

CHAPTER 1



Opening Shots

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—Robert Rogers

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M. Wolff answered him to be careful of himself when he comes again.

—Captain Malartic

WINTER RAIDS

By the time Robert Rogers and his troops got within a half dozen miles of Fort Carillon on March 13, 1758, they had endured three agonizing days and nights of cold and snow. By light and through hours of dark they had trudged on snowshoes up Lake George's ice toward Fort Carillon. The frigid air constantly seeped through the layers of wool capotes, blankets, caps, hunting shirts, and leggings that each man wore. Even the sun could be an enemy. Cloudless skies were usually colder and the sun's rays glaring off the snow-buried landscape was blinding. The nights were worse. Fires were forbidden. At best the men could chop down fir saplings, spread them across the snow, and shiver the dark away atop them. In addition to battling the elements, they were haunted by the constant fear that at any time musket shots and war screams would split the air—followed by a rush of hideously painted Indians brandishing tomahawks and scalping knives. Winter campaigns could rapidly break down most men physically and emotionally. Yet, when successful, they bloodied and demoralized the enemy while bringing back word of his numbers and intentions.

To minimize the chance of ambush, Rogers deployed his men in three parallel columns that marched fifty yards apart, each with advance, rear, and flank guards. Scouts ranged further ahead, from a quarter mile to several miles, depending on how well they knew the forest and the probable danger of colliding with an enemy war party. Rogers ensured that his men were equipped for the challenges ahead. In addition to adequate clothing, each man carried a musket, sixty rounds of ammunition, a hatchet, ice-creepers, snowshoes, and a haversack stuffed with rations; each dragged a sled with extra blankets and equipment. Nearly every one of his 181 troops were rangers, which comprised 11 officers, 11 sergeants, and 150 men among four companies. Joining the expedition from the 27th Inniskilling Regiment were 8 volunteers—3 officers, 3 cadets, a sergeant, and a private.¹

The American rangers, mostly born on the frontier and veterans of many a winter march, were hardened to the icy hell. All were experts at wilderness survival and combat. This was not true of the volunteers who accompanied them. No English winter could match those of upper New York in cold or snow. Many of those regulars most likely cursed themselves for embarking on what they thought would be a grand adventure to prove their virility and to boast of for years to come.

The normally intrepid Rogers was unusually cautious the closer his troops got to Fort Carillon. He was aware that word of his expedition had already reached the French. Just two weeks earlier, Fort Edward's commander, Lieutenant Colonel William Haviland of the 27th Regiment, had ordered Captain Israel Putnam to lead his Connecticut company and some ranger volunteers on a reconnaissance near Fort Carillon. Putnam received the order on February 28 and departed the following day. He and his men got within eight miles of Fort Carillon without encountering any French patrols. Learning that 600 Indians were camped near Fort Carillon, Putnam decided to return. While he and his men were heading north, a French and Indian raiding party captured the rangers' sutler, a Mr. Best, and a deserter near Fort Edward. From them they learned of Putnam's sortie and another one soon to be led by Rogers and 400 troops.

If the French and Indians were now lying in wait, they would encounter less than half the number they expected. The rangers might well be blundering into a death trap. Haunted by that grim possibility, Rogers "viewed this small detachment of brave men . . . with no little concern and uneasiness of mind."²

To lift his spirits Rogers may well have recalled his previous raid of that winter. On December 17, 1757, he led 150 rangers out of Fort Edward

for the brutal trek north toward Fort Carillon. Frostbite afflicted 8 men so badly that they had to turn back. The rest pushed on. By Christmas Eve, he and his men were huddled in the snow several hundred yards from Fort Carillon. Rogers hoped to ambush a French woodcutting party and hurry prisoners back to Fort Edward for prolonged interrogation. Late that morning they nabbed a lone sergeant who was out stretching his legs. As the day wore on, Rogers grew impatient. Around noon when a hunter headed their way, Rogers ordered a few of his men to chase him in hopes of drawing a rescue party from the fort into their ambush.

