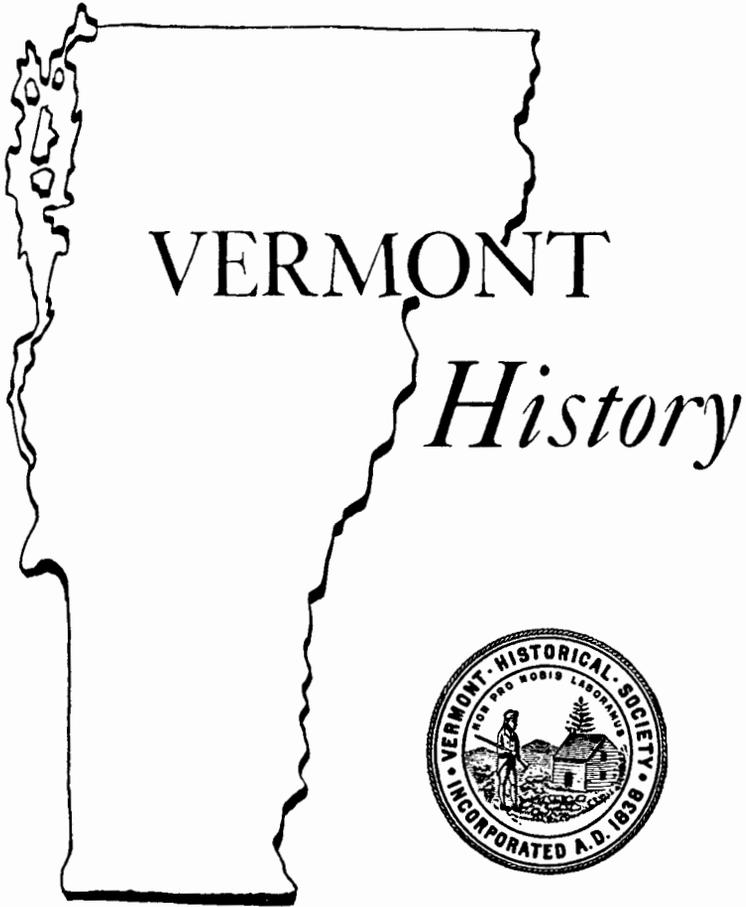


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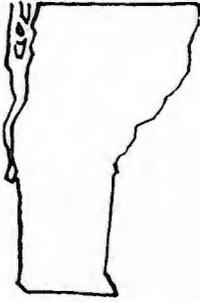
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*This 1984 aerial view of Arnold's Bay shows the location of the foundation remains of the Ferris homestead.  
Courtesy of Art Cohn*



Squire Ferris provided an eyewitness account that sheds new light on the career and reputation of Benedict Arnold.

## An Incident Not Known to History: Squire Ferris and Benedict Arnold at Ferris Bay, October 13, 1776\*

By ART COHN

Ferris Rock is one of Lake Champlain's best known maritime hazards. A vast underwater mountain, it rises from a depth of 150 feet to within three feet of the water's surface. It is also the only existing monument to the Ferris family of Panton who were among the Champlain Valley's earliest settlers. The rock was named after Hiram Ferris, the grandson of Peter Ferris who came to live in Panton in 1765. Hiram Ferris was one of Lake Champlain's steamboat pilots; in 1809 he became the first pilot on the *Vermont I*, the lake's earliest steamboat, and plied his trade on the water until his retirement a half-century later. Incidentally, he discovered Ferris Rock without maritime accident. But before Ferris Rock had been found, another Lake Champlain landmark had carried the Ferris name; the bay to which Benedict Arnold retreated in 1776 was then known, by British and American alike, as Ferris Bay.<sup>1</sup>

On October 13, 1776, Benedict Arnold pointed every cannon himself as he fought frantically to save his life and those of the two hundred men still under his command. As he fired at the superior British naval squadron that he was engaging for the second time in three days, Arnold calculated a means of escape. Following the October 11 battle at Valcour Island, the Americans had managed a difficult nighttime maneuver past a British blockade, and now as Arnold sailed toward the safety of Crown Point, contrary winds forced him to confront the pursuing enemy for a second time. Arnold knew that retaining American control of Lake Champlain was no longer possible and the best he could hope for was to save his

