

Fall of Quebec

12 September 1759

A long term British goal had been to capture Quebec, the chief city of French Canada. The fortress of Louisbourg, situated as it was at the mouth of the St Lawrence River, had been a major deterrent. In 1758, during the Seven Years War, it had been recaptured by the British, opening the door to Quebec.

Sir Charles Saunders led a powerful fleet up the river to Quebec. On 27 June 1759, he landed nine thousand troops under Major General James Wolfe on the Island of Orleans, five miles below the city. Louis-Joseph de Montcalm-Gozon, with fourteen thousand troops guarded the land approaches to the city at Montmorency on the north bank. The armies maneuvered. The French sent fire ships and rafts down the river to burn the British fleet. The attempt failed. Wolfe failed in a direct assault on Montmorency. He tried shifting some troops upstream, but they were neutralized by the French under Colonel Louis Antoine de Bougainville. Then, in a surprise maneuver on the night of 12 September 1759, Wolfe led a landing party that scaled the heights just above the city. The next morning forty-five hundred British troops met three thousand French regulars, allied with fifteen hundred Canadians and Indians. The formal battle lasted fifteen minutes before the city surrendered to the British. The French lost fourteen hundred to the British seven hundred, the Canadians and Indians did not take part. Both Wolfe and Montcalm were killed.

Governor General of the colony, Pierre de Rigaud, marquis de Vaudreuil-Cavagnial, withdrew to Montreal, and the British settled in for the winter. The French, under the Chevalier de Levis, tried to retake Quebec in the spring of 1760, but the presence of the English fleet, which kept the British constantly supplied, forced the French to withdraw to Montreal. In early September the British moved on Montreal in a beautifully executed three-pronged attack: Amherst from Lake Ontario, then down the Saint Lawrence; General William Haviland, who moved down Lake Champlain from Crown Point, outflanking de Bougainville at Isle aux Noix; and General James Murray from Quebec. Vaudreuil surrendered, and French Canada thereupon became a British colony. The Treaty of Paris in 1763, ending the Seven Years War, gave

possession of parts of New France to Great Britain, including Canada and the eastern half of French Louisiana—lying between the Mississippi River and the Appalachian Mountains.

Though the menace from the French was now over, there were still Indians to deal with. Quite understandably they could not comprehend that the entire territory east of the Mississippi had been ceded to the British, and they protested bloodily against the waves of settlers moving west through New York, Pennsylvania, the western Carolinas, and Tennessee, and pausing at the edge of the rich lands of the Ohio Valley. There were raids and counter raids for several years in the Valley, starting in 1760, but by 1764 it was cleared of hostile Indians. In 1765 Chief Pontiac of the Ottawas concluded a peace treaty with Sir William Johnson. The final treaty of the whole series of colonial wars came when Chief Cornstalk of the Shawnees surrendered to Governor Dunmore of Virginia in 1774, ending Dunmore's War. This acknowledged that the entire Ohio valley was in British hands, and millions of acres were open to settlement.