But the French stayed put. Rogers and his men could do nothing against an alerted garrison that refused to come out and fight. Instead, Fort Carillon's commander, Captain Louis-Philippe Le Dossu d'Hebecourt of La Reine battalion, ordered his gunners to fire grape-shot at the woods where the rangers had crept to snipe at the French soldiers lining the parapet. The rangers scrambled back out of range. All Rogers could do was order the fort's woodpiles torched and the cattle slaughtered. While the rangers were busy burning and butchering, the sergeant escaped. Two other Frenchmen, however, deserted to the rangers. As a parting touch, Rogers scribbled a note and tied it with a leather thong to the horn of one of the eighteen slain cattle. The note read: "I am obliged, Sir, for the repose you have allowed me to take; I thank you for the fresh meat you have sent me; I shall take care of my prisoners; I request you to present my compliments to the Marquis de Montcalm. Rogers, Commandant of the Independent Companies."³ By December 27, Rogers and his men were safely back at Fort Edward.

Upon receiving the "compliments," General Montcalm remarked with wry annoyance that Rogers was a "rogue" who "exudes maybe a bit more spirit than is necessary." The raid, and especially that message, stung French pride. It was later reported that "Rogers, a great partisan, came roving in the neighborhood of Carillon . . . He caused to be attached to one of the oxen a letter addressed to the Commandant of the fort, the contents whereof were an ill-timed and very low piece of braggadocio."⁴

Having savored that fond memory, Rogers might well have recalled another. In early 1758, French lieutenant Wolff was dispatched under a truce flag to Fort Edward with letters from New France's Governor Vaudreuil and General Montcalm to their English counterparts concerning prisoner exchanges. Wolff enjoyed the civilities he received at Fort Edward, especially the banter with his respected opponent Rogers over his latest raid: "Captain Rogers . . . quizzed him on the fresh meat they

let him eat at Carillon; M. Wolff answered him to be careful of himself when he comes again.”⁵ That warning was prescient.

FORT CARILLON

Rogers’s raid worsened a miserable winter for Fort Carillon’s garrison. With the right leaders, troops can endure and sometimes revel in the most wretched conditions. Fort Carillon’s isolated snowbound defenders lacked that vital spark of leadership. Diminishing supplies, equipment, and pursuits gnawed at the soldiers’ morale. Their swelling frustration burst into protests in November 1757, and threatened to do so again throughout that long winter. The officers not only were incapable of alleviating those complaints but may have aggravated them with their own mutterings of dissatisfaction, lethargy, and disdain.

What could be done to rejuvenate enthusiasm at that strategic post? Noncommissioned officers are any army’s backbone. They, more than anyone else, determine whether the troops’ morale will slouch or stiffen—on or off the battlefield. The army’s second in command, General François Gaston, duc de Levis, grasped that simple truth. Montcalm and Vaudreuil eagerly approved his proposal to send among the troops tough but understanding veteran noncommissioned officers. Under the pretext of escorting a munitions convoy of sledges, eight sergeants and eight corporals arrived at Fort Carillon in February and were dispersed to each company. That infusion of vigorous leaders raised the garrison’s morale on the eve of that winter’s greatest military challenge.⁶

But noncommissioned officers are not enough to wring victories from battle. In this area, too, the garrison received a boost in early 1758. A master of wilderness warfare, marine Ensign Jean-Baptiste Levrault de Langis Montegron, arrived at Fort Carillon in mid-January. Then thirty-five years old, Levrault (better known today as Langy), had led numerous raids since the war began four years earlier and had proven to be every bit as audacious and skilled a leader as Rogers.

