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The Trade and Travels of Peter Pond

DAVID CHAPIN

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PREFACE

When Peter Pond was born in 1740 none of the people living in North America could accurately picture the entirety of their home continent. To the British colonists along the Atlantic, the interior beyond the Mississippi River was mostly unknown, while their countrymen on Hudson Bay seldom ventured inland from their bayside trading posts. The French along the St. Lawrence and Mississippi Rivers, and on the Great Lakes, similarly had little knowledge of what lay very far west of the Mississippi or northwest of Lake Superior. The Spanish in Mexico and New Mexico seldom ventured very far north of Santa Fe, while Native societies throughout the continent knew their own regions and traded hundreds of miles into neighboring regions, but still had limited knowledge of what lay beyond. During Peter Pond's lifetime that situation changed.

As a fur trader and explorer, Pond participated in an expansion of knowledge about North America. As a teenager he left his hometown in Milford, Connecticut, to go to war against the French in Canada. When the war ended he became a trader around the Great Lakes. He moved west and north from there - first to the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, and then into the Canadian Northwest as far as Great Slave Lake. Pond is best known as a partner in Montreal's North West Company and as the trader who opened up the remote Athabasca region to the

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fur trade out of Montreal. With his crew of French Canadian *voyageurs*, he was the first trader to cross the Methye Portage between the Hudson Bay and Arctic watersheds in what is now northern Saskatchewan. He is also known for his maps, which for much of the 1780s were the best available cartographic representations of much of what is now central and western Canada. Finally he is known as the mentor of Alexander Mackenzie, who made his famous journey down the Mackenzie River to the Arctic Sea based on Pond's theories about the best route to the Pacific Ocean.

What follows is a biography. The focus is on Peter Pond's personal story and his individual experiences. Pond was a curious, proud, talented, and ambitious man, living in a world that could often be quite violent. He lacked much formal education and was in many ways quite rough, but he was intellectually engaged with the world around him. He studied the geography, natural history, and cultures of the places he visited, and the knowledge he gathered spread to both sides of the Atlantic. Some previous accounts have caricatured Pond as a violent and unprincipled man, even a murderer, while the present account attempts to portray a fuller image of this unique individual.

One cannot tell Pond's story without also telling the story of the growth of the North American fur trade. Pond was part of a generation of traders who came of age while English-speaking people were extending their influence and their trade across North America. After fighting in the Seven Years' War, Pond ventured north and west through Albany to the Great Lakes, where he found an environment that was open to ambitious young traders. The most successful of these young men would ultimately help shape a global market in furs.

Finally, Pond's story is a story of exploration, both geographic and cultural. Throughout his career Pond traveled to places little known to the world he came from. He exchanged goods and information with individuals from a variety of Iroquoian, Algonquian, Siouan, and Athapaskan cultures. This was the context of Pond's intellectual life. He sought to learn about the most remote parts of North America and the people who lived there. Like many of his predecessors and contemporaries he

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speculated about western geography and about the best route to the Pacific Ocean from his fur-trading grounds. He drew maps of the western regions. In this he was participating in a great endeavor of his day, the goal of discovering what North America truly looked like.

Writing a biography of a man who traveled widely involves traveling widely oneself. The research for this project took me to cities, towns, archives, libraries, and historical sites throughout the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. It also took me to many of the rivers and lakes that Pond traveled over. I learned about Pond by visiting the places he lived in and traveled through. The landscape has changed dramatically since Pond's time, yet there is still much to be learned by looking out onto Long Island Sound from the shore near Milford, Connecticut, or standing by the Detroit River and trying to imagine how it looked 250 years ago. The Hudson River still flows past Albany, and the Clearwater River still joins the Athabasca, even if the surroundings have changed. The waters of Lake Winnipeg still get choppy when the wind blows from the north. Perhaps the most enjoyable research involved paddling my canoe from La Loche, Saskatchewan, to the Methye Portage and walking the trail that Pond first crossed in 1778. The exact route of the trail has been modified at times, and scarred by the tracks of all-terrain-vehicles. Generations of trees have grown and died, yet it is not hard to imagine the eighteenth century while walking the twelve-mile trail.

I visited several historical sites, both large and small, in the course of my research. There I found dedicated people preserving the memory of places Pond knew well. I would like to thank the interpreters and other staff members at museums and historical sites across two countries, including the Milford Historical Society, Fort Ticonderoga, the Fort William Henry Museum, Old Fort Niagara, Colonial Michilimackinac, Grand Portage National Monument, Old Fort William, the Fort Dauphin Museum, the McCord Museum, the Fur Trade at Lachine National Historical Site, the French River Provincial Park Visitor Centre, the Fort George and Buckingham House Provincial Historic Site, and the Canadian Canoe Museum.

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I spent the bulk of my time following Pond's trail in archives and libraries. I have benefited from the skills and knowledge of staff members at many institutions, including the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library, the William L. Clements Library and the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, the Library and Archives Canada, the Sterling Memorial Library Manuscripts and Archives Department and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, the Connecticut State Library History and Genealogy Unit, the Milford (Connecticut) Public Library, the Woodbury (Connecticut) Public Library, the Minnesota Historical Society Library, the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Research Library, the Whitney Library at what was then the New Haven Colony Historical Society but is now the New Haven Museum, the New York State Library Manuscripts and Special Collections, the New-York Historical Society Library, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the McCord Museum, the British Library, the National Archives (of the U.K.), and the Dimond Library at the University of New Hampshire.

I would like to thank all the writers and scholars whose works are listed in the notes and bibliography for providing a wealth of information, ideas, and research to draw on even before I began my own research. Bill McDonald of the Peter Pond Society was an early source of information about Pond, and his website is a great resource that put me in touch with several people with an interest in Pond, including several Pond descendants. Thank you to those descendants who shared genealogical information. Patricia Kennedy provided valuable help at the Library and Archives Canada. Thanks to Michelle Cox for photographic assistance at the University of Michigan and to Charles Warren and Kathryn Olivarius for reading portions of an early draft of the manuscript. Thanks to Bob McCoubrie for sharing his knowledge and interest in canoe routes and the Canadian fur trade. Thanks also to Matthew F. Bokovoy, Heather Stauffer, Kyle Simonsen, and the rest of the staff at the University of Nebraska Press, and Jennifer S. H. Brown and Theresa M. Schenck, who reviewed the manuscript and provided many excellent ideas and suggestions for ways to improve it.

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A NOTE ON MAPS

Peter Pond prepared at least three maps in his own hand during his lifetime, but none of these originals are known to have survived. Instead historians must rely on several contemporary copies, drawn by people to whom Pond showed his original maps. The following shorthand names are used throughout, given here with full citations:

The Congress Map. "Copy of a Map Presented to Congress by Peter Pond," (2 copies), Additional MS. 15332c and Additional MS. 15332d, British Library.

The Hamilton Map. Public Record Office: Maps and plans extracted to flat storage from various series of records of the Colonial Office, MPG 1/425, National Archives (Kew).

The July 1787 Map. "Copy of a Map of P. Pond's dated Aurabascha July 1787," H1/700/1787, Library and Archives Canada.

The December 1787 Map. Colonial Office, Maps and Plans: Series 1, CO 700/America North and South 49, National Archives (Kew).

The *Gentleman's Magazine* Map. "A Map Shewing the Communication of the Lakes and the Rivers between Lake Superior and Slave Lake in North America," *Gentleman's Magazine,* 60, March 1790.

The Stiles Map. "Map Showing the Travels of Capt. Peter Pond, 25 March, 1790," *The Ezra Stiles Papers at Yale University*, microfilm collection,

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(New Haven: Yale University, 1976), 974 ES. Original at the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

I have concluded that the last four of these are all copies of a map, now lost, that Pond prepared at his post on the Athabasca River in 1787.

