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582-7080

# Arnold Expedition Historical Society

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JUNE 9 1988

NEWSLETTER NO. 61  
MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF THE A.E.H.S.

## WE'VE MISSED YOU !!

AND WE KNOW YOU'VE MISSED US - FOR WE ARE A LITTLE REMISS IN NOT KEEPING IN OUR USUAL CLOSE TOUCH. SOME OF US DASHED OFF TO WARMER WEATHER IN JANUARY-FEBRUARY, LEFT A FEW THINGS UNDONE & DID NOT REMIND YOU THAT OUR "DUES DUE" DATE WAS CHANGED TO JANUARY 1, OF EACH YEAR. NOT ALL OF YOU - JUST SOME WHO NEED TO BE REMINDED THAT OUR MEMBERSHIP ASSESSMENT STILL STAYS AT :

- \$ 7.00 FAMILY MEMBERSHIP
- \$ 5.00 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP
- \$ 3.00 STUDENT MEMBERSHIP
- \$ 25.00 CONTRIBUTING MEMBERSHIP
- \$ 100.00 LIFE MEMBERSHIP

## NOW WE'RE BACK TO BRING YOU UP TO DATE

ALL THE GOOD NEWS - A CALL FROM PRESIDENT BOB CUNNINGHAM TELLS US HE IS NOW AT HOME, RECUPERATING FROM "REAGAN TYPE SURGERY " BUT WITH THE RESULTS THAT WE ALL WANT TO HEAR - ALL O.K. HE WILL HOWEVER HAVE TO REMAIN UNDER MARGARETS FOOT AT WOODCOCK LANE, LINCOLN MA 01773 FOR AWHILE YET. DULUTH WING & CECIL PIERCE HAVE NEW SOPHISTICATED METAL DETECTORS WHICH THEY PROMISE US WILL BRING FORTH MORE OF B. ARNOLD'S RELICS FROM AN AREA WHICH THEY ARE ALREADY FAMILIAR WITH, HAVING RETRIEVED A COAT BUTTON, A HAND MADE NAIL- THE FIRST EVER FOUND, SOME LEAD SPRUES CUT FROM NEWLY CAST MUSKET BALLS ETC. ALL FOUND TOGETHER IN ONE CAMPGROUND -- THEY ARE BACK WITH THEIR NEW INSTRUMENTS FOR MORE !.

## OUR UP-COMING ACTIVITIES

JULY 9-10 WEEK-END HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS ROOF-REPAIR WORK WEEK - END AT OUR CARRY POND UPTON CABIN - FLIES ARE GONE WEATHER & FISHING ARE PERFECT - COME FOR DAY OR NIGHT- WE HAVE MUCH TO OFFER FOR A GET-A- WAY DAY OR TWO.

SEPT. 3-4 WEEK-END BECKONS US TO AGAIN TRAVEL THE ROUTE TO CARRY POND FOR VIEWING EARLY FALL FOLIAGE-CHECKING OUT THE CABIN AFTER HAVING IT RENTED TO OUT OF STATERS FOR A MONTH, FISHING, HIKING & MEETING OLD & NEW MEMBERS ALL OF WHOM HAVE MUCH TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARD FURTHERING OUR ARNOLD TRAIL DEVELOPMENT. SUMMER FLIES BY AND OUR OCTOBER 9 DATE BRINGS US TO WHERE WE MUST HAVE OUR 20th A.E.H.S. ANNUAL MEETING AT A MEETING PLACE YET TO BE DECIDED UPON. WE ARE OPEN FOR SUGGESTIONS ON ANY OF OUR MATTERS AT ANY TIME.

## OUR HISTORY LESSON

IS A PRETTY MODERN ONE IN THIS ISSUE - MAINLY BECAUSE WE ARE STILL ABLE TO ENJOY AND SEEK FACTUAL INFORMATION FROM THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN THERE - HOPE YOU AND MANY OTHERS WILL BENEFIT FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE & EXPERTISE.;

## THE TRAIL OF A FAILED HERO

TRACKING THE REVOLUTIONARY BENEDICT ARNOLD ACROSS MAINE TO QUEBEC

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TRACKING THE REVOLUTIONARY BENEDICT ARNOLD ACROSS MAINE TO QUEBEC

By DAN BEHRMAN



It was a joke at the start. The state of Maine is so poor — it ranks as New England's lowest in per capita income, a criterion that does not include fresh air, wild-running trout streams, lonely lakes, rockbound coves and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow — that it must fall back on Benedict Arnold as a hero. Wouldn't it be fun to follow the Arnold Trail, the route the traitor-to-be took through Maine on his expedition to Quebec?

In Massachusetts in the fall of 1775, General Arnold and 1,100 American men marched from Cambridge to Newburyport, where they took ship. About four seasick days later, they were anchored in the Kennebec River below what is now Augusta.

The trail of the ill-fated expedition can be picked up south of Augusta at the Reuben Colburn House in Pittston, where it is still fresh. The Colburn House is headquarters of the Arnold Expedition Historical Society and it is also the home of Crosby Milliman, who serves as its curator and graciously shows it to visitors.