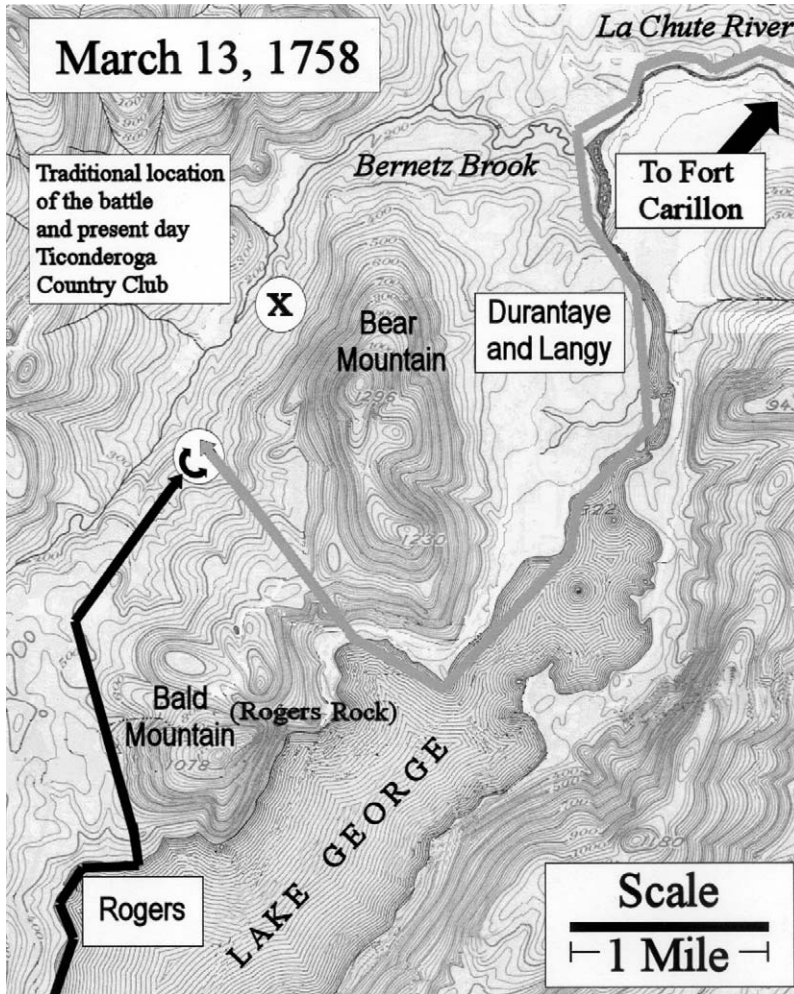
Within days Langy led a raiding party through forty-five miles of deep snows south to the trail near Fort Edward. There he ambushed a fifty-man American patrol on February 8. They killed twenty-three, and brought back five prisoners. Langy led another party out later that month which failed to find any prey. Three or four of his Indians lingered, and “fell in with a convoy of 30 sleighs loaded with provisions, which they plundered and dispersed, taking 4 scalps. They would have

had greater success had one of them not been dangerously wounded."⁷ With the infusion of dynamic leaders like Langy and the noncommissioned officers, the garrison would be ready the next time Rogers appeared at its doorstep.

THE BATTLE ON SNOWSHOES

Rogers and his troops were exhausted when they reached Lake George's north end on the morning of March 13, having trudged out of Fort Edward three days earlier. They had spent the first night at Halfway Brook, roughly six miles from Fort Edward. They hiked nearly twenty miles the second day and shivered away the night at Lake George's first narrows on the east shore. Rogers sent a scouting party three miles up the lake. The scouts returned to report no sign of the enemy. Nonetheless Rogers had scouts patrolling up the lake all night and ringed his camp with sentries. Shortly before sunrise on March 12, Rogers crossed his troops to the west shore and led them north. After three miles, they spotted a dog dashing across the lake toward an island. Rogers sent a patrol to scout the island where the dog had disappeared. They found nothing. He then led his troops to Sabbath Day Point where they rested until dark; scouts carrying spyglasses pushed further up the lake. After the scouts returned with the report of all clear, Rogers roused his weary men. He sent Lieutenant William Phillips and fifteen troops on ice skates up ahead, while Ensign Andrew Ross and a detachment plowed through the snow on shore. Rogers and the main body then followed along the lake's edge.