The contemporary copies of Pond's maps, with the exception of the one printed in 1790 in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, are manuscript maps measuring in feet rather than inches. A few are relatively clear, while others are in fading ink on browning paper. They cannot be reproduced with clarity in a small format, so I have redrawn them once again. Maps 6 through 12 in this volume are my own copies of the contemporary copies listed above. The outlines of the lakes and rivers have been traced faithfully, but the words on the map have been either eliminated or enlarged so that they can be read. None of the writing has been changed in any other way.

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Introduction

THE METHYE PORTAGE

On the upper reaches of the Churchill River, far to the northwest of Lake Superior and well beyond Lake Winnipeg, five large birch-bark canoes glided north across a quiet lake. White pelicans may have skimmed the water on this late summer day in 1778, looking for fish, undisturbed by the sight of the first non-Natives ever to visit their summer nesting grounds. The four or five paddlers in each canoe stroked the water in unison. Most were young French-speaking *voyageurs*, accustomed to the rigors of extended wilderness travel. Each of their "north canoes," or *canots du nord*, held more than a ton of trade goods and provisions bound for the Athabasca country, a region to the north as yet unknown to the men. As they paddled past a long peninsula jutting out from the lake's western shore, they looked to the low-lying forest ahead, wondering what they would find there.

Along with the French-speaking paddlers, known as *engagés*, one canoe held the English-speaking leader of the party, or *bourgeois,* and perhaps his clerk. As gentlemen, not laborers, they did not paddle unless they wanted to. Also among the group there was likely a guide of Cree or Dene heritage showing the way. Perhaps too the *bourgeois* had a personal servant, possibly a *panis* boy or young woman. Indeed not all the people in the canoes were men. Several women of Native or mixed ancestry likely

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accompanied the group as guides, interpreters, wives, or companions of the men. All told the party that glided across the lake that day was a self-sufficient little community venturing north to stay the winter in a largely unexplored region of North America.

As they approached the northern shore, the men and women in the canoes knew that they had traveled almost as far as they could on this watershed. In recent weeks they had been traveling upstream, for much of the time on the deep and wide waters of a channel they called the English River, now known as the Churchill. It flows east into Hudson Bay from its headwaters in northern Saskatchewan. The *voyageurs* had come a long way to get here. Most were from Montreal, Quebec, or one of the smaller towns along the lower St. Lawrence River, far away to the southeast. They had signed contracts with a fur trader more than a year before, agreeing to serve at isolated posts in the Northwest. Some had spent many winters in the Upper Country.

The previous winter they had been trading on the North Saskatchewan River, and that spring they had agreed to venture even further afield. From the Saskatchewan they followed the canoe route north up the Sturgeon-Weir River to the Churchill, which they followed west and north to its source. The river had been large and deep where they first encountered it, with violent rocky rapids flowing between clear cold lakes. Weeks later, as they neared its headwaters, the river had diminished until the once-great waterway was no more than a shallow creek running between open lakes. Before getting to the lake they were now on, the river had threatened to become too shallow to float their large trade canoes. Looking at the shore ahead there was little sign of any stream at all entering.

With the help of a local guide, the party finally found a sluggish creek, no more than thirty feet wide at its mouth. They pointed their canoes up its slow current, but in a short distance the creek narrowed to the point that the twenty-five-foot canoes could barely navigate the turns. Soon after, the guide showed them the beginning of a portage trail that they would take from here. The trail, the guide perhaps informed them, was named for a species of fish that the Crees called *methye*. The French called this species *la loche*, while in English they are known as burbot.

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The trail would continue to be known as the Methye Portage, though the *voyageurs* would often refer to it as Portage La Loche.

The party spent several days crossing the Methye Portage, which led north for close to twelve miles along a trail established years before by local people and Native travelers. The men took the packs upon their backs and stretched tumplines across their foreheads. By means of this ancient device, the weight of their heavy loads was distributed across their heads, necks, and backs. The portage was accomplished in stages and at a trot. Most of the men carried two ninety-pound packs at a time, one on top of the other. There were stopping places along the trail where the men put down their burdens before going back for another load. Each *voyageur* probably made two or three trips. Of course, time would be taken to sit and smoke pipes and swat mosquitoes for a few minutes between carries—but not much time. The hardest job was held by those assigned to carry the large birch-bark trade canoes. Even with two men to a canoe, the task was grueling. This particular trail was long, indeed the longest they had ever encountered, so the party would spend more than a week getting across its full length. Perhaps they found some satisfaction, despite the hard labor, in knowing that they were pioneering a new route that would play an important part in a global network of trade. If not, at least they knew they were acquiring stories to tell and feats to boast of on their next trip south.

The leader of this group, the *bourgeois*, was a thirty-eight-year-old Connecticut-born fur trader named Peter Pond. He was an experienced and well-traveled man who enjoyed setting off to places unknown to other traders. One imagines that on this late summer day in 1778 he went ahead with his guide to scout the portage as his men carried the goods. About three quarters of a mile along the trail he would have come to a small stream that was narrow enough to jump over. Pond likely noted that the cool, fresh water would be appreciated by his thirsty men as they passed by. Perhaps the party would camp near this water source one of the nights they spent on the trail, or at least stop to smoke their pipes here. After crossing the stream the trail was relatively flat for eight or

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nine miles, passing through an open forest of spruce, poplar, and birch trees. Eventually, if he scouted the whole trail, Pond came to a small lake, less than a mile wide. He probably noted that its sandy shores would provide another good camping spot. Walking around the western shore he would have picked up the trail again on the other side.

Not long after this, the land, and with it the trail, dropped off abruptly before him. Gazing through the green treetops ahead and below, Pond would have seen a wonderful view. A deep, forested valley stretched for miles from east to west. Down on the valley floor, close to eight hundred feet below, a beautiful river wound its way west. Pond would call it the Pelican River for its avian inhabitants, but others would know it as the Clearwater. It was the sort of river that geographers had been dreaming of for decades.

Peter Pond knew rivers, and he understood the significance of the one that stretched below him. In 1778 rivers and lakes served as the main transportation and trade routes across North America. Since his birth in 1740, Pond had been on many rivers, including several important and majestic ones. He had traveled New England's Housatonic and Connecticut Rivers and New York's Hudson and Mohawk. He had descended Canada's St. Lawrence and ascended the Ottawa. He knew Great Lakes tributaries like the Cuyahoga, the Sandusky, the Maumee, and the Fox, and he had passed further west to the Wisconsin, the Mississippi, and the Minnesota. More recently he had ventured into the Northwest and gone up and down the Pigeon, the Winnipeg, the great Saskatchewan, and the Churchill. These freshwater passages took him from his birthplace in Milford, Connecticut, across much of a continent. But all these rivers had one thing in common. Whether they flowed into Long Island Sound, Hudson Bay, the Gulf of Mexico, or the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence system, their waters eventually found their way back to the Atlantic Ocean—the ocean on whose shores Pond had been born. All, that is, except the river below him now; it flowed the other way.

Pond and his party were the first people of European origins known to have crossed this portage into North America's Arctic watershed, and to see this view of the Clearwater River, but in the years to come the

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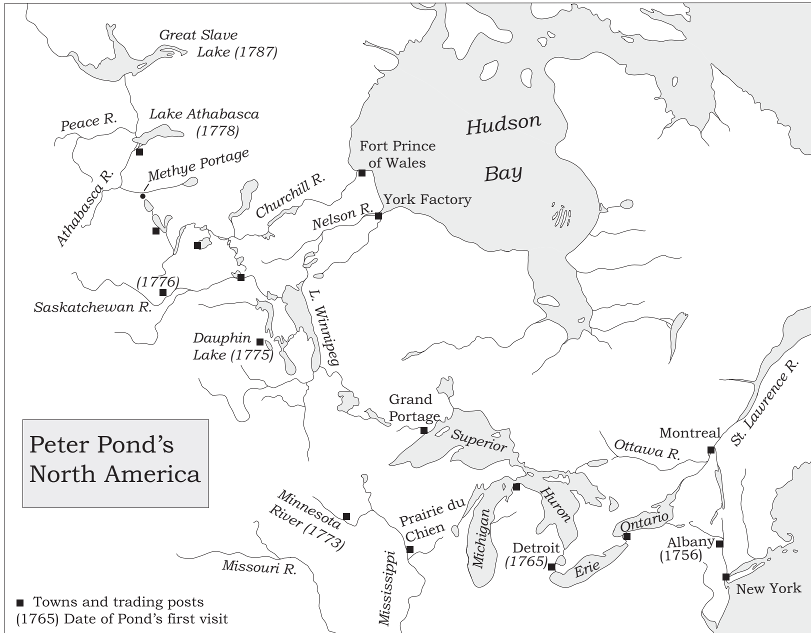

MAP 1. Peter Pond's North America. The extent of Pond's travels in the interior of North America. Dates indicate his earliest visit.

