

BENEDICT ARNOLD, BOTH HERO AND TRAITOR

by Eugene E. Miller

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Thank you Mr. President, Honored Guests, Ladies, and Fellow Collectors.

Let me begin with the promise that the formal part of my talk this morning will be brief, and it will not involve Winchester's - Colt's - Remington's - or Smith & Wesson's - in fact, I'm going to talk not about guns, but about a man - one who was both hero and traitor - Benedict Arnold.

I was recently privileged to have a picture story appear in "Down East Magazine," a Maine publication. Because the state of Maine figured prominently in the Arnold Expedition of 1775, and because I happen to own many of the items used by the soldiers from this expedition, it seemed only natural to offer the pictures of this part of my collection to the readers of this journal.

When speaking about the Arnold Expedition, we wonder a great deal about the man who led it. Benedict Arnold was in his time, both hero and traitor, the essence of this statement can best be described by another event of historical significance ... the oration of Marc Anthony upon the event of the death of his friend Caesar ... He said, and I quote, "The evil that men do, lives after them, the good is oft interred within their bones." As Caesar's good deeds were forgotten as he struggled to maintain his power, so it was with Arnold. His deeds of courage and heroism were, for the most part, completely overshadowed by his single act of treason, causing his name to be

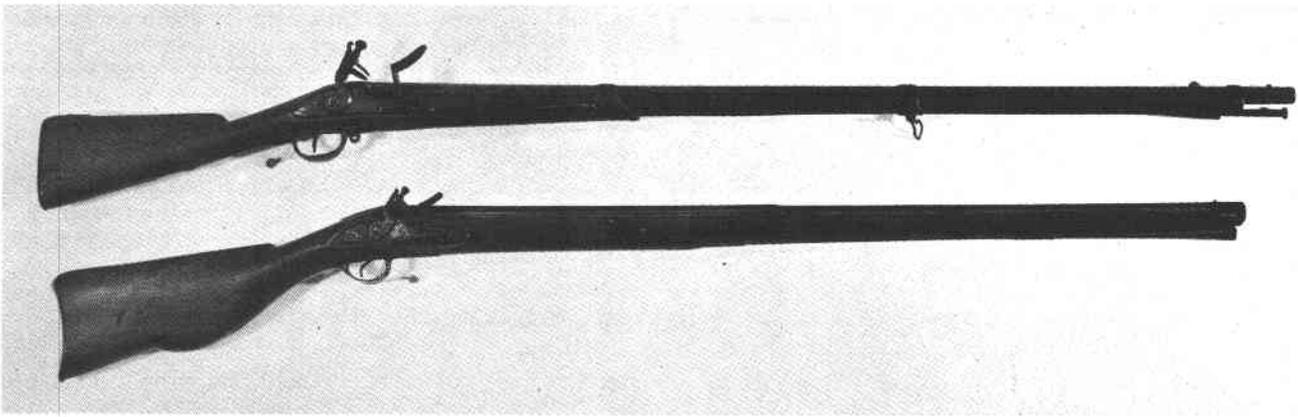
synonymous with infamy. However, were it not for Arnold's brave deeds at Ticonderoga, Quebec, and Saratoga, the course of American history may have been dramatically different from facts as they stand.

It is the Arnold Expedition through the wilderness of Maine and Canada that I speak to you about today.