About eight miles from Fort Carillon, one of Phillips's men skated back with word to halt; the lieutenant thought he had spotted a fire on the east shore. Still cautious, Rogers sent Ensign James White to join Phillips and determine whether it was indeed a camp. An hour later, Phillips and White returned with word that the enemy was there. Rogers called in the rest of the advanced and flanking guards and moved into a thicket on the west shore. They were near the base of the five-hundred-foot eminence then called Bald (Peele) Mountain and later Rogers' Rock. There they hid their sleds and packs. Leaving a small guard, Rogers led his men across the ice to attack the enemy camp. But when they crept close all they discovered were some patches of rotten wood that appeared to glow in the dark. They returned to their cache where they spent the remainder of the night.



Map 3: The Battle on Snowshoes

Actual site of the battle roughly a mile southwest of traditional location, marked "X"

On the morning of March 13, Rogers and his officers decided to head inland through the rugged forests around Bald Mountain into the Bernetz Brook valley. The brook flows north for several miles before angling east to join the La Chute River where it bends toward Fort Carillon. That route was much more laborious but far safer than following the lake shore, where they could be easily spotted. But that route could also be a death trap if the enemy learned of their presence and dashed south along the lake to cut off their retreat.

The rangers shuffled atop the four-foot-deep snowdrifts until noon, when Rogers called a three-hour halt and explained his plan. They would advance toward Fort Carillon around three o'clock, after the French patrols had withdrawn for the day. The troops would be split into two groups. Captain Charles Buckley would command the first and Rogers the second; they would be followed by a small rear guard led by Ensigns James White and Joseph Waite. Should they encounter enemy troops, the first division would provoke a French attack then withdraw into an ambush set by the second. It was a good plan, provided Rogers had reliable knowledge of the enemy's whereabouts and a good bit of luck.

For the most part, Rogers's luck that day could not have been worse. The previous day marine Ensign Durantaye had led two hundred Nipissing Indians from the Sault St. Louis and Two Mountain missions, along with twenty Canadians, through Fort Carillon's gates. Those Indians were itching for the glory of combat, scalps, and loot. Yet it appears to have been divination by an Indian clairvoyant rather than scouts that unveiled Rogers and his rangers. A few days earlier, in the Indian camp near Fort Carillon, "an old sorcerer had assured them they would see the English before long." Then on March 12 that clairvoyant suddenly "began to prophesy. He said that the English were very close to Fort Carillon and that they should go out immediately and attack them. The other Indians were so convinced by this example of inspiration & went to the commandant's quarters to inform him that they wanted to set out the next day as they were sure they would come across an English raiding party." Canadians with long exposure to Indian ways did not take such visions lightly. In their mind, such prophecies may well have been the Devil's voice but nonetheless they were often prescient. Fort Carillon's commander, Captain d'Hebecourt, "although astounded by their idea, was very pleased with it as a means of getting rid of them."⁸ For most frontier commanders, Indians were at best a nuisance, devouring supplies and making incessant demands while conducting few raids or even scouting missions.

Cutting loose the Indians became urgent when two Abenaki scouts hurried in around noon on March 13 with word they had discovered the tracks of an enemy force. D'Hebecourt gave permission for Langy and Durantaye to lead the Indians and half the garrison on a patrol down Lake George. Within minutes around a hundred Indians and Canadians, led by Durantaye, grabbed their muskets and surged from the fort. Not long after, a second force of nearly two hundred Indians and

French commanded by Langy set forth. The two forces followed the trail along the La Chute River from Fort Carillon to Lake George and then down the ice to Bald Mountain's north end where Langy caught up to Durantaye. Scouts dashed back with word of "numerous human footprints on the ice" at Bald Mountain's south end. Durantaye and Langy "immediately decided to go back into the woods through which the English had to pass."⁹

The French leaders correctly surmised that the enemy was following the Bernetz Brook route north.¹⁰ With Durantaye's force leading and Langy's several hundred yards behind, they hurried west over the trail that cut from Lake George to the Bernetz valley, between Bald Mountain and Bear Mountain. Once in the Bernetz valley Durantaye and Langy expected to pick up the enemy trail heading toward Fort Carillon or Fort St. Frederic. What they could not know was that Rogers had called a three-hour halt and thus was just on the other side of the mountain. Tired from their own strenuous hike and not expecting to reach the enemy's rear for hours—if at all that day—the Indians and French probably paid little attention to the surrounding forest. They advanced straight into a trap.

