

Getting A Handle on Your Loyalist Ancestors Using Published Sources

by Edward B. Kipp © 2002

Who Were the Loyalists?

Loyalists were colonists in America who remained faithful to the British Crown and constitution during the American Revolution (1775-1783). They believed that disputes over Imperial taxation and trade controls did not justify a rebellion against the lawful British government and King George III. They also prized their civil and property rights.

Loyalists came from a cross section of society and included farmers, trades people, merchants and the colonial elite. National elements included Blacks, Indians, German, Swiss, Dutch, French and British etc. This means they had little in common except for their opposition to the revolution.

Loyalist strongholds were found in Georgia, South Carolina, New York, and New Jersey. Loyalists would have expressed their loyalty by serving in the King's forces or supporting the King's cause. About 50 separate Loyalist (or Provincial) Corps were formed, such as the King's Royal Regiment of New York (Sir John Johnson), Butler's Rangers (John Butler) and the Queen's Rangers (John Graves Simcoe).

It is estimated that of the population of the colonies about a third were loyalist, a third were rebels and a third were undecided and tried to remain neutral.

At the time, the Loyalists were often referred to as Tories. If they did not take the oath of allegiance to the new "state" they were "A King's Man." Because of their traditional view they and their families were persecuted in many ways and thus suffered their own difficulties and tragedies. Persecution often took the form of tar and feathers or riding on a rail. Sometimes the mob attitude took over to an extreme and the King's man was hanged. Tories also had their properties seized and sold. Their families had to persevere as well. An example of persecution can be found in the Haldimand Papers in the petition of Philip Empey Sr. (Sir Frederick Haldimand was the Governor of Quebec from 1778 to 1786.)

The persecutors were the Rebels or Patriots depending on your point of view.

From the petition of Philip Empey Sr., following the siege of Fort Stanwix in 1777.

“That Pet's Wife and Children were set at Liberty, on the Rebels' Reinforcement being beat and dispersed near Fort Stanwix. Then She returned to her own House, expecting to live in it again, but they beat and abused her in such a Manner, that she was carried out by four men and left on the high Road. As soon as she recovered a little, she procured Friends to bring her to Schenectady where she continued till she died.”

After the Treaty of Paris was signed on September 3, 1783 many loyalists tried to remain in or return to the new United States of America. However, they soon discovered this was not possible.

Where did they go?

Because they were no longer wanted in the country, the Loyalists dispersed to many areas. It is estimated about 35,000 were shipped to Nova Scotia and the Island of St. John (P.E.I.) when the city of New York was evacuated in 1783 by Sir Guy Carleton, the British Commander at that time. In Nova Scotia, Loyalist activities led to the formation of the new Province of New Brunswick in 1784. Many New Brunswick Loyalists later moved to Upper Canada.

Another 10,000 went to Quebec, which at that time included present day Quebec and Ontario. Most of these people followed the well known trails and routes across country to Sorel, Machiche, Trois Riviere, Fort Niagara and Detroit. This had been a gradual migration from 1775 to 1783 and later. In 1784 many of these Loyalists were settled in the Royal Townships along the St. Lawrence River and the Cataraqui Townships on Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte, with the Indian allies settling on the Grand River and at Deseronto.

The Royal Townships were: Lancaster (Mouille), No. 1 Charlottenburgh, No. 2 Cornwall, No. 3 Osnabrock, No. 4 Williamsburgh, No. 5 Matilda, No. 6 Edwardsburgh, No. 7 Augusta, No. 8 Elizabethtown.

The Cataraqui Townships were: No. 1 Cataraqui, No. 2 Ernestown, No. 3 Fredericksburgh, No. 4 Adolphustown, No. 5 Marysburgh.

In Quebec there was Loyalist dissatisfaction with French laws and the seigniorial system of land tenure. They successfully lobbied the British government in that the Constitutional Act of 1791 announced the formation of Upper (Ontario) and Lower (Quebec) Canada. In 1841 these became Canada West and Canada East respectively. In a mere 26 years in 1867 Confederation took place. Thus in spite of what you may have heard the American War of Independence led to the formation of two countries.

Thousands went to Florida, The Bahamas, Bermuda, Dominica, Sierra Leone, St. Vincent, Jamaica and British Honduras (Belize) and even England.

What did they have to do to get land?

In the years following the close of the Revolutionary War, the Loyalists who settled in Ontario were given land grants in partial recognition of their losses and services during the conflict. In addition, a provision was made that each of their children in turn were eligible for land grants free of fees as they came of age or married. As these sons and daughters of Loyalists petitioned for land, a notation was made of the authorization for each grant in the records of the Council of Upper Canada

They had to prove who they were by providing reliable witnesses who knew them; they had to be 21 years of age; they had to swear they had not received any lands as yet; they had to swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown.

Lord Dorchester (Sir Guy Carleton) and the UE

Guy Carleton served with Wolf in 1759 on the Plains of Abraham.

He was Governor of Quebec from 1766 to 1778.

He helped to repel the invasion of the Continental Army under Montgomery in 1775/76.

In 1776 he was Knighted.

In 1782 he became the Commander in Chief of the British Forces in North America.

In 1783 he supervised the evacuation of 30,000 troops and 27,000 refugees from New York City. This included several thousand former slaves.

In 1786 he was made a Baron (the first Lord Dorchester).

He was again Governor of Quebec from 1786 to 1796.

By an Order-in-Council dated November 9, 1789 at the Council Chamber at Quebec

“His Lordship intimated to the Council, that it remained a question, upon the late Regulation for the disposition of the Waste Lands of the Crown, whether the Boards constituted for that purpose were authorized to make Locations to the Sons of Loyalists, on their coming to full Age and that it was his wish to put a Mark of Honor upon the families who had adhered to the Unity of the Empire, and joined the Royal Standard in America before the Treaty of Separation in the year 1783.

The Council concurring with his Lordship, it is accordingly Ordered:