

May 7 – “We were alarmed at 2 o’clock this morning by two expresses (couriers on horseback) from Quebec, giving account of the arrival of the fleet (British), fifteen sail, who yesterday came along by Quebec; our poor feeble, sickly army is obliged to retreat with great precipitancy. Great numbers sick with the small pox we had to leave, and some others; the ships pursuing up the river, firing at our army on the land and on the bateaux. This is the most terrible day I ever saw. God of Armies, help us. Three ships came near by us, firing as they came, and our boats and people in a scattered condition, coming up. Distress and anxiety in every countenance. The small pox thick among us, from the poor fugitives that come up; we are in hourly expectation of the ships attacking us – our boats, provisions, etc. The whole conspired to give an idea of distress. At 11 Gen. Thomas came up and immediately a council of war was called, Gen. Wooster present and a great number of gentlemen. The result is, to retreat with the whole army back to the River Sorrel (130 miles), as in case of defeat here, ‘twill be absolutely fatal. Saw several other chaplains, worn out with fatigue, etc. Many officers lost all, to the clothes on their backs. Gen. Wooster goes by water with the boats; Gen. Thomas brings up the rear by land. All the men except enough for rowing and the invalids go by land. I am still unwell, very much weakened with the disorder that has attended me these four days past; am obliged to go by water. We set sail at sunset and were hampered all night by high winds and strong currents”.

All that night and all the next day they rowed against the winds and currents. On the ninth, they reached Trois Rivieres where they slept for three hours. “Great are the fatigues of our march, enough to destroy the strongest constitution. My eyes very sore, but otherwise as well as can be expected. Praise to God”.

Saturday, 11 “Feel poorly, and much worn out, distressed for the army; surely our cause is good and we shall prosper. We have to endure continual hardships, and little sleep, but having obtained help we are enabled to proceed on our way. Early, before sunrise, entered St. Peter’s Lake. Perfect calm, rowed within five miles of west end, when a hard gale came ahead, and we were in a terrible situation, but through mercy, near night, got through into a narrow river, which leads to Sorrel. Lodged, much fatigued – came up with my boy and chest, which arrived safe before me. Numbers arriving and many with small pox”.

Lord’s Day, 12 – “Rowed up to Sorrel, landed at 9 o’clock. Found two Boston regiments arrived, also sundry others. No public exercise today (religious services), as troops are in such confusion. Conversed with sundry gentlemen, who indeed feel greatly distressed; our days are days of darkness. Feel very gloomy today on every account, low in spirits by reason of my disorder which has brought me down, which together with the fatigues and fearful forebodings, has been almost too much. Still I believe our cause is just, and we shall prosper.” Monday, 13 – “Walked out this morning into camp, which now makes a very considerable appearance. Our regiment almost all back, but a few scattering ones in boats. General (Benedict) Arnold is coming from Montreal; they are erecting the old battery to command the river, but a strange discouragement seems to prevail in the army among the officers. There is jealousy and want of confidence; we are in a most critical situation. The small pox strikes terror into our troops”.

Thursday, 16 – “We arrived at Chamblee near night, all in confusion. Here we are in a great country and know not who are friends or who are enemies. Our army in a most sad state, no provisions, nor supplies, only men; nor half enough of them”. “Lord’s

Day, 19 May, 1776 – News from the Cedars, that there is an attack. Four hundred regulars, about two hundred Indians and Canadians; Col. Beadle, Patterson, etc. opposed them – know not the event.” (outcome)

Later that day a detachment of troops began the journey south that would take them through Lake Champlain, as they retraced their steps back to the Albany area. The trip through Lake Champlain took them four days, but they were long, arduous days. Rev. Robbins, like so many Continental soldiers, was in poor health, brought on, and constantly aggravated, by the effects of poor diet, terrible living conditions and almost no medical facilities. Even though their spirits were low, they were convinced that they were fighting for a just cause, and that at the end, whenever that might be, the Americans would prevail. Robbins apparently has dysentery, an illness all too common among the troops on both sides of the conflict. His description of the discomforts encountered in traversing of Lake Champlain speaks for countless soldiers in the War of Liberation, most of whom were not as eloquent as was Rev. Robbins.

Monday, 27 – “I find I am gaining strength, yet am so thin, that people who have seen me before, scarce know me. I think I know in some degree now, what hardship is”.

Thursday 11 – “Rainy all day, uncomfortable in the tent from rain, tents are very miserable shelter in a hard rain. All look down and gloomy. We want good generalship”.

on July 29: “I envy brother Avery his health. He will go through the hospital when pestiferous as disease and death can make it with a face as smooth as a baby’s and afterward an appetite as healthy as a woodchopper. I cannot – after inhaling such diseased breath, am sick and faint, besides their sorrows take hold of me. I would not shrink from the work. Our war is a righteous war; our men are called to defend the country; whole congregations turn out, and the ministers of the gospel should go and encourage them when doing duty, attend and pray for them and with them when sick, and bury them when they die. I hope to return to my work”.