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Lew Taylor

After having read Thomas A. Desjardin's *Stand Firm Ye Boys From Maine*, a book about the 20th Maine Infantry under Colonel Joshua Chamberlain and the Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War, this reviewer was excited to find that Desjardin had also written a book about Benedict Arnold's expedition into Canada in 1775. *Through A Howling Wilderness: Benedict Arnold's March to Quebec, 1775* is a rather small book, and it proves to be an easy read.

Desjardin held a position as a Historic Site Specialist for the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, and he showed his expertise with his descriptions of not only the personalities involved in the expedition and battle, but also his knowledge of the terrain that they encountered. As he did with *Stand Firm*, Desjardin put together a very well researched book. Some could consider it a collection of research and less an interpretation of history as it is only 216 pages long, but contains 371 notes and over 60 references in the bibliography.

The eleven-chapter volume begins with a description of the experiences of Simon Fobes, a young soldier from Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and his homecoming, which set the mood of the book with an account told by a soldier who withstood the hardships of the expedition. "Simon Fobes was home from the war and had a tale to tell of one of the greatest military expeditions in American history" (p. 2). Desjardin then provided a brief history of the city of Quebec and the possibility of Quebec becoming the "fourteenth colony," since its status was, like the other thirteen, a North American colony under British rule (p. 5).

The next four chapters address the American expedition to Quebec, while the last three discuss the battle itself and the return trip. Desjardins extensively quoted Kenneth Roberts' 1938 book, *March to Quebec: Journals of the Members of Arnold's Expedition*, which, as its title stated, used the surviving journals of the members of the expedition. The journals contained in Roberts' book covered most of the existing knowledge of the march to and from the battle for Quebec. Desjardin's book wove those same journals into a narrative—complete with the inaccuracies and exaggerations one would expect in the personal journal of a soldier—many of whom expanded upon their wartime "notes" before publishing

after their return home.

While Desjardin's description of the battle is excellent, his portrayal of the expedition to and from Quebec can be a bit tedious to read. This was especially true for the reviewer who really was not interested in how an army traveled to a battle and then back home from it, but whose interest rested in the details of the battle. However, in this particular case, the reader found the expedition especially informative since Desjardin based that portion of his book on the information gleaned from the journals.

For the reviewer, the high point of this book was the epilogue, titled "America's Hannibal." In it, Desjardin stated that the failure to capture Quebec actually helped the Americans win the Revolutionary War. If Benedict Arnold had not been such a menace to Quebec during the first year of the war, the forces that England diverted in response to his threat might have gone, instead, to Boston or New York, and, thus made it much harder for General George Washington to succeed (p. 197). Arnold's attempt to capture Quebec helped lead the British forces under General John Burgoyne into a trap at Saratoga almost two years later. Following the Battle of Saratoga, Burgoyne praised Arnold as "instrumental in the colonial victory," and Dr. James Warren, in a letter to Samuel Adams, stated, "Arnold has made a march that may be compared to Hannibal's or Xenophon's" (p. 198).

The final part of the epilogue dealt briefly with Arnold's anger with those he felt tried to damage his reputation. Because of this anger, Arnold plotted with Major John Andre to turn over West Point to the British. Arnold narrowly escaped arrest by Washington for the conspiracy, and fled to the security of the British lines. The British rewarded Arnold's act of treason with a commission into the British army and a payment of 10,000 pounds sterling. Arnold moved to London, and later returned to Virginia to lead British troops against his former comrades, there and in his home state of Connecticut. After a four-year stay in New Brunswick, Canada, Arnold returned to England, where he died in 1801 (p. 199).

If Desjardin's objective was to write a short, concise account of Arnold's 1775 Quebec Campaign, he succeeded admirably. *Through a Howling Wilderness* is an adventure narrative that tells of the hardships and the heroism of the men who took part in the campaign and their fight against not only the enemy, but also illness and the forces of nature. This book would be a welcome addition to the library of anyone who was familiar with the campaign, or the library of a student just beginning his/her studies of the American Revolutionary period.