Methye Portage would become a major pathway for traders and explorers. Until the era of railroads, the trail would occupy an important place in continental transportation. The view of the river Pond saw that day in 1778 would be immortalized by better-known travelers who followed in his wake. Alexander Mackenzie (later Sir Alexander Mackenzie), who first came this way nine years later, described it as "a most extensive, romantic, and ravishing prospect."[1] More than forty years later the ill-fated Lieutenant John Franklin of the Royal Navy (later Sir John Franklin) crossed the Methye Portage in wintertime while on an exploring expedition. When he came to the overlook, he praised it as "the most picturesque and romantic prospect we had yet seen in this country." Franklin observed that "two ranges of high hills run parallel to each other for several miles, until the faint blue haze hides their particular characters, when they slightly change their course and are lost to the view. The space between

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them is occupied by nearly a level plain through which a river pursues a meandering course."[2] One of Franklin's men, Midshipman George Back (later Sir George Back), stopped to sketch the majestic scene.

Unlike his successors, Pond did not write a narrative about this portion of his travels, or at least not anything that survives. Nor was he knighted for his achievements as an explorer as were some of those who followed. He may have shared Mackenzie's, Franklin's, and Back's impressions of the picturesque, romantic, and ravishing qualities of the view, but he also had other matters to think about. The significance of the Methye Portage was not just aesthetic. The portage was a doorway into an entirely new portion of the North American continent—a part of North America where the rivers flow north and west into the unknown. The realm ahead held a harvest of prime beaver furs of great value on world markets, but it also held a mystery. Just where did the Clearwater River flow? Pond had no map of what lay ahead, so he was left to ask local people and to speculate. Maybe it continued its course due west, all the way to the Pacific Ocean, or perhaps it turned north into the, as yet unexplored, Arctic Seas. Then again, maybe it flowed into the Strait of Anian, the mythical saltwater passage between Hudson Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Pond, like many of his contemporaries, hoped to find out.

Unfortunately, Pond did not have the luxury of being a full-time explorer. He did not have the logistical support of an established trading company behind him, as would Mackenzie. Nor was he funded by the British Admiralty, as Franklin and Back would be. Rather, at the time, his primary objective was to make a profit for the loose coalition of merchants and traders who had a stake in his trip. For over a decade Pond had been involved in the fur trade around the Great Lakes, on the headwaters of the Mississippi, and along the Saskatchewan. He was successful in the trade and unafraid to venture into areas little known to fellow traders. He knew how to open up new territory to European markets and pioneer a successful exchange with local people. He knew how to interact profitably with women and men of varying cultures. That spring he and a collection of fellow master traders on the Saskatchewan had pooled

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their surplus goods from the previous winter and placed them in his care, so he could travel further into the Northwest than any of them had previously been. His goal was the land of the Denes in the Athabasca region, and the Methye Portage was taking him there.

Pond probably had some good prior information about what lay before him. A local Cree or Dene guide surely told him that the Clearwater soon joined a larger river that flowed north into a vast lake. These waterways were the Athabasca River and Lake Athabasca—his immediate goals. Once there, he needed to find a good place to build his winter quarters. He needed to get to know the locals and convince them to trade with him rather than travel with their furs to the Hudson's Bay Company post at the mouth of the Churchill River. He had to get his men to build structures for shelter and storage and a log palisade for security. They would have to hunt and fish for provisions, so they would survive the coming winter. He needed the women to cut firewood and start making snowshoes for winter travel to visit neighbors and make known their presence.

These practical matters were surely in the front of Pond's mind when he first crossed the Methye Portage, but the question of geography would never have receded far from his thoughts. Where did the water beneath his canoe eventually flow, and how far away were the Pacific and Arctic Oceans? Was there a route west by which he could take his furs directly to the markets of Asia to sell rather than taking them the many hundreds of miles back east to Montreal? Was the river below him a Freshwater Passage to the Western Sea?

Peter Pond was a pioneer of North American exploration, and in his day the information he gathered about the far Northwest circulated widely, but he was not a famous man. His place in history has been largely limited to occasional mentions in books on the Canadian fur trade or early North American cartography. Nonetheless Pond's career is significant. It is illustrative of an important era in the history of North America—a time when political boundaries were shifting and when the commerce of English-speaking people was rapidly expanding both continentally

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and globally into new regions. In his lifetime he witnessed two major geopolitical transformations: the Seven Years' War, which ended French colonial ambitions and weakened many Algonquian and Iroquoian tribes in the Northeast and Great Lakes regions; and the American War of Independence, which again redrew the political map. Both conflicts expanded the perspective of English-speaking North Americans like Pond.

Pond took part in many of the great transformations of his era. In his teens he served in the provincial forces of the British Army as it set out to conquer French Canada and gain control of a continent. In his twenties he became a fur trader based out of British army posts on the Great Lakes, bringing European and West Indian products to Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Siouan people in the interior. He spent his thirties and forties on the fringes of the British imperial world, in the borderlands of the "Northwest," as the territory northwest of Lake Superior was then called.

Pond was part of a network of trade that connected him with an expansive British Atlantic world, venturing out into a diverse North American landscape. His activities connected parts of the world that had seldom been connected before. While riding in a canoe up the Mississippi River or across a remote lake in the far Northwest, Pond was participating in global markets. His canoes contained English textiles, New England wampum, West Indian rum, and Madeira wines. When he traveled back east, he would carry skins and furs destined for Montreal, New York, London, continental Europe, and Asia. Both to the north, in what would one day be Canada, and south, in what would become the United States, the tendrils of the Atlantic world were reaching west, to the Great Lakes, the Mississippi, the Saskatchewan, the Athabasca country, and beyond. European goods found their way into remote parts of the continent, while the resources harvested by the indigenous people of these regions went east to the shores of the Atlantic.

Pond collected and transported knowledge as well as goods. He recorded the plants and animals he encountered. He collected fossils and minerals. He learned about Algonquian, Siouan, and Athapaskan people. He talked with them about their customs and asked them about

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the places they had traveled. He drew maps that showed the remote areas he visited and the places beyond about which he heard. He proudly shared this knowledge, which then spread back to Montreal, New York, London, and beyond. He even spoke with associates of making a map of North America to lay before Empress Catherine the Great of Russia halfway around the globe. A more complete image of the continent took shape through travelers like Pond. When he was born, maps of North America included large blank areas or depicted imaginary features such as the River of the West, the Mer de l'Ouest, or the Strait of Anian, while by the end of his life they were filled in with real rivers, lakes, and mountains, populated by real people.

Pond's New England contemporaries included such now-famous men as John Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere, but politics was not his sphere. Rather, he concerned himself with the growth of trade and the expansion of knowledge. He envisioned North America on a continental scale, and he connected this continental vision with global aspirations. Pond was not a "Great Man," but his life serves as a broad lens through which we can view the transformations of the latter half of the eighteenth century. At different points in his life he was a soldier, a sailor, a fur trader, a husband and father, a suspected murderer, an explorer and mapmaker, a diplomat, a spy, a partner in one of North America's largest trading firms, a British subject, and eventually, in his final years, a citizen of the United States. His inland travels extended from Milford, Connecticut, to Great Slave Lake in Canada's Northwest Territories, while his maritime ventures took him from Long Island Sound to the islands of the Caribbean. He, more than most of his contemporaries, saw the diverse cultural and economic interactions that took place across this vast expanse. Through his life we see the landscape of eighteenth-century North America through a wider lens.

