

COLUMBIA GAMES' LIBERTY: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Mini-game by Alan Marian

CAMPAIGN FOR CANADA: 1775-1776

This mini-game is an enlarged and enhanced version of my earlier scenario called Invasion Canada 1775. It now lasts for 8 Game Turns divided by a Winter turn on a limited map area. Several good recent histories have been published on it and some key older sources located. The campaign could have resulted in making Canada a 14th American colony, or the Crown forces winning the war in 1776 by reaching Ticonderoga, Albany, and beyond. It is also one of the most harrowing tales of endurance and determination in American and Canadian history.

Comments in italics follow various rules sections below.

Summary: Almost a full year before the rebellious colonies declared their independence from Great Britain, the Continental Congress authorized its newly established army to undertake a strategic offensive into foreign territory. British forces under General William Howe are besieged in Boston by American militia undergoing training into an army led by George Washington. Canada is British-owned but thinly defended, and Americans hope to be welcomed by the French minority eager to overthrow their British masters.

Fort Ticonderoga is the American forward base, having been taken without a shot in April '75. General Philip Schuyler is Northern Department commander with HQ at Albany. His skilled second in command Richard Montgomery is poised on the Lake Champlain corridor for advance to the St. Lawrence River. Meanwhile, a thousand volunteers and riflemen from Washington's command are poised to move by land and water through the Maine wilderness under dynamic Colonel Benedict Arnold and Captain Daniel Morgan. These two expeditions expect to distract enemy attention from each other.

British Governor-General Guy Carleton has few regulars and a handful of rugged Loyalists but has time and Winter on his side. He has established a "forward defense" at St. Johns and Montreal leaving Quebec City with a token garrison of militia and sailors. He is poised to either defend enough ground until Winter, or make a daring advance of his own. A promised sealift in spring of '76 might reinforce and supply Canada for defense or a counter-invasion of the rebellious colonies.

Board Play is limited to all hexes north of, and including, the row Boston-Springfield-Albany-Ft. Stanwix-Ft. Niagara. That row is treated like the edge of the map.

Duration is 4 Game Turns, followed by a Winter turn, followed by 4 more Game Turns. This represents August-December 1775 in 4 Game Turns, Winter which represents January-April 1776, then May-October 1776 in 4 Game Turns.

Victory Conditions: Rule 11.1 is changed in that Victory is determined at the end of Game Turn 8 which is the fourth Game Turn after the Winter Turn. *There is no automatic victory at the end of 1775 (turn 4) even if one side achieves the requirements. Both sides reinforced their northern armies and sought the advantage in 1776. Either player can reverse their fortunes in the second half of the scenario.*

British start with 8 on-board Supply points which includes occupied Boston. Americans start with 5 on-board Supply points.

British win if they control at least 7 or more Supply Points which must include 3 of the 4 towns: Quebec, Montreal, Ticonderoga, Albany.

Americans win if the British control 5 or less Supply Points and do not control 3 of the 4 towns: Quebec, Montreal, Ticonderoga, Albany.

Any other result is a Draw.

The 4 named victory locations comprise the Lake Champlain/St. Lawrence River corridor which was the cockpit of the campaigns and battles historically. Each side begins with 2 of the 4 victory towns but must make a major advance somewhere to capture a 3rd or 4th town and play for a win. The concurrent supply point requirements make other towns count toward victory too, so play can spread across the entire area while keeping emphasis on the corridor. Occupying non-victory towns with mobile forces can garner supply points and either help meet victory conditions or at least prevent the opponent from winning. If it's a draw, there's time to play again!

Strategy notes: The burden of the offensive in 1775 is on the Americans and they must move hard and fast to seize whatever they can in Canada before Winter. The British have just enough strength to defend their Colony but not if early losses are too high. A wild-card factor is Boston which is in a stalemate siege. Both players could spend valuable action points to fight over 3-point Boston or move those units toward the Champlain-St. Lawrence corridor. Loyalists and Indians pose a threat to Albany from Oswego and Ft. Niagara but require valuable action points. The American strike force at Ft. Western threatens Quebec or Montreal but also requires action points. The British 1776 reinforcements may be enough to turn the tide if they take the offensive. A comparative handful of soldiers will once more decide the fate of Canada as in a different war sixteen years earlier.

