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## **COST OF BENEDICT ARNOLD'S EXPEDITION TO QUEBEC**

The purpose of this paper is to determine how much money was spent by Benedict Arnold's detachment to carry out its invasion of Canada in 1775. Determining the cost of the Arnold expedition involves the following components. The first and largest component is the money in specie and paper that Washington provided to its commander, Colonel Benedict Arnold, at the beginning of the expedition. The amount that Arnold received was documented by the Treasury Board in 1780 and there is clear evidence that all of the money advanced to Arnold was expended. The second component is the unreimbursed money, in the form of goods and supplies, advanced by the American born merchants living in Canada who became allies of the expedition. One of these Quebec merchants, John Halsted, was appointed as Arnold's Commissary in Canada. Other merchants, in addition to the Commissary, also supplied the American army with supplies during its stay in Canada, and to the extent that they can be identified their claims are included in this calculation. The third component is the unreimbursed personal money and credit that Arnold himself advanced in order to get his men to Quebec and to keep them there until the American army retreated in early June of 1776.

There are two additional cost components that are not able to be defined enough to be included in this calculation. The first is money that may have been advanced by the commanding officers of each of the thirteen companies under Arnold's command. I have found information on reimbursements claimed by two commanders. However, neither claim was substantiated to the satisfaction of the Congressional reviewing entity. The insufficiency of documentation dictates caution in including these items in a computation of actual costs so I have not included them in my calculation.

The first officer's claim was by Captain Oliver Hanchett from Connecticut. Hanchett put in a claim to the State of Connecticut for the sum of \$1000 which he said he advanced to members of his company while in prison in Quebec. This claim was paid but not until a lengthy process led to a resolution. Hanchett also submitted a claim to the Continental Congress in 1782 for various items he purchased for his company as well as travel expenses for himself and his men. Upon a review by General Benjamin Lincoln the claim was put on hold "until further evidence shall be given in support of the several observations". No such documentary evidence was ever submitted. Therefore, Hanchett's claim to Congress was never approved.

Captain William Goodrich of Massachusetts applied to both to General Philip Schuyler and the State of Massachusetts for reimbursement of alleged losses that he incurred on the expedition. His petition to the State in 1780 claimed losses in the amount of thirty five pounds. His letter to Schuyler also contains a somewhat different list of items he lost as a result of being captured. There is no record that either request was ever considered or honored.

The final component is the cost to pay the officers and men from the time they left Cambridge until they returned home. Based on letters from the officers in Canada, it is clear that the men were not being paid, except in paper money, which was useless in Canada, and almost useless in the colonies. Unfortunately, there is no source that provides enough reliable information to make a determination of the amount of money paid, or that should have been paid, to the participants of the expedition. Even Mark Boatner in his Encyclopedia refrained from defining specific pay standards for Revolutionary War participants. He states, "Authorities disagree so radically on actual figures pertaining to military pay that I have deliberately avoided an attempt to give them here..." The number presented at the end of this chapter, therefore, excludes pay both enlisted and officer personnel, which would have been substantial.

However, to further the understanding of the real expedition costs, I have calculated an order of magnitude total for the cost of the officers and men in Arnold's detachment from the time they left Cambridge through the assault on Quebec on December 31, 1775. I have assumed a reasonably conservative estimate of \$10 per month per man. In Arnold's detachment there were approximately 1060 men for the first two weeks or one-half month. They were at full strength of approximately 1116 men for two weeks. There were 1077 men for another two week period, 680 men for a four week period and, finally, 675 men for the final four week period. Based on this analysis, the total amount paid to the officers and men would be \$29,815 in 1775 dollars. This would increase the costs shown below by about one-third making the total \$122,877. This cost in 2008 dollars for the above total of \$29,815 would be \$693,000, which is a substantial sum.

#### **HARD SPECIE AND PAPER MONEY PROVIDED TO ARNOLD PRIOR TO DEPARTURE**

Arnold's expedition was in the planning stages by the middle of August 1775 and on August 25th, Washington's aide, Joseph Reed, wrote the Paymaster General of the Army that Washington would need about \$2000 in specie "for a particular service". As plans became more firm, Washington himself wrote to James Warren, Paymaster General, telling him that Col. Arnold would be undertaking a mission and that Warren should "pay to him so much Continental money as make up the whole sum £1000 lawful". Washington subsequently informed Schuyler that Arnold "is supplied with £1000 lawful money in specie to answer his contingent charges". Washington also signed pay warrants on September 13 for sums totaling £752.2 shillings and £2670.16 shillings, as well as £1000. From the above, it seems that Arnold received money in continental paper of £1000 (as per letter to Paymaster General) and pay warrants of £4422.36, which was given in hard money or coins. The total of those funds is £5422.36.

Arnold's personal Day Book and Ledger was seized on September 28, 1780 by an order of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. This order authorized the confiscation of all Arnold's papers from his

house in Pennsylvania. In multiple entries in his Day Book from 1777 and 1778, Arnold acknowledged receiving the following payments, which he referred to as "cash": (1) £2064 from the Quartermaster General, Thomas Mifflin; (2) £4343 from General Washington; (3) £593 from General Montgomery; (4) £2673 from General Wooster; and (5) £732 from the Commissioners of Congress. The total of all cash receipts from the Day Book was £10,405.