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CHAPTER ONE

Provincial Soldier

Milford, Connecticut, and the Seven Years' War

The town of Milford, Connecticut, where Peter Pond was born in January 1740, was in many ways a typical eighteenth-century New England seacoast town. The sixth oldest town in the colony, it was founded one hundred years earlier by followers of the minister Peter Prudden. These Puritan forebears chose a promising site on the banks of the Wepawaug River, where it falls through a small gorge into a long and narrow harbor. In the decades that followed, as the town grew, Milford's residents enjoyed the fruits of both the land and the sea. The town's navigable inlet was a mile long, providing seagoing sloops and schooners with shelter from the open waters of Long Island Sound. Tidal flats hosted oyster beds, harvested from October to March. Schools of fish swam in the nearby Housatonic River, especially during the spring shad runs, and the Atlantic Ocean and Long Island Sound offered up their resources to fishermen willing to venture out onto their waters. Along the coast, wild beach plums grew, which the town's inhabitants collected to turn into jellies and preserves. Nearby forests of oak, elm, chestnut, cedar, and maple trees provided lumber and an ample supply of firewood.

Agriculture was the business of most Milford residents. Farmers raised livestock and grew wheat, flax, and corn. Foresters harvested timber from the nearby woods to be used locally and exported. The trades were also

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well represented. Shoemaking was Peter Pond's father's occupation, while neighbors made their livings in blacksmithing, brewing, weaving, coopering, and a host of other necessary trades.

As Milford grew it developed a shipbuilding industry, and by the time Pond was born a shipyard provided work for carpenters, caulkers, rope makers, and other artisans, while the vessels they made employed local sailors. Milford merchants and mariners engaged in a busy coastal trade along the Atlantic seaboard as well as in the profitable West Indies trade. Sloops and schooners would load up with cattle, horses, grains, and lumber and sail to the islands of the Caribbean to exchange these New England staples for the products of West Indian slave labor: sugar, molasses, and rum. Though small, Milford was not an isolated or insular village; it was a place with wide horizons.[1]

Peter's father, also named Peter Pond, and mother, Mary Hubbard Pond, married around 1739 and moved to Milford from the nearby town of Branford, where several generations of Ponds had been born and raised. The Ponds were neither rich nor poor; rather, like most eighteenth-century New Englanders, they fell somewhere in the middle. A shoemaker's family would not have differed much from the families of the surrounding farmers and tradesmen. The couple was quite young when they married: the groom was no older than twenty-one, while his bride was only sixteen. Their youth suggests that their first son's pending arrival may have hastened the union.

Peter's forebears on both his father's and mother's sides were of good New England stock. Indeed, his mother's side of the family had some small claims to distinction. Mary Hubbard had been born in Boston. Her father, Zechariah Hubbard, was a hatter and felter who relocated to Fairfield, Connecticut, not far to the west of Milford, by the 1750s. When Peter's grandfather Hubbard died in 1769 his estate would list five slaves, who appear to have been a husband, wife, and three children, so he was clearly a man of greater than average wealth.[2] Peter's most famous forebear was his great-grandfather on his mother's side, Sir Charles Hobby, who was knighted by Queen Anne in 1705 for bravery during an earthquake in Jamaica in 1692. Hobby had served as a captain of artillery in Boston

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during Queen Anne's War and as a commander of two Massachusetts regiments during the successful 1710 expedition against Port Royal. Sir Charles's exploits reflect that Pond's ancestors, particularly on his mother's side, seldom stayed put in their New England towns as mere farmers or tradesmen. They roamed away to go to war or ventured into the maritime trades. Both war and seafaring were significant parts of New England life in the eighteenth century. They were indeed the parts that held the most attraction for several of Pond's forebears.[3]

While Pond's ancestors were Puritans, there is no clear sign of his parents' religious affiliation, though there is some suggestion that his father may have been an Episcopalian just prior to his son's birth. This would have set him somewhat apart from his predominantly Congregationalist neighbors, but the evidence consists merely of his name on one list of parishioners in the late 1730s.[4] Additional information about his parents' religious beliefs comes from the records of Milford's Second Society Church. This church was founded during the religious revivals of the Great Awakening, which were going on around the time of Peter's birth. A list of members from 1742 does not list either of his parents, but in later years four of his younger brothers and sisters were baptized at the Second Society Church, indicating that at least one of his parents became a member of the "new-light" congregation while Peter was a child.[5] Was he a witness to an emotional conversion of one or both of his parents during the Great Awakening? It is a possibility, but religion does not appear to have played an important role in his adult life, regardless of his parents' persuasion. Pond was always attracted more to the worldly than the godly. Luckily, his surroundings would offer plenty of opportunity for worldly adventure.

In the spring of 1756, when Peter was sixteen years old, he approached his parents and told them that he had "a Strong Desire to be a Solge [soldier]."[6] His parents, he recalled many years later in a poorly spelled memoir, were not at all pleased. At sixteen they thought he was still too young to go off to war. World events, however, were not moving in their favor, for all around town neighbors were preparing for war. British

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troops had been in Milford recently, survivors of the staggering defeat of General Edward Braddock's army the previous summer in western Pennsylvania. They told tales of frontier warfare with the French and their Native allies. In the taverns downtown, Captain David Baldwin of the Connecticut provincial army was recruiting a company of Milford men to go fight the French on Lake Champlain. As Pond later recalled, "Marth [mirth] & Gollatrey [gallantry] was Highley Going on" in the taverns. "Drams an Instraments of Musick, Ware all Imploid [to th]at Degrea that thay Charmd me." It was too much for an ambitious and restless boy to resist, no matter what his parents said.[7]

Pond talked with Captain Baldwin at the tavern. Baldwin was a local man, whose family had resided in Milford for generations. He was in his early thirties, and for several years had served as town sexton, a role for younger men on their way to becoming town leaders. His primary duty was "to take care of ye clock and see yt it keep time and to Ring ye bell att all Public times and for deaths and funeralls when desired, and at nine of ye Clock a Nights."[8] The previous summer Baldwin had found a more interesting way to serve the community; he became a lieutenant in the provincial army. This year Baldwin was a captain, recruiting the Seventh Company of the First Connecticut Regiment among his neighbors. Pond recalled, "I found [ma]ney Lads of my Aquantans which seamd Detarmined [to] Go in to the Sarvis. I talkt with Capt Baldwin & ask him [we]ather he would take me in his Companey as he was the [Recrui]teing Offeser. He Readealey agread & I seat my [hand] to the Orders." The young recruit promised to show up when the company was mustered in a few weeks and serve out the summer under his neighbor's command.[9]

Peter's father and mother certainly had reasons to worry. While the weapons of the day only posed a threat during the occasional battle, diseases often ran unchecked through crowded army camps, killing thousands of bold and ambitious young men before they ever saw the enemy. His parents also needed their oldest son home to work. Peter Pond the elder was training his sons in his shoemaking trade. Pond would later recall: "My father had a Larg & young famerley I Just Began to be of Sum

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youse to him in his afairs."[10] But to his parents' chagrin, shoemaking had limited appeal to their oldest son; instead, Peter was inspired by the military exploits of his great-grandfather and other forebears who took up arms in the colonial wars. In his narrative he observed that the same "Inklanation & Sperit" that his ancestors had shown ran through his own veins. "It is well Knowe that from fifth Gineration downward we ware all waryers [warriors] [e]ither by Sea or Land and Indead Both."[11] He claimed that he enlisted because, despite his parents' objections, he could not resist the temptation to emulate such glory. Simply put, he was a restless and ambitious young man in search of excitement. For him to be a soldier meant broadening his horizons to see what lay beyond the borders of his hometown. He would continue searching over successive horizons his entire life, expanding his own perspective and that of the world he came from.

