

History of New Brunswick

Chapter VII

The agents of the Continental Congress were very active in Nova Scotia, but nowhere more so than on the Saint John River and in the Chignecto district. On the St. John river was a large and fertile territory, peopled by men from New England, who were nearly all in sympathy with the rebels, and capable of being easily defended against any British force that was then available. The Chignecto district was then justly regarded as the key to the defence of Nova Scotia, and it was also a country of great resources, and peopled largely by New Englanders, who desired the overthrow of British power. On the St. John the most active promoters of rebellion were Parson Noble, Jacob Barker, Dr. Nevers and Israel Perley. Noble wrote a letter to General Washington, setting forth the great importance of the capture of Western Nova Scotia, and offering to assist in that measure in any way that he could be useful. Washington had no men to spare for this enterprise, but Noble and his associates were so full of zeal that they thought they could place the St. John river under the Rebel Government without outside help. Accordingly a meeting was convened at Maugerville on the 14th of May, 1776, at which most of the inhabitants were present. A series of eight resolutions were passed, condemning the claim of the British Parliament to pass laws binding on the colonies, and expressing the desire of the people to place themselves under the government of Massachusetts, and their readiness, with lives and fortunes, "to share with them the event of the present struggle for liberty." It was also resolved to appoint a committee of twelve, who were authorized to make application to the Massachusetts Congress for relief, and to conduct all matters, civil and military, in Sunbury County until further regulations could be made. Another resolution bound all the inhabitants to obey the orders of this committee, and to pay whatever sums might be necessary to carry this project into execution. Thus did the people of Maugerville and the adjacent townships issue their declaration of independence and withdraw themselves from under the protection of the British flag.

These resolutions were drawn up in a paper addressed to the Massachusetts Assembly and signed by one hundred and twenty-five inhabitants. Only thirteen of the residents of the river refused to sign it, and of these, nine resided at the mouth of the river. The meeting also voted that "we will have no dealings or connection with any person or persons for the future, that shall refuse to enter into the foregoing or similar resolutions." It would appear from this that the system of "boycotting" was in force in America long before Captain Boycott's day. Two members of the committee, Asa Perley and Asa Kimball, were selected to go to Boston, to present the Maugerville document to the Assembly at Boston. A resolve was passed by that body ordering the Commissary General to deliver to them one barrel of gunpowder, three hundred and fifty flints and two hundred and fifty pounds of lead, and they were authorized to purchase forty stand of arms. This is apparently all they got from their brethren in Massachusetts, so that they seem to have parted with their allegiance at a very cheap rate.

The previous February Washington had sent a letter to the Indians of the St. John river and other eastern tribes, asking their friendship and support in their contest with the British government. The effect of this letter was to set those red-skinned vagabonds to plundering all persons who were thought to be favorable to the government, and the Maugerville people were afraid that when the Indians had done all they could against the "Tories," the other residents of the river might share the same fate. Messrs. Perley and Kimball were therefore directed to represent this to the Massachusetts Assembly, and to ask that some person of consequence, be sent among the Indians to keep them quiet. The fact that Washington was tampering with the eastern Indians at so early a period in the Revolutionary struggle, causes the fulminations of Lord Chatham and others, against the employment by the British of Indians in the war, to sound rather absurd. The Americans employed all the Indians in the war that they could persuade, to take their side. The trouble was that they had treated the Indians so badly, but few of them were willing to assist them.

