

Journal of Mathias Ogden on the March to Quebec with Benedict Arnold, 1775

[October] 27th. This day we were employed in transporting our boats to the river leading to Chaudier Pond. The land raises gradually about half the distance across the portage, where we were all much pleased in seeing the brooks running north, which was our direct course. After finishing our portage the provision belonging to the whole was collected and equally divided among the whole detachment. We shared about Y2of a pound of pork per man and five pints, scant measure, of flour, which was to last us to [reaching] the inhabitants. The Rifle men were wholly destitute of any kind of meat before this for eight days. At four o'clock in the afternoon we heard a shout from the men near the river, which soon reached throughout the Camp. We received a letter from Col. Arnold informing us of the return of the two Indians, from whom he received an answer to his letter to Quebec, informing him that the inhabitants were much rejoiced at our near approach, would assist in repulsing the King's Troops there and forever go hand in hand with us.

Our men were much rejoiced and their spirits animated at this good news, for never were men more fatigued, at any time, nor ever could men bear up under it better than they. Surely no person, unless he was present, could form any idea of the hardships surmounted.

In Col. Arnold's letter he directed us to take a northeast course from the height of land, which would bring us to Chaudier river beyond the pond. At this they returned (all but those belonging to the boats) to the hill, where they encamped. The remainder belonging to the boats, about 10 in number, had orders to set off by daylight and wait the arrival of the landmen at the entrance of Chaudier. Col. Arnold informs us likewise that in six days he will meet us with provisions.

28th. In the morning, being disappointed in my boat that was taken back by the express sent by Col. Arnold, Col. Green sent word that I might send back the boat's crew belonging to the Company and take her for myself. Accordingly, by sun-up I set off with Messrs. Burr and Melcher with a Lieut. belonging to Capt. Thayre. We followed a small stream, which in about 10 miles led us to Amegunti Lake, or Chaudier pond. We then steered northeast and overtook Capts. Morgan and Smith at an Indian hut by the side of the lake. We kept our course till we were stopped at the upper end of the lake, [which is] about 16 miles in length.

We found we had passed the mouth of the river. We, however, encamped. The sight of our smoke led up Capts. Morgan and Smith's boat, with one belonging to Capt. Ward. Being late, they all encamped with us.

29th. After rowing about three miles back we made the mouth of the river. We put in and ran down the river with amazing swiftness from the rapidity of the current, about 10 miles, where we found one of Capt. Smith's boats dashed on the rocks with all her lading lost. We stopped and agreed to join with him and set off immediately for the inhabitants. We set off on foot at 2

o'clock, seven in number. After travelling two miles we came up with an officer belonging to Capt. Goodrich, who informed us that his boat split against the rocks, and he had lost four days' provision per man belonging to the Company, with every other thing in her. We travelled on, steering northeast.

In about an hour after, Capt. Goodrich passed us with his men, who had been out of provision two days. We encamped by sunset beside a brook, we judged 18 miles from the river's mouth.

This day was somewhat solitary. We were separated from the main body and almost destitute of provision of any kind. What little we had we were obliged to share with Capt. Smith and his two men with him; we were likewise destitute of a guide or path, and how far from the inhabitants we knew not.

30th. After travelling a short distance we came on Capt. Goodrich's track, which soon led us to where he encamped the evening before. We here found a part of two quarters of dog they had killed and hung up for the remainder of his Company that was behind; the other they had eaten and taken with them. One of our Company, rejoiced to find the prize, immediately cut a part of it, roasted it on the coals and ate it very greedily. About an hour after we fell in with the rest of the Company which had passed another way. We found them much dejected and spent with fatigue and hunger. We informed them of the meat, at which they sent two men for it immediately.

We then travelled on in a very bad road, sometimes over shoes in mire, sometimes climbing on all fours, and at others scarcely able to see for the thickness of the bramble and small fir shrubs. At 3 o'clock we hailed Capt. Dearborn and one more going down stream in a birch canoe. They informed us that Capt. Morgan had his boat split upon a rock, the most of his effects lost, and one man drowned; that he saw where Col. Arnold's boat was stove; what his loss was he knew not. After travelling about 20 miles with our packs on our backs, we encamped by sunset much fatigued and very hungry.