With their oldest son preparing to depart, the Ponds still had several children remaining at home. Fourteen-year-old Zachariah surely could pull his weight, as perhaps could twelve-year-old Charles, who would prove quite capable at most things he put his mind to during his long life. We know little or nothing of a brother named John who appears in some genealogical accounts, but if Peter's younger brother Phineas was as wild as a child as he would prove to be as a man, the Ponds had their hands full. Peter's infant sister Mary and his four-year-old brother Samuel were still too young to add much to the family economy, but certainly added to the family workload. There may have been other siblings as well, unmentioned in surviving records.[12]

After Pond signed Baldwin's recruitment papers his parents were upset with him. He recalled: "My Parans was So Angrey that thay forb[id me] makeing my apearans at Home." But the new recruit had no second thoughts about his upcoming adventure: "I taread [tarried] about the [town] among my fello[w] Solgers and thought that I had made [a profitable] Exchange giting a Rigmintal Coate in Plase" of an old one. In addition to the coat he must have appreciated the bounty money in his pocket, which amounted to £1.16—a nice bit of spending money for a sixteen-year-old boy.[13]

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Peter's naive satisfaction with himself continued into early June when his company mustered. He and his companions boarded a vessel in Milford harbor, sailing west to New York City and then up the Hudson River to Albany—the gateway to Canada and the West. He recalled, "I came on Smartly as I had Sum of my Bountey Money with me. I did not want for Ginger Bread and Small Bear and sun forgot that I had left my Pairans [parents] who was Exseadingly trubeld in Minde for my wellfair." It was a time of great excitement for him and his companions as they came into contact with strangers from all over New England. Close to seven thousand provincial soldiers were assembling in and around Albany, most of them from Massachusetts and Connecticut. It must have been a tumultuous scene. Here was thrown together an inexperienced army that numbered over four times the population of Milford. Thousands of young recruits were milling about. Many were away from home for the first time in their lives with little notion of military ways, discipline, or, most notably, sanitation.[14]

While he was most concerned with his own experiences, Pond would have understood the larger issues at stake in what would come to be known variously as the Great War for the Empire, the French and Indian War, or the Seven Years' War. The last of a series of colonial wars, it began far to the west of his Connecticut home along the headwaters of the Ohio River—deep in what was then considered a wilderness. The Ohio River was crucial to the North American ambitions of France and Great Britain. To the French in Canada the Ohio was a transportation key to the continent. It offered an excellent route between the lower Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. In the middle of the eighteenth century, French influence in North America extended from Montreal and Quebec on the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. The French did not rule over, claim sovereignty over, or extensively populate the regions west of Montreal or north of New Orleans, but they extended their influence into the backcountry with small forts, trading outposts, and a network of Native alliances. To them the region surrounding the Great Lakes and as far south as the Ohio River Valley was the *pays d'en haut*, or Upper Country, where they

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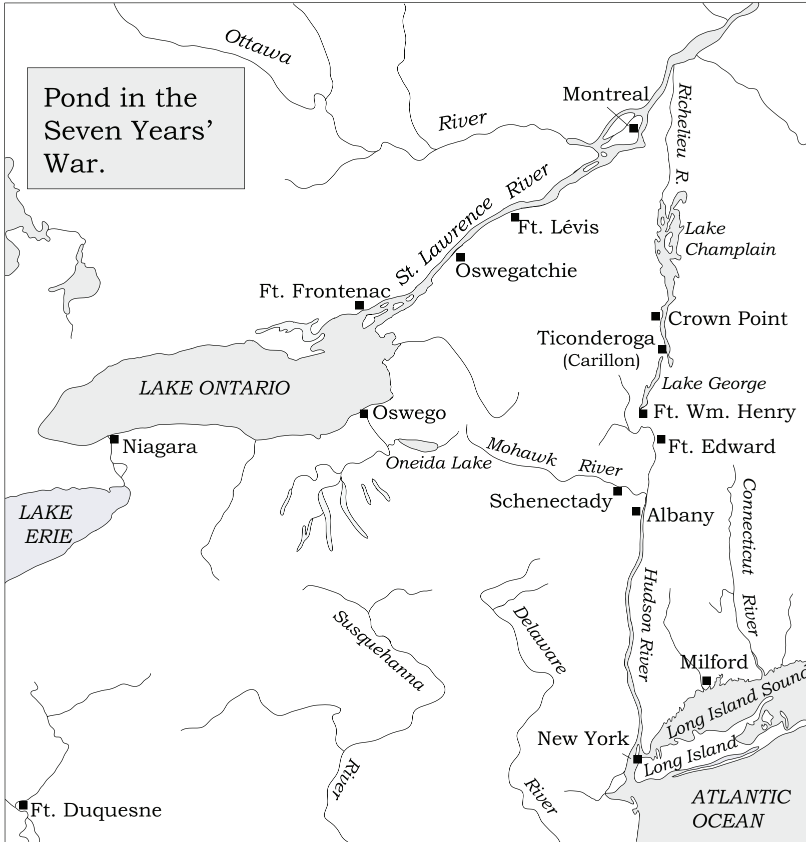

MAP 2. Pond in the Seven Years' War. The range of Pond's travels with the provincial army, 1756–1760.

maintained influence by supplying trade goods and by acting as mediators in disputes among Native people.[15]

The Ohio Valley was also of vital importance to Britain's North American ambitions. Pennsylvania and Virginia both had designs on this western region. Like the French, they first came to trade for furs, but the British colonists also wanted land for permanent settlement. The Ohio River Valley had rich soils and fertile bottomland, so was ideal for farming. To allow the French to tighten their hold on the region and strengthen their alliances with the Native communities there would forever hem in

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Britain's growing agricultural colonies. It would potentially give France control of the majority of North America, including all the unknown territory to the west and northwest. The predominantly Protestant British colonies could barely tolerate a Roman Catholic and French-speaking population to the north, and so would not easily submit to being surrounded and confined by these "papists" on all sides.

How much this geopolitical rational mattered to Pond we will never know. But certainly as a young man in Connecticut he would have been aware of the events that were unfolding a few hundred miles away. He had doubtlessly heard that less than two years before his enlistment, during the summer of 1754, a small contingent of troops from Virginia had clashed with the French over control of the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. The French were building a fort, which they named Fort Duquesne, where these two rivers joined to form the Ohio (the present-day site of Pittsburg). Virginia's governor was not going to let this happen without protest, so he sent Colonel George Washington to tell the French they were trespassing on Virginia's territory. Violence ensued with fatalities on both sides.[16]

During the summer of 1755, still without any formal declaration of war, a much larger force of British regular and provincial soldiers under General Edward Braddock went off to remove the offending French from Fort Duquesne and the Ohio country. They failed miserably. Braddock's army, totaling about 2,200 men, was routed by a small force of barely 250 French and *Canadien* soldiers with around 600 Native allies. General Braddock was killed, and most of his well-trained army fled in terror before the assault of a "savage" force that shot at them unseen from behind the cover of a thick and threatening forest. Peter and his friends must have listened with great interest to the grim stories told by the survivors of Braddock's defeated army, some of whom were in Milford shortly before he decided to enlist.[17]

The geopolitical issues at stake in the war would have a long-term influence on Pond's life, but at the time his experience involved more mundane matters of everyday life. He records little in his memoir about how he spent his time in the army. Did he learn to gamble or drink to

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excess with the other teenage boys in his company? Did he get into fights? Was Captain Baldwin able to keep his men in line? There is no way of knowing for sure, but we can assume Pond participated in the sort of activities that young men engage in when away from home for the first time. Or perhaps, like so many of his provincial brethren, he piously prayed for victory with one of the many chaplains who accompanied the New England troops. Many of his fellow soldiers understood their military service in Christian terms, but there is no indication that Pond shared their religious fervor.[18]

