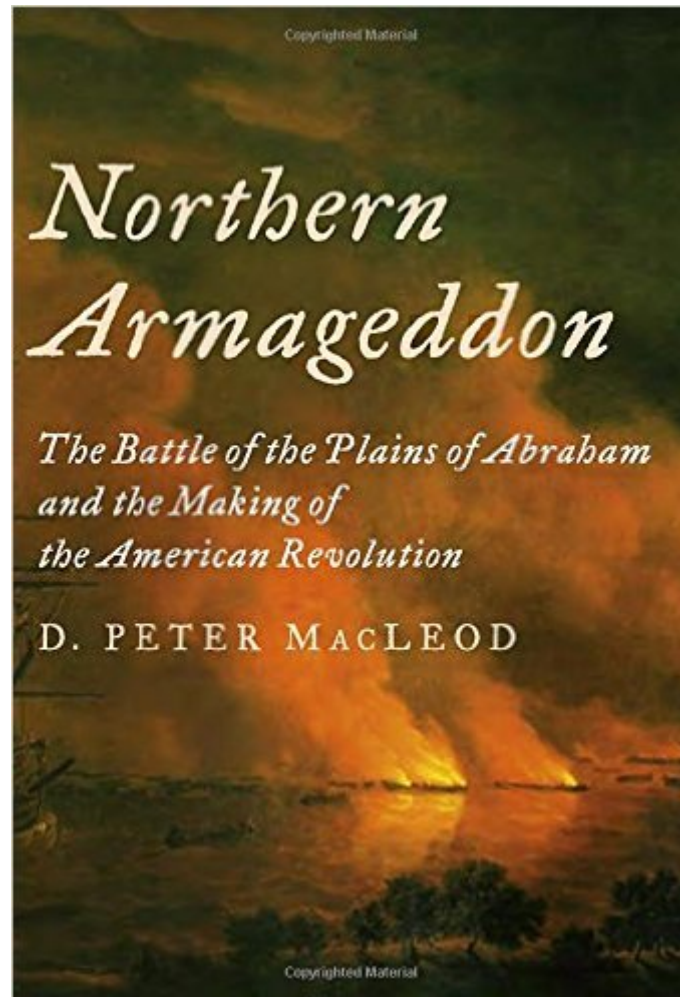


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Northern Armageddon: The Battle Of The Plains Of Abraham And The Making Of The American Revolution



Synopsis

A huge, ambitious re-creation of the eighteenth-century Battle of the Plains of Abraham, the pivotal battle in the Seven Years' War (1754–1763) to win control of the trans-Appalachian region of North America, a battle consisting of the British and American colonists on one side and the French and the Iroquois Confederacy on the other, and leading directly to the colonial War of Independence and the creation of Canada. It took five years of warfare fought on three continents—Europe, Asia, and North America—to bring the forces arrayed against one another—Britain, Prussia, and Hanover against France, Austria, Sweden, Saxony, Russia, and Spain (Churchill called it “the first world war”) to the plateau outside Quebec City, on September 13, 1759, on fields owned a century before by a fisherman named Abraham Martin . . . It was the final battle of a three-month siege by the British Army and Navy of Quebec, the walled city that controlled access to the St. Lawrence River and the continent's entire network of waterways; a battle with the British utilizing 15,000 soldiers, employing 186 ships, with hundreds of colonists aboard British warships and transports from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, with France sending in a mere 400 reinforcements in addition to its 3,500 soldiers. The battle on the Plains of Abraham lasted twenty minutes, and at its finish the course of a continent was changed forever . . . New military tactics were used for the first time against standard European formations . . . Generals Wolfe and Montcalm each died of gunshot wounds . . . France surrendered Quebec to the British, setting the course for the future of Canada, paving the way for the signing of the Treaty of Paris that gave the British control of North America east of the Mississippi, and forcing France to relinquish its claims on New Orleans and to give the lands west of the Mississippi to Spain for surrendering Florida to the British. After the decisive battle, Britain's maritime and colonial supremacy was assured, its hold on the thirteen American colonies tightened. The American participation in ousting the French as a North American power spurred the confidence of the people of New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, who began to agitate for independence from Great Britain. Sixteen years later, France, still bitter over the loss of most of its colonial empire, intervened on behalf of the patriots in the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783). In Northern Armageddon, Peter MacLeod, using original research—diaries, journals, letters, and firsthand accounts—and bringing to bear all of his extensive knowledge and grasp of warfare and colonial North American history, tells the epic story on a human scale. He writes of the British at Quebec through the eyes of a master's mate on one of the ships embroiled in the battle. And from the French perspective, as the British bombarded Quebec, of four residents of the city—a priest, a clerk, a nun, and a notary—caught in the crossfire.

MacLeod gives us as well the large-scale ramifications of this clash of armies, not only on the shape of North America, but on the history of Europe itself. A stunning work of military history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a welcome book on the battle for Quebec, which helped determine the outcome of the so-called French and Indian War. The focus in this book is that climactic battle, although it also provides a context for the struggle. The British had had difficulties fighting the French mixed forces (regular army, militia, and Native Americans) and the French were apparently well situated in their defense of Quebec. One point made by the author is that Quebec's defense was enhanced immensely by a geological formation going back 500,000 years. The Quebec Promontory was a raised formation six miles long and a half mile wide. Attackers had to scale a steep slope up from the river and elsewhere along the promontory. Quebec and French forces held that piece of ground. The leader of the French forces at Quebec was General Montcalm, who had established a pretty good record in the war. On the English side? General Wolfe. The English, with their fleet, had control of the river. The French forces--and citizens of Quebec--struggled with acquiring enough food and other needed goods. There is a nice discussion of how the French strove to create logistics to provide food and other needed goods. Wolfe and the English were quite frustrated in trying to take Quebec. Oddly enough, after his successes, Montcalm was "down" over his view of the French prospects. The story continues. . . . Observing the Promontory along the St. Lawrence River, he came to see that an attack might be made. And, because they saw the heights as unscalable, the French had only small forces guarding the heights. As many know, Wolfe was able to bring his

troops up the steep grade to the Plains of Abraham. When the French became aware of this, they moved to meet the British..

On Thursday, September 13, 1759, at 10 o'clock in the morning, the Marquis de Montcalm, commander of the French forces at Ville de Québec (Quebec City), ordered his troops to charge the British forces under General James Wolfe that were arrayed on the Plains of Abraham below the city. As Peter MacLeod, author of this magnificent, detailed, and compulsively readable account of that battle says, it was the most significant military decision in Canadian history. Montcalm's order was also a huge mistake. It resulted in a rout of the French forces and cost France its place in North America. All Canadians are well aware of this famous battle but what they, and their American neighbours and other people around the world, generally don't know is that this battle not only shaped the future of Canada but, as Dr, MacLeod says, it also shaped the futures of "...the United States, Native Americans across the continent, the French and British Empires, and the world." Canadians, who tend to modesty in themselves and their history, will be astounded to learn that the author conclusively proves this assessment of the battle. In the telling of this story, Dr. MacLeod, an historian at the Canadian War Museum, surpasses all previous accounts of the conflict, and he does so in a manner that makes his book in its dynamics more akin to a thriller than the sort of sloggy tome we can associate with history books. What a writer he is! This is a page-turner in the best sense of the word, mixing clear, superb descriptions of the logistics of the siege of Québec with extracts from diaries, songs of the period, and testimony from witnesses on both sides of the fight. Sections within chapters have white space between them.

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