Among the settlers at Chignecto was Jonathan Eddy, a native of New England, and a person of considerable energy and courage. He was chosen to represent the township of Cumberland in the Legislature of Nova Scotia, and seems to have stood well with the settlers among whom he lived. Eddy was from the first a sympathizer with the revolutionary party, and he succeeded in persuading most of his neighbours to adopt his opinions. He formed the bold design of seizing Fort Cumberland and holding it for the rebels, and early in the summer of 1776 took his departure for Massachusetts in company with two of his neighbours, William Howe and Samuel Rodgers. Eddy declared to the Massachusetts Assembly his ability to capture Fort Cumberland with but little assistance, and he obtained from them a commission as Lieutenant Colonel and authority to raise troops for the Cumberland expedition. Eddy expected to obtain men at the various settlements, so that when he left Boston he was accompanied only by two men, William Howe and Zebulon Rowe, both residents of Cumberland. At Machias he obtained about twenty men and a few more at Passamaquoddy. He then went to Maugerville where he was joined by a captain, a lieutenant and twenty-five men, and also by sixteen Indians. This brought his whole force up to seventy-two men, and, embarking in whaleboats and canoes, Eddy's little army sailed up the Bay towards Fort Cumberland. At Shepody, Eddy landed and captured Captain Walker and twelve men of the Fort Cumberland garrison who were stationed there. Eddy then proceeded to Memramcook where he induced a number of French Acadians to join him. From thence they marched to Sackville, where he met the local rebel committee who were much disappointed to find Eddy's force so small and unprovided with artillery. Nevertheless, believing that Eddy would soon receive a reinforcement under Colonel Shaw, they joined the invaders to the number of more than one hundred. Eddy's next exploit was to capture a sloop laden with provisions for the garrison, and having on board a sergeant and twelve men. The capture of this vessel by the rebels was not known in Fort Cumberland for some hours after it was effected, and a number of men, among others Captain Barron, the engineer of the garrison, and Mr. Eggleston, the chaplain, were captured when on their way from the fort to the vessel. Fort Cumberland was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Gorham of the Loyal Fencible Americans. Its condition was extremely weak, the garrison, including the sick, numbering only about 200 men. The artillery consisted of three nine-pounders and three six-pounders, imperfectly mounted. Ammunition was very scarce, and the capture of the provision sloop had reduced the supplies of the garrison to a very low ebb. Gorham was not capable of meeting a resolute attack from a well trained and well equipped force, but Eddy's

means of attack were wholly insufficient for the task he had undertaken. His whole force, if we are to believe his own statement, did not exceed 180 men, and he was without cannon and therefore forced to rely on an assault. On the 10th November Eddy sent Colonel Gorham a formal summons to surrender, and on this being declined, attempted an assault on the fort on the night of the 12th. This assault failed, and it could not have been very much pressed, for Eddy states his whole loss to have been only one Indian wounded. Eddy's men attempted to set fire to the buildings in the fort by setting fire to houses outside them, the wind favoured their purpose, but their efforts all failed owing to the vigilance of the garrison. This warfare was continued for about a fortnight, Colonel Gorham in the meantime making several attempts to communicate with the authorities at Halifax. At length, after a number of failures owing to his messengers being intercepted by the enemy, Lieutenant Dixon, a half pay officer, volunteered for this dangerous service and succeeded in reaching Windsor in an open sail boat. The result was that on the 27th of November, His Majesty's ship "Vulture" appeared off the harbour, and the same day Major Batt and Captain Studholm landed with Captain Branson and his company of marines. On the following day Captain Pitcairn landed with the remainder of the force which came in the "Vulture," numbering ninety officers and men. Early next morning this force, with a detachment from the garrison, attacked the rebel camp and completely routed them, pursuing them some four or five miles up the road to Baie Verte. In the pursuit a number of houses belonging to the rebels were burned. A detachment of one hundred men was ordered to proceed to Westcock and Memramcook to cut off the retreat of the rebels and destroy their boats, but before the men could march, a letter was received from Mr. Charles Dixon of Westcock stating that most of the people of that district who had been in arms were convinced of their error and desirous of surrendering to the King's mercy. Upon this Colonel Gorham issued a proclamation offering a pardon to all rebels who should come in and surrender their arms within four days. The only persons excepted from the benefits of this offer were Eddy, Allen, Howe, Roe and Rodgers, for whose apprehension large rewards were offered. Upwards of one hundred persons took advantage of this offer of amnesty and surrendered within the time limited. They claimed that they had been coerced into joining Eddy, by fear of the Indians of whom he had several hundreds with him. This excuse may have been valid with respect to some of the inhabitants, but there is too much reason to believe that the majority of them acted voluntarily, and that Eddy's expedition was brought about by their own intrigues.

