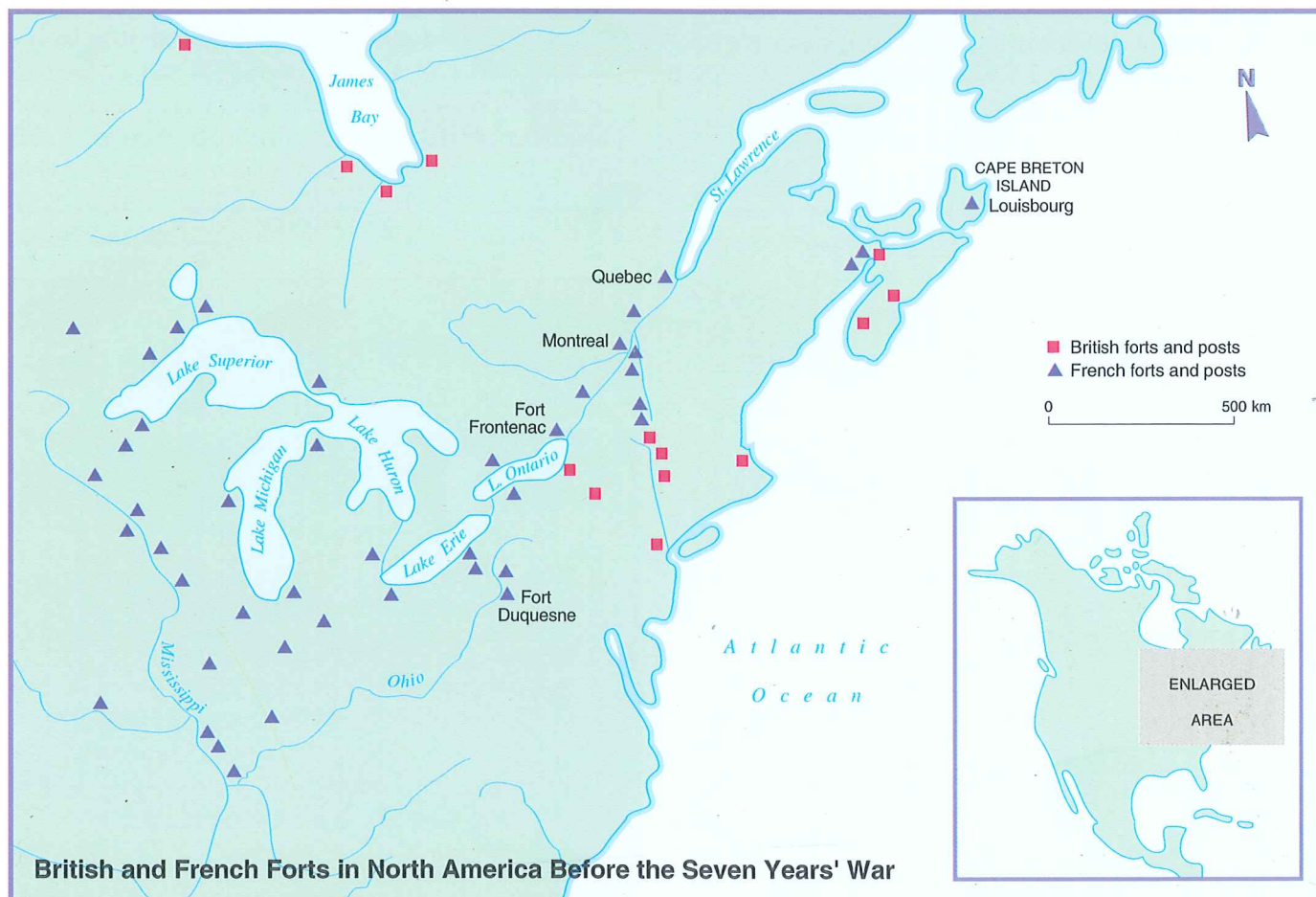


The Final Struggle for Control of North America



We have seen that there was a continuing struggle for control in the New World between Britain and France. The chart at the beginning of the chapter summarizes this conflict. These struggles caused the two nations to go to war in Europe. The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 gave Newfoundland, Hudson Bay, and most of Acadia to the British. The French reacted by building the fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island and the Acadians refused to take an oath of allegiance to Britain. When the deportation of the Acadians occurred in 1755, it was clear that France and Britain would soon be at war again in Europe and that conflict between the two empires would increase in North America. One year later, in 1756, the Seven Years' War broke out in Europe between France and Britain. This war had an enormous effect on the history of North America.