Pond would learn quickly that eighteenth-century warfare in North America had more to do with manual labor than glorious battles. He and his friends likely spent much of their time hauling supplies and clearing roads. After a few weeks in Albany, his company moved up the Hudson River to Fort Half-Moon where they waited for more troops to assemble. Eventually they would march farther north to Fort Edward, where the portage to Lake George began. The Connecticut and Massachusetts forces planned to assemble at Lake George, just to the southwest of Lake Champlain, then proceed to Lake Champlain and attack the French at their forts at Ticonderoga and Crown Point (Fort Carillon and Fort Saint-Frédéric to the French). These French strongholds guarded the southern approaches to their settlements in Canada. Once Crown Point was taken the British planned to descend the Richelieu River to the St. Lawrence and conquer Montreal and the city of Quebec.[19]

Pond later described how the work proceeded: "Parties & Teamsters war Imploid in forwarding Provishon from Post to Post & from Fort Eadward to the Head of Lake George." The simple process of keeping such a large army fed was a logistical ordeal. Tons of supplies had to be moved overland on poor to nonexistent roads. Young recruits like Pond were assigned this task. He recalled that their progress was so slow that time eventually ran out, and plans for attacking the enemy were abandoned. "It was supposed that we should Crose Lake George & make a Desant on ticandaroge [Ticonderoga]. But befour that Could be acomplishead the Sumer Endead. Fall of ye Year Seat in and we went to work at the fort George [Fort William Henry] which Lay on the Head of the Lake By that name."[20]

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Army life was characterized by hard work, boredom, ill health, and occasional episodes of violence. Pond does not mention any drilling, but presumably his company received some training. Soldiers were encouraged to stay close to camp, for even though the main body of the enemy was still a good way off, scouting parties from both the French and British forces roamed the woods, gathering intelligence and cutting off unwary wanderers. In nearby Schenectady at about this time an officer in the regulars observed that "we cannot stir out to take a walk unless we are twenty together in number well arm'd, for the French Indians are continually skulking about us, and carry off every day a great many scalps."[21]

Disease, not the French or their Native allies, was the most dangerous enemy to the Connecticut ranks that summer, particularly dysentery. One of Pond's fellow provincial soldiers, Captain Edmund Wells of Hebron, Connecticut, kept a diary of that summer's campaign. While stationed at Fort Edward, Wells wrote of the sickness prevailing among his fellow troops, and he recorded the growing number of fresh graves in the local cemetery. On September 14 he observed that it was "very Sickly in the Camp, Dies more or Less Evry Day." Three days later he "took a walk into the Burying place and counted the Graves and found theire to be 92 which have been Buried there in five weeks wanting one Day." Ten days later the number of graves had climbed to 137. Most of these were strong young men stricken down by the effects of poor sanitation.[22]

A glimpse into the shape of Pond's company can be found in a muster roll recording the soldiers at Lake George on October 13. Of the three officers and seventy-five men in his company, only twenty-three were listed as healthy and ready for duty. Pond was one of these lucky ones, as he always had a strong constitution. Twenty-one were listed as sick, five as "confined," ten as dead, and thirteen as absent without leave—all this without meeting the enemy.[23] In his memoir he recalled that a great number died "with the Disentary & other Dissaeses whi[ch] Camps are subget to Aspesaley [especially] among Raw troops as the Amaracans ware at that time and thay Beaing Strangers to a Holsum [wholesome] Mod of Cookerarey it mad[e] Grate Havock with them in makeing youse of Salt Provshans as thay did which was in grat part Broyling & Drinking water with it to Exses."[24]

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Pond recalled that the campaign eventually ended with a whimper. "In Novmber it Groed two Cold to Sleap in tents and the men began to Mutanise [mutiny] and Say that thay had Sarved thare times Out for which thay ware Inlisted and would Return Home. After Satisfying them with Smooth words thay ware Provaild on them to Prolong the Campain a few Weakes, and at the time Promest By the Gennarel the Camp Broke up and the troops Returned to thare Respecttive Plaiseis in all Parts of ye Cuntrey from whic[h] thay came."[25]

Battle

In the spring of 1757 Pond decided that another summer with the army was not for him. In his memoir he described that year briefly. "The year insewing which was 57 I taread at home with my Pairans." By staying home he avoided the misfortune that befell many Connecticut provincials when Fort William Henry was surrendered to French General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm. As made famous by James Fenimore Cooper in his novel *The Last of the Mohicans,* General Montcalm's Native allies attacked the British troops after they had surrendered and were evacuating the fort. Pond avoided this fate, though he surely had friends who were there.

Despite the misfortune of the Connecticut troops in 1757, Pond was too restless to sit out more than a single summer's campaign. During the winter of 1757–58 British regulars were quartered in Milford, and he may have spent time with them and listened to their stories of army life. Perhaps he also took part in the soldiers' winter revelries, which included accidentally burning down the Milford Town House late one night. Again the temptation for worldly adventure called to him. When spring came recruitment was being carried out vigorously throughout New England, and Captain Baldwin was once again raising a company. Major offensive operations were being planned, and wages were up as a result. As an experienced soldier, now eighteen years old, he would have been a particularly attractive recruit. He could expect to earn £1.16 per month as a private, and as a veteran soldier he would receive a £4 enlistment bounty. These financial inducements mattered, but also during the previous year Pond had become bored. He observed: "tareang [tarrying]

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at Home was two Inactive a Life for me." Once again he agreed to serve under Captain Baldwin in an expedition against the French on Lake Champlain, which would be commanded by General James Abercromby.[26]

He left home that spring prepared for another summer of war. Once in Albany he was again put to work bringing provisions and supplies north, first to Fort Edward, and then to a camp on the south shore of Lake George by Fort William Henry's ruins. By late June they had finished building hundreds of small boats and were making final preparations to cross the lake to attack Ticonderoga, which lay on the far side of the portage between Lake George and Lake Champlain. The sixteen thousand regular and provincial troops made up one of the largest concentrations of human beings in North America at that time. Nine thousand were provincials like Pond, five thousand were regulars, and one thousand were rangers.[27]

On July 5, 1758, the troops boarded a vast fleet of over a thousand bateaux, whale boats, and floating batteries to cross Lake George. As the expedition rowed through the narrows on their way north, the flotilla extended six miles. They arrived at the portage to Lake Champlain at dawn after a night spent on the water. Pond recalled that they "landed without Oposhion [opposition]. The french that ware Incampt at that End of the Lake flead [fled] at our appearanc as far as Tiandarogeea & joind thair old Commander Moncalm." As the French withdrew across the portage to their fort, the British troops disembarked and assembled. Pond recalled, "We ware Drawn up in Order & Devideed into Collams & Ordred to March toward Moncalm in his Camp Befour the fort."[28]

Things looked grim for General Montcalm, commanding the French troops. His total force numbered little more than 3,500 men, less than a quarter the size of the approaching army. But the British were still some distance away. At the time of their landing, Montcalm had posted his men along the portage and the small stream that flows from Lake George into Lake Champlain, but he withdrew them as the larger army advanced. Yet Montcalm knew that he could not simply withdraw entirely into the fort, since it was not a very imposing structure. His own military engineer had observed that if he were to lay siege to it, he "should require only

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six mortars and two cannon."[29] General Abercromby's advancing army had far more artillery than that.