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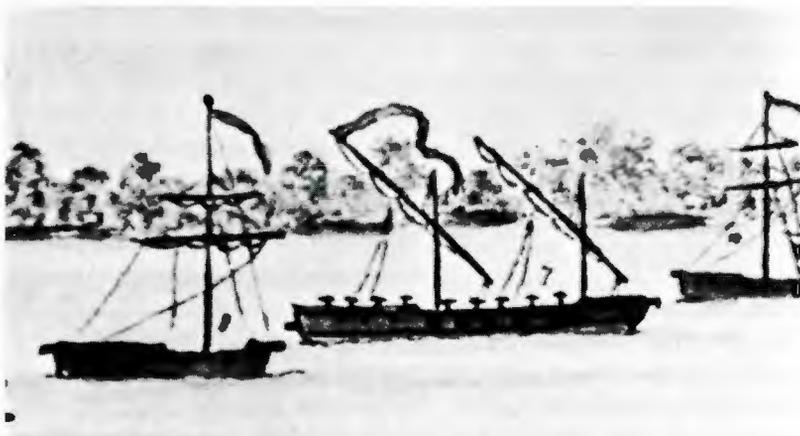
*\*The author wishes to thank the Champlain Maritime Society, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, and the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, for their sponsorship of this research. I would also like to thank my friend, J. Robert Maguire, who graciously read and commented on this article.*



*The only known Ferris family likeness is this portrait of Hiram Ferris drawn from a photograph in 1891. Terry Stone of Colchester, Vt., made this copy from the original. Courtesy of Art Cohn*

men and ships from falling into British hands. The field commander turned naval commodore selected tiny Ferris Bay, just ten miles north of Crown Point on the eastern shore of the lake, and steered his flagship *Congress* and the four remaining gondolas into the bay until they ran aground. With flags still flying in defiance of his British pursuers, he ordered his cannon dumped overboard and his vessels destroyed.

Historians acknowledge that the naval engagements on Lake Champlain in the fall of 1776 shaped the outcome of the American Revolution.<sup>2</sup> Lake Champlain, stretching 120 miles north and south at the center of the colonies, provided an ideal invasion route from the north. Despite the loss of his fleet at the Battle of Valcour Island, the resistance of Arnold



*At the center of this watercolor by Charles Randle, “A View of New England Arm’d Vessels on Valcure Bay on Lake Champlain, 11 October, 1776,” is Benedict Arnold’s flagship, the galley Congress. Original painting in Public Archives of Canada.*

and his men gave the colonial army a year to prepare for a British invasion. In October, 1777, American forces commanded by Major General Horatio Gates, and with a dramatic assist from Benedict Arnold, inflicted a devastating defeat on the British army at Saratoga. Historians agree that without the American defense of Lake Champlain in 1776, the British strategy of dividing and then conquering the rebel colonies might well have succeeded.

After Arnold destroyed his fleet, the British circulated “a dreadful report” that he had burned his sick and wounded men in his ships. In the course of a larger project, I have uncovered a connection between Benedict Arnold and early Vermont settler Peter Ferris and his family.<sup>3</sup> In pursuing it, I have found evidence that sheds new light on the controversy that has arisen about Arnold’s behavior that day. Research into the history of the Ferris family also reminds us of the difficulties experienced by settlers in the Champlain Valley in the years of the American Revolution.

Peter Ferris came to the town of Panton from Nine Partners, New York, in 1765. He and his wife traveled to this lakeshore town on horseback with Peter carrying their two-year-old son Squire in his arms. They settled on a bluff looking north over the bay into Lake Champlain where Peter built a log cabin and began farming the fertile lands that surrounded his home.<sup>4</sup> Later he probably sold his surplus crops to his closest neighbors, the British garrison at Crown Point, or traded north to Canadian markets. The Ferris farmstead, located in a largely uninhabited

frontier region, soon became a natural stopping place for travelers moving through the valley.

When war broke out at Ticonderoga and Crown Point in May of 1775, soldiers and statesmen also sought refuge at the Ferris household. During the winter of 1776, Congress ordered reinforcements from Pennsylvania north via the frozen Lake Champlain in a vain attempt to shore up Arnold's and Montgomery's failing Canadian invasion. Freezing temperatures, snow, wind, and a shortage of pack animals made this northward journey in the dead of winter an almost impossible mission. As the soldiers left the Hudson Valley and entered the desolate Champlain corridor, their journals record that one of the few accommodations available to them was the home of Peter Ferris.<sup>5</sup> Later in April, Congress sent a three-person delegation consisting of Samuel Chase, Charles Carroll, and Benjamin Franklin to Canada to look over the uncertain Canadian campaign. Passing north on the Hudson River and Lakes George and Champlain, the seventy-year-old Franklin and his party arrived at the home of Peter Ferris on April 24. Charles Carroll's journal records information about the area, particularly the fortifications at Crown Point. "This intelligence I received from one Faris, [Ferris] who lives 10 miles down the lake and at whose house we lay this night."<sup>6</sup> The Ferris house became well known to American soldiers and their supporters.