Nov. 1st. By daylight in the morning began our march. In about two hours we came up with the wreck of a birch canoe that was foundered on a rock, which we supposed to be Capt. Derbon's. We marched very steadily in the track of some few that had gone on before, leading along the river. About 2 o'clock we came up with a man belonging to Capt. Goodrich. Being asked why he lay there he replied he had eaten nothing for three days and that he was far spent; he had not strength to proceed. Here I would have parted with anything in my possession to give him relief, but my very small pittance of provision, and notwithstanding I knew not how long before I should see any more, I could not part with him until I gave him the full half of my pork, which was scarcely two ounces. Capt. Smith gave him half his bread, not amounting to that weight. He immediately ate it and said he felt greatly refreshed, so that he came on with us.

We continued our march till sunset, when encamped; we judged 22 miles from our last encampment. One of our Company had a small bit of chocolate, which we boiled and divided out

equally by spoonfuls. This day to me was very [hard], my boots being worn out entirely. Some days before I made a cover for them of the bag our flour was in, but being worn out it likewise occasioned my feet to be very sore. "2nd. As soon as the day dawned we began our march. After travelling about 8 miles we were blessed with the finest sight my eyes ever beheld; no sensation could be equal to it. Scarce one of us but with tears of joy expressed the gratitude of his heart at seeing five horned cattle and two birch canoes loaded with mutton and flour brought forward by French men. They appeared glad to *see* us and welcomed us to Canada. After taking off the meat and flour enough to satisfy our hunger, we hastened them on to the main body of the detachment.

After broiling some of the meat we set off and marched about 10 miles. We again received new life from the sight of a house. When we came up with it we found it to be an Indian's, with several more about it. They were very officious in ferrying us across the river and seemed fond of seeing us. The next house was a Frenchman's, where the Colonel had placed an officer with bread, butter and potatoes to serve the men as they came up. Nothing to me ever tasted half so sweet. "After eating sparingly I took passage in a birch canoe and came down five miles to St. Francis way, where I found Co!. Arnold. He informed me he had been as far as Sartigan; was very kindly received by a great number of the inhabitants, who told him they imagined he was sent from heaven to restore them liberty and rang the parish bell on the occasion.

3rd. In the morning a number of Indians belonging to different tribes, by Co!. Arnold's desire collected themselves and desired to be informed of the nature of the quarrel between the King and his children. After it being made known to them they very willingly agreed to go with us and fight anybody who should molest us, but they would not agree to go with us in any garrison, and they must have bread not only for themselves but their children. Co!. Arnold agreed to give as many of them as were fit to go to war eight dollars per month. Thirty-two of them enlisted and received two dollars per man advance.

Toward evening [met] Co!. Green, with some officers of his division, much worn and wasted with the excessive hard marching and want of provision. Co!. Arnold proceeded forward six leagues to meet his express sent forward to Quebec.

4th. Last evening fell a slight of snow about two inches deep. At 9 o'clock Co!. Green and myself took a boat belonging to a Frenchman, who agreed to transport us six leagues down the river for three dollars. We stopped at one of the inhabitants, who treated us very civilly indeed, and seemed much pleased. The old woman sung the "Lexington March" for us in taste. The whole of these six leagues is along the river; is very beautiful; the river very mild and the banks lined with inhabitants. We passed the chapel of St. Mary, situated on a pleasant part of the river in the parish of St. Joseph.

5th. We fell down the river two leagues to the parish of St. Mary. Here we were met ,by several of the inhabitants, some of whom informed us that Carleton had taken our express and confined him; that he and twenty of the inhabitants were under sentence of death and would be executed

in two days' time unless we got in to assist them. Others informed us Carleton was taken prisoner and that a number of the citizens were shipping what cannon they could and destroying the rest. How matters stand we are not able to judge. This, however, we are assured of, that we have had not the least certain intelligence from Quebec since our setting out; that the Indian Is express had betrayed us and given up our letters; and that our second and third express were detained in Quebec. However, at all events we are determined to go forward. We were kindly received in the parish of St. Mary, especially by the priest, who appeared to be subtle, artful and much of a gentleman.

