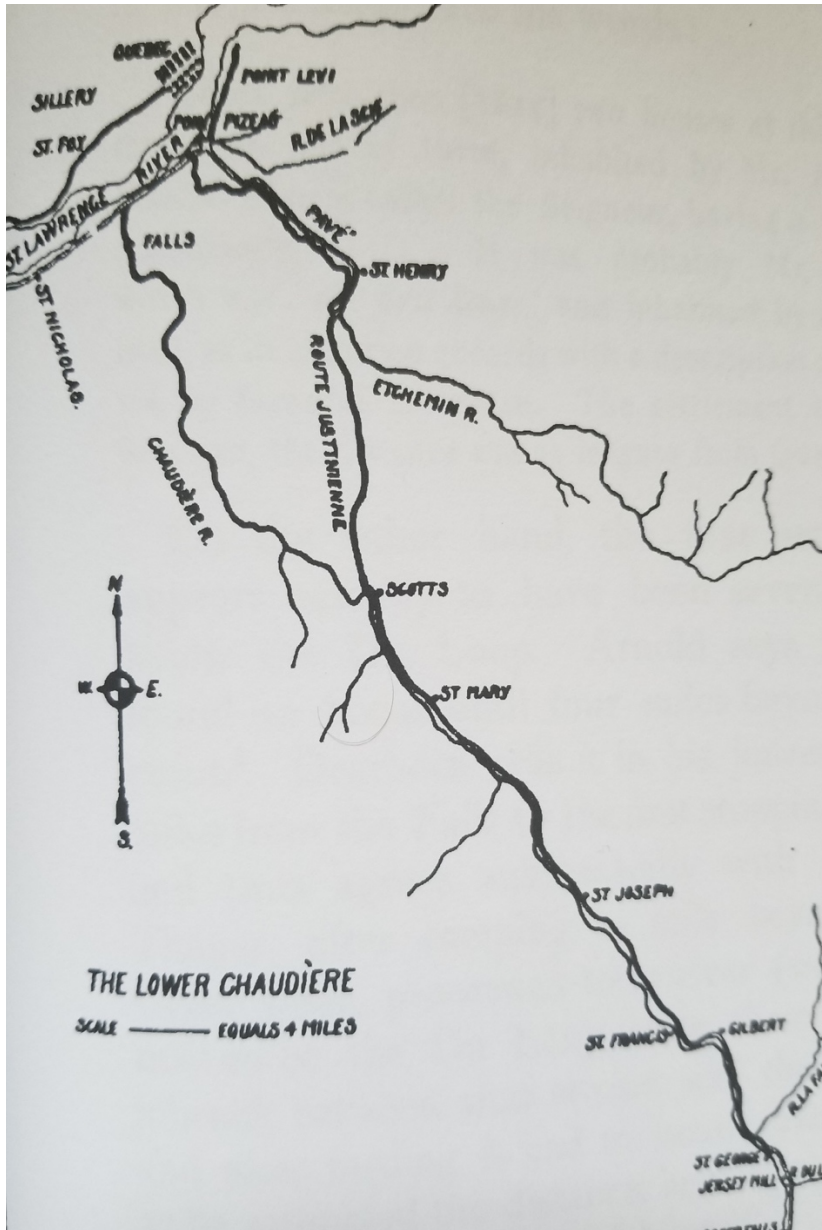
<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>Population in 1790</u>	<u>Age in 1775</u>
Anonymous	Private	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Arnold, Benedict	Colonel	Merchant	New Haven, CT	4,484	35
Barney, Samuel	Private	Unknown	New Haven, CT	4,484	22
Dearborn, Henry	Captain	Physician	Nottingham, NH	1,069	24
Dorr, William	Private	Unknown	Dover, NH	1,996	18
Fobes, Simon	Private	Farmer	Amherst, MA	1,233	19
Greenman, Jeremiah	Private	Shop Keeper	Providence, RI	6,380	18
Haskell, Caleb	Private	Unknown	Newburyport, MA	4,837	21
Henry, John	Private	Gunsmith	Lancaster, PA	297	19
Humphrey, William	Lieutenant	Unknown	Providence, RI	6,380	28
Kimball, Moses	Private	Blacksmith	Hampstead, NH	725	19
Meigs, Return	Major	Surveyor	Middletown, CT	5,375	40
Melvin, James	Private	Apprentice	Hubbardston, MA	933	22
Morison, George	Private	Farmer	Sherman Valley, PA	Unknown	21
Pierce, John	Sergeant	Surveyor	Worcester, MA	2,095	31
Quebec #3	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Senter, Isaac	Surgeon	Physician	Newport, RI	6,716	22
Squier, Ephraim	Private	Unknown	Ashford, CT	2,583	27
Stocking, Abner	Private	Privateer	Haddamn, CT	2,195	23
Thayer, Simon	Captain	Wig Maker	Providence, RI	6,380	38
Topham, John	Captain	Unknown	Newport, RI	6,716	33