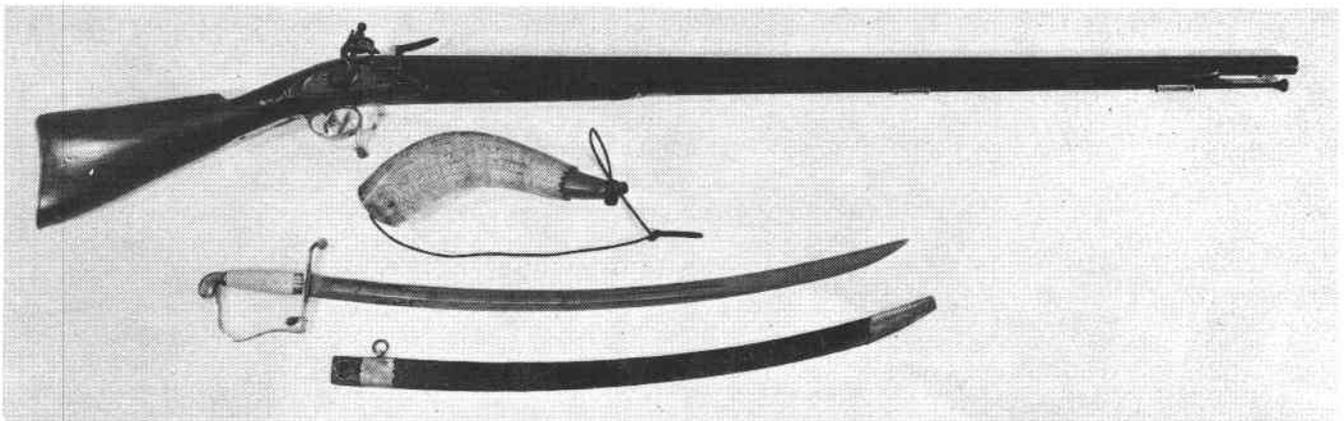
The invasion of Canada was one of the very earliest strategic moves in the war of the Revolution. In the Fall of 1775, 1100 soldiers under the command of Benedict Arnold attempted to cross 600 miles of wilderness through Maine and Canada to storm Quebec. Their purpose was to deprive the British of their most important base North of the 13 colonies. The capture of Ft. Ticonderoga and Crown Point by the New England troops under Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold opened the way for an expedition to be dispatched by way of Lake George and Lake Champlain to the St. Lawrence, and Congress in the summer of 1775 authorized such an undertaking.

The invading force was to be composed of militia raised in New England and New York, with Major-General Schuyler having mobilized at Albany, was rushed forward early in July with an army fluctuating from 500 men to 1500 men up Lake George and Lake Champlain to Ft. Ticonderoga. From that base he was expected to begin the expulsion of the British from Canada by taking Chambly on the St. John's River and then St. John's and Montreal. However before he had an opportunity to meet the enemy in force, he was compelled by illness, in middle September, to resign the command to Brigadier-General Richard Montgomery, a former British Officer, who had sold his commission after the French and Indian War, to retire near Albany, New York. Meanwhile General Washington, who had recently taken command of the Colonial troops besieging Boston, had communicated to congress, with his approval, a project for the support of Schuyler's movement by another expedition to be sent against Canada, as it were, from the rear while General Carlton, who was Governor-General of Canada was engaged with an active enemy in his front. This second army was to attempt by rapid marches to surprise and capture Quebec; and if this failed, it would at least be able to join forces with the Champlain expedition and give valuable assistance in the reduction of the all important fortress.

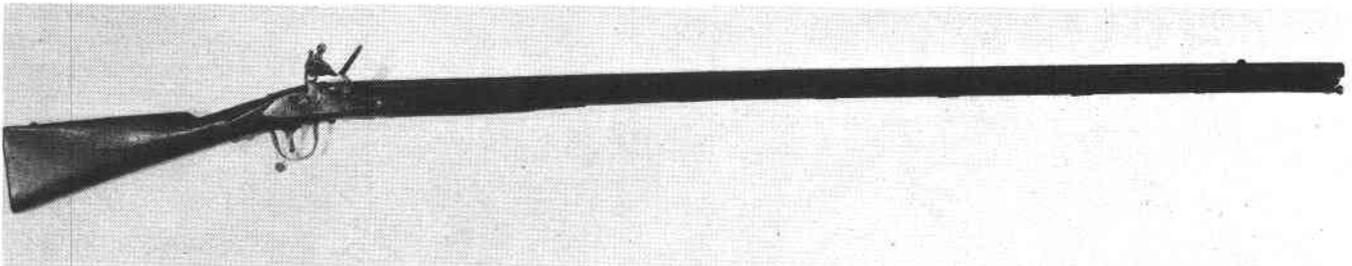
The expedition thus resolved upon; Washington chose Benedict Arnold as its commander, and Congress promptly voted him a Colonel's commission in the Continental Service. The young officer entrusted with this responsible command was born at Norwich, Conn. on Jan. 14, 1741. As a youngster, Arnold ran away from home to serve in the French and Indian Wars of 1756, but was promptly returned home at the request of his parents. In 1775 his military ambitions had not left him, and he became a popular young captain of one of the two companies of the "Governor's Guards," which was the crack militia organization of Conn.