The Ferris family contributed to the colonial war effort in other ways. Peter and son Squire served as scouts for Col. Arthur St. Clair, commander at Ticonderoga. On one occasion they rescued two neighbors, Joseph Everest and Phineas Spalding, who had been captured by the British. In the dark of night, the Ferrises paddled a canoe alongside the British schooner *Maria*, which was anchored in their bay and ferried Everest and Spalding to shore.<sup>7</sup> In 1777, however, the Ferrises paid a price for their rebel sympathies. As the British general, John Burgoyne, advanced south on both sides of the lake heading for success at Ticonderoga and defeat at Saratoga, Gen. Simon Fraser, one of Burgoyne's officers, landed at the Ferris farm. He turned two hundred horses into Ferris's meadows and grainfields, totally ruining the crops.<sup>8</sup>

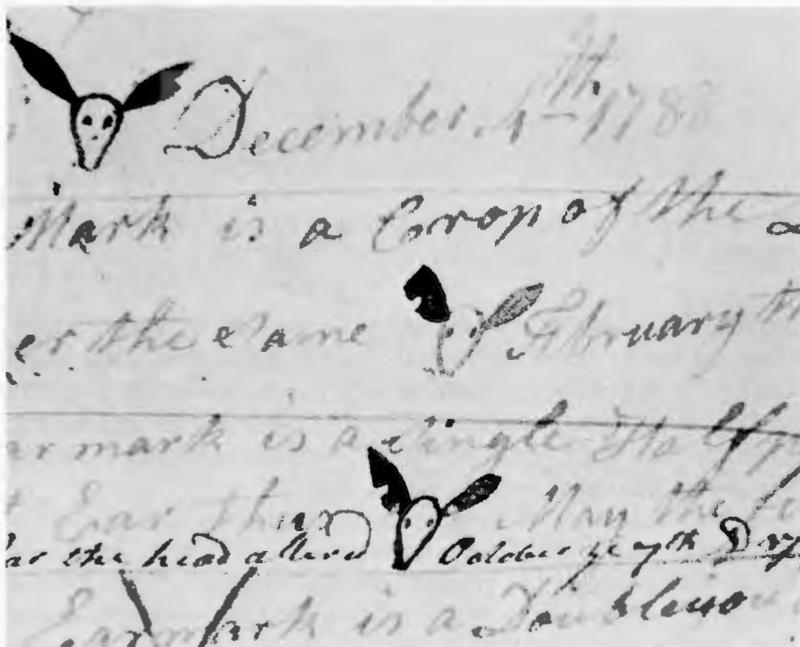
In 1778 yet another disaster befell the Ferris family. After the British defeat at Saratoga, a force under the command of Major Christopher Carleton was sent to drive rebel sympathizers out of the valley. During Carleton's raid, many buildings in the region were burned and a total of thirty-nine men and boys were captured. Peter Ferris and his son were deer hunting on the west shore of the lake near the mouth of Putnam's Creek when they were seized and carried on board the schooner *Maria*. Their house and other buildings in Pantown were burned, according to one report by a vengeful Tory neighbor.<sup>9</sup>

Ferris and his son became prisoners of war. They made several attempts

to escape, but each time they were recaptured and more brutally confined. Their captivity lasted until July of 1782, when they were finally taken to Skenesboro and exchanged for British prisoners. Squire Ferris later recalled that he and his father had been prisoners of war for “Three years Eight months & fifteen days.”<sup>10</sup>

After their release in 1782, Peter and Squire returned to their lakeside home and began to rebuild their lives. Peter was proud of the fertility of his land. Charles Carroll during the stay of the Congressional commissioners in 1776 had reported that “his land and the neighboring lands are exceedingly fine. He told us he had reaped 30 bushels of wheat from an acre.”<sup>11</sup> Peter, as was the custom, registered his “Earmark for cattle, sheep & hogs” with the town clerk. His mark was described as “a crop of the left ear and a half penny under the same” and included an illustration of the head of a sad-looking cow to illustrate the mark.<sup>12</sup> Peter Ferris opened his home for meetings of the local militia.<sup>13</sup> In 1784 he became the area’s first elected representative to the Vermont legislature.<sup>14</sup>

As the number of settlers in the Champlain Valley grew, the “Great Increase in Travel too [sic] and from these and Different Parts” created the need for a regular ferry crossing at Ferris Bay. In 1799 Peter Ferris



*An enlargement of the cattle “earmark” [center] that Peter Ferris registered with the Panton Town Clerk in 1788. Courtesy of Art Cohn*

