

The Valcour Bay Research Project

June 30, 2001

The American Battle Line Artifact Recovery



The American Fleet at Valcour Island. P. Randle
Courtesy of Public Archives of Canada

Welcome

Art Cohn, Director

Maritime Research Institute, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

Co-Principal Investigator, Valcour Bay Research Project

Remarks

The Honorable Ronald B. Stafford
State Senator, 45th District, New York

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator, Vermont

The Honorable Hillary R. Clinton
United States Senator, New York

Edwin Scollon

Co-Principal Investigator, Valcour Bay Research Project

— Historical Background —

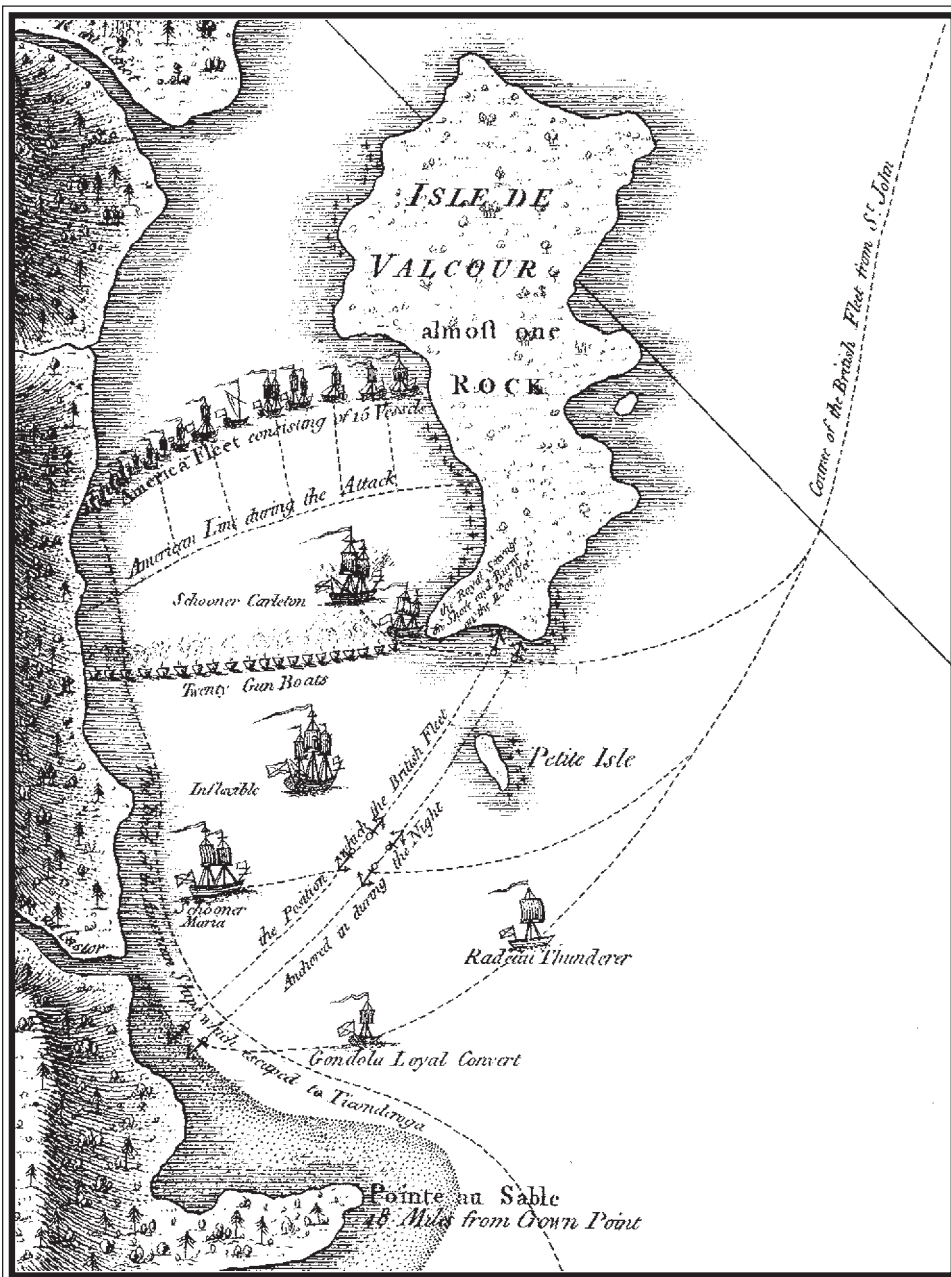
On October 11, 1776, General Benedict Arnold commanded an American fleet of fifteen fighting vessels and engaged the British Navy in perhaps the most important naval contest of the American Revolution. After an intensive five-hour battle with heavy casualties on both sides, darkness finally ended the conflict. With some 60 men killed and wounded on the American side and three-quarters of their ammunition gone, Arnold and his officers executed a daring nighttime escape past a British blockade. Two days later, on October 13th, the British fleet caught up