Ranger scouts spotted Durantaye and his men as they wearily filed across a broad meadow on the east branch of the upper Bernetz Brook. The scouts hurried back to Buckley, who ordered his men to take cover and sent a runner back to Rogers. Rogers and his men closed with Buckley's. Shedding their packs and snowshoes, the rangers sprawled in a thin crescent facing northeast. It was a good position. Bald Mountain guarded their right flank and the small stream their left.

Rogers recalled that they tensely "waited till their front was nearly opposite to our left wing, when I fired a gun, as a signal for a general discharge . . . whereupon we gave them the first fire, which killed above forty Indians; the rest retreated, and were pursued by about one half of our people. I now imagined the enemy totally defeated, and ordered Ensign [Gregory] McDonald to head the flying remains of them that none might escape." Unfortunately, the rangers committed a grievous error. Determined to rip scalps and run down any survivors, they dashed after the enemy without reloading. "We soon found our mistake," Rogers admitted. He continued,

The party we attacked were only their advanced guard, their main body coming up, consisting of 600 or more Canadians and Indians; upon which I ordered our people to retreat to their own ground, which we

gained at the expense of fifty killed, the remainder I rallied, and drew up in pretty good order, where they fought with such intrepidity and bravery as obliged the enemy (tho' seven to one in number) to retreat a second time; but we, not being in a condition to pursue them, they rallied again and recovered their ground, and warmly pushed us in front and both wings, while the mountain defended our rear; but they were so warmly received that their flanking parties soon retreated to their main body with considerable loss. This threw the whole again into disorder, and they retreated a third time; but our number being now too far reduced to take advantage of their disorder, they rallied again, and made a fresh attack upon us. About this time we discovered 200 Indians going up the mountain on our right . . . to attack our rear, to prevent which I sent Lieutenant Phillips with eighteen men to gain the first possession and beat them back; which he did, and being suspicious that the enemy would go round on our left and take possession of the other part of the hill, I sent Lieutenant [Edward] Crafton, with fifteen men, to prevent them there.¹¹

A half dozen other troops, including two volunteer gentlemen, joined Crafton's party.

With the repulse, Langy ordered some of his men to fire on the enemy front while he dashed through the snow around their right flank with most of the others. The French and Indians pressed their attack, slipping through the trees and firing. The sheer weight of attackers finally broke the rangers. Rogers and twenty men retreated to a hill where the remnants of the parties led by Phillips and Crafton tried to join them. Crafton succeeded. Phillips called out to Rogers that he was going to surrender; his troops were exhausted, outgunned, and cut off, and a French officer offered him quarter. It proved to be a fatal mistake, because the Indians, "having discovered a chief's scalp in the breast of an officer's jacket, refused all quarter."¹² Those men who surrendered "were inhumanely tied to trees and hewn to pieces, in a most shocking and barbarous manner."¹³

The slaughter of Phillips and his men gave the remaining rangers a chance to escape. Rogers admitted that "I now thought it most prudent to retreat."¹⁴ Nearly every one of his men was either killed or captured—144 scalps and 7 prisoners, while the French suffered 2 marine cadets, 1 Canadian, 15 Iroquois and an Abenaki wounded, and 5 Iroquois and 1 Nipissing killed; many of the Indian wounded would later die.