Town Clerk  
 May the 13<sup>th</sup> 1786  
 11<sup>th</sup> Mr. Elizabeth Afford's Ear Mark is a full Croop of the  
 Right Ear and a Half penny the Upper Side the Left Ear  
 Marked thus  September 15<sup>th</sup> 1786  
 12<sup>th</sup> Mr. Edward Goodwin's Ear Mark is a half Croop of the Right  
 Ear Marked thus  December 1<sup>st</sup> 1786  
 13<sup>th</sup> Mr. Peter Ferris Ear Mark is a Croop of the Left Ear and  
 a Half penny under the same  February the 24<sup>th</sup> 1788  
 14<sup>th</sup> Mr. Job Worthington Ear Mark is a single Half penny  
 under the Right Ear  May 20<sup>th</sup> 1788  
 15<sup>th</sup> Mr. Samuel Richards Ear Mark is a Lamb's foot on the left  
 Ear and a half Croop the under side the right  
 Marked thus  May the 13<sup>th</sup> 1788  
 16<sup>th</sup> Mr. James Goodrich Ear Mark is a single Half penny  
 under the Right Ear thus  May 20<sup>th</sup> 1788  
 17<sup>th</sup> Mr. Charles Goodrich Ear Mark is a Half penny on  
 the Upper Side the Left Ear Marked thus  August 1<sup>st</sup> 1788  
 18<sup>th</sup> Mr. Giles Pelton Ear Mark a Croop of the right Ear  
 and a Half penny Each side of the same  February 31<sup>st</sup> 1789  
 19<sup>th</sup> Mr. Bebe Perry Ear Mark is two Half pennies under  
 the Left Ear  February 31<sup>st</sup> 1789  
 20<sup>th</sup> Mr. James Worthington Ear Mark is a half Croop and a  
 Half penny under the Right Ear  February 31<sup>st</sup> 1789

The original of this page of earmarks is at the town clerk's office in Panton. Courtesy of Art Cohn

petitioned the Vermont state legislature for the right to operate a ferry from his bay to "Hezekial Barbur's" on the New York side of the lake.<sup>15</sup> On November 7, 1800, the Vermont legislature granted this privilege to the seventy-five-year old Ferris.<sup>16</sup> Peter Ferris survived four wives and lived to the age of ninety-one. He died on April 7, 1816, and was buried on a knoll overlooking the bay.<sup>17</sup>

Just as the agitation of local events complicated the ordinary lives of the Ferrises, so a series of crises spanning the first eighteen months of the American Revolution brought Benedict Arnold to Ferris Bay on October 13, 1776. In May of 1775, Ethan Allen, the Green Mountain Boys, and Benedict Arnold seized the English fortresses of Ticonderoga and Crown Point. In three days and in the first offensive action of the struggle for independence, a fledgling American army had become masters

of strategic Lake Champlain, captured some much needed cannon, and contributed mightily to American confidence.

The Americans, flushed with this early success, determined to press their advantage and launched a full-scale invasion of Canada. Gen. Richard Montgomery led an army through the Champlain Valley and advanced to the fortress city of Quebec. There he met Benedict Arnold. The daring Arnold had reached Quebec with a force of 675 men by penetrating the uncharted Maine and Canadian wilderness. Arnold and Montgomery planned a bold strike at the besieged British force, and on New Year's Eve, 1775, under the cover of darkness and a blinding snowstorm, the Americans attacked. Montgomery was killed in the first assault and Benedict Arnold was badly wounded. The assault failed and the American campaign deteriorated. By spring, this disaster had forced the Americans to retreat to Lake Champlain. A fresh British army advanced as far as St. Johns, Quebec. Here the British had to wait until they could launch a naval fleet and attempt to regain control of the lake.<sup>18</sup>

The British tirelessly brought vessels and seamen to St. Johns. Several large vessels from the St. Lawrence were transported in sections overland to the lake. General Gates, concerned about delays in American efforts to build a fleet, assigned Benedict Arnold, now recovered from his wounds, the command of the American effort; Gates believed Arnold "has a perfect knowledge in maritime affairs, and is besides, a most deserving and gallant officer."<sup>19</sup> The Americans fitted up their existing vessels and at Skenesboro busily built new ones. "We build a thing called a gondola"<sup>20</sup> and "Arnold thinks it proper for him to go immediately to work building a Spanish Galley."<sup>21</sup> The gondolas and galleys became the backbone of the American fleet.

Despite Arnold's efforts, the British were able to launch a larger, better armed, and better manned fleet. The Americans had not anticipated the ability of the British to build so superior a fleet in so short a time. Intelligence finally reached Arnold about the impressive size of the British fleet only three weeks before the battle. A concerned Arnold wrote to General Gates, "I am inclined to think, on comparing the various Accounts, that the Enemy will soon have a considerable naval force."<sup>22</sup> "Considerable" was an understatement, as both sides learned when the two fleets met at Valcour Island on October 11, 1776.

Arnold chose to anchor his ships on the western side of Valcour Island, calculating the British would sail past the island on the eastern side and have to beat into the wind to engage him. He was correct; the northerly winds, which brought the British fleet south past Valcour, prevented it from bringing its superior firepower into the fight. Consequently, during the first day's battle, the British were only able to use one of their large vessels, the *Carleton*, and their twenty gunboats. For five hours the lake

resounded with cannon fire; the British then retired to form a blockade between the southern end of the island and the mainland. Both sides knew that if prevailing positions were maintained, the next day would see the destruction of Arnold's fleet and the end of the American naval control of Lake Champlain. Arnold, after discussion with his officers, chose not to await this fate. Aided by a dark October night, and perhaps some British overconfidence, Arnold boldly escaped by rowing his shattered vessels single file past the British blockade.<sup>23</sup> The next morning, a "mortified" Gov. Gen. Sir Guy Carleton ordered his vessels into a headlong pursuit of the fleeing Americans.<sup>24</sup>