The Historical result in '75 was a British victory but the Americans came very close to capturing Quebec in a desperate snowstorm night assault by the

combined forces of Montgomery and Arnold before enlistments ran out. The survivors remained encamped outside the city for the winter while Carleton could only wait for the spring river thaw and more men coming by sea.

The Historical result in '76 was an American victory. Both sides had been reinforced but Carleton chased the ragged Americans up the St. Lawrence, out of Montreal and St. Johns. He and Arnold spent the summer building competing gunboat fleets on Lake Champlain. The British might have taken Ticonderoga and Albany but for Arnold's naval stand at Valcour Island. His vessels were sunk but the season was over and Carleton retreated to Canada to try again next year.

Setup: All units are at full strength unless otherwise designated.

British:

Quebec: Cunningham (2 cv) (representing militia, marines, ship's guns, and Colonel Allen MacLean)

St. Johns: Peters (2 cv) (representing Major Preston)

Montreal: Carleton (2 cv)

Ft. Oswego: Butler

Ft. Niagara: Mohawk (2 cv) (for this mini-game, the fort acts as an Indian town)

Boston: Howe (3 cv); Grant (3 cv) (representing second in command Gen. Hugh Percy); Grey (3 cv); Naval unit Howe (representing Admiral Samuel Graves, later replaced by Adm. Richard Howe).

In the 1775 Replacement Pool (turns 1-4): *none*, per Rule 12.0

In the 1776 Replacement Pool (turns 5-8) as two separate face-down groups:

(Canada convoy)= Fraser, Riedesel, Philips, naval block Hood (2 cv)

(Atlantic convoy)= Heister, Knyphausen, Ewald.

American:

Ft. Ticonderoga: Gates (2 cv) (representing Gen. Richard Montgomery); Clinton (2 cv).

Ft. Western: Arnold (2 cv); Morgan (2 cv)

Springfield: Washington (2 cv); Ward (3 cv); Putnam (3 cv)

Portsmouth: Stark

Albany: Wooster

In the 1775 Replacement Pool (turns 1-4): *none*

In the 1776 Replacement Pool (turns 5-8): Wayne, Greene, Dickinson (representing Gen. John Sullivan).

Rules: All basic game rules apply unless otherwise indicated.

Rule 4.0 Weather is amended as follows.

Die roll of 3-6 remains "no effect".

Die roll of 2 is "storms" (combat allowed but for 1 round only).

Die roll of 1 is “severe storms” (no combat).

Portions of this campaign were fought during rain and snow which could prevent combat or limit its duration due to wet gunpowder. For mini-game purposes, two varying levels of bad weather provide both uncertainty and opportunity.

Rule 6.0 Replacements is amended as follows:

British/German regular (not Loyalist) blocks in the Replacement Pool are placed face down in the Atlantic Box. When the British player selects a block from the Pool by using an Action per Rule 3.1, that block can be deployed to a port within scenario boundaries and rules.

In this 8-turn mini-game, it would be too restrictive for the standard game rule of deployment into the Atlantic box first, then using a later Action to land in a port.

New British/German blocks in the '76 Replacement Pool are divided into the two face-down convoy groups described above under Setup. The British player must select one of the two face-down convoy groups to draw replacements from for each Action used. Blocks from the Canada convoy must land at Quebec whether friendly or not. Blocks from the Atlantic convoy must land at any port within scenario boundaries whether friendly or not, other than Quebec.

Blocks in the Replacement Pool from disbanding or combat elimination are not subject to any limitations and can deploy anywhere within scenario limits.

Blocks are still bound by Weather Rule 4.0 (as amended above) which can limit or prevent combat including entering unfriendly towns/ports. Since Weather Phase comes before Action Phase, Canada convoy blocks should not be drawn by British player on a weather roll of 1 if Quebec is unfriendly since they have only that one target port.

The “convoys” reflect where these units were actually ordered to go via separate sailings from different European bases, but allows player decisions about which to select from and when. Once at sea, it was extremely difficult to change their orders and get the word to them in mid-Atlantic Ocean.