On the morning the British force landed there was a brief skirmish along the road. As the French troops retreated, a portion of the attacking army under General George Howe, the second-in-command, pushed forward rapidly. The thirty-four-year-old Viscount Howe was a great favorite among provincial soldiers. Unlike most officers in the regular army, whom the provincials often found surly and aloof, Howe was at ease with all classes of men, a quality that won him widespread respect. Pond was part of Howe's advance, most likely eager and afraid like his comrades. The regulars advanced up the main road led by the general, while the Connecticut provincials marched through the woods to the left. First contact was made by these Connecticut troops in the forest. As Pond described it, "The British & french Meat in the Open Rode Verey Near Each Other Befour thay Discovered the french on a Count of the Uneaveneas of the Ground." Visibility in the forest was low, and the members of the two forces met without warning. Pond depicted what happened to General Howe: "Being at the Head of the British troops with a Small side arm in his Hand he Ordered the troopes to forme thare front to ye Left to atack the french." Unfortunately, Howe exposed himself too recklessly, Pond continued, for as the British prepared to attack "the french fir[e]d & his Lordship Recved a Ball & three Buck Shot threw the Senter of his Brest & expired without Spekeing a word."[30]

Pond and the other soldiers on the scene surrounded the small enemy party responsible for killing Howe and captured or killed most of them. But order was not easily restored. With the fear, smoke, and noise of the skirmish, many of the provincial troops became lost in the forest. This was, after all, the first time that most of these New England men and boys had ever been shot at, and their training had been minimal. Pond wrote of night falling on a disoriented crew. "The troops Beaing all Strangers to the Ground & Runing threw the woods after the Disparst frenchmen Night came on and thay Got themselves so Disparst that thay Could not find the way Back to thare Boates at the Landing." One group, he remembered, unwittingly spent the dark night within half a mile of the French lines.

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Pond recalled: "I had wanderd in ye woods in the Nite with about twelve Men of my aquantans [until they] finealey fel on the Rode about a Mile North of ye Spot whare the first fire began." They stumbled through the dark back to the landing place, having to pick their way over the bodies of those killed during the day. These bodies, he vividly recalled over forty years later, "ware Strueed [strewn] Quit[e] thick on the Ground."[31]

In the morning, despite the confusion of the previous day and the tragic death of General Howe, the British were still in an excellent position to take Ticonderoga. The troops that had been scattered were reformed, and that afternoon the advance began once more. By nightfall they had reached a mill that lay along the portage road. The following day, July 8, they approached within sight of the fort. According to Captain Charles Lee, the British were confident of success: "Our troops were numerous & in vast spirits, both men and officers; the French by all appearances in the extreamest confusion and panick. . . . I shou'd have look'd upon any man as a desponding dastard who could entertain a doubt of our success."[32]

General Montcalm prepared the best he could against the advancing enemy. Rather than withdrawing entirely into the fort, he sent most of his men to occupy the high ground less than a mile forward. Here they constructed a barrier that was to act as the first line of defense. Recalling this obstruction, Pond observed that "the French had Cut Doun a Grate number of Pinetrease [pine trees] in front of thar Camp at Sum Distans. While sum whare Entrenching Others ware Imployed in Cuting of the Lim[b]s of the trease and Sharpen[in]g them at Both Ends for a Shevoe Dafrease [chevaux de frise]."[33] The purpose of this barrier, called an abatis by military historians, was to compel the advancing soldiers to pause to get by a tangle of sharp branches while the defenders shot at them from a protected position. A short distance up the slope from the abatis was a hastily constructed breastwork of logs from behind which the outnumbered French soldiers could shoot. Moreover, the abatis and breastwork were constructed in a U shape. The French were at the top of the hill and inside the U, while the British assaulted from the outside. This allowed the outnumbered defenders to quickly move from one point to another on the inside as the British attacked.[34]

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General Abercromby ordered an infantry assault against this French position. Luckily for Pond and his provincial companions it was the better-trained regular battalions who were to make this bold charge. Pond did not see much of the ensuing disaster, as the Connecticut troops formed the rear guard, well back from danger. Nonetheless, he described what happened. As the regulars reached the abatis, "thay Could not Git threw them til they ware at Last Oblige to Quit that Plan for three forths ware Kild in the atempt."[35] This was Pond's matter-of-fact way of describing a horrendous bloodbath. As the attacking soldiers advanced, they were forced to remain in one place struggling with the entangling branches while musket balls tore into them from the breastwork above. They could not return fire effectively, and when they were wounded or killed their bodies were held up by the tangle of branches to serve as further impediment to the men coming behind. "The fire was prodigiously hot," recalled Captain Lee, "the slaughter of officers very great, almost all wounded, the men still furiously rushing forwards without any leaders."[36] General Abercromby foolishly ordered one charge after another on the French position, from noon to nightfall, none more successful than the last, before finally calling a halt to the futile attacks. By the time it was over there had been close to two thousand casualties.

Certainly, at eighteen, Pond had never seen violence on such a scale, and one can only wonder what kind of emotional toll it took. His critique of his general's conduct of the battle differs little from that of his contemporaries or from later historians. He observed, "[T]he assault was made] with Out ye Help of Canan [cannon] tho we had as fine an Aartilrey [artillery] Just at Hand as Could be in an armey of fifteen thousend men."[37] Others have observed the same, pointing out that the hastily constructed French defenses could have been easily blasted away by the artillery. Captain Lee angrily declared that the use of the artillery should have occurred to "any blockhead who was not absolutely so far sunk in Idiotism as to be oblig'd to wear a bib and bells." What is worse, that night, perhaps shaken by the day's slaughter and fearing the arrival of French reinforcements, General Abercromby ordered a retreat, even though his army was well supplied and still outnumbered the enemy

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four to one. The outspoken Captain Lee lay the entire blame for the disaster at the feet of the "Booby in Chief," as he came to call his commander, recollecting that he "really did not think that so great a share of stupidity and absurdity could be in the possession of any man." The provincial troops shared Lee's view, thereafter calling the general "Mrs. Nabbycrombie" to show their distain.[38]

The withdrawal back over the portage was a mess. Pond recalled: "We ware Ordered to Regain our Boates at the Lake Side which was Dun after traveling all Nite so Sloley that we fell asleape by the way." In the morning the order was given to board the boats for the return to the head of Lake George. "But to sea the Confusan thare was. The Solgers Could not find thare thare One Botes [their own boats] But Imbarked Permiskenly [embarked promiscuously] whar Ever thay Could Git in, Expecting the french at thare Heales Eaverey mennet [every minute]."[39] Eventually they made it back to their camp on Lake George, but in their panic they had left behind valuable baggage and provisions to be scavenged by the French.

Pond stayed at the Lake George camp until late fall when he returned home. He ends his account of the disastrous summer of 1758 with a sour comment: "Thus Ended the Most Ridicklas Campane Eaver H[e] ard of."[40] He may not have been able to spell ridiculous, but he knew it when he saw it. Despite his phonetic spelling, Pond was not a stupid man. While occupying the lowest rung in the army, he could clearly see the shortcomings of his commander in chief, as did most of his peers. If he had ever held any romantic notions of the glory of war, he did no longer. At eighteen, he had witnessed human brutality and human folly on a truly grand scale.

Later War Years, 1759–1760

Despite the boredom and disease of his first summer in the army and the futile slaughter of his second, Pond was not finished with the war yet. He would participate in two more summer campaigns, gaining invaluable experiences that would prove useful in his later career. In the spring of 1759 he once again enlisted. This time, instead of joining his local

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Connecticut company, he crossed Long Island Sound to enlist in a New York company with his tall, dark-eyed younger brother Zachariah, who, like Peter, is listed in the muster roll of Captain Gilbert Potter's Suffolk County company as a shoemaker. In his memoir, Pond explained that he crossed to Long Island to enlist because he wanted to serve in the expedition being mounted against the French fort at Niagara, which would not include Connecticut troops. Apparently Peter and seventeen-year-old Zachariah were curious to see Lake Ontario and what was then the far western periphery of their world.[41]

The army Peter and Zachariah joined in 1759 was commanded by Brigadier General John Prideaux and consisted of regular troops, New York provincials, and a large contingent of Iroquois warriors led by Sir William Johnson. Early in the spring they assembled near Albany and Schenectady, where they embarked in small boats or bateaux for the journey up the Mohawk River. The Mohawk was a major route west, as its valley provided the flattest pathway through the Appalachian Mountains between the Hudson River and Lake Ontario. The Mohawk could be fairly easily ascended, though at its western reaches it became shallower and boats needed to be dragged over some portages. There were settlements along the banks of the eastern portion of the river and a road ran along it for much of the way, allowing troops to walk when needed. Peter and Zachariah would come to know this route well in later years, for in peacetime the Mohawk River was an important fur trade route between Albany and the Great Lakes.