*This map, first published in London by William Faden in December, 1776, shows the location of the first day's confrontation between Arnold and the British. Courtesy of Special Collections, UVM*

The wind, which until now had been Arnold's chief ally, deserted him and on October 13 he was forced to engage in a second gun battle.<sup>25</sup> The fickle winds at the Palisades rock cliffs, south of Split Rock, so impeded the second-in-command, General Waterbury, in his galley *Washington*

*This detail from the 1776 "Topographical Map of Hudson's River . . ." by Claude Joseph Sautier was published by William Faden in London in 1777. Sautier was the earliest cartographer to distinguish accurately between Arnold and Buttonmould Bays. Courtesy of Special Collections, UVM*



that he was captured. This loss of General Waterbury left Arnold with only his galley *Congress* and four gondolas to make his fight.<sup>26</sup> Arnold searched for a way to disengage and, as described earlier, sailed into Ferris Bay. It is likely that Arnold chose this position because he and Ferris were already acquainted.<sup>27</sup> James Wilkinson described Arnold's landing at Ferris Bay in his 1816 *Memoirs*: "[Arnold] set [the ships] on fire, but ordered the colours not to be struck, and as they grounded, the marines were directed to jump overboard, with their arms and accoutrements, to ascend a bank about twenty-five feet elevation, and form a line for the defence of their vessels and flags against the enemy, Arnold being the last man who debarked. The enemy did not venture into the cove, but kept up a distant cannonade until our vessels were burnt to the water's edge, after which Arnold commenced his march for Crown Point, about fifteen mile distant, by a bridle way through an unsettled wilderness."<sup>28</sup> Benedict Arnold and the Ferrises retreated together to Ticonderoga, and while Arnold went on to achieve further fame at Saratoga and infamy at West Point, Peter Ferris returned home that winter to find that the British had shot his cattle, horses, and hogs, burned his fences, and cut down his orchard trees.<sup>29</sup>

That Benedict Arnold brought five of his fleet into this bay on the eastern shore of the lake and destroyed them, and escaped overland to Crown Point is a well documented historical fact. What took place, however, during the vessels' destruction has been a matter of much debate. J. Robert Maguire, in a pioneering essay published in *Vermont History* in 1978, carefully examined evidence pertaining to Arnold's actions in the fleet's destruction.<sup>30</sup> This controversy centers around "a dreadful report," which circulated through the British ranks at the time in which it was said "That General Arnold, while burning his five ships had also burned about thirty sick and wounded men who were on board."<sup>31</sup> This quote, however, is from the journal of Major General Friederich Riedesel who was not there. Presumably then, Riedesel was commenting on a current rumor. Seeking a source for this accusation, Maguire discovered an eyewitness account written by Dr. Robert Knox, chief medical officer to the British army in Canada. Dr. Knox was on board the British flagship *Maria* during the entire battle. His account of the incident states that "Mr. Arnold run [*sic*] five ships ashore, and remained on the beach till he set fire to them, burning the wounded and sick in them."<sup>32</sup> Since Knox had nothing to gain by such a statement, Maguire felt forced to conclude that "Knox's account must be seen as providing firsthand corroboration" for the "dreadful report."<sup>33</sup>

Benedict Arnold's treason at West Point later added substance to charges about his lack of character. Despite this, it is difficult to reconcile the Benedict Arnold who inspired such fierce loyalty from his men as a field commander and the Benedict Arnold capable of abandoning his wounded as naval commander. Arnold's own report written on October 15 neither hints at nor seems to anticipate the allegations later made by the British: "The Sails Rigging and Hull of the *Congress* was shattered and torn to Peices [*sic*], the first Lieutenant and three men killed, when to prevent her falling into the Enemy's hands, who had seven Sail around me, I ran her ashore in a small Creek ten Miles from Crown Point on the East Side when after saving our small Arms, I set her on Fire with four Gondolas . . ."<sup>34</sup> That his official report is so matter-of-fact suggests that Arnold did not expect controversy here. Also, the absence of any hint of this "dreadful report" in contemporary American sources raises additional doubts about the authenticity of the British version.<sup>35</sup>

What all accounts of the fleet's destruction have failed to mention is that these events took place in front of Peter Ferris's dooryard and that Peter and his son, Squire, were there. Research into the life of the Ferris family has clarified the details of what Benedict Arnold did on October 13. Historical investigation led to a rediscovery of what fourteen-year-old Squire Ferris saw from the vantage point of his homestead on the high bank at the head of the bay. Local history sources in Pantons,



*This Revolutionary era portrait of Benedict Arnold, with Quebec in the background, is European in origin and probably dates from the late 1770s. Courtesy of Special Collections, UVM*

Middlebury, and Vergennes testify to the little known fact that there were Vermont witnesses to the destruction of Arnold's fleet.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, one of them, Squire Ferris, provided an eyewitness account that sheds new light on the career and reputation of Benedict Arnold.