Players' Notes: *The naval convoys were the only way England could directly reinforce and resupply Canada after the winter ice broke up. At various times in '76 there were 50 to 70 vessels in the St. Lawrence River. They could sail past the Americans and were a major reason for the historical rout that spring. This flotilla was not as powerful as the Atlantic fleets but there were no American vessels to fight them.*

Liberty is a fast playing exciting game, not a detailed simulation. The presence of transports and small gunboats in the St. Lawrence is represented by river movement per Rule 5.6. The presence of warships and crews serving on land are represented by the factors of land units and the naval block included in the Canada convoy. There are no rules about the need to disassemble and reassemble boats on both sides of the portage between Lake Champlain and the

St. Lawrence River which was important in the '76 campaign. Interested players can try a shipbuilding rule such as Columbia's War of 1812 Rules 5.1 and 7.1, or create their own house rule.

Rule 11.4 Winter is amended as follows:

Any 1 cv block of Americans (any type) or British (any type) can attempt to pass the Winter Turn in the non-supply towns of Trois Rivieres, St. Johns, Ft. Frontenac, Ft. Stanwix, Falmouth, or Ft. Western. *(This permits for example a small American presence to remain near the two major Canadian cities until Spring, as did the remnant of the Montgomery-Arnold force.)*

To add the necessary element of risk in making this decision, and after the player must select blocks for Disbanding per Rule 11.3, then each 1 cv block making this attempt must perform a Winter Attrition roll of one die. A roll of 1 or 2 eliminates the block which becomes "prisoners" subject to exchange per Rule 11.5. A roll of 3 through 6 permits the 1 cv block to survive the Winter Turn on the selected non-supply town. *(Small detachments and raiding parties familiar with the north woods could survive at minimum strength but survival was never guaranteed. This rule allows the unlikely but possible existence of a small enemy force where they can threaten harm or require action points to deal with, adding to unpredictable play.)*

Rule (New): Canadian Sympathizers

At the end of the first game turn in which Americans control Montreal or Quebec, roll one die for each American block in that city. A roll of 1 adds 1 cv instantly to each block rolled for.

Congress and the army believed that French Canadians would rise up and help overthrow their British rulers. Despite supportive words and some supplies to Arnold's men, the French remained apathetic and more concerned about saving their businesses and homes. The British government also allowed the Catholic Canadians to worship without interference and hinted that the Protestant Americans would not. Only some 200 volunteers and 50 Indians joined the Americans.

This Rule allows the slim chance that some volunteers will actually join up.

Rule (New): the Ordnance Ships

At the end of Turn 4 (Nov-Dec '75) after all phases have been completed, one player rolls 1 die to determine the fate of two British ordnance ships at sea.

Results:

2-5 = no effect

1= 1 step is added to any British block in a friendly port.

6= 1 step is added to any American block in a friendly port.

The step is forfeited if no friendly blocks are in friendly ports on a roll of 1 or 6.

The British Admiralty sent two loaded ordnance ships to hazard a stormy Atlantic crossing to get weapons, ammunition, and supplies to Boston or Quebec before winter closed in. George Washington commissioned a half dozen ships before Congress officially did so. Its vessels captured one of the ordnance ships named "Nancy" which was brought into Cape Ann north of Boston. It was estimated that its contents would have required 18 months to manufacture in the colonies.

Optional Rules (Page 5 of Rules) for American Militia "honorable shot" and for British/Hessian bayonet charge are **not** available. Neither of those tactics were employed this early in the conflict, until the New York campaign in late summer of '76.

As with any scenario, feel free to experiment, tinker, and have fun!

Sources: Arthur Lefkowitz, Benedict Arnold's Army; James Nelson, Benedict Arnold's Navy; Thomas Desjardins, Through a Howling Wilderness; Mark Boatner III, Encyclopedia of the American Revolution; Bruce Lancaster, narrative for American Heritage History of the American Revolution; Kenneth Roberts, Arundel; also Roberts as editor of Letters from Arnold's Expedition.

**Note for the purists who chafe at seeing Ft. Frontenac on the map, knowing it was demolished after the French & Indian War: just call it Kingston which the site later became, as per Columbia's War of 1812 map.*