with Arnold and a second running battle was joined. Outgunned and surrounded, Arnold deprived the British of battle prizes by intentionally destroying five of his own vessels in the spot known today as “Arnold’s Bay,” and escaped back to Fort Ticonderoga on foot.

Only four of his original fifteen vessels survived the three-day affair. At its conclusion, control of the strategically important Lake Champlain invasion corridor had shifted to the British. Sir Guy Carleton, Governor General of Canada, content with achieving control of the lake, broke off the attack and returned to Canada for the

winter. During the Spring of 1777, the British moved their army and navy south past the hastily abandoned American Fort Ticonderoga and Mount Independence and launched an invasion of the Hudson Valley. Here, at Saratoga, General John Burgoyne and his army were defeated on the field of battle by a strong American force. Burgoyne was forced to surrender his army and the tide of the American Revolution changed. More than a century later, naval historian Alfred Thayer Mahan perhaps said it best when he wrote:

“The Little Navy on Lake Champlain was wiped out, but never had any force, large or small, lived to better purpose or died more gloriously. That the Americans were strong enough to impose a capitulation of the British Army at Saratoga was due to the invaluable year of delay secured by their little Navy on Lake Champlain.”



The Battle of Valcour Island. William Faden. LCMM Collection

What happens next?

The recovered artifacts will be put under the care of LCMM conservators and stabilized for their journey to the museum's conservation lab at Basin Harbor, Vermont. The conservation process is expected to take approximately one year to complete. The public will be able to see the artifacts during their treatment. Once the artifact conservation is completed the material will be placed on public exhibit. For the first six months the artifacts will be incorporated into LCMM's exhibition, *Key to Liberty: The Revolutionary War in the Champlain Valley*. In October 2002, the artifacts will cross the lake for exhibition at the Clinton County Historical Museum in Plattsburgh, New York.



Institutions Supporting the Valcour Bay Research Project:

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum
Clinton County Historical Association
New York State Museum
New York State Office of General Services
New York State Police
New York Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau
Navy Historical Center
The Lake Champlain Basin Program
American Battlefield Protection Program
The Department of Defense Legacy Program
The Office of Senator Patrick Leahy
The Office of Senator Hillary Clinton

Sponsors for the Artifact Recovery Event:

The Lake Champlain Transportation Company

This event would not have been possible without the extraordinary support of the Lake Champlain Transportation Company, celebrating their 175th year of providing transportation services to the Champlain Valley. We would especially like to thank Ray Pecor, Trey Pecor, Henry Sorrel, Monica Lalime, B.J. Bombard, Bill Dumbleton, John Paul and Russell Fox.

United States Coast Guard, Burlington Station

BMCS James Steudle, BM1 Robert Wooten, MK1 Ed Anderson, BM3 Stephanie Junczak, FA Jamish Vega, SN Denny Doyle

Breakwaters Restaurant
On the Burlington Waterfront
Kim and Al Gobeille and team

Shadows and Light Design
Eric Bessette and Erin Juhl

The New York State Police

Historic Lakes
Jim Millard

Barrett's Tree Service
Gary Barrett and Family

The Valcour Bay Research Project Dive Team:

Edwin Scollon, Terry Aubin, Tony Tyrell, Dan Carpenter, Steve Nye, Dan Rock, Tim Aubin,
Jerry Forkey, Todd Bissonette, Matt Booth, Bill Leege, Roger Harwood, Phil Lamarche, Desi Recicot,
Adam Kane, Pierre LaRocque, Bill Atkinson, Erick Tichonuk, Chris Sabick and Art Cohn.

Following the recovery, more information can be obtained on the official Valcour Bay Research Project web sites at:
www.lcmm.org and www.historiclakes.org.