Late in June the army reached Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario, an old British fort and fur trade post that had been sacked by the French early in the war. Some soldiers were put to work rebuilding the structure, while others prepared to row west to assault Fort Niagara. Here we find some evidence that Pond stood out as someone of special abilities in the eyes of his superiors. Sometime between his enlistment and reaching Lake Ontario he was promoted to sergeant. He recounts that at Oswego he was summoned by Colonel John Johnstone, who commanded the New York troops. Johnstone told him that he was to join the part of the army that was to attack Niagara, even though the rest of his company was

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staying at Oswego to rebuild the fort. "I wated on him," Pond recalled, "and Inquiard of him How he Came to take me the Ondley Man of the Companey Out to Go Over the Lake. He sade He had a mind I should be with him."[42]

How Pond had attracted the attention and patronage of this high-ranking officer in an army numbering in the thousands is not clear. The eighteenth century was a time when personal relationships were the key to advancement. Johnstone certainly saw promise in the young man. The colonel was no fool either. He was a highly respected provincial officer, who was admired even by the officers of the regular army, so his judgment is telling. At nineteen, Pond stood out as a young man with leadership qualities. He was permitted to choose several companions to bring with him as his tent mates (his dark-eyed brother Zachariah was surely among them), and he joined the company of a Captain he calls "Vanvaeter."[43]

The army set off along the southern shore of Lake Ontario in their bateaux. In early July they arrived at Niagara, disembarked a short distance to the east of the fort, and began to lay siege. Pond was now assigned the job of Orderly Sergeant to General Prideaux. His main task was to deliver the general's messages. Apparently someone who was young and fit was wanted for this physically demanding task. As Pond recalled, "I was Keept So Close to my Dutey that I Got nither Sleape nor Rest for the armey was up Befoar the works at the fort & the Gennarel was Doan at Johnson's Landing four Miles from the acting part of the armey. I was forced to Run Back & forth four miles Nite & Day til I Could not Sarve Eney Longer." Eventually, he asked to be relieved of this arduous duty.[44]

The British besieged Niagara for close to a month before the French garrison capitulated. Using standard eighteenth-century European siege tactics, the troops dug trenches by which they brought artillery up within range of the fort. During this time, Pond was exposed to the dangers of war, and he received a minor wound in the course of his duty. Others were not so lucky. Pond's patron, Colonel Johnstone, who he calls "my frend Corll Johnsen," did not survive the siege. Nor did General Prideaux. The two leaders were killed on July 20—Prideaux by a mortar and Johnstone by a musket ball shot from the fort. Another colonel in the

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New York provincials, who Pond calls "Corll Shaday," was shot through the leg that same day. Pond lamented, "This was a Loss to Our Small armey three Brave Offesares in One Day. We Continud the Seage with Spereat under the Command of Sir William Johnson who it fel to after the D[e]ath of Braduck [Prideaux]."[45]

Despite the losses, the campaign against Niagara ended in success. The fort surrendered on July 25, resulting in British control of Lake Ontario. Before winter set in, the British were also victorious under Brigadier General James Wolfe on the "Plains of Abraham" outside of the city of Quebec. Thus, by the close of 1759 they were poised to put an end to the French presence in North America. They controlled the major waterways west, east, and south of Montreal, so they just had to wait for the spring thaw to deliver the final blow.

Pond returned to Milford at the end of the Niagara campaign to spend the winter. There he found that many of the French soldiers captured at Niagara were being held nearby. He recalled that he "past the winter among them." Perhaps he practiced speaking French with these prisoners and questioned them about the opportunities to be found in the *pays d'en haut*. When spring came, he once again enlisted. His service in 1760 remains somewhat of a mystery, as we have only his memoir to rely on for information. He wrote: "In 1760 I Recved a Commision and Enterd a forth time in the armey. We then Gind [joined] the Armey at the Old Plase of Randavuese." That he was commissioned as an ensign after serving as a sergeant the previous summer would not be a surprise, but no independent record of his commission exists in incomplete New York or Connecticut muster rolls, and he fails to mention what company and regiment he joined. As he described his experience it is clear that he was moved about among different companies as he had been the previous summer. When General Jeffrey Amherst set out from Albany to Oswego, he recalled, "I was Ordred on this Command four Offeser & Eighty Men. On Our arival at Osswago the Ginneral Gave the Other three Offercers as Meney Men as would Man One Boate & Ordered them Return to Thare Regiment." Ensign Pond, however, he kept close.

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"Me He Ordred to Incamp with my men in the Rear of his fammaley til farther Orders with Seventy Men til Just Befour the armey Imbark for Swagochea [Oswegatchie—near present day Ogdensburg, New York] and then Gind [join] my Rigment."[46]

Not long after returning to his regiment Pond was again detached for special duty. "Sun after thare was apointed a Lite infantrey Cumpaney to Be Pick Out of Each Rigiment, Hats Cut Small that thay mite be Youneform [uniform]. I was apointed to this Cumpaney." Light infantry, like rangers, were skirmishers, well suited to American frontier warfare. Their hats and jackets were "Cut Small" so that they could move through dense forest without long garments to get caught by branches and brush.[47]

Ensign Pond, along with his light infantry company, joined General Amherst's army as it made its way from Lake Ontario down the St. Lawrence River toward Montreal. Most likely they were assigned the flanks, their job to scour the nearby woods and thus prevent the army from being surprised by French irregulars and Native warriors as Braddock had been at the beginning of the war. Amherst's army took Fort Lévis on the St. Lawrence above Montreal in less than a week. It then took three days to descend to Montreal. There they rendezvoused with another British army that had come up from Quebec and a third that had come north from New York via Lake Champlain. On September 8, 1760, the city surrendered to Amherst's imposing force. With this surrender, Pond observed, "all Cannaday was in the Hands of the British. Nor have they [the French] Had aney Part of it Sins [since]."[48]

The mainland North American fighting was now over, but the Seven Years' War did not officially end until the Treaty of Paris in 1763. In that treaty France ceded to Britain its claims to Canada and all territory east of the Mississippi River with the exception of New Orleans. In addition, France agreed to turn its Louisiana colony over to its ally Spain, including New Orleans and an ill-defined territory to the west of the river. Spain was weaker than France and thus less of a threat to British colonies as a western neighbor. The peace made Great Britain the most powerful colonial power in North America.

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The war had been a life-changing event for Pond and many of his generation. Some provincial soldiers would go on to become leaders in the American Revolution. Others, like Pond, would leverage their wartime experiences to create careers for themselves in the West. During his time in the army Pond made important connections. To be made a sergeant at nineteen and an ensign at twenty were signs, not only that he had leadership qualities, but also that he knew how to impress the right people. While he did not always respect his superiors if they did not deserve it, he was well aware that the patronage of powerful men was important to his advancement. Pond was clearly ambitious.

What he and his contemporaries learned about the West would also be vital. Albany, the Mohawk River, Niagara, and Lake Ontario were vital links between the coast and the western hinterland. Soldiers experienced first hand the economic possibilities of the western trade when they commandeered furs at Niagara. They learned about geography and about how to move people and goods in small boats across the North American landscape. Pond was now acquainted with the major freshwater routes from New England and New York to the Great Lakes. This simple geographic knowledge created new opportunities. An adventurous man, with the ability to garner patronage and lead others, could go far.

The war opened up a continent to the British. A continental vision of North America from the perspective of the British colonies was not possible as long as the French remained in Canada. With the conquest of Canada geographic horizons expanded. There was still a vast territory to explore and a large indigenous population that had not been conquered. There were subjects of Spain on the Mississippi and to the southwest, and there were Russians far away along coastal Alaska, but in 1760 the British were the most significant emerging power in North America. Peter Pond, as a loyal British subject, had positioned himself to take full advantage of these new opportunities.

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