

EIGHTH SERIES *of* HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS, 1906

BLOCKADE
of
QUEBEC IN 1775-1776
by the
AMERICAN REVOLUTIONISTS
(LES BASTONNAIS)

PUBLISHED BY THE
LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF QUEBEC

AND EDITED BY
FRED C. WÜRTELE, LIBRARIAN



QUEBEC
THE DAILY TELEGRAPH JOB PRINTING HOUSE

1906



FORT CHAMBLY
1897

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FOREWORD

This volume, the "Eighth Series of Historical Documents," is a continuation of the previous one concerning the Blockade of Quebec by the American Revolutionists in 1775-76, and contains other unpublished or out of print diaries of officers present in Quebec during that period.

The first, entitled "Journal of the Siege from 1st December 1775," is an unpublished diary kindly communicated to the Society for publication by W. Lane, Esq., Librarian of Harvard University. It forms part of the Sparks' collection in the University library, and as the diarist appears to have been occupied chiefly in the batteries, his journal, to be distinguished from others, is named that of the Artillery Officer. Besides corroborating the other journals, it gives information not included in them, and proves that the defenders of the Près-de-ville barricade on the morning of the 31st December were not demoralized, as some writers assert, but were alert and did their duty; so that when this Artillery Officer, who had been sent there with a strong reinforcement, arrived on the scene he found that the enemy had been repulsed by the heavy cannon and musketry fire of the guard which had killed eight or ten of the attackers. He at once sent a message to the general, reporting the circumstances, and asked for orders,

which directed him at once to hurry with his detachment to the Sault-au-Matelot. If he had found that guard demoralized he could not have reported all correct and satisfactory. On arriving at Saut-au-Matelot this officer directed the fire of the guns so that their fire soon demoralized the attackers of that barricade.

The next diary is entitled:—"Journal of the principal occurrences during the siege of Quebec by the American Revolutionists under Generals Montgomery and Arnold in 1775-76," etc.—edited by W. T. Short, and published in London in 1824. This diary was kindly lent by Dr. Doughty, C.M.G.—Dominion Archivist, and as it has been long out of print is here reproduced, but omitting the editor's notes and comments.

Colonel MacLean's letter to Mr. John Coffin is reproduced from a paper sent by his grandson, Lt.-Col. W. H. Coffin, of Ottawa, to Dr. Anderson, who read it before the Society, and it was printed in Transaction No. 10, N.S. This letter shows how Colonel MacLean appreciated John Coffin's services in the Près-de-ville barricade, and formed one of a number of old documents belonging to the Coffin family, relating to that period. Dr. Doughty also sent the Society the report of Colonel Daniel Claus, one of the Indian superintendents, which reveals the attitude of the Indians, besides relating some occurrences happening between Montreal and the frontier during the invasion.

The Halsted-Mercier papers, comprising twenty-five original manuscripts, concerning two Quebec citizens

of 1775, were presented to the Literary and Historical Society by its Honorary President, Dr. James Douglas. The five most important documents are here-with transcribed at length, and the remaining twenty simply noted in their order of sequence.

It appears that John Dyer Mercier and John Halsted, two citizens of Quebec, purchased in the year 1774 a water lot on the River St. Lawrence, under Cape Diamond at Quebec, some distance above the King's Wharf, from Magdelaine Domptail, widow of Hubert Lacroix. On this they constructed a wharf 130 feet long, and in the fall of 1775 put up the frame work of a strong warehouse 128ft. x 40ft.—three stories high. The invasion of the Bostonnais stopped the work of construction by the hurried flight of Messrs. Mercier and Halsted who were Rebels. The former seems to have been a particularly trusted friend of Arnold, who sent him a letter on the 10th October from Dead River by the hands of an Indian named Aeneas, informing Mercier (misspelt Manir) of his coming with 2000 men to attack Quebec, and requested him to forward provisions and supplies to the Chaudière river. Fortunately this letter was delivered to Lieut. Governor Cramahé, and was the first notice received in Quebec of an invasion via the Kennebec. This probably accelerated Mercier's exit from Quebec, if Cramahé's proclamation of 13th September had not already done it. However, nothing more was heard of Mercier until the end of the war, when he petitioned the Governor through his agent Deschenaux for the return of his property.

Halsted was, among other things, in the employ of Major Caldwell at his flour mill, situated at Point Levis near Etchemin at the mouth of the Rivière la Scie. Caldwell says in his letter to Gen. Murray: "On the 8th November they (Arnold's column) got to Point Levy when they took post, as also at my mill. The fellow whom I had employed to put the mill in order, and who was to have had a share in the profits of it, turned out a great scoundrel, put me to great expense, and has proved to be in the rebel interest. He contrived to detain some of my flour, and two hundred bushels of my wheat, which was at the mill, for the rebels' use; he afterwards was appointed their commissary of provisions, and acted in that position till the blockade was raised on the 6th May, 1776. (2nd Series Historical Documents of L. & H. Society.)

Nothing was heard of these two rebels until 1784, when they jointly laid claim to their property, as contained in these manuscripts, demanding from the Government rent for its use since they abandoned it; also compensation for the frame work of the store which Carleton had used for construction of batteries, etc., behind the Hotel Dieu, St. John's and St. Louis Gates. Besides, the Government had built a provision store on the foundations of the former frame work.

Although their letters and their agent Deschenaux's petitions lay unanswered, they pertinaciously hammered away for eleven years; when, soon after invoking the aid of the United States Government by a letter from Philadelphia on 3rd June, 1797, to the Secretary of

State, Col. Pickering, Halsted returned to Quebec to push his claims. They found that the Government would not recede from its position, and finally had to accept the appointment of a valuation committee; who, before acting, caused Halsted, and Mercier by his agents, to give a joint bond for £1,000, to be a guarantee of good faith that they would abide by the decision of the committee. The award, instead of the £1,200 demanded; allowed them 13 years rent, making £855,16,8 from which was deducted the value of the provision store, with the repairs and improvements to the whole property, amounting to £767. This left a balance in their favor of £88.16.8, and the property as it stood on the 4th October, 1797. For six years after its abandonment the wharf, etc., was left to go to ruin until repaired by the Government. Col. Caldwell's opinion of Halsted was verified, for in spite of the bond, Halsted wrote on 6th Oct., trying to get the committee to revise their decision.

With these MSS. the story ends, and from it an instructive comparison may be drawn between the manner in which the Revolutionists treated the U.E. Loyalists and the treatment of those two rebels, who, instead of having their property confiscated, had it returned to them by the British Government, with 13 years rent for its use.

In the 7th Series, published last year, the publication of the roster of Colonel Caldwell's regiment of British Militia that assisted in the defence of Quebec was