6th. Ordered that the men should proceed on as far as the village of St. Andrew, six leagues from this place. This morning the Colonel, on hearing that the enemy had destroyed all the boats on the river St. Lawrence, purchased a number for transporting the men across the river. On our way to St. Andrew we were met by two Frenchmen, well mounted. They informed us they had heard of our coming and were determined to be assured of it, even if they went to Chaudier pond. We asked them many questions relative to Quebec. They informed us that there were a number of the French citizens under arms, but that they were determined to lay them down as soon as our army appeared. They likewise informed us that there were several small frigates at Quebec.

At sunset we were near three leagues from St. Andrew. The depth of the road made it very heavy travelling, and, what was still worse, a light snow, about two or three inches deep, which, together with the mud, took us half leg deep. By 9 o'clock we got through the swamp and came up with two or three small huts one league from St. Andrew. Here we stopped, wet and cold; the houses not large enough to contain near all the men, and many were obliged ,to lay down in the barns and stables.

7th. In the morning we marched in a heavy snow storm and reached St. Auree [St. Henry] at 9 o'clock, where, from the best information we could obtain, we concluded the two Frenchmen we had seen yesterday were spies. We remained here waiting for the rear to come forward, which we supposed were at least two days' march behind. Toward evening the storm abated and we received a messenger from Point Levi, informing us that there was a quantity of flour and wheat stored in a mill; that it was guarded by a few of the inhabitants, who expected a party over from Quebec that threatened to burn the mill unless they would give it up. He informed us that on Sunday a 26-gunship has arrived in the harbour, but that he knew not how many came in her, nor could he give us any account of the number of the enemy in Quebec, but there were several sloops of war and cutters lying in the harbour. The Colonel ordered a reconnoitering party, consisting of a subaltern and thirty men to proceed to Point Levi this evening and send back all the intelligence they could get, and inform the inhabitants that he would be there himself in the morning with what men there were forward.

Our situation now seemed somewhat ticklish. As yet we had no certain intelligence of the strength of the enemy at Quebec, nor had we heard a word from General Schuyler or his army; our whole number not exceeding 600 and they not all effective; the most of us naked and

barefoot and very illy provided with ammunition; the winter approaching in hasty strides and we had no quarters we could call our own, nor any possibility of retreating but by fighting our way to Gen Schuyler, with a handful of men, through all Carleton's army. We determined, however, to make a bold push for Quebec at all events.

8th. About one o'clock we were awakened by the sentinel, who informed us there were two Indians who came express from General Montgomery. This gave us new life and spirit. In the morning we were ordered to march to Point Levi and Co!. Green was sent back to bring up the rear as soon as possible with the canoes, as the Frenchmen informed us all on the river St. Lawrence were destroyed to prevent our crossing.

We reached Point Levi at 12 o'clock, three leagues from St. Auree. Here we had a full view of the harbour and a part of the town. We found one frigate of 26 guns, which had arrived the last Sunday and one sloop of war of 16 guns, called "The Hunter," besides several armed cutters.

Mr. Halstead, an American gentleman, who had taken his family to the Island of Orleans, not daring to be seen in Quebec, hearing of our coming, met us at Point Levi. He informed us that the frigate was from London, but the account she brought was not known but by the King's party, [which was] that a transport arrived yesterday from St. John's, at Newfoundland; she brought 150 recruits; that the frigate yesterday landed 50 marines; these, with about 100 Tories and 200 Canadians, were all within the walls in the upper town, and were exclusive of the militia, of which there were 11 Companies; that they had taken under pay three small vessels belonging to the merchants in the town, with all the sailors they could press out, of which he supposed they had sent 150 in the town. Mr. Halstead imagined the Canadians (all except the 100 Tories) would lay down their arms. He informed us that our Indian express had given our letters to the enemy, who immediately sent [him to] Mr. Mercier, the unhappy gentleman to whom the letter was directed on board the frigate, without acquainting him with the reason of his being confined.

Our Colonel dispatched the two Indians back to General Montgomery, acquainting him with our situation and desiring him to send us a reinforcement as soon as possible.