Eddy fled from Fort Cumberland to Maugerville by the old French portage road from Chignecto to the St. John, the streams being then frozen over. He was accompanied by the Cumberland Rebel Committee of seven and by 37 other inhabitants of Cumberland, In addition to these, there were his own men from Machias, the contingent of 27 from the St. John River, sixteen St. John Indians and thirteen French Acadians under Capt. Boudrot. They formed a large party and they suffered great hardships in traversing the forest at that inclement season of the year, for it was December. Eddy does not tell how long it took his party to reach Maugerville, but it is probable that the whole month of December was thus employed, for he fled from before Fort Cumberland on the 29th November, and it was the 3rd January before his report of his expedition, to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, was written at Maugerville. The people of that township who had a few months before dedicated their lives and fortunes to what they called the cause of liberty, were obliged to maintain these Cumberland refugees during the whole winter, while the families of the rebels who had been left in Cumberland were in a very miserable condition.

Eddy's invasion was a ridiculous fiasco, but it had its tragic side in the ruin and exile of so many persons, who had no need to take part in a rebellion, and in the suffering of their families.

The authorities at Halifax were on the alert in the spring of 1777 to counteract the work of the rebels. The report of the Attorney General showed, that upwards of two hundred persons in Cumberland had been in arms against the government, and it was resolved to tender the oath of allegiance to all in that district who had not taken it. Three justices of the peace were sent to Truro, Onslow and Londonderry to tender the oath of allegiance to all the settlers there. Only five persons in three places were willing to take the oath, and it was resolved that the others should be proceeded against. On the St. John River the state of affairs was still more serious, for the people had been in rebellion for almost a year, they had sent a detachment to assist in the capture of Fort Cumberland, and during the winter they had sheltered the Cumberland rebels and their leader Colonel Eddy. Evidently it was necessary that the authority of the King should be re-established on the St. John. To effect this, Colonel Gould, a member of the council, was sent to the St. John early in May in the ship of war "Vulture." On his arrival he found a boat there from Machias, on board of which were a number of men under the command of William Howe, a Cumberland refugee, and John Preble. There were also two schooners laden with supplies for the Indians which were intercepted. Howe and Preble and their men fled to the woods but their boat was taken. Gould immediately sent a letter to the inhabitants of St. John offering them a pardon and the possession of their properties on condition of their taking the oath of allegiance. This letter was written on the 9th May and on the 12th a reply was sent by the inhabitants accepting Gould's terms. In the course of a few days the oath was taken by all the inhabitants of the St. John, with the exception of three who fled the country. The Mougerville people excused their rebellious conduct by the plea that they had been induced by threats to submit to the government of Massachusetts, and Gould pretended to believe this too transparent story, and the St. John people, as a body, gave no more trouble to the government during the war.

John Allan, of whom mention has already been made, again appears upon the scene at this time. Allan fled from Cumberland, where he had resided, in August, 1776, and on arriving at Machias met Eddy, who was on his way to Nova Scotia to make his attempt on Fort Cumberland. Allan, after vainly trying to induce him to give up his rash expedition, proceeded to Boston, and before the end of the year, was at Washington's head quarters on the Delaware. He laid his plans before the Continental Congress and was appointed superintendent of the Eastern Indians with the rank of a Colonel of Infantry. The object of this appointment was to enlist the St. John and Passamaquoddy Indians on the side of the rebels, and to obtain control of the St. John river, which having an interior line of communication with Maine, could always be reinforced from that quarter, and held by a sufficient force. This might have been accomplished if Allan had been more prompt in his movements. If he had reached St. John before Colonel Gould, he might have been able to confirm the weak-hearted residents of the river in their rebellious views and obtain their active support. Had this been done, it would have required a large force to win back the lost territory. As it turned out Allan reached the St. John after Colonel Gould had departed, when it was too late to accomplish anything, for the inhabitants had renewed their allegiance to the King. With three or four exceptions they kept aloof from him and he did not seek their company.