TOP: FRENCH CHARLEVILLE MILITARY MUSKET, Model of 1746, BOTTOM: COLONIAL MILITARY MUSKET - During the French and Indian War Period of 1750 and after, these muskets hung in the Garrison House in Kittery, Maine for one hundred and seventy-five years. These muskets were used on the Arnold Expedition to Quebec, Canada.



COMMITTEE OF SAFTY MUSKET AND BATTLE GEAR OF CAPT. SAMUEL BURNHAM OF ARUNDEL (Now Kennebunk) MAINE. BURNHAM WAS A SCOUT FOR MAJOR ROGERS RANGERS, 1759. THIS MUSKET REPRESENTS A VERY FINE EXAMPLE OF A MUSKET OF THIS PERIOD. THE MUSKET CONFORMS EXACTLY WITH THOSE SPECIFICATIONS SET FORTH BY THE VARIOUS COMMITTEES OF SAFTY TO GUN CONTRACTORS. THE WORK IS TYPICAL OF JONATHAN BLAISDALE OF AMSBURY, MASS.



INDIAN TRADE MUSKET - Circa 1750

This extremely rare Indian trade musket, in fine, unfired condition was found in the storeroom of an old Hudson Bay Trading Post on the St. Lawrence Penninsula, encased in a protective covering of moose tallow. These trade muskets were allotted to the Hudson Bay Co. by the British East India Trading Co., to be used in trade for furs from the Indians. In trading, the method used in determining a fair exchange value was to stand the musket on end. This height had to be matched against an equal height of stacked beaver pelts. This accounts for the extra long length of the musket. Note the unusually large trigger guard, which was purposely made this way for the use of a glove in firing.

This particular musket, in this fine condition, is perhaps the only one of its type to be found outside of a museum. Most of the surviving trade muskets saw extremely tough service, were cut down, and most were converted to percussion. Overall length is 67-1/4". Maker - R. Wilson & Son, London—Contractor to the N.W. Trading Co, and the British East India Trading Co. Both barrel and lock are marked R. Wilson & Son.

He was rather short, thickset and very muscular. He had dark hair, light blue eyes, a ruddy complexion and was considered quite handsome. He was an excellent horseman, a good sailor and an excellent shot with either musket or the pistol.

General Washington had just arrived from Virginia to take command on July 2, 1775 and Arnold, on his return from the Lakes, met him for the first time. Washington recognized the young officer's merit from the outset, and always fairminded and hampered by no local prejudices he became his admirer and friend. The duty to which Arnold was assigned was one of great responsibility, for many patriots, including Washington himself, were inclined to believe that, if this expedition was to stand any chance of success, the right leader must be chosen.

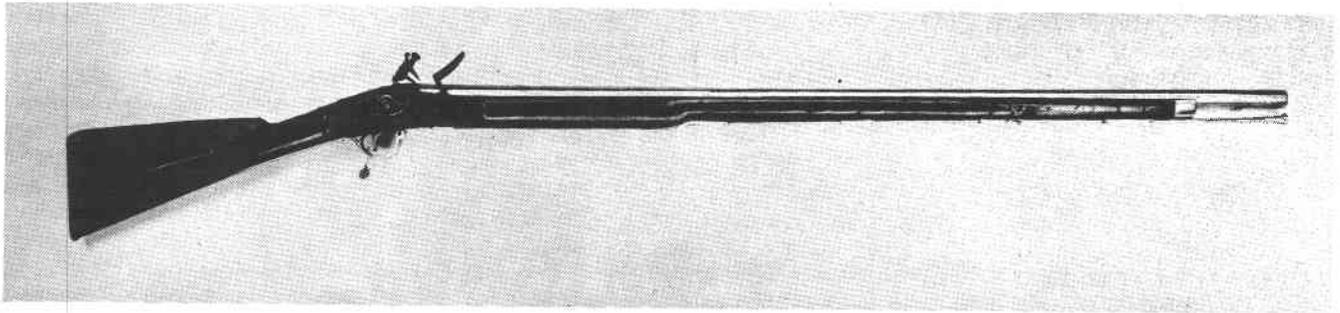
There were three principal ways by which an entrance into Canada might be sought, that is besides the Champlain route over which Schuyler was advancing. One was by the Connecticut River, second was the Salmon River and the St. Francis, which would carry the invader to Lake St. Peter, about 100 miles below Quebec, and the third way was that by the Kennebec and the Chaudier. This was the route decided upon by Washington. There were other expeditions before this, including the campaign of 1756-59 of the English during the French and Indian War, but no previous expedition had been obliged to follow a path so dimly traced through almost unexplored wilderness, or to meet the hardships and perils which were in store for Arnold's men. Colonel Arnold, who, with 1100 men consisting of New England Infantry, some volunteers, a company of artillery, and three companies of riflemen started his march on the 13th of September.