The French and the English used different strategies in their struggle to control North America. The French kept most of their soldiers in Europe. Their plan was to use a

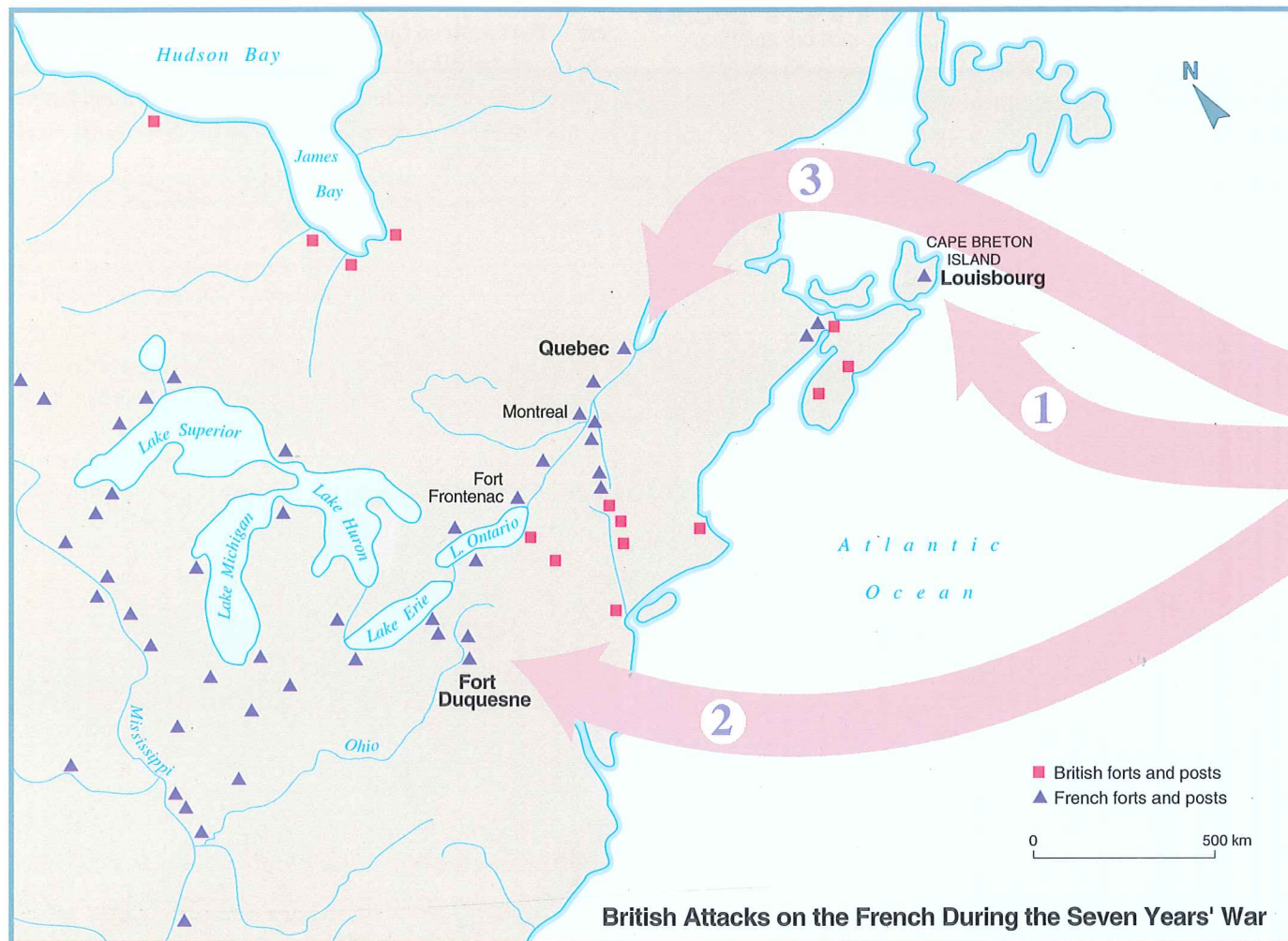
small number of soldiers to fight the many British in North America. They believed that if fewer French soldiers in North America could keep a large number of British occupied, then the larger French forces in Europe could defeat the British there.