Allan's whole force, with which he prepared to seize the St. John River numbered just forty-three men, according to his own statement, and he expected a reinforcement under Col. Shaw which when it reached him, numbered only forty-five soldiers. More than half of Allan's men were former residents of Cumberland, who had fled with Eddy the previous autumn. He waited at Machias until he heard of the departure of Col. Gould and the "Vulture" and then proceeded to St. John, which he reached on the 2nd June. His journal written by his Secretary Lewis F. Delesdenier is still extant and contains a very full account of all his movements. His first act on reaching St. John was to make Messrs. Hazen and White prisoners. These gentlemen were afterwards released and again taken. On proceeding up the River, Lewis Mitchell, a man whose active loyalty was notorious, was captured. A few days later Mitchell contrived to escape and, hastening to Halifax, gave the alarm to the authorities which brought a British force at once to the St. John River. While on the river Allan resided at Aukpaque, the Indian settlement, and most of his time was taken up with long winded palavers with the red men. These wily sons of the forest were much more anxious to obtain goods from both sides than to fight for either; throughout the war they acted the part of greedy mercenaries. Most of Allan's men were kept at the mouth of the River for the purpose of preventing the British from landing there. The British arrived in force on the 30th of June and immediately drove Allan's men away, killing and capturing a number of them. The British naval force on that occasion was under the command of Capt. Hawker of the "Mermaid," and he had with him the sloops "Vulture" and "Hope." The Americans fled up the River and were pursued by the British. Allan was obliged to escape into Maine by way of Eel River and the St. Croix Lakes, arriving at Machias after a toilsome journey of more than three weeks. Allan was accompanied not only by his own men, but by most of the St. John Indians with their families, the whole numbering about five hundred persons, men, women, and children. It was Allan's aim to keep the St. John Indians under his control, hence the exodus, but the result was disappointing, for they achieved nothing for him. Soon after Allan reached Machias, that place was attacked by a small squadron, under Sir George Collier, and the mills and magazines there destroyed, but the place was not captured, owing to the lack of troops, which were refused by General Massey, on the plea that he could not spare them from the defence of Halifax. This was a serious blunder, for Machias continued to be a rebel nest for the remainder of the war. If it had been occupied, as it might easily have been, the boundary line between New Brunswick and Maine would have been very different from what it is now.

The outrages committed by American privateers on the coast of Nova Scotia, at this time, and throughout the war, were very discreditable, and partook of the nature of piracy rather than legitimate war. No settler who lived near the coast was free from danger. At any time he was liable to have his house plundered and burnt, his cattle stolen, and his fields ravaged by these robbers. Their depredations extended to every part of the province. Mr. Davidson's extensive fishery on the Miramichi was broken up by them, and the same fate befell all the fishing establishments on the North Shore. In the Bay of Fundy they committed great outrages in spite of the efforts of the fleet to prevent them. The establishments of Messrs. Simonds, Hazen and White were plundered more than once, and Mr. Simonds removed to Maugerville to escape their visits. All the settlers of the township of Conway suffered from their depredations and most of them were forced to abandon their farms. Under the circumstances it became necessary for the Halifax authorities to take some action for the purpose enabling the St. John settlers to live in peace. Accordingly, late in the autumn of 1777, Major Studholme was sent to the St. John River with fifty men, and

ordered to establish himself there. He took with him a frame block-house, and four six-pounders, and took possession of a high and rocky hill on the east side of the harbour on which he erected a fortification, which he named Fort Howe, in honour of the Commander in Chief of the forces in America. Studholme who was an able man and full of energy, speedily made his position secure. A short time before his arrival, a privateer, mounting eight guns, commanded by one Crabtree, had been at St. John, and had robbed the truck house of Messrs. Simonds, Hazen, and White, of everything it contained, including the pledges given by the Indians. These were carried to Machias, and delivered to Col. Allan. Crabtree was again sent to St. John to complete the destruction of the settlement, but before he got there Studholme had arrived. Crabtree fled as soon as he became aware of Studholme's presence, for robbery was more to his taste than fighting, and St. John was no more molested. Studholme remained at Fort Howe, became identified with the new province which he assisted in establishing, and is buried in Kings County, in the parish which is named after him.