It is almost impossible to conceive the labor, hardships and difficulties which this detachment had to encounter in their progress up the rapid stream of the Kennebec. Frequently interrupted by falls, where they were obliged to land and carry the boats upon their shoulders until they surmounted them, through a country wholly uninhabited, with a scanty supply of provisions, the season was cold and rainy, and the men dropping out every day with fatigue, sickness and hunger. Arnold exhausted very effort to alleviate the distress of his men, but it was almost impossible to procure provisions for them. Near the end of the march, their hunger was so great that the dogs belonging to the men of the army were killed and eaten. Many of the soldiers actually boiled and devoured their cartridge boxes and mocassins.

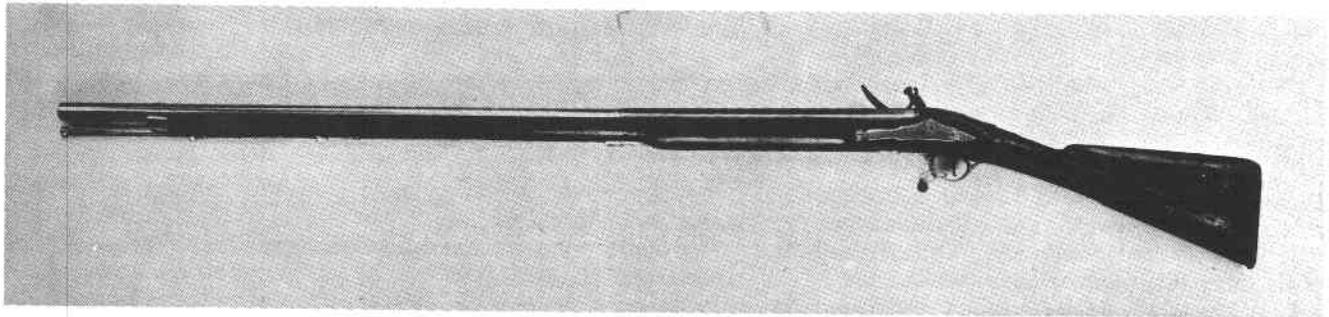
Arnold and his army eventually arrived at Point Levi, opposite the town of Quebec, but because of information which the British had reserved, due to the treachery of the Indian Eneas, to whom Arnold had entrusted a letter to General Schuyler, the boats which he expected to find there to transport his troops across the river had been removed, and the enemy was no longer in a state to be surprised. Arnold was not to be deterred from attempting something against the town. He calculated strongly upon the defection of the inhabitants, and having supplied himself with canoes, he cruised the river in the night and gained possession of the heights of Abraham. Here, though he had no artillery, and scarcely half the number of men that composed the garrison of the town, he made a bold attempt to try the loyalty of the enemy's troops by sending a flag to summon them to surrender. However, no message would be accepted, and Arnold was compelled to retire to more comfortable quarters, where he awaited the arrival of General Montgomery. It was on Dec. 1st, that Richard Montgomery arrived in Quebec from Montreal, with a handful of tired, sick and worn men, and after clothing the half-naked troops of Arnold with garments he had brought with him, he now took command of the whole

American Force, which amounted to only 900 men. It was on the last day of the year 1775, in the thick gloom of an early morning, while the snow was falling fast, and the cutting wind whisking the snow about in heavy drifts, that Montgomery, at the head of his New York troops, proceeded along the narrow road leading under the foot of the precipice from Wolf's Cave in the lower town of Quebec. At the entrance of the street crouching beneath the lofty rock of Cape Diamond, the British had built a block house, its guns pointed carefully so as to sweep the approach. This post was manned by Captain Barnsface, with a few British seamen, and a body of Canadian Militia. As Montgomery approached in the darkness along a roadway encumbered with heaps of ice and snow, he encountered the line of stockades, part of which he sawed through with his own hands, and at length having opened a passage, he rushed forward to storm the blockhouse and when they were within a few paces, the match was applied to the touch-hole, and a hurricane of grape-shot swept the pass, and the gallant Montgomery was immediately killed. With him were killed Captains Cheeseman and McPherson, his Aides-de-camp, and several of his other foremost soldiers. The rest of the divisions panic stricken at witnessing the fall of their leaders, gave up all hope of success, and retreated in confusion back to where they had started from.