During the nineteenth century a Vergennes lawyer and amateur historian, Philip C. Tucker, gathered the oral testimony of survivors of the Revolutionary era and published it in area newspapers.<sup>37</sup> In the *Vergennes Vermonter* of February 8, 1861, Mr. Tucker recalled an interview with a person "on the spot" when Arnold ran his fleet into the bay.



*Local historian Philip C. Tucker (1800-1861) played a critical part in preserving the oral history testimony of Squire Ferris. Portrait undated. Courtesy of Special Collections, UVM*

This was Squire Ferris, and Tucker “wrote down his statement, as given by his own lips, in February, 1845.” Ferris, who was eighty-three-years old in 1845, remembered that the *Congress* and four gunboats came into the bay; that the men were landed and the vessel set on fire; that the British fleet reached the mouth of the bay before the explosion of Arnold’s vessel took place, fired at the men upon the shore and at the house of his father, which was struck by one cannon and several grape shot, and his father and family retreated with Arnold to Crown Point and Ticonderoga.<sup>38</sup>

The interview with Squire Ferris that Tucker mentioned in 1861 had originally been published in the *Vergennes Vermonter* in 1845. Unfortunately, that issue cannot be located. Samuel Swift, however, in his *History of the Town of Middlebury*, 1859, included a verbatim extract



*Samuel Swift contributed to the preservation of Ferris's memoirs by including them in his history of the town of Middlebury. Portrait undated. Courtesy of Special Collections, UVM*

from the article originally published by Philip Tucker on February 26, 1845.<sup>39</sup> This extract, according to both Swift and Tucker, has the actual words of Squire Ferris, and directly addresses the allegations about Benedict Arnold.<sup>40</sup>

In 1845 Squire Ferris recalled, "Lieutenant Goldsmith of Arnold's galley had been severely wounded in the thigh by a grape shot in the battle near Valcour Island, and lay wholly helpless on the deck, when orders were given to blow up the vessels. Arnold had ordered him to be removed on shore, but by some oversight he was neglected, and was on the deck of the galley when the gunner set fire to the match. He then begged to be thrown overboard, and the gunner, on returning from the galley, told him he would be dead before she blew up. He remained on deck at the

explosion, and his body was seen when blown up into the air. His remains were taken up and buried on the shore of the lake. To his credit Arnold showed the greatest feeling upon the subject, and threatened to run the gunner through on the spot. The British fleet arrived at the mouth of the bay before the explosion of Arnold's vessels and fired upon his men on the shore, and upon the house of Mr. Ferris, which stood near the shore."<sup>41</sup>

This dramatic account seems to portray a competent, even heroic Benedict Arnold doing his best under difficult circumstances. Also Arnold's order that the "remains [be] taken up and buried on the shore of the lake" in the face of a continuing British cannonade gives further evidence of dedication to his men.<sup>42</sup> Does Ferris's report then exonerate Benedict Arnold from responsibility for the "dreadful report"? I believe it does. As often happens, two witnesses to the same incident may see it in completely different ways. It was not unreasonable for Knox, viewing the event from the deck of the *Maria* at the mouth of the bay, to conclude that Arnold had abandoned his wounded in order to hasten his retreat. Squire Ferris, however, was closer to what took place.

Little is known about Squire Ferris's life after the war. Scattered records tell us he served as a sailor and a scout on Lake Champlain and as a pilot on board Commodore McDonough's fleet on Lake Champlain during the War of 1812.<sup>43</sup> About this time he moved to Chazy, New York. Squire petitioned the U.S. Congress for a veteran's pension.<sup>44</sup> Although Squire served in both the Revolution and the War of 1812, his request was not honored. Later Ferris moved to Vergennes. There he gave his statement to Philip Tucker, and there upon his death in 1849 he was buried.

The record of Peter and Squire Ferris's service and suffering in the cause of America's fight for independence suggests the impact of major events on ordinary lives. The story of these unsung heroes of the Revolution is one of sacrifices made for principles held. Peter Ferris and his son were personally involved with Benjamin Franklin, Benedict Arnold, Arthur St. Clair, and Gen. Simon Fraser. They became involved not simply because they lived in a strategically important place at a crucial time, but because they believed in the struggle.