Some of Rogers's troops escaped the battle only to surrender later. Captain Henry Pringle of the 27th wrote of the hellish days he spent wandering the forests with two others: "we marched all night and on

the morning of the 14th found ourselves entirely unacquainted with the ice . . . After struggling thro' the snow some hours, we were obliged to halt to make snowshoes . . . Here we remained all night without any blankets, no coat, and but a single waistcoat [sleeveless coat] each." The following morning they became lost in the snowbound forest west of the battlefield and for the next four days they plodded on in what they prayed was the direction of Fort Edward. On the fifth day "the wind pierced us like a sword; but instead of abating it increased together with a freezing rain, that incrusted [*sic*] us entirely with ice . . . We made a path round a tree and there exercised all night, though scarcely able to stand, or prevent each other from sleeping. Our guide notwithstanding repeated cautions, straggled from us where he sat down and died immediately." On their seventh day of wandering they finally emerged from the forest. But to their horror they discovered that for days they had plodded in a circle. It was not Fort Edward but Fort Carillon before them. At death's brink, there was no choice but to give up. They "approached with a white flag; the officers [from Fort Carillon] ran violently towards us and saved us from a danger we did not then apprehend; for we were informed that if the Indians, who were close after them, had seized us first, it would not have been in the power of the French to have prevented [us from being killed or carried away]." Captain d'Hebecourt "and all his officers treated us with humanity and politeness, and are solicitous in our recovery."¹⁵

What was Rogers's fate? The French initially thought that he was among the dead. Vaudreuil later wrote that Rogers "left on the field of battle his coat, and even the order he received from his General, which gave me every reason to believe that he had been killed, [more so] as an Indian assured me he had himself killed him."¹⁶

Rogers remained very much alive. It took four days for him and two score other frostbitten survivors to reach Fort Edward: "Our snowshoes breaking and scrambling up mountains, and across fallen timber, our nights without sleep or covering, and but little fire, gathered with great fatigue, our sustenance mostly water, and the bark and berries of trees . . . a freezing rain . . . encrusted us with ice."¹⁷

Upon his return, Rogers was greeted with both condemnation and accolades. Rogers admitted only to 131 dead while claiming his troops "killed 150 of them, and wounded as many more."¹⁸ Most likely to downplay the decisiveness and humiliation of his defeat, Rogers exaggerated the enemy's losses as grossly as the number arrayed against him. Throughout the war he had stirred controversy with his personal

daring and brilliant leadership, offset by an abrasive personality, the jealousy of his lessers, and rumors of financial corruption. Critics were primed and loaded to fire at any of his setbacks. The Battle on Snowshoes gave them their elusive target.

But Rogers had his supporters. An admirer described that “gallant & bloody” battle as rendering “considerable proof of his bravery and conduct. But envy that arch fiend will not allow him much merit.”¹⁹ After nearly four years of defeats, the British army was in desperate need of heroes and daring leaders. Brigadier General Howe was one such leader who recognized those qualities in others. Long inspired by Rogers’s tireless bravery and exertions, Howe celebrated the Battle on Snowshoes as an example of British valor. He invited Rogers to his cozy headquarters at Albany, asked him to raise five new ranger companies, and, on April 6, 1758, promoted him to major.

Rogers returned to Fort Edward to command six ranger companies, of which four were composed of provincial volunteers, one of Stockbridge Indians, and the other of Mohican Indians. The provincial rangers now received a standard uniform of forest green regimental coat, waistcoat, and knee breeches, and dark blue bonnet. They would be ready for General Abercromby’s campaign up Lake George that summer.

FOLLOW-UP RAIDS AND THWARTED PLANS

After spending a freezing night on the battlefield, the French and Indians returned triumphantly to Fort Carillon. Following native etiquette, Captain d’Hebecourt gathered the Indians and covered their dead with presents. He then promised them that Governor Vaudreuil would generously reward their great victory once they reached Montreal. The seven rangers captured at the Battle on Snowshoes yielded diverse and at times conflicting information. But the most important information was of a planned winter expedition by several thousand troops pulling mortars on sledges across Lake George’s thick ice against Fort Carillon’s under-strength garrison. They also shared the rumor that the summer’s most powerful British offensive would be against Louisbourg, although Abercromby had also targeted campaigns against Fort Carillon—if the winter expedition faltered—and Fort Duquesne. Other prisoners nabbed that winter and into the spring corroborated these reports.²⁰