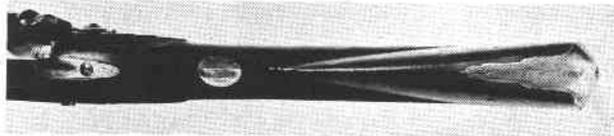




RIGHT HAND VIEW OF A BRITISH OFFICERS FUSIL. This Musket Originally the property of Colonel Ephraim Williams and so inscribed. He was killed at Lake George, N.Y. on Sept. 8, 1755 in what was to become known later as the "Bloody Morning Scout."



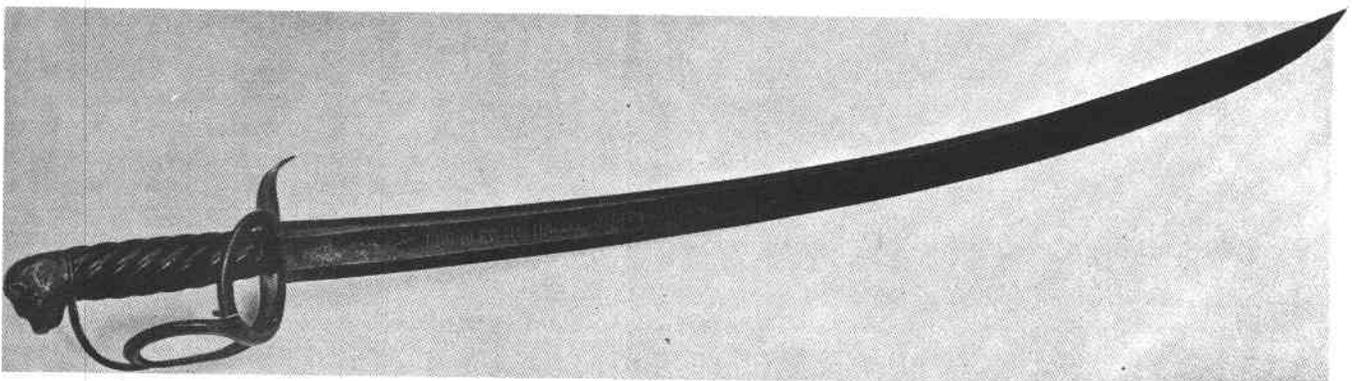
LEFT SIDE OF BRITISH OFFICERS FUSIL



TOP OF BUTT STOCK SHOWING COMB AND ENGRAVED BUTT-PLATE OF OFFICERS FUSIL



DETAILS OF ENGRAVED TRIGGER-GUARD OF OFFICERS FUSIL



CALAVARY OFFICERS SWORD, CIRCA 1778. Inscribed "GOD BLESS THE UNITED STATES (on the right side), OF AMERICA" (on left side.)

Arnold meanwhile, at the head of the other division, had pushed along through the snowdrifts to a narrow street called "Soo-O-Mat-A-Lo" (Sault au Matelot). Defended by a two-gun battery and here, while urging his men forward, he was completely disabled by a musket wound in the knee, and carried back to the hospital where he learned that Montgomery had already fallen. Morgan now succeeded to the command, and fought so bravely with his riflemen, that in spite of the storm of grape-shot and musket balls, he carried the first barrier and hurried to the assault of the second. Here, a severe conflict took place, the small body of Americans in the heart of a hostile city, for three hours bravely kept up the attack. They stormed the barrier, and were preparing to rush into the town when they were intercepted by the bayonets of a powerful detachment sent out by Carlton to take them in the rear and cut off their retreat, thus compelled to surrender themselves as prisoners of war. The force that surrendered consisted of one Lieutenant Colonel, two Majors, eight Captains, fifteen Lieutenants, one Adjutant and one Quartermaster, four volunteers, 300 rank and file. The whole American loss of killed and wounded at Cape Diamond and Soo-O-Mat-Lo (Sault au Matelot) as this was where the major conflicts took place, was about 160. The British loss was only about 20 killed and wounded.