9th. We found this morning that the enemy had posted many sentinels along shore as far as the "Hunter," which had fallen up the river with the tide about 1~ miles; we imagined to prevent our crossing the river. Two of our Companies came up about noon.

About one o'clock the ball was opened between us and the enemy. A barge, belonging to the "Hunter," landed at a mill; was discovered by some of our men, who crept up expecting the whole boat's crew would land, but [only] one of them went on shore. The remainder in the boat discovered our men on the bank and alarmed the one on shore, at which they fired on the boat, then returned and left their fellow on shore to shift for himself. He took to the water. Our men

fired several shots at him and the boat, which were answered by several shots both from the frigate and boat, but fortunately missed him. Two or three of the men jumped in and followed him, with one of our Indians, who came up first and brought him in. We found him to be a brother of Capt. W. Kinsey, a lad of about 18, who was a midshipman on board the "Hunter." He appeared very willing to satisfy us in answering questions asked him. He informed us that they had certain intelligence that St. Johns had surrendered and General Carleton was at Montreal with the remainder of his force, except what was at Quebec. He could not tell us the number of men in the town, nor the number on board any of the vessels except the one he belonged to, which had 100, but he thought the frigate had 280; she was called the "Lizard" and arrived on Sunday, the 5th, from London, and brought no other information that he knew of, but that the Ministry were determined to carry their point and subdue the Americans, for which purpose 20,000 Hanoverians were already embarked for America. He said, likewise, there were five Regiments on their way from Boston to Quebec. These ill-grounded and false reports we easily perceived was an artifice made *use* of by the principal officers to encourage the inferior ones and privates.

10th. Toward evening Major Meigs came up. He informed us 17 canoes would be up tomorrow with the rear of the detachment. A party with a French guide were sent to the parish of St. Nicholas to bring down in the evening a number of canoes belonging to the inhabitants. The frigate fired several shots at the mill and our guard but without the least damage to either. Our sentries observed three boats loaded with men go on board the "Hunter" -we imagined either for fear of being boarded by us in the night or else to make an excursion to the mill. The Colonel ordered the guard to be doubled for fear of the latter.

11th. & 12th. Lay at Point Levi, making preparation for scaling the walls and waiting the arrival of the rear with the canoes.

13th. In the morning a French inhabitant came in and informed us that one Indian, who carried the letters to General Montgomery, was taken by three men in war boats which happened to be coming from Montreal; the other made his escape and proceeded on his journey. (Lucky for us). The Indians, for fear of being taken, were informed of the contents.

This intelligence was confirmed directly after by an express from Col. Easton, commander of our troops at Sorrel, informing us of the reduction of St. Johns, etc., and desiring an account of our present situation that he might remit it as soon as possible to General Montgomery, then lying before Montreal.

The Captains of each Company were ordered to be in readiness with their men to cross the river St. Lawrence. A council was held and left to the Colonel's pleasure whether we should storm the town immediately after landing or not. It was his opinion we ought to do it immediately. Accordingly the scaling ladders and pikes were carried to our place of landing. The "Hunter," being in the place where we intended crossing, to wit, Scillery, we fixed on Wolfe's cove, about

halfway between the “Hunter” and the “Lizard,” not doubting but, as the cause was superior to his [Wolfe’s], we might at least expect as good success.

At eight in the evening the first load for the canoes embarked. After we had crossed two-thirds of the river, we heard the “Hunter’s” boat rowing under the shore. The Colonel, whose boat I was in, gave orders for [us] to lay upon our paddles and let her pass, which she did, without noticing us. After we had landed and sent off the boats we amounted to but 27, out of which we dispatched six on each wing as a flank guard, and drew the remainder up in a body ready for keeping the ground we had taken against any number that might have disputed it with us. The scarcity of canoes made it very tedious getting over the men. We, however, executed it by 2 o’clock without any other damage than the loss of the guns and baggage belonging to one boat, which foundered in the middle of the river. The men were all saved by towing them after the others.

After a second freight being landed, a party of sixteen was ordered to take possession of a house near the road leading up the bank from the cove in which we expected they had a guard, but we found it destitute of any inhabitants.