Today sailors and ferry passengers, traveling from Burlington to Port Kent, pass Ferris Rock, marked with a navigational tower by the U.S. Coast Guard. While neither a statue or commemorative plaque identifies the lakeside Panton home of Peter Ferris, his son Squire, or his grandson Hiram, Ferris Rock carries their name into the future and serves to remind us of the contribution they made to this region and the nation. To Ferris Rock should be added another monument to the Ferris family: namely the account of the final moments of the Battle of Valcour Island recalled by eighty-three-year old Squire Ferris in 1845.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Essex County Republican*, June 11, 1891, contains information on Hiram Ferris in an article, "Steamboating On Lake Champlain." A copy is included in the genealogical records of the Ferris family at the Vermont Historical Society Library, Montpelier, Vt. The town of Ferrisburgh was named for Benjamin Ferris who applied to New Hampshire's Gov. Wentworth in 1762 for the town charter. The following year Benjamin and David Ferris came to the newly chartered town to survey and divide it into lots. Abby Hemenway, ed., *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, (Burlington, Vt., 1867) 1:32.

<sup>2</sup> William M. Fowler, Jr., *Rebels Under Sail, The American Navy During the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 153. After minimizing the impact of the saltwater navy on the outcome of the Revolution, Mr. Fowler states, "But what might be said of the deep-water navy cannot be applied to its freshwater counterpart that operated in the remote areas of upstate New York and Vermont along the Hudson River-Lake Champlain corridor. Here an American fleet played a vital role in what was perhaps the most important campaign of the Revolution; in fact, this naval action among the mountains was the only battle fought by the Americans that Alfred Thayer Mahan thought worthy of including in his *Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence*."

<sup>3</sup> Historic Ferris Bay is today known as Arnold's Bay. The Arnold's Bay Project, which the author codirects with Kevin Crisman, is a nautical archaeology program that has systematically examined the sub-surface area of this bay. In the course of the investigation, a portion of the *Congress*, Benedict Arnold's flagship, has been discovered.

<sup>4</sup> From the "Ferris Family Genealogy," 2-3, typescript obtained from Peter Story, Emigrant, Montana, a descendant of Peter Ferris.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Charles Jones, *Conquest of Canada in 1776* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1882; reprint, New York: Research Reprints, 1970), 27.

<sup>6</sup> Allan S. Everest, ed., *The Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton*, (Fort Ticonderoga, New York: Champlain-Upper Hudson Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 40.

<sup>7</sup> "Ferris Family Genealogy," 4; Samuel Swift, *History of the Town of Middlebury* (Middlebury, Vt.: A.H. Copeland, 1859), 90.

<sup>8</sup> Swift, *Middlebury*, 89. General Simon Fraser was mortally wounded and died at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777.

<sup>9</sup> Ida H. and Paul A. Washington, *Carleton's Raid*, (Canaan, N.H.: Phoenix Publishing, 1977), 57. This excellent presentation of an important chapter in Champlain Valley history contains much information about the Ferrises and their Vermont neighbors' seizure and captivity. Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer* 1:82.

<sup>10</sup> "To the Honorable the Senate & House of Representatives of the U.S., The Petition of Squire Ferris of Chazy in the State of New York," November 12, 1833, #R 3518. Federal Records Office, National Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Everest, *Journal of Charles Carroll*, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Land Records of the Town of Pantton, bk. 2, p. 6, February 24, 1788. Pantton town clerk's office, Pantton, Vt.

<sup>13</sup> Return listing the officers and men of the local militia company, Vermont Historical Society Library, MSS 24, #18.

<sup>14</sup> Leonard Deming, *Catalogue of the Principal Officers of Vermont 1778-1851*, Middlebury, Vt. 1851, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Allen Soule, ed., *General Petitions of 1797-1799, State Papers of Vermont*, (Montpelier: Secretary of State's Office, 1962), 11:450.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 451. The bill "passed into law 11/7/1800."

<sup>17</sup> From the genealogy records of the "Hiram Ferris Family," Vermont Historical Society Library, Montpelier, Vt. Peter Ferris, born April 21, 1725, died April 7, 1816; Squire Ferris, born 1763, died March 17, 1849; and Hiram Ferris, born May 25, 1792, died December 25, 1876. The longevity of these three generations of Ferrises is remarkable; they were ninety-one, eighty-six, and eighty-four years old respectively at the time of their deaths.

<sup>18</sup> United States Naval History Division, *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* (Washington: GPO, 1964-1980). Hereafter cited *NDAR*.

<sup>19</sup> Gates to Washington, 29 July, 1776, Peter Force, *American Archives*, (authorized by an Act of Congress, Washington, 1837-1853; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1972) series 5, vol. 6, col. 651.

<sup>20</sup> Col. John Trumbull to Gov. Jonathan Trumbull, 12 July 1776, *NDAR* 5:1035-36; *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, 6 (July 1942), 144-145.

<sup>21</sup> From a collection forty-three letters from Assistant Deputy Quartermaster Harmanus Schuyler to Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler. The original letters are at the Cornell University Archives. A microfilm set is at the library of the Adirondack Museum at Blue Mountain Lake, N.Y. These letters, many of them written from Skenesboro, N.Y., at the southern end of Lake Champlain, are weekly reports on the building of the American fleet. The letter cited was written from Skenesboro on July 24, 1776.

<sup>22</sup> Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold to Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates, 18 September 1776, *NDAR* 6:884.