Durantaye and his troops escorted the rangers back to Montreal, bringing them before Vaudreuil and Montcalm on March 27. Upon

interrogating them, the governor and general viewed with fatalism the word of a pending attack on Fort Carillon. Very little could be done to assist the fort in the short term. There were simply not enough sledges to convey all the supplies necessary to sustain enough troops to defend the fort successfully. Only a fraction of the number of necessary troops could be sent to counter the enemy. If the British expedition was as large as the prisoners claimed, any handful of reinforcements that reached Fort Carillon would most likely end up captured. Under the circumstances it was best to do nothing and hope that some mix of the harsh weather, British bumbling, and French élan would defeat the enemy expedition. Montcalm was confident that "the good guard and vigilance of d'Hebecourt, who commands there, will prevent" the fort's capture.²¹

The intelligence and hope were both correct. While few relished a winter campaign, the British were planning a winter thrust against Carillon. The plan's genesis was in a November 1757 reconnaissance of Fort Carillon by two intrepid regular British officers, Captains Matthew Clerk and James Abercrombie, escorted by Captain John Stark and a ranger company. They nabbed several French prisoners and deserters who revealed that the winter garrisons of Fort Carillon and Fort St. Frederic were only 350 and 150 troops, respectively. The harsh supply shortage would prevent the French from reinforcing either fort until May at the earliest and possibly June.

Upon their return to Fort Edward, Clerk and Abercrombie mulled what they had learned. They excitedly concluded that a winter expedition of 3,000 picked troops, the rangers, and a small battery of mortars and howitzers against those forts could capture them both. In December they submitted their proposal to His Majesty's commander in chief for North America, Major General John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun. Loudoun enthusiastically embraced the proposal, recognizing that the capture of those two forts would "forward matters greatly the next campaign."²² He ordered the officers to work out its details. Major General James Abercromby inherited the strategy in March after he received Pitt's order to replace Loudoun. Rogers and his rangers would play a key role as the advance guard for that campaign, atop their raiding missions to harass Fort Carillon and gather intelligence.

Had the plan for a lightning strike been implemented the war might well have been significantly shortened. That year's summer campaign could have begun by around mid-July from Fort St. Frederic, fifty miles north of the actual jump off at Lake George's south end. Abercromby would have faced the combined armies of Montcalm and Levis at Fort

Isle aux Noix at Lake Champlain's north end. Whether Abercromby would have handled that campaign any differently than the historic one is, of course, impossible to say.²³

Too much work, nature, and lethargy combined to abort the plan's execution. An essential element of that winter campaign was making enough snowshoes to supply more than 3,000 troops. That job was assigned to the rangers. But they had little time to make snowshoes in between raids up Lake George. A thaw on January 3 flooded Rogers Island, where they were encamped across from Fort Edward, and washed away their supplies and what snowshoes they had made. They resumed the tedious work. Then late-winter heavy snows made it impossible for that force to advance even on snowshoes. But by early April, the thaw of snow and ice rendered the snowshoe issue moot.

The troops, supplies, and bateaux were available at Fort Edward and nearby posts. Why did General Abercromby not transport them over to Lake George and lead them north as soon as the ice melted? Nothing in the existing records explains the lapse. A fleeting opportunity was lost.

Valor was not confined to Rogers and his rangers. While nearly all British and many French officers passed the winter huddled over cards, rum, and bawdy talk in their barracks, there were exceptions. Snow and bitter cold no more inhibited French, Canadian, and Indian war parties than they did American rangers.²⁴ All winter, blanket-clad war parties plowed south through the drifts to attack settlements and outposts along the American frontier. In doing so they obeyed Montcalm's order for "Canadian officers to go out nearly all winter with parties of thirty or forty savages."²⁵