This is a good starting point. Here, Maj. Reuben Colburn in 15 days constructed the 200-odd bateaux that the expedition poled, rowed and toted toward Quebec. Mr. Milliman quotes the writer and historian Kenneth Roberts, who likens the exploit to Hannibal's crossing the Alps and he is not far off. In a Maine autumn, Arnold set out to cross a wilderness with inaccurate maps and insufficient supplies. It was a good time for foliage but not much else.

Such was the endurance of his men that, to Mr. Milliman, they were more than human. They portaged 400-pound boats over hills, waded through swamps crusted with ice, boiled rawhide and drank the juice in lieu of food and still reached Quebec. But they did not do better than Hannibal. On New Year's Eve of 1775, they stormed the city and were repulsed with heavy losses.

The present-day traveler is better off. For maps, there is the Maine Atlas and Gazetteer published by DeLorme in Freeport; for ad-

DAN BEHRMAN, a writer who lives in Rangeley, Me., is writing a book about Penobscot Bay windjammers.

vice, "The Bicentennial Guide to the American Revolution" by Sol Stember, published by the Saturday Review Press/E. P. Dutton in 1974. Mr. Stember leads one through incipient suburbs, shopping malls and mobile home parks along the trail, as well as through the historical sites. Then for a more literary cicerone, the traveler has Roberts, whose "Arundel" told it true.

Nor need one haul bateaux. I did the trip in a bicentennial station wagon, a 1976 Plymouth Volaré, with an all-terrain bicycle hung from the stern. From Pittston to Lac Mégantic in Quebec, I used the wagon, the bike and, at one point, a canoe piloted by a French missionary. Well, O.K., Chancel Cyr is Franco-American, and preached 18 years not to the Indians but to the Fijians, but he comes close.

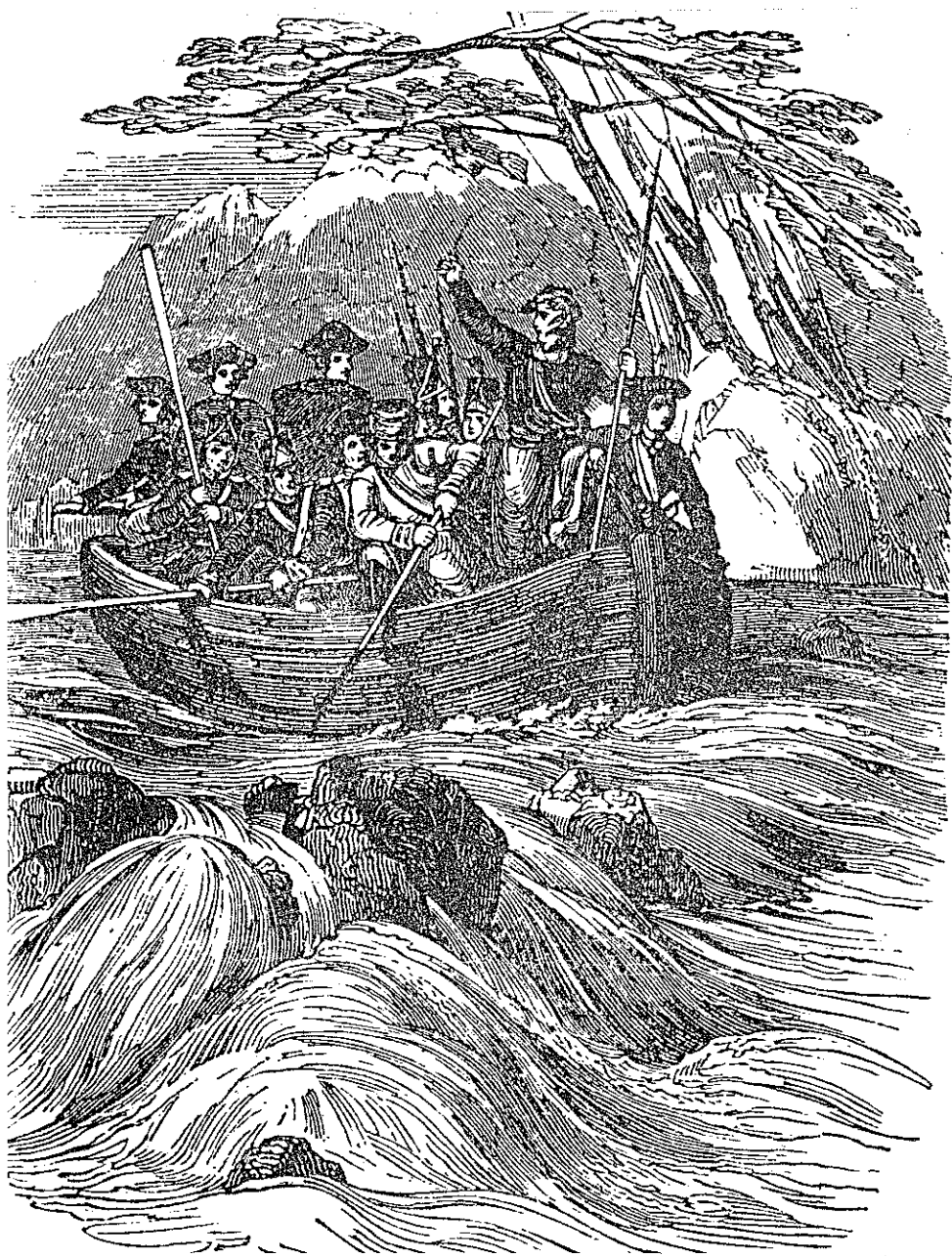
This is strictly do-it-yourself travel. The only traces of the Arnold Trail come in the occasional explanatory panels put up in roadside rest areas, a few stone markers placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution and a rare shop or hotel bearing its name. At Stratton, one can rent a canoe at the Arnold Trail Sport Shop to paddle and portage the last part of the route in Maine, the Chain of Ponds to the Canadian border.