Thus ended the famous assault of Quebec, which desperate as it would seem nevertheless might have succeeded, had not Montgomery perished at the very beginning, and that his column forced to retreat. After the disastrous repulse, Arnold retired with his small remaining force to a distance of about three miles from Quebec, and here he endeavored to maintain during the rest of the winter a sort of a blockade, while Carlton remained quietly within the walls of the city, awaiting the arrival of troops from England.

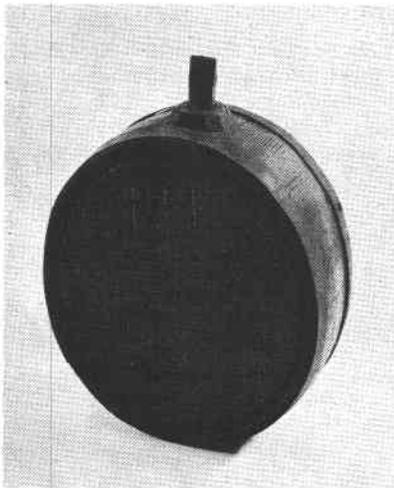
Congress continued to send re-inforcements, until the army was at length built to three thousand men, and General Wooster arrived to take command when Arnold unwilling to serve under this officer, obtained permission to retire to Montreal. The rest of the campaign was but a constant succession of disasters.

History was later to record the lives of many of Arnold's men, but certainly it was Arnold's leadership which enabled these men to finally reach Quebec. Though he failed in his mission, Charles Knight, in his history of England wrote, that Arnold displayed more real military genius and inspirational qualities than all the generals put together on both sides.

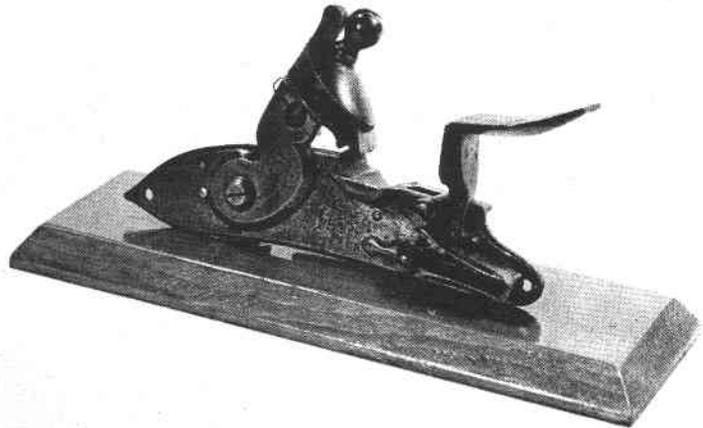
John Joseph Henry, one of the soldiers of this expedition, in his diary wrote, "That our commander was of a remarkable character -- he was brave -- he possessed great powers of persuasion -- and he held in great abundance both courage and leadership.

This concludes the formal part of my talk on the Arnold Expedition, but if time permits, I would like to show you some of the firearms and other items used by the soldiers of Colonial and Revolutionary America. A great many of the items displayed here today were actually used by the soldiers from the Arnold Expedition, and I will explain them to you as I go along. All of the arms displayed here are of the military type.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Space limitations permit us to show only a small part of Mr. Miller's fine and large display of arms and accouterments used in our country's early history. An outstanding display.