<sup>23</sup> How Arnold managed to slip his fleet past the British has been the subject of much historical speculation. Some writers have suggested that Arnold took his fleet around the north end of the island, but this view is not supported by the weight of evidence. In examining documents that relate to this dramatic action, two aspects of the evening stand out as contributing to Arnold's success. One is the blockade position chosen by the British fleet, which was severely criticized in "An Open Letter to Captain Pringle" written by the junior officers under his command on June 8, 1777, published in *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, I, no. 4 (July 1928), 14-20. The second incident involved the American schooner *Royal Savage*, which had gone aground on the southern end of Valcour Island early in the contest. At dusk, according to "The Journal of Captain George Pausch," *NDAR* 6:1259-1260, the British set the *Royal Savage* on fire, "her ammunition, blowing up, caused a fine fire lasting all night." As the *Royal Savage* burned to the east and drew the attention of the British watch, Arnold quietly rowed his fleet passed them on the west.

<sup>24</sup> Gov. Gen. Sir Guy Carleton to Lt. Gen. John Burgoyne, *NDAR* 6:1272-1274.

<sup>25</sup> The date of the battle of Valcour Island is frequently given as October 11, 1776. The battle actually spanned three days, with the Americans fleeing south and the British in hot pursuit on October 12. A second battle took place on October 13 between Split Rock and Ferris Bay. The engraving, reproduced on the front cover, and originally published by Robert Sayer, London, December 23, 1776, has been often cited as the battle of Valcour Island, but is, in fact, the second battle, which took place on October 13.

<sup>26</sup> The seizure of General Waterbury, who with his men was paroled just days later, led to a split between him and Arnold. Writing in his own behalf to Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates on February 26, 1777, Waterbury criticizes Arnold for not allowing him to scuttle the *Washington* before she was taken. *NDAR*, 7:1294-1297.

<sup>27</sup> On August 31, 1776, Arnold was anchored in and wrote correspondence from "Buttonmould Bay," which is directly north of Ferris Bay. *NDAR* 6:371. The name "Buttonmould Bay" was frequently applied to both bays.

<sup>28</sup> General James Wilkinson, *Memoirs of My Own Times* (Philadelphia, 1816) 1:91-92. According to J. Robert Maguire, from whose article this quotation is taken, Wilkinson was not present himself, but based his account on information obtained from a fellow officer who had been sergeant of the marines on board Arnold's galley, the *Congress*. J. Robert Maguire, "Dr. Robert Knox's Account of the Battle of Valcour, October 11-13, 1776," *Vermont History*, vol. 46, no. 3 (Summer 1978): 13.

<sup>29</sup> Swift, *History of the Town of Middlebury*, 89.

<sup>30</sup> Maguire, 141.

<sup>31</sup> William L. Stone, ed., *Memoirs, Letters, and Journals of Major General Riedesel* (reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969) 80.

<sup>32</sup> Dr. Knox's letter, written to an unidentified party in England, is in J. Robert Maguire's personal collection.

<sup>33</sup> Maguire, 146.

<sup>34</sup> Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold to Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler, 15 October 1776, *NDAR* 6:1276.

<sup>35</sup> Mr. Maguire has confirmed this idea in subsequent conversations with the author.

<sup>36</sup> The author wishes to thank Lois Noonan and the staff at the Bixby Library in Vergennes; Polly Darnell and the staff at the Sheldon Museum in Middlebury, and Hazel Stagg, the Panton town clerk, for their assistance.

<sup>37</sup> Philip C. Tucker, (born in Boston 1800, died in Vermont 1861) came to Vermont to work at the Monkton Iron Works located at the falls in Vergennes. He became a lawyer and was actively engaged in the Free Mason movement in Vermont, serving as Grand Master of the Masons in the state.

<sup>38</sup> *Vergennes Vermonter*, February 8, 1861. This article, with some additions, was reprinted in a seven-page booklet entitled *General Arnold and the Congress Galley* by the late P. C. Tucker, Esq. Special Collections, Bailey-Howe Library, University of Vermont.

<sup>39</sup> Swift, *Middlebury*, 88-93. The original article referred to in the *Vergennes Vermonter* of February 26, 1845 cannot be located among the collection of original newspapers in the Bixby Library in Vergennes or at the Vermont State Library in Montpelier.

<sup>40</sup> Swift, *Middlebury*, 88.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>42</sup> Over the years the Ferris homestead has been the scene of relic hunting. The bluff on which the house was located has steadily eroded and only one wall of the foundation now exists. According to one local source, sworn to secrecy, a relic hunter saw a bone protruding from the eroding bank and, thinking it a cow bone, dug it up. It proved to be a human skeleton with a Revolutionary War soldier's belt buckle still recognizable.

<sup>43</sup> "Hiram Ferris Family," Vermont Historical Society; "Petition of Squire Ferris."

<sup>44</sup> "Petition of Squire Ferris."