Appendix B



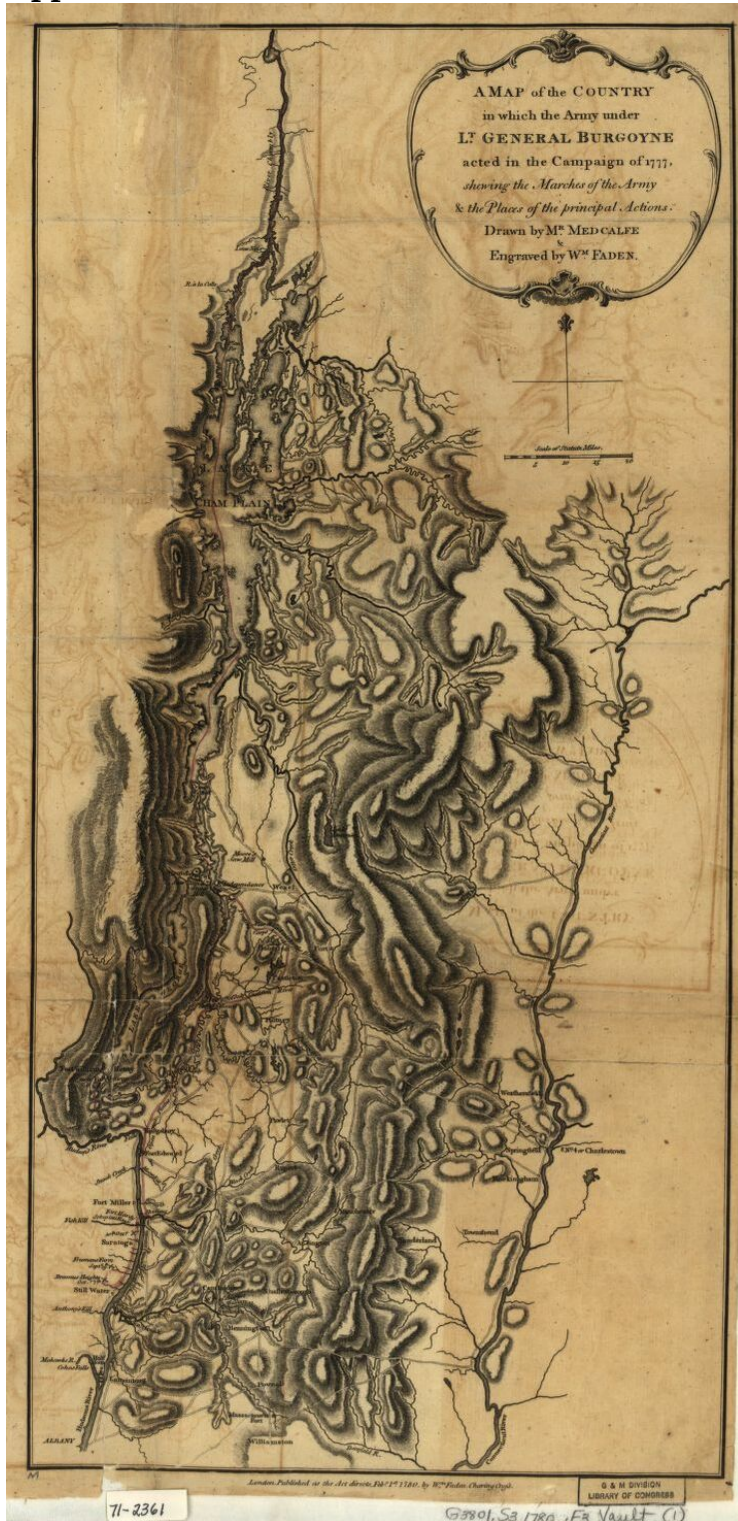
The Map shows the approximate route of the Arnold expedition. Map created by the author, based on John Mitchell, Map of the British and French North America, 1775. Collections of the Maine Historical Society.