In New York, the Mohawk River valley was the prime target for raids from the French fort and mission at La Presentation on the St. Lawrence River. In November 1757, Lieutenant François-Marie Picote de Bellestre's party destroyed German Flats, a rich village fattened by trade with the Iroquois and just across the river from Fort Herkimer. The men were all butchered and the women and children dragged into captivity, with around a hundred and fifty settlers lost altogether. Later expeditions wiped out other hamlets in the region. Near Fort Herkimer, Captain Claude Nicolas Guillaume Lorimier de La Riviere's war party wiped out a patrol of forty troops and took three prisoners. Lieutenant Wolff led an Abenaki raid on the Massachusetts frontier. Colonial Lieutenant Charles Deschamps de Boishebert et de Raffetot commanded nearly seven hundred Acadians, Canadians, and Micmacs on the St. John's River to harass the British in Nova Scotia.²⁶

But, as always, the most fiercely contested region was that from the southern end of Lake Champlain to the upper Hudson River. All winter long and into the spring Captain d'Hebecourt sent out expeditions. At one point eight bands of French, Canadian, and Indian troops prowled the forests around Fort Edward.²⁷ May was an especially active month. The thick green foliage made ambushes especially effective and tracking difficult. Langy was the most active of all the raiding leaders. Early that month he and sixteen Abenakis brought back four scalps and thirteen prisoners from near Fort Edward. Instead of resting on his laurels, Langy led another war party out of Fort Carillon on May 17. This time he returned empty-handed.²⁸ In early May, Lieutenant Dufay of La Reine battalion led a party that brought back three scalps taken in an attack on a supply convoy to Fort Edward. On May 30, Lord Outelas and Chief Kisensi led forty Nipissings in an attack on five British and eighteen Iroquois prowling along the La Chute River; they took two Indian and two British scalps and captured two British and seven Indians. When the Nipissings arrived at Montreal on June 4, their Iroquois allies greeted them with the demand that they immediately torture and kill the prisoners. Those Iroquois undoubtedly sought vengeance for their own losses in earlier raids. Vaudreuil immediately held a council with the Iroquois and Nipissings, rewarded them all generously, and then dispatched them on yet another raid. He warned them to return within twenty-five days. The governor hinted that he had an even bigger raid in mind that would require not only these loyal warriors but many more from other tribes.²⁹

Apparently not all who lusted to sally forth against the British got their chance. Lieutenant Pean wintered at Fort Carillon, where he studied an Iroquois dialect. Upon returning to Montreal, he angrily wrote to War Minister Belle Isle that "it was out of my power, My Lord, to obtain permission from M. de Vaudreuil to organize during the winter any detachment against the enemy, although that was the sole motive which induced me to ask for leave to winter near the English. I have even been refused permission to march at the head of some Indians, whose confidence I acquired and who asked me to lead their war party." Why would a governor who was otherwise so enthusiastic about dispatching war parties to attack the British block the efforts of a skilled officer? Pean attributed it to jealousy: "there is no anxiety in Canada to employ the French in such a manner as to furnish them occasions for distinguishing themselves, these favors being reserved for the children of the soil."³⁰ His enforced inactivity, however, did not

prevent the French lieutenant from requesting a promotion from the Canadian governor.

As for British raids, other than Rogers and his rangers, Mohawk allies were most frequently sent against Fort Carillon. At least one of those raids scored a bloody victory. In early May, Captain "d'Hebecourt having need of timber to cover the storehouses, had caused the banks of [lower Lake Champlain] . . . to be reconnoitered where the timber was to be cut; that he . . . sent a detachment thither of 45 men in 3 bateaux, one of which, containing 17 men, was fired upon on approaching land by 40 hostile Indians, who took or killed [all]. . . the other two bateaux prepared to fire and to return to the fort." That same Mohawk war party took "a gunner and a soldier of the Colony who had gone to hunt, notwithstanding the prohibition of the officers."³¹ In separate raids, rangers killed a Canadian and captured three Germans near Fort Frederic, and captured a gunner and two soldiers near Fort Carillon.³²

Raids when successful not only bloodied, disrupted, and discouraged the enemy. More importantly, they brought back word of the other's power and plans. What Governor Vaudreuil and General Montcalm learned would force them to abandon their own plan and concentrate their forces to defend against what seemed impossible odds.