The British were determined to defeat the French in North America. They sent seven or eight times more men than the French did to North America. They planned to attack the French on three fronts: Louisbourg, the Ohio Valley, and Quebec. (See above map.) The British knew that it was important to control the St. Lawrence River because this was the route that French supply ships used to reach Quebec and Montreal. Control of the St. Lawrence depended on the control of Louisbourg.

For Your Notebook

1. Use the map above to decide what effect the British strategy would have on the French colonies of Louisbourg, Acadia, and Quebec.

War in North America: A Three-Pronged Attack



During the Seven Years' War, the British attacked the French in three areas: Louisbourg (1758), the Ohio Valley (1758), and Quebec (1759).

1. The Capture of Louisbourg



The British needed to capture Louisbourg in order to gain control of the entrance to the St. Lawrence River. If successful, they could sail down the river to attack Quebec.

In June of 1758, the British attacked Louisbourg. Imagine the surprise of the French inside the fortress when they saw 200 British ships in the harbour outside their fortification. The battles did not last very long. After fighting for almost 60 days, the British landed on the high ground overlooking Louisbourg and bombarded the fortress. By the time the French surrendered, Louisbourg had been almost completely destroyed by the British.

2. The Capture of the Ohio Valley



The French had many fur forts in the Ohio Valley. British control was necessary to reduce French influence in the large area of the Ohio Valley.

Prior to the fall of Louisbourg, the French had been successful in defending the Ohio Valley. This situation changed quickly with the fall of Louisbourg in July of 1758. In August, Fort Frontenac, a French fort in the Ohio Valley, was captured by the British, followed in November by Fort Duquesne. With the French driven back toward Quebec by the British and with Louisbourg captured, the British now were free to travel up the St. Lawrence to the heart of New France—Quebec.

3. The Capture of Quebec



Quebec was the centre of French power in North America. British capture of the colony of Quebec would mean the end of French control in North America. The British, under the command of General James Wolfe, waited until the spring of 1759 to attack Quebec. Over the summer the British fleet sailed up the St. Lawrence and bombarded the city of Quebec from the water, while the British troops tried to land on the Beauport shore. Wolfe tried for almost three months to capture Quebec without much success. He finally decided to attack from upriver to cut off the source of Quebec's supplies.



Today there is a park on the Plains of Abraham, the site of the 1759 battle between the French and the British.

The British Attack

British Captain John Knox described the first part of the attack on Quebec City in his journal as follows.