Early in the spring of 1778, Studholme was reinforced and his post was now regarded as secure from any attack. His only anxiety now, was in regard to the attitude of the Indians, who were constantly being stirred up to do mischief, by the agents of Colonel Allan. During the summer, they sent Studholme a letter which amounted to a declaration of war, but owing to the efforts of Colonel Franklin, the Indian agent, and their priest, Father Bourg, they were kept quiet and induced to make a treaty of peace with the British, at Fort Howe, in September, 1778. Upwards of \$2,000 worth of presents were given the Indians on that occasion, and a large sum additional was expended in entertaining them. In this treaty were included the Micmacs of the Miramichi and other places on the North Shore, as well as the Malicetes of the St. John. Allan still continued his efforts to detach the Indians from their alliance with the British but without success. The Indians remained quiet during the rest of the war. Allan's presence at Machias was also felt in one or two insignificant raids that were made on the settlers up river. In the autumn of 1779, it was reported, that a party of Indian rebels from Machias had captured a vessel at Mougerville, and plundered two or three of the inhabitants, after which they made off. These attacks were to be expected so long as the Indians from Machias could reach the Upper St. John by way of Eel River. To guard against them and protect the settlements, a block house was built at the mouth of the Oromocto River and a small garrison placed in it. It was named Fort Hughes, after the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, who had succeeded Arbuthnot. It was placed under the command of Lieutenant Constant Connor.

The St. John River now became an important part of the line of communication between Halifax and Quebec. The use of this route was first suggested by Lieutenant Governor Arbuthnot to General Haldimand, who was in command at Quebec. This route was utilized until the end of the war, not only for despatches going from Quebec to Halifax, but for communications between Quebec and the British army in New York. The persons chiefly employed in the arduous work of carrying these despatches, were Lewis Mitchell and Louis Mercure, a French Acadian. It is worthy of note, that a message sent by this route, by Lieutenant Connor from Oromocto, gave General Haldimand the first information of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis.

The story of the war of the Revolution is one which no loyal citizen of the British Empire can regard with any pride, and which contains many episodes at which

honest Americans must blush. The bad faith displayed by Congress in refusing to carry out the terms of the surrender of the British army at Saratoga, shows that there were not many honest men in that famous body. Instead of being sent to England as had been promised, they were marched to Virginia and kept there in camp for several years, to the great financial benefit of Thomas Jefferson whose plantation was in the neighbourhood. The treatment of the Loyalists by their Whig neighbours was also another disgraceful feature of the war. These people were persecuted and harassed in every possible way, driven from their homes, their property destroyed or confiscated and subjected to personal violence, and in many cases to imprisonment. As a result of these persecutions large numbers of Loyalists came to Nova Scotia during the war. When Boston was evacuated in March, 1776, about fifteen hundred Loyalists embarked in the transports and landed at Halifax. Some of these people returned to the Colonies and took part in the contest on the side of the King, but many remained in Nova Scotia. From that time until the end of the war refugees were constantly arriving in Nova Scotia and most of them took up their abode in that province. When the Loyalist emigration at the close of the war took place, they sought to make a distinction between themselves and the Refugees, who had not remained in the thirteen colonies to fight it out. It was almost a matter of reproach to be a Refugee, and the descendants of Loyalists and Refugees kept up the argument for two or three generations. In my opinion, there was no just ground for this distinction. Whether a man was a Loyalist or a Refugee depended largely on the colony he lived in. In Massachusetts, and indeed in most of the New England States, the Loyalists were so much in the minority that they had no chance to make head against the current. There was nothing for them to do but to escape to some other land where their opinions would not expose them to the danger of being tarred and feathered or perhaps hanged. In New York, on the other hand, the Loyalists were numerous, they were protected by the King's armies and they could remain in the country without danger, at least on equal terms with their enemies. The fact that they were Loyalists and not Refugees was due to their environment as much as to their own merits. They were, as men generally are, the creatures of circumstances, and the men who were exiled from New York, in 1783, are entitled to no more praise for their Loyalty than the men who fled from Boston seven years before.