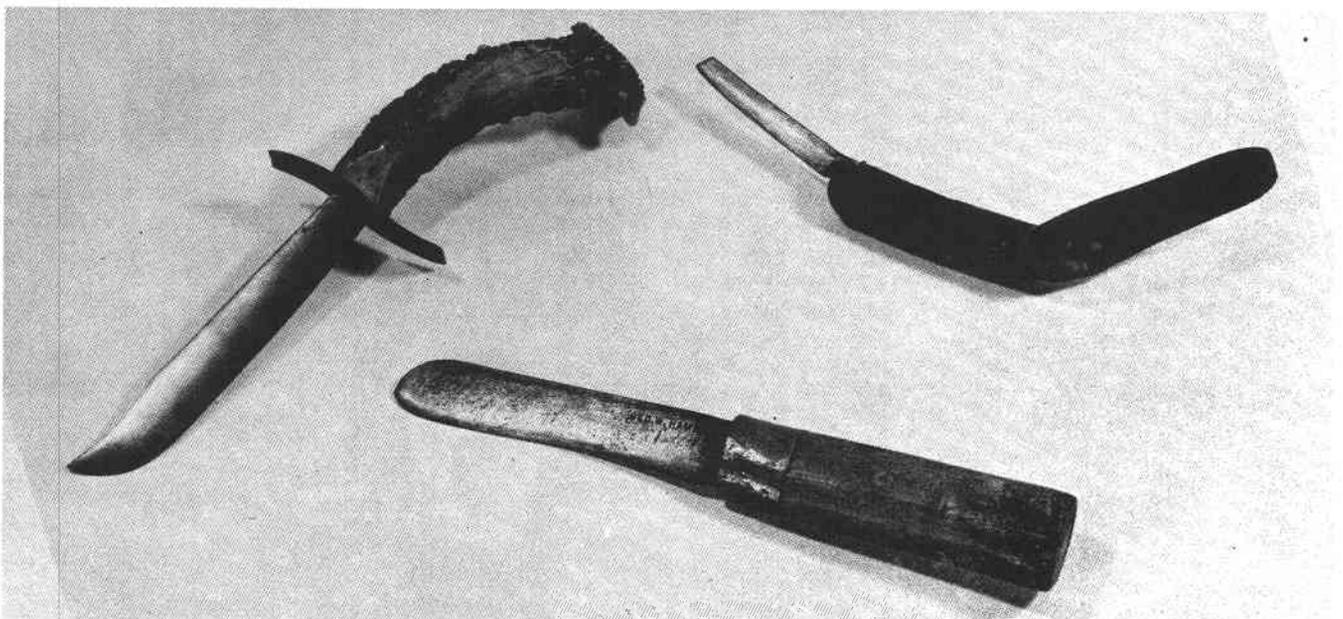


REVOLUTIONARY WAR CANTEEN made of Wood and used on the March with Arnold to Quebec in 1775 by Rowell B. Foote, a Former member of the Arundel Regulars. Foot was taken prisoner by the British, but later escaped and followed the expedition's route home. He is believed to have died in Arnolds Hospital at Carratunk.



FLINTLOCK LOCK - Removed from a wall piece during the battle for Quebec City, Dec. 31, 1775.

This lock was taken from the part of Quebec City called the Saut at Matelock and brought back to Arundel by Lt. Nathaniel Lord of Capt. Goodrich's Company. Lt. Lord was wounded during this battle but made his way back through the wilderness to Arundel. He arrived on March 16, 1776 and died on April 14, 1776. As a result of his wounds and exposure suffered during this long journey back to Arundel, Lt. Lord was a brother-in-law of Samuel Burnham and this lock remained in that family for many years.



TOP LEFT: BRITISH "TRADE KNIFE." Used as one of the many articles to trade with the Indians. TOP RIGHT: From the "Abanakis" tribe and is of the skinning type. BOTTOM: Colonial Soldier's knife, marked Geo. W. Hamm, circa 1750 later acquired by an Abanakis Indian chief.



TOMAHAWKS AND AXES:

Reading from left to right: **FIRST:** Typical Camp or squaw axe, also used by the American soldier during the Revolutionary War as part of his equipment. **SECOND:** Colonial Soldiers Axe. To the soldiers of Europe who were to see service in North America during the French and Indian Wars, this is the type axe that was issued to them as a part of their equipment. In Europe where the fighting was in the open, these were not needed, but here in America where most of the fighting was in the woods, this was a very necessary item. Circa 1750. **THIRD:** The Oldest known French Soldiers Axe. — This dates 1650. **FOURTH:** English Trade Axe — Circa 1750. This is the typical mid 18th century tomahawk that was used as trade to the Indians and carried by the American soldier of the American Revolution. **FIFTH:** French Trade Axe — Circa 1720.

LEFT: Historical Revolutionary War Powder Horn originally the property of Joshus Smith of Haverstraw, N.Y. A messenger for Major General Benedict Arnold. **CENTER:** Powder Horn of the famous Chief Natanis of the Abanaki Indian Tribe showing his crude carvings. Natanis guided the Arnold Expedition through the wilderness of Maine and Canada. **RIGHT:** Powder Horn of Hezekiah Staple inscribed with his name and dated 1774. A soldier with Arnold Expedition.

