

## Introduction

On its own merits, Canadian notary Jean-Baptiste Badeaux's record, commonly known as the "Journal of the Operations of the American Army during the Invasion of Canada in 1775–76,"<sup>1</sup> warrants a long-overdue translation to the English language. Badeaux's document, written in Three Rivers (Trois-Rivières), Quebec, is one of three principal French Canadian journals of this period, all written by notaries, which have served as invaluable primary sources for the various historical examinations of this American invasion. These three accounts were published in their original French, in an 1873 collection edited by Hospice-Anthelme Verreau.<sup>2</sup> The most prominent of these, the "Eyewitness Account of the Invasion of Canada by the Bostonians during the years 1775 and 1776,"<sup>3</sup> by Simon Sanguinet, is anchored in that author's hometown of Montreal, the political center of the American occupation. Another account, "Extracts from a Memoir by M. A. Berthelot on the Invasion of Canada in 1775,"<sup>4</sup> from Quebec City's Michel-Amable Berthelot Dartigny, provides a French Canadian perspective originating inside the capital—the besieged focal point of the military campaign for six months of the invasion. In a period when approximately 75 percent of French Canadians were functionally illiterate, these journals demonstrate their

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1. "Journal des Opérations de l'Armée Américaine Lors de L'Invasion du Canada en 1775–76."

2. Hospice-Anthelme Jean-Baptiste Verreau, ed., *Invasion du Canada, Collection de Mémoires Recueillis et Annotés* (Montreal: Eusebe Senecal, 1873).

3. "Le témoin oculaire de la guerre des Bastonnais en Canada dans les années 1775 et 1776."

4. "Extraits d'un mémoire de M. A. Berthelot sur l'invasion du Canada en 1775."

authors' remarkable writing skills—the notarial skills they required for documenting local civil and judicial activities were easily transferred to journal keeping during such momentous times. Badeaux's account, however, stands out from the others.

Most importantly, Jean-Baptiste Badeaux provides a uniquely objective view of the invasion. While he repeatedly and explicitly clarified his staunch loyalist stance in his journal, Badeaux, unlike his vehemently partisan counterparts Sanguinet or Berthelot, made a remarkable effort to simply state the facts surrounding events. He avoided the temptation to put all of the invading Continentals' actions in the worst light, and he deliberately weighed the veracity and bias of secondhand reports received from outside his home district. Additionally, Badeaux offers the reader occasional glimpses of his sly wit, and a sprinkling of self-deprecation, giving his journal a warmer, more intimate feel.

One obvious drawback of Badeaux's account is that he was distant from the most momentous events in the campaign, since he largely remained in the Three Rivers District. His relative remoteness from the center of action is an important consideration, however; it gave him opportunity for thoughtful deliberation of the circumstances, and less personal emotional investment in key developments. While his journal is undeniably dependent on others' accounts and rumors of activities in the principal seats of action—the Richelieu River Valley, Montreal, and Quebec City—Badeaux's thoughtful interpretation of those events adds a value of its own. Additionally, readers and historians can gain valuable insight by examining what was happening away from the front-lines: How did the Continentals and Canadians get along in day-to-day interactions? How strong was Canadian support for the royal government . . . or for the Continentals? How did the invasion impact the lives of urban and rural Canadians, of all political persuasions, away from the battle lines? Badeaux's journal is important to understanding all these significant “background” aspects of the American foray into Quebec.

Among the many episodes in Jean-Baptiste Badeaux's journal is a particularly interesting professional relationship that developed during a two-month period of the occupation. The notary observed, on February 8, 1776, that “a detachment under the command of Captain William Goforth . . . arrived to take possession of the city” of Three Rivers. The same Captain Goforth, with substantial extant correspondence from the period, wrote to the colonies from Three Rivers about his “[h]aving

been ordered by his Excellency Genl. Wooster on the 3d Feb with a small party to take the command of this place.” When Goforth asked for Badeaux’s assistance, the Canadian notary recorded his thoughts about cooperating with the enemy, in his journal: “I could not refuse him, especially in the circumstances in which we found ourselves.”<sup>5</sup> By Badeaux’s account, the two established an effective, cooperative partnership to properly administer Three Rivers and the surrounding district, characterized by mutual respect, in the middle of a divisive, revolutionary invasion.

Yet Captain William Goforth warrants examination for more than just his effective Three Rivers District military governorship described in Badeaux’s journal. The captain also serves as an important, representative revolutionary American leader—both in New York politics and through his military activity. William Goforth’s thoughtful correspondence offers some particularly interesting elements, and his dedication to rights, his country, and his family shine through in his writing. The intended recipients of the captain’s correspondence reflect an importance and reach beyond his second-tier position as a New York City patriot activist, political agent, and industrious artisan. Notable leaders such as Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and Alexander McDougall received Goforth’s letters. And, as a particularly reliable reporter from the Quebec theater, Captain Goforth’s observations carried unusual weight with these movers and shakers; and extracts from his letters, reprinted in contemporary newspapers, helped inform home-front New Yorkers of the Canadian campaign’s progress and challenges.

Like Badeaux, Goforth was a distant reporter of most action. He missed the initial phases of the invasion’s Richelieu Valley campaign overture, and was later forced to rely on secondhand accounts from the decisive Quebec City siege lines. His relative distance from the scene of action, in both time and space, gave him time to reflect—something generally lacking in other military accounts. Additionally, no other American source so thoroughly recorded the unfortunate, occasionally violent, and significant events that directly affected the Americans’ ability to attain their Canadian objectives as Continental reinforcements transited the 150-mile span of otherwise quiet and hospitable parishes

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5. February 18 entry, Badeaux journal.

that sat between Montreal and Quebec City. Another intriguing aspect of Goforth's correspondence is that the captain was clearly thinking at a strategic level, beyond the strict operational bounds of his specific military post. In his missives, he offered diverse solutions for the many challenges that the thirteen colonies faced in their Canadian venture.

Finally, Badeaux's journal and Goforth's correspondence have greater value side by side, as parallel narratives. The Canadian notary's interpretation of events and accounts of the Continental captain's leadership contrast with Goforth's fairly matter-of-fact narration. Badeaux makes frequent reference to "the Commander," Captain Goforth, while the New Yorker is notably silent about his Canadian counterpart. However, in comparing their records, it is clearly evident that the notary played a critical role in shaping the captain's views of the larger Canadian situation. Together, in comparison and contrast, they make an even more significant source for understanding the political, cultural, and behind-the-scenes military factors that affected the American invasion of Canada in 1775–76. Through the personal observations and musings of a lifelong French Canadian official, committed to royal rule, and the writings of an educated New York artisan, serving as a mid-level officer in the "rebellious" Continental Northern Army, the reader receives insight into more than just a military campaign. Badeaux and Goforth offer a valuable cultural vignette of the American Revolution and Canadian-American relationships of the late eighteenth century.