



The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada, 1774–1776 by Mark R. Anderson.

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Mark R. Anderson is an independent scholar and former US Army officer. His new monograph¹ concerns the first American invasion of Canada, a neglected topic in both countries. He notes in his preface that his own experience during the second Iraq War gave him the idea for the book and for the use of the word “liberation” in its subtitle. He wisely avoids the potential presentist pitfalls of facile comparisons of the two conflicts, though readers will pick up on the parallels.

Anderson demonstrates that, at the onset of the American Revolution, the Continental Congress failed to appreciate the complex societal differences between Quebec and the thirteen colonies. A significant protest movement within Canada somewhat paralleled the American colonies' dissatisfaction with British imperial arrangements. Those most likely to side with the Americans were the Anglo inhabitants of Quebec who had failed to garner political appointments, licenses to trade with the natives, or opportunities for advancement, as well as those who just wished to voice their discontent through a legislature. The “habitants” (Francophone rural settlers of Quebec) were unhappy as well, because they resented local seigneurial elites. Most of them were illiterate and, given the dearth of newspapers at the time, learned the news of events through Roman Catholic priests.

All this differed sharply from the situation in the thirteen colonies, particularly New England. The Continental Congress was slow to recognize key distinctions. Hence, Anderson observes, John Dickinson's Enlightenment-influenced “Letter to the Inhabitants of Quebec” fell on deaf ears. The Quebec Act divided Canada's community into a (predominantly British) merchant's party of outsiders and the French Party headed by a British governor backed by French and British elites and the Catholic Church hierarchy in Quebec.

After Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen seized Fort Ticonderoga, both New York and Massachusetts felt a need to defend the northern frontier. The British in Canada reacted to American moves along their southern frontier by calling up the militia and imposing martial law. These measures antagonized British malcontents in Canada and, more importantly, the habitants, who often resisted seigneurial leadership of the militia. Once the Americans invaded, however, ethnic divides within Canada proved less critical than pro- vs. anti-government positions.

Despite weak pre-invasion support for the Americans, some Canadian backers began to come forward, encouraged by the restrained behavior of the troops under Brig. Gen. Richard Montgomery: during the initial invasion, the occupying force confiscated only loyalist property and showed respect for the Church. But such efforts to win hearts and minds were hampered by the absence of hard specie to pay for supplies from the locals.

1. His earlier work includes (as editor) *The Invasion of Canada by the Americans 1775–1776: As Told through Jean-Baptiste Badaux's Three Rivers Journal and New York Captain William Goforth's Letters* (Albany: SUNY Pr, 2016).

After the capture of Montreal and Trois-Rivières, a smallpox outbreak and lack of siege guns kept the Americans from taking Quebec. Though some of the local habitants helped by refusing to supply the city, congressional failures to provide replacement troops and create a provisional government for Quebec proved to be serious stumbling blocks.

Brigadier General David Wooster, who had command at Montreal, exemplified American difficulties during the occupation. In 1775, his critics called him too lenient toward loyalists; but in 1776, he commenced to arrest and eject loyalists from Montreal and required Canadian militia officers to switch their commissions to the Americans. A critical issue in Montreal was the requirement to have licenses to reopen the fur trade with the Indians; Wooster believed he needed congressional approval to grant such licenses. His predicament seemed insoluble:

If he let the archloyalists run free, the district's security was endangered; if he detained them, he gave his enemies ammunition to "prove" that patriots were hypocritical "defenders of British rights." The general's core problem, however, was that he had no civil authority to guide and support such decisions—he was in over his head, unaided by Continental authorities, local government, or a civilian judicial system. (209)

Moreover, when fresh recruits did arrive, they proved markedly unlike Montgomery's force in their arrogance, indiscipline, and poor relations with locals.

When Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne's relief force arrived, the Americans panicked and beat a hasty retreat, losing the strategic initiative and any chance either to appeal to the Canadians ideologically or to retain Canadian volunteers, who soon melted away. The subsequent congressional investigation traced these failures to short enlistment periods, lack of hard currency, and smallpox. Anderson stresses the invasion force's lack of political and diplomatic savvy in dealing with the locals. Even when significant Canadian support for the invasion emerged, the Americans allocated too few resources to the mission. The Patriots had to rely on the British party and the habitants in the countryside. In addition, the Canadians were economically averse to the embargo requested by the Americans:

In 1776, Congress analyzed the Canadian debacle only in terms of a traditional military campaign, even though they had intentionally launched a revolutionary war in Quebec—a struggle for the will of a people. The delegates did not investigate political-diplomatic failures and did not question why Quebec Province failed to follow the course of its southern neighbors. The catastrophic outcome of the northern enterprise originated from much more than short enlistments, smallpox, and a want of silver. The United Colonies launched a liberation campaign with scant Canadian support, then executed it with insufficient energy and means to achieve its objectives. (345).

Anderson is careful throughout not to present his subject anachronistically through the prism of either Canadian or American national lenses, which were then, respectively, nonexistent and still nascent.

The book includes two appendices: the first surveys the pertinent sources and explains why those for the habitants are so rare. The author has scrupulously included Canadian voices, albeit with a decidedly Anglo and elitist slant. In appendix 2, "The Polarized Legacy of General David Wooster," Anderson seeks to rehabilitate Wooster, who, he maintains, was scapegoated in his own time and thus wrongly blamed for the bungled campaign in the subsequent historical literature.

Thanks to Mark Anderson's corrective analysis of his subject in both military and political terms, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony* will engage and instruct all students of military history, the American Revolution, and early Americanists in Canada and the thirteen colonies.