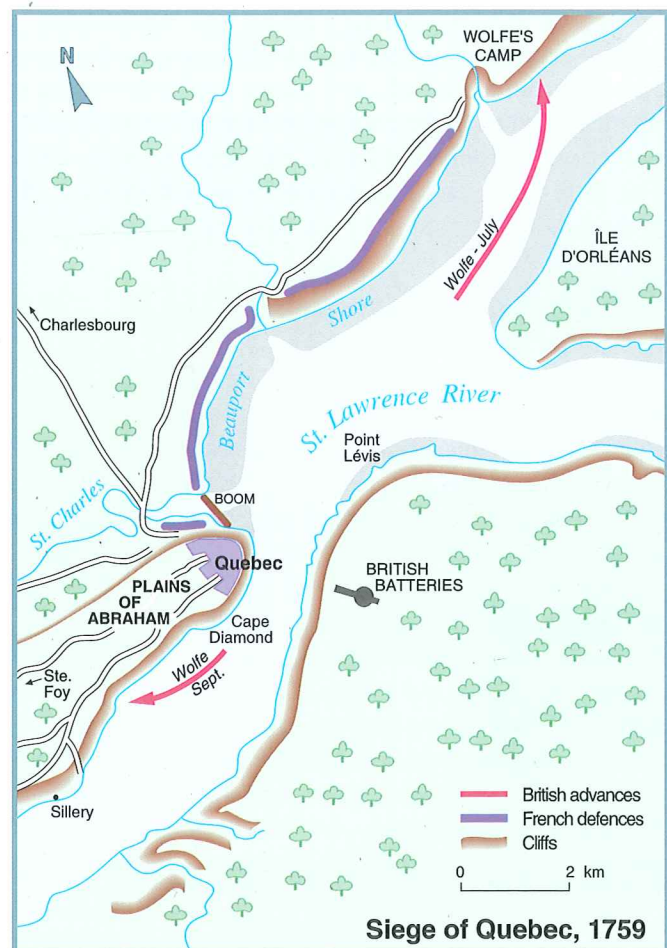
Eyewitness Account

Thursday, September 13, 1759.

Before daybreak this morning, we made a descent upon the north shore, about half a quarter of a mile to the eastward of Sillery; and the light troops were fortunately, by the rapidity of the current, carried lower down, between us and Cape Diamond. We had in this debarkation thirty flat-bottomed boats, containing about sixteen hundred men. This was a great surprise to the enemy, who, from the natural strength of the place, did not suspect, and consequently were not prepared against, so bold an attempt. The chain of centres, which they had

posted along the summit of the heights, galled us a little, and picked off several men, and some officers before our light infantry got up to dislodge them. This grand enterprise was conducted and executed with great good order and discretion; as fast as we landed, the boats put off for re-inforcements, and the troops formed with much regularity. The General, with Brigadiers Monckton and Murray, was ashore with the first division. We lost no time here, but clambered up one of the steepest precipices that can be conceived, being almost a perpendicular, and of an incredible height. As soon as we gained the summit all was quiet, and not a shot was heard, owing to the excellent conduct of the light infantry under Colonel Howe. It was by this time clear daylight. Here we formed again, the river and the south country in our rear, our right extending to the town, our left to Sillery, and halted a few minutes. . . . We then faced to the right, and marched toward the town by files till we came to the Plains of Abraham; an even piece of ground which Mr. Wolfe had made choice of, while we stood forming upon the hill.

Weather showery: about six o'clock the enemy first made their appearance upon the heights between us and the town; whereupon we halted and wheeled to the right, thereby forming the line of battle. . . .



The French React



In the early morning of September 13, 1759, Montcalm, the leader of the French forces in Quebec, received word that the British army, by a surprise plan, had landed its troops over a poorly defended cliff upstream from Quebec City at Anse aux Foulons. Wolfe's soldiers were waiting on the Plains of Abraham, three kilometres from Quebec City.

The French forces under the command of the Marquis de Montcalm were not all gathered in one place. A portion of the army was 16 kilometres away on the Beauport shore, where it was expected that the British would attack. Montcalm had to decide:

- Should he keep his army in the fortified town of Quebec and wait for the British to attack?
- Should he send word to the rest of his army to attack the British from behind?
- Should he attack immediately, with the men he had, on the Plains of Abraham?

The Battle on the Plains of Abraham

Montcalm took his men and went to meet the British on the open fields of the Plains of Abraham. The French troops were at a disadvantage because they were used to fighting in the forest, not open fields. They made a disorganized charge on the British, who waited until they were near and then fired on them, causing the French ranks to break and retreat in disorder. In less than an hour the battle was over. Both Wolfe and Montcalm died from wounds received in the fighting. Quebec had been taken by the British.

British Captain Knox's Eyewitness Account of the Battle Continues:

The enemy had now likewise formed the line of battle, and got some cannon to play on us, with round and canister shot; but what galled us most was a body of Indians and other marksmen they had concealed in the corn opposite to the front of our right wing, and a coppice that stood opposite to our centre, inclining toward our left. But Colonel Hale, by Brigadier Monckton's orders, advanced some platoons alternately, from the forty-seventh regiment, which after a few rounds obliged these skulkers to retire. We were now ordered to lie down, and remained some time in this position. About eight o'clock we had two pieces of short brass six-pounders playing on the enemy, which threw them into some confusion, and obliged them to alter their disposition; and Montcalm formed them into three large columns. About nine the two armies moved a little nearer each other. The light cavalry made a faint attempt upon our parties at the battery of Sillery, but were soon beat off; and Monsieur de Bougainville, with his troops from Cape Rouge, came