When the Treasury Board auditors finalized Arnold's expense claims in 1780 they converted the money Arnold received from all governmental sources from pounds to American dollars. The Treasury Board's final determination of the money paid to Arnold was \$66,671 in dollars. The Treasury Board document is the best available source to identify the amount of funds that Arnold obtained from American military sources for his invasion of Canada and is the amount that will be used for this component of the total cost of the Arnold expedition.

### **SUPPLIES PROVIDED TO AMERICAN ARMY ON CREDIT BY MERCHANTS AND THE COMMISSARY IN CANADA**

One man from Canada played a prominent role in the ability of Arnold to support an army in the field in Quebec and Montreal in the winter and spring of 1776. The man was John Halsted, an American born merchant living in Canada, who Arnold appointed as his commissary for the time he was in Canada. John Halsted first came in contact with Arnold's expedition when it arrived at Point Levis. At that time he was acting in the capacity of superintendent of a flour mill owned by Major Henry Caldwell of the British army. Halstead offered valuable assistance to Arnold's expedition at the time he met up with them and later when appointed as Commissary.

After meeting up with Arnold's detachment near Quebec in early December, General Richard Montgomery selected Halsted to be his Commissary, probably at Arnold's urging. Arnold confirmed this action by Montgomery in a January 24, 1776 letter to Congress, where he recommended that Halsted's appointment be confirmed and continued. Congress passed a resolution on February 17th confirming the appointment of John Halsted "to be commissary for the Army before Quebec". According to John Jeffrey, Halsted remained as Commissary "until the siege was raised on May 6, 1776". Halsted kept a written record of his expenditures for the Americans from January 7, 1776, until May 17, 1776. This record is in the form of an original manuscript book, which is in the possession of Chateau de Ramezay in Montreal, and was published in pamphlet form in 1912. His book also records the money he received from Arnold from time to time during that period.

Halsted submitted a claim to Congress in 1783 in the amount of \$1379.79, which represented the money he had advanced for the American cause but for which he had not been reimbursed. In response to his claim, Congress agreed to settle it for \$1326.80. For the purpose of this analysis, the higher dollar amount will be used as the amount of money due to Halsted for providing supplies to the American army.

In addition to Halsted's claim, there are also claims submitted to the Continental Congress by three other merchants for their expenses incurred to supply the American army during 1776. The first claim was from

Peter du Calvert in the amount of \$5352.43, most of which was rejected by the Congressional auditors. The second was from Levy Solomons, a merchant of Montreal, who claimed a loss of 7000 livres. Using a 1778 conversion of Canadian livres to dollars, the total of this claim is \$1100. The third claim was from Maurice Desdevens, made in 1785, which was in the amount of \$3000. The total of the three claims amounted to \$9452 and the total of all of the merchant claims including Halsted's was \$10,831.

**ARNOLD’S COST REIMBURSEMENT CLAIMS**

On April 27, 1779, Arnold submitted a claim to Congress for reimbursement of the personal money and credit he had expended during the Quebec campaign. Through a long drawn out process that occurred over the next fifteen months, Arnold and the Treasury Board argued over the amount that Arnold should be reimbursed. The final Congressional committee report, which was never acted on by the full Continental Congress, was issued on July 31, 1780. The report recommended that a smaller sum than Arnold was demanding be approved as a final settlement of Arnold's claim. Even though his initial claim was for more money, by May 12th Arnold proposed a compromise to settle his claim of "upwards of two thousand five hundred pounds lawful money", and also proposed that two thousand of it be paid in specie, which is defined by Webster as money in coin. For the purpose of calculating the total cost of the expedition, the sum of £2500 that Arnold proposed as a settlement will be used for this component. Using the Treasury Board's conversion ratio, the total in dollars due to Arnold was \$15,360. In today's dollars, the value of Arnold's personal contribution to keep the expedition in the field was \$248,837. Keeping in mind that the personal fortunes of that time were smaller than those of today, this figure probably represented a sizable portion of Arnold's personal wealth. It was approximately one-third of the amount of money Arnold received from the British for changing sides.

**RECAP OF EXPEDITION COSTS (in dollars)**

Total Money Given to Arnold from American Military Sources	\$66,671
Total of Unpaid Costs Incurred by Merchants in Canada	10,831
Total Additional Costs Due to Arnold	15,360
Total Cost of Expedition	<b>\$92,862</b>

**VALUE IN TODAY’S DOLLARS**

The above cost is shown in 1780 dollars because that is when the determination of value was made. To convert that number to 2008 dollars, a computation needs to be made to calculate the relative value of the U.S. dollar in 1780 as compared to its value in 2008. The web site Measuring Worth, which is a service for calculating relative wealth over time, uses a computation matrix to determine comparative relative values. By plugging the total cost of the expedition from above into Measuring Worth's formula, the value in today's dollars, using the consumer price index as the measurement, is \$1,504,399.00. Even though other measurements reach a higher number, the consumer price index seems to be the most appropriate measure of the comparative value of that sum of money spent at that time period for the purposes stated

above. As previously explained, this figure does not include the pay for officers and men of the expedition.

The amount of money expended for the Quebec expedition led by General Arnold as listed above is substantial for the time. The 2008 current value shows how substantial the amount was and further shows that Arnold's claim was also substantial. The Continental Congress's delays in approving Arnold's claims of personal monies expended while in Canada and the final committee report proposing a lesser total settlement than he had claimed could well have played in his decision to change sides.