After the most of our men were landed, we perceived a boat rowing from one ship to the other, which, for the advantage of keeping out of the current, stood close along shore. Six or eight of us crept out on a point and lay undiscovered till she came opposite; we then rose and ordered her to bring to. They answered “yes,” but turned her head off, upon which we fired on her, but she rowed off. We heard the shrieks of the wounded a long time.

It was near the morning before the last of our men [got] over and not a single ladder. After we were landed the subaltern belonging to the guard on the side reported that he had taken up a man, who called himself a deserter from Quebec and informed us Colonel McLean’s new-raised Regiment landed the day before. We formed ourselves on the Plains of Abraham and marched up to Major Caldwell’s house. We found nothing in the house but a few servants, who had been left to take care of the house. We took possession of it, together with two or three horses we found in the stables.

14th. In the morning early I walked round with Major Bigelow and Mr. Halstead to view the walls of the town. By the time I returned the guard was going out; the Colonel ordered me, as I had seen the ground, to set the out-sentries next the town. I accordingly did, after which, on hearing the ship firing at our guard that was placed at Wolfe’s cove over the canoes, on my return I observed the guard turning out. I ran as fast as possible to know the reason and found the enemy was sallying out, and gave the alarm. We marched up briskly near the walls. The enemy had retreated with one of our sentries they had surrounded and taken, which was all their errand.

We drew up on the Plain hoping they might come out and give us battle, which at that time they did not choose. We gave them three huzzas, which was answered by an eighteen-pounder from the town. It was followed by a shower from different parts of the town until we were covered by

the hill in our retreat. What was very surprising, we had not a man touched notwithstanding we were so very near and there was not a countenance scarcely among the whole that appeared concerned.

Mr. Glenney, a gentleman who came to us (and had left the town this morning) confirmed the information of Col. McLean's arrival, with 200 of his Regiment and about 80 of the Eighth. As the number of the enemy now exceeded, beside the shipping, we lost all hopes of taking the town by storm. We were without one piece of cannon and scarcely ammunition to serve us one-half hour in battle. In this situation we could expect nothing more than to stand on the defensive until we received reinforcements from our army above.

Colonel Arnold dispatched an express to Montgomery, acquainting him with our circumstances and requesting an immediate reinforcement.

Toward evening the Colonel wrote a letter to the Commander-in-Chief in the town, demanding a surrender of the place and letting them know what they might expect should they put him to the expense of taking the town by storm. I was the person appointed for going in with the flag. According to custom I took a drummer with me, who, as soon as had risen the hill, beat a parley, and I at the same time raised my flag and marched on, waving it in the air, until I was within four rods of St. Johns' Gate, when I was saluted with a eighteen-pound shot from the wall. It struck very near and spattered us with the earth it threw up. I at first thought it had killed the drummer, but he had only fallen with the fright. We did not wait for a second, but retreated in quick time till under cover of the hill. We could not account for this usage, unless we either came out of season (for the evening gun was fired just before), or else they did not intend to treat us any other way than as rebels and not give us quarter. We stopped several persons going and coming from the town, some of whom informed us we had killed three of the boat's crew and wounded a fourth dangerously.

This day the enemy burned two block houses, which stood near the wall, with several of the houses of the inhabitants without the walls. Here a shocking scene presented itself; several houses in flames and the inhabitants obliged to fly they knew not whither, and we unable to assist them without running in the mouths of their cannon.

15th. To be assured whether the reason for their not receiving our flag was its being out of season or for other reasons, the Colonel desired I would try them once more, but my drummer could not be persuaded to go with me. I took another in his place and showed ourselves a second time. After beating the parley I ordered the drummer to stop, whilst I advanced slowly toward them waving my flag. They soon gave me the old salute; the ball passed just over me in a very straight direction. I left them the ground and returned. The drummer told me he saw them load the cannon and then bring the match; that he called to me several times and thought I heard him. The reason of my not seeing it was that I looked at the place that it came from before, but this came from a different part of the wall. The reason of their firing there was because the cannon

was smaller and, of consequence, a ball might be thrown with greater exactness. The Colonel, whilst I was gone, was informed by a Canadian who had just left the town that one man they had taken was thrown in... [*The manuscript ends here*]