Appendix D



Map of the Beauce region. Here Beauce-Sartigan is labeled as St. George. Map from Justin H. Smith, *Arnold's March from Cambridge to Quebec: A Critical Study, Together with a Reprint of Arnold's Journal* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1903).

Appendix E



Topographical map of the Burgoyne expedition. The mountainous and wooded terrain served as an obstacle and point of fear. William Faden, London, 1780. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division.

Appendix F



This painting of Jane McCrea depicts the racial and sexual fears of colonists living in the Northeast Borderlands in 1777. *The Death of Jane McCrea*, by John Vanderlyn. 1804. Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.

Appendix G



Map of Burgoyne's encampment at Saratoga. Here he is surrounded by the impenetrable forests of the region with the Hudson River on his flank and streams to his rear making retreat difficult. Map by William Cumberland Wilkinson. 1777 Library of Congress Geography and Map Division.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Daniel S. Soucier was born in Millinocket, Maine on July 13, 1983. He was raised there and graduate from Stearns High School in 2001. He graduated with a BA in History from the University of Maine in 2011 as a member of the Phi Alpha Theta Honors Society. He then enrolled in the MA program in the department of history in the fall of that year graduating in 2013. At that time, he enrolled in both the PhD program in History and a Certificate in Advanced Graduate Studies in Digital Curation which he earned in 2016.

The department of history at the University of Maine awarded Daniel Soucier a teaching assistantship where he taught United States History I and European Military History in 2013 – 2014. The Canadian-American Center awarded him several fellowships from 2014 – 2019 including the Canadian Studies Fellowship, the New-England Atlantic Provinces & Quebec Studies Fellowship, and the Alice Stewart Fellowship in History. He also was awarded the John J. Nolde Lectureship in History in 2015 - 2016 to teach the American Revolution and the Susan J. Hunter Teaching Fellowship from the Graduate School to teach European Military History in 2015 – 2016. He also worked as Associate Editor and Editor of *Maine History* from 2014 – 2019.

In 2014 he was awarded the Society of the Cincinnati Research Fellowship from the Massachusetts Historical Society to begin work on this dissertation regarding the environmental history of Arnold's March to Quebec. He also received the Hal Rothman Dissertation Research Fellowship from the American Society for Environmental History

(2015 – 2016); a Resident Research Fellowship from the David Library for the American Revolution (2015 - 2016); a MANECCES Young Scholars Research Award (2016); a Resident Research Fellowship from the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium (2017 – 2018) to conduct research at Maine Historical Society, New Hampshire Historical Society, Rhode Island Historical Society, and Houghton Library at Harvard University; and a Charles Eliot Research Fellowship from the Mount Desert Island Historical Society (2018 – 2019) to conduct research on the environmental history and history of the American Revolution on MDI. Further research support came from a Summer Research Assistantship (2014) and Charles J. Dunn Dissertation Research Grant (2015; 2017) from the University of Maine Department on History; Summer Dissertation Writing Fellowships (2016; 2017) from the Graduate School at the University of Maine; a Graduate Student Travel Grant from the American Society for Environmental History (2015), and the National Science Foundation (2016; 2017).

Daniel Soucier worked as an instructor in the Department of History and the Maine Studies program at the University of Maine and the Liberal Arts Department at the University of Maine Machias teaching courses in Maine History, Historical Methodology, Interdisciplinary Surveys of Maine, Environmental Studies, Military History, and Environmental History. He published articles for the *Journal of Military History*, *Maine History*, and *Chebacco*. In addition, he has presented his work at a variety of international conferences including the Society for Military History, the American Society of Environmental History, the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, the New England Historical Association, the Mid-Atlantic and New

England Association for Canadian Studies, the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, and the North East Atlantic Region Environmental History Conference. Daniel Soucier is a candidate for a Doctor of Philosophy in History degree from the University of Maine in May 2019.