down to attack the flank of our second line, hoping to penetrate there. But by a masterly disposition of Brigadier Townshend, they were forced to desist; and the third battalion of Royal Americans was then detached to the first ground we had formed on after we gained the heights, to preserve the communication with the beach and our boats. About ten o'clock the enemy began to advance briskly in three columns, with loud shouts and recovered arms, two of them inclining to the left of our army, and the third towards our right, firing obliquely at the two extremities of our line, from the distance of one hundred and thirty, — until they came within forty yards; which our troops withstood with the greatest intrepidity and firmness, still reserving their fire and paying the strictest obedience to their officers. This uncommon steadiness, together with the havoc which the grape-shot from our field-pieces made among them, threw them into some disorder; and was most critically maintained by a well-timed, regular, and heavy discharge of our small arms, such as they could no longer oppose. Hereupon they gave way, and fled with precipitation, so that, by the time the cloud of smoke was vanished our men were again loaded and, profiting by the advantage we had over them, pursued them almost to the gates of the town and the bridge over the little river, redoubling our fire with great eagerness, making many Officers and men prisoners . . .

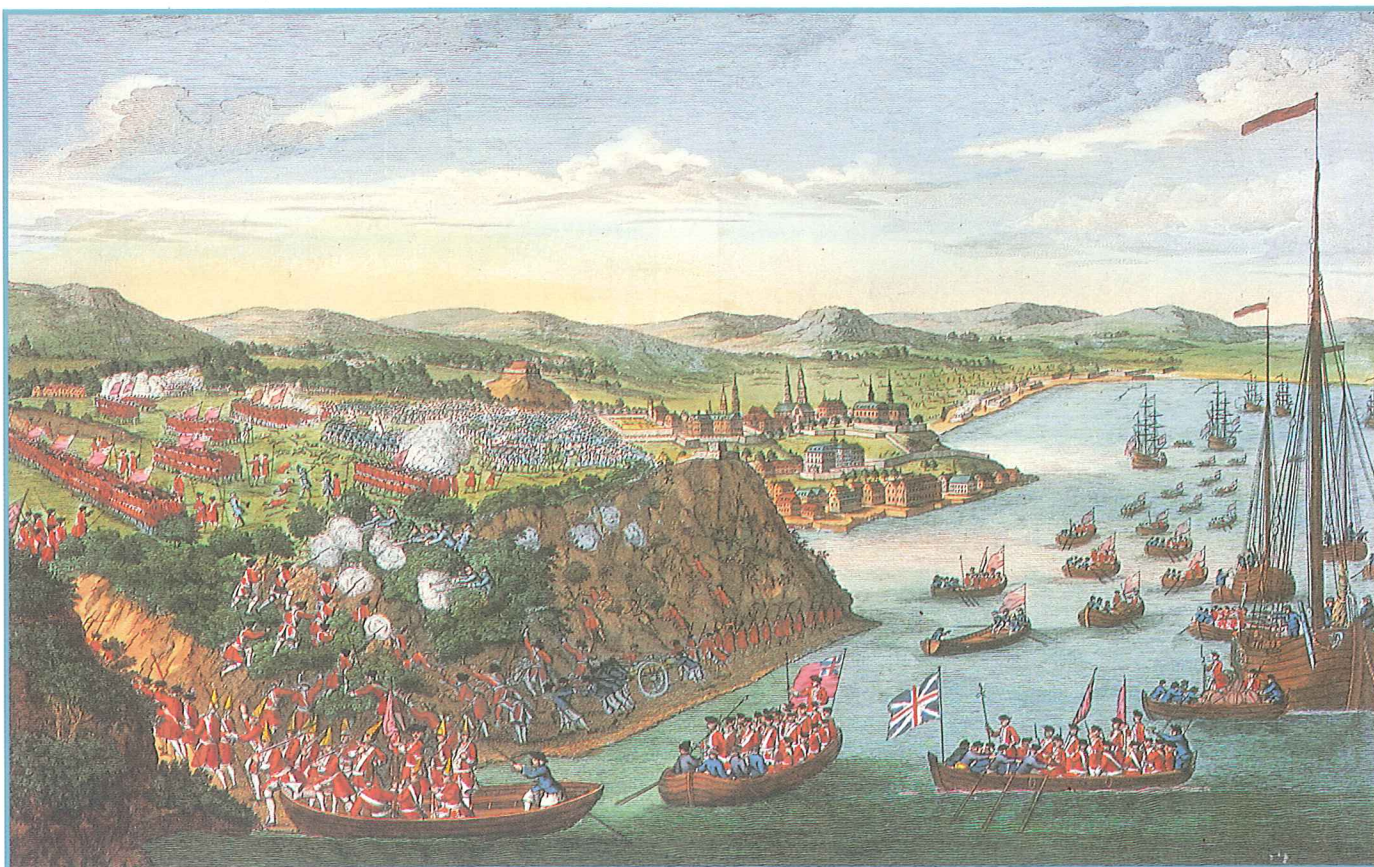
Our joy at this success is inexpressibly damped by the loss we sustained of one of the greatest heroes which this or any other age can boast of—GENERAL JAMES WOLFE, who received his mortal wound, as he was exerting himself at the head of the grenadiers . . .