The toughest part is the Great Carry north of Bingham, where Arnold's men hauled their bateaux up an unbelievable grade to cross from the Kennebec to the Dead River. I did this partly on the bicycle, 12 miles of scrambling over pebbles and ledge in the company of only an occasional moose, coyote or rabbit. It would make good walking in autumn when the leaves are out and the black flies are gone.

**T**he canoeing was not easy either. Father Cyr and I were bucking a north wind out of Quebec and we couldn't make it back to our starting point on Natanis Pond, where we had left his jeep. So we hauled out and walked.

There are a number of threads in the skein of the Arnold Trail; no one can hope to unravel all. There is the Kennebec River, tamed and semiurban in Augusta, rampaging over Skowhegan Falls and then 60 miles above Augusta, north of Bingham, placid and majestic as a pre-Columbian Hudson.

There are the Indians, in the shadows while Arnold was on the march and still an unseen presence. At Madison, right by the monument to Father Sebastian Rasle, a Jesuit massacred with his Indian wards by the British in 1724, there are the aborted beginnings of an Indian village that two Waterville artists tried to start a few years ago. They put up a building and painted murals of Arnold's expedition inside but the building had a flat



Engravings from Culver Pictures

roof. First snows and then vandals got the better of it. It has been restored by Jim Elias, a stonecutter, cabinetmaker and former member of the Maine Legislature.

Farther along the Kennebec, more Indians turn up at the Evergreens Vacation Center at Embden run by Jim and Ruth Perry, a campground-cabin establishment on a spot where Arnold's men camped in much less comfort. The Perrys have converted their dining room into a museum of Indian artifacts.

Mr. Perry says his place was recently visited by a group of Indians. They walked

around, then stopped at one point and told him: "Don't ever let anyone dig here. This area is sacred."

Finally, just across the border on Spider Lake in Quebec, John Clich and Catherine Rancourt have been collecting Indian artifacts around their home on the lake, where a detachment of Arnold's men wandered lost for three days.

They have found neither muskets nor Arnold's gold.

All along the trail, this legend of gold. Alfred and Alice Dyer, who make dollhouses in

their not much more than doll-sized house in Moscow, Me., told of a friend who goes out on the trail with a metal detector. He believes that Arnold found his gold too heavy to carry and buried it in a spot to be discovered anew by taking bearings on three mountains.

**O**thers speak not of gold but silver, a payroll lost when a boat overturned. But Duluth Wing, who lives on Flagstaff Lake, which used to be the Dead River, is persuaded that anyone with a metal detector is not going to find much more than aluminum foil.

Mr. Wing, a retired forest ranger, and Cecil Pierce, an 81-year-old active lobsterman and shipwright from Southport on the coast, believe they are the only people in the last 200 years to have gone over the Arnold Trail from the mouth of the Kennebec to Quebec City. They did it solely on foot and by canoe, in installments over several years; Mr. Wing was free to leave his fire watch only in wet weather.

In 1975, the march to Quebec was re-enacted and Mr. Pierce built a reproduction of a bateau. He used his imagination, common sense and a description by Henry Thoreau in "The Maine Woods."

The Pierce boat, which resembles long-prowed, flare-sided craft used by loggers in the river-driving days, became a prototype for others put together by college students.

When the re-enactors reached Lac Mégantic, Quebec, in 1975, they gave the Pierce boat to the city.

Twelve years later, Mr. Pierce wondered what had happened to it. In search of it, I visited Lac Mégantic and spent an afternoon with Jean Perreault, the city clerk. He showed me the keys to the city, made from a crossed musket and sword that had been found in a farmer's field, and he told me what he knew.

The French were cordial but not much more, he said, when the survivors of Arnold's march straggled into Quebec. Though the Americans wanted to fight the British, the Americans were Protestants just the same and that rankled. In the end, the Quebecois fed and housed the soldiers — but in exchange for hard cash.

All that was dissolved in the euphoria of 1975 when the Americans in uniform arrived once again to be wine and dined. The Pierce bateau was left on a concrete pedestal just outside the town's tourist information office. It was there that I found it, freshly painted, its long prow soaring forward like a Brancusi bird, eternally thrusting to the heights of Quebec. ■