

Mount Independence Primary Source Activity: Maps

Lesson Overview: Historians use primary sources to learn about the past. Sometimes these sources, such as letters and diaries, are difficult to decipher. This lesson asks students to make sense of place names in diaries of Revolutionary War soldiers in the Champlain Valley.

Background: Many soldiers wrote home to their families about their experiences in the American Revolution. Other soldiers kept journals about their daily lives. These written sources help historians learn about the past with their stories of individual people.

Sometimes they wrote about exciting things:

“A gen’l alarm thro’ the camp. A party of regulars & Hessians land’d before noon at 3 mile Point, but retreated again in the evening without attacking us.” (*Henry Sewall*, October 28, 1776)

Some days were not so exciting:

“Saturday october 5th Nothing Meterial to day hapned in camp” (*Jonathan Burton*, Oct. 5, 1776)

These documents are primary sources and contain information recorded about an event by a person who was there or living at that time. Lack of punctuation and inconsistent spelling can make them difficult to read. Messy or fancy handwriting of the original documents can be challenges to students trying to use these texts. With help they can use these history building blocks.

Place names are a challenge in many primary sources. Often the soldiers only heard the names and never saw them written down. This leads to a wide variety of spellings, especially with place names of French or Native American origin. This activity asks students to interpret some of the inventive spellings and match names in the document to names on a modern map.

Procedure: Ask students how they might spell some unfamiliar names, like Chateaugay, Ticonderoga, or Richelieu. How many spellings does the class come up with? Pass out the worksheet (page 3) with place names taken from various Revolutionary War diaries and the worksheet (page 4) with excerpts from these diaries. Ask students to use modern maps that show Lake Champlain, the Richelieu River, and the St. Lawrence River, to locate where soldiers traveled as they retreated from Quebec to Mount Independence. (pages 5 and 6 are some basic maps for Vermont and Quebec). Suggest that they say the names out loud and look for matches along the rivers. (The answer key shows the current accepted spelling and the approximate locations.) Discuss why it is important for historians to match place names in diaries with their corresponding locations. How does this detective work increase our understanding of the Revolutionary War? What happens if historians cannot figure out place names or words in primary sources?

Connections: Ask the students why these locations are along rivers and lakes. During the Revolutionary War, the water routes were often easier to travel than the land routes. Can the students figure out why the American Army built Mount Independence on Lake Champlain?

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Where Are We? Worksheet

It can be confusing if people spell words differently. In Revolutionary War letters and diaries, soldiers used many spellings for place names, especially those from French or Native American words. Excerpts from their writings are on page 4.

Ille aux Noix (the Island of Nuts) was particularly difficult to spell. These are examples of how the soldiers spelled the name of this place.

Isle anon	Isle aux Naux	isle anoix	Oil oix noix
isle anoy	isle oneoix	Oile of Noix	Island of Noe

Here are other place names spelled differently in primary sources than on current maps. Use a modern map of Vermont and Quebec, and some detective work, to find these locations where the soldiers camped when they were traveling from Canada to Mount Independence. (Hint: All the places are along the shores of Lake Champlain, Richelieu River, and St. Lawrence River.) Write down your ideas on this list.