The Officers who are prisoners say, that Quebec will surrender in a few days: some deserters, who came out to us in the evening, agree in that opinion, and inform us, that the Sieur de Montcalm is dying, in great agony, of a wound he received today in their retreat . . .



An Exercise in Decision-Making

1. Why do you think Montcalm made the decision he did?
2. What decision would you have made if you were Montcalm? Use one of the decision-making models from this textbook, or design one of your own, to help you arrive at a decision.

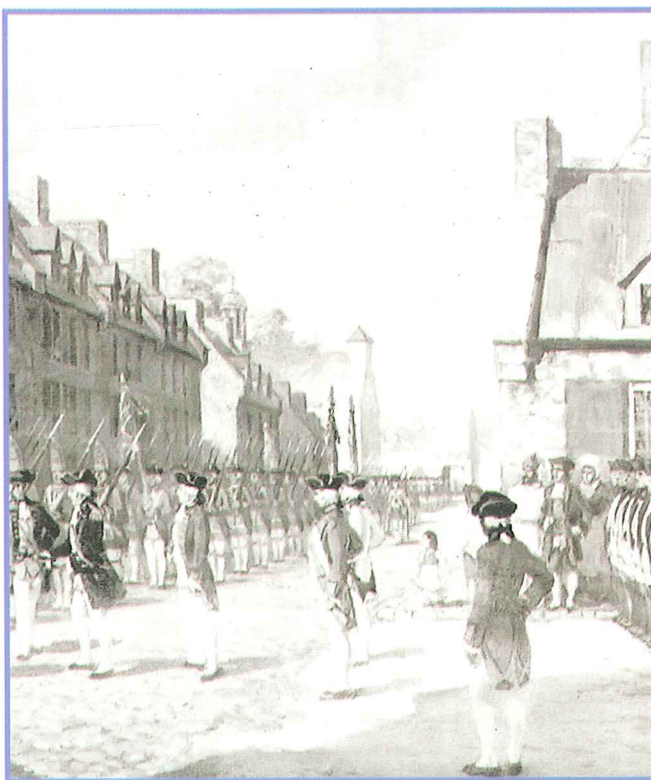


A View of the Taking of Quebec, September 13, 1759—Quebec falls to the British. This painting shows a view of the day's events as though they were all happening at once, but really the events took place from late at night until the following morning.

Montreal

After the British took Quebec, the French army and officials retreated to Montreal. The British occupied Quebec over the winter. The French made an attempt to drive the British from Quebec in the spring of 1760. They marched from Montreal to Quebec and were able to force the British to retreat behind the town's walls. The outcome of the struggle for Quebec now depended on whether the first ship through the St. Lawrence that spring brought British or French reinforcements. The first ship to come was British and the French retreated to Montreal again.

In September 1760 the British troops marched to Montreal, burning crops along the St. Lawrence River as they advanced. The French governor, Vaudreuil, realizing future resistance attempts were futile, agreed to peace and surrendered to the British troops. Chevalier de Lévis, the commander of the French army, rather than surrendering the French flags to the enemy, ordered that they be burned. British control in North America was finally achieved.



Surrender of Montreal. On September 8, 1760, Governor General Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil de Cavagnial surrendered Montreal to the British commander, Jeffrey Amherst.