1. Tiontiroga

2. Independant point

3. Shoram

4. Isle Emot

5. Mescisco bay

6. St. Johns

7. Shambalee

8. Sirrell

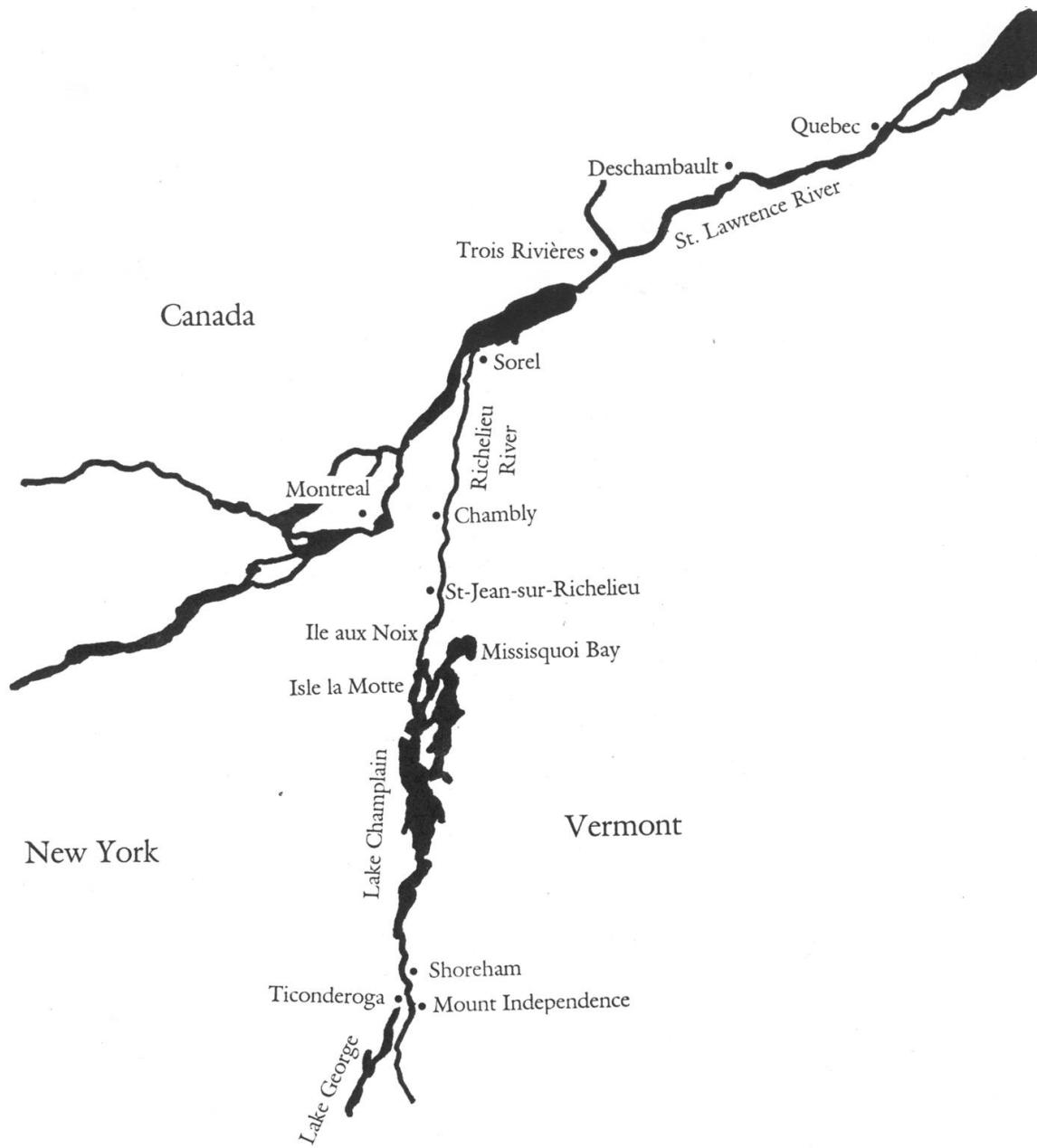
9. 3 Rivers

10. Deshambo

11. Qbec

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Where Are We? Answer Key



1. Ticonderoga (New York)
2. Mount Independence (Vermont)
3. Shoreham (Vermont)
4. Isle La Motte (Vermont)
5. Missisquoi Bay (Vermont)
6. St. Jean sur Richelieu (Quebec)
7. Chambley (Quebec)
8. Sorel (Quebec)
9. Trois Rivières (Quebec)
10. Deschambault (Quebec)
11. Quebec City (Quebec)

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Where Are We? Sources for Place Names

Note to educators: To read more, some of these resources are available by searching online.

From the diary of Sergeant Timothy Tuttle

(Wickman, Donald. "The Diary of Timothy Tuttle." *New Jersey History*. Vol. 113, nos. 3-4: 61-80.)

May 24, 1776	Tiontioga fort
June 7, 1776	Qbec
June 12, 1776	sirrell Encampment
June 17, 1776	isle anoix
June 20, 1776	isle anoy
July 2, 1776	isle oneoix

From the journal of Colonel Jeduthan Baldwin

(Baldwin, Jeduthan. *The Revolutionary Journal of Col. Jeduthan Baldwin, 1775-1778*. Bangor, ME.: The Deburiens, 1906; reprint, Ayer Publishers, 2005.)

May 13, 1776	Island of Noe, St. Johns
May 14, 1776	Shambalee Fort
May 23, 1776	Deshambo
June 6, 1776	3 Rivers
June 16, 1776	Oile of Noix
June 20, 1776	Oil Oix Noix
August 18, 1776	Independant point

From the journal of Reverend Ammi Robbins

(Robbins, Ammi R. *The Journal of the Rev. Ammi R. Robbins, A Chaplain in the American Army, in the Northern Campaign of 1776*. New Haven: B. L. Hamlet, 1850).

May 19, 1776	Isle Aux-Noix
Sept. 13, 1776	Shoram

From the journal of Bayze Wells

(Wells, Bayze. "Journal of Bayze Wells of Farmington, May 1775-February 1777." Connecticut Historical Society Collections, Vol. 7, 1899: 241-296.)

June 17, 1776	Isle anon
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From the journal of Dr. Lewis Beebe

(Beebe, Dr. Lewis. "Journal of a Physician on the Expedition Against Canada, 1776." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. Vol. LIX, Oct. 1935: 321-361.)

June 27, 1776	Isle aux naux
June 30, 1776	Isle Emot, Mescisco bay

From the diary of Reverend Enos Hitchcock

(Hitchcock, Enos, D.D. "Diary of Enos Hitchcock, D.D." *Publications of the Rhode Island Historical Society*, N.S. Vol. VII, April 1899, No. 1, 87-134; continued in later volumes).

June 9, 1777	Isle la Noix
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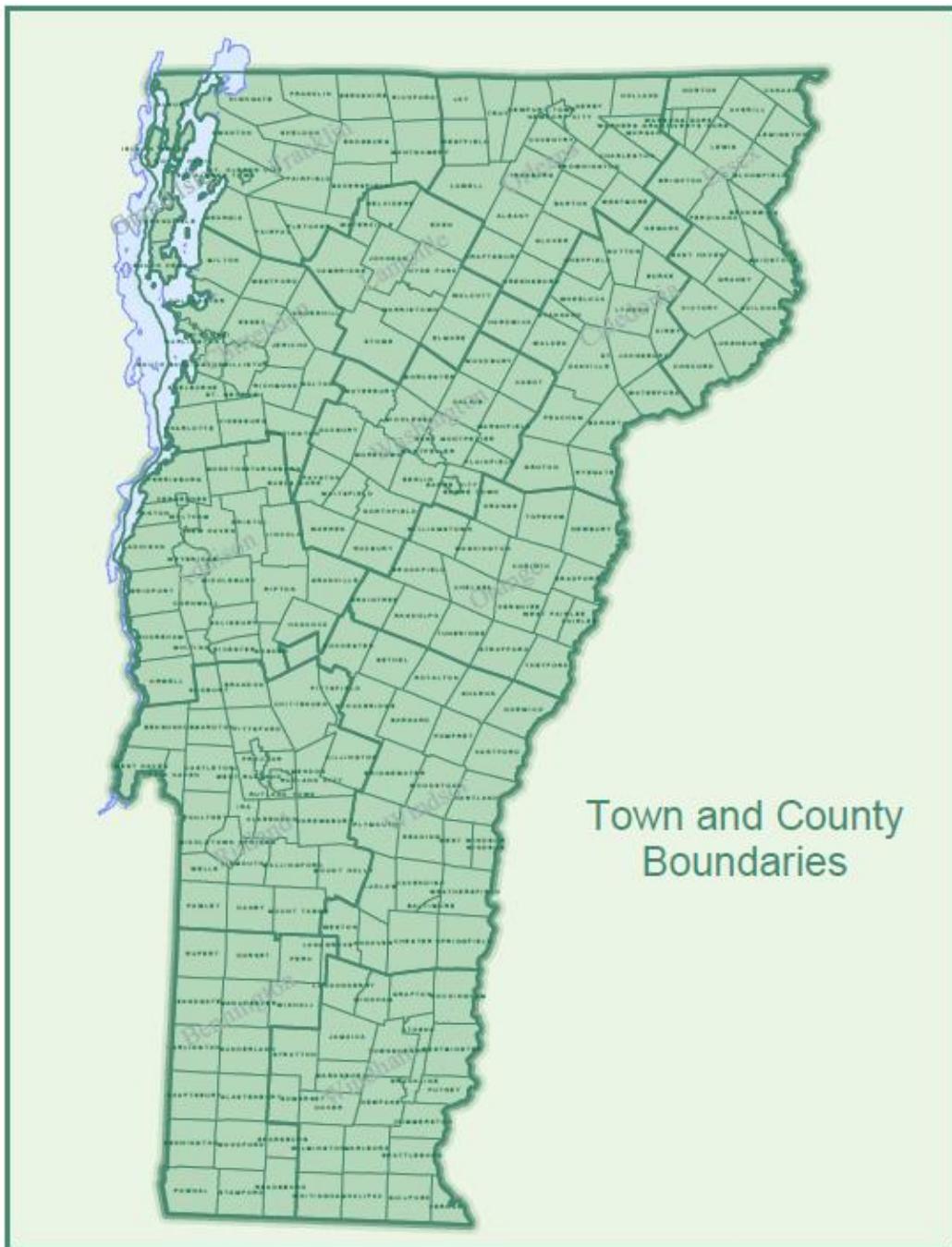
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Where Are We? Maps

Vermont State Map

Vermont Town and County Outline Map PDF (Source: State of Vermont)

You can ask your students to get a Vermont atlas from the school library or try searching the Library of Congress website for historic Vermont maps. www.loc.gov, then search under “Maps,” type in Vermont as the subject.



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Orwell, Vermont

Quebec Province Map

Quebec Province Map PDF

(Source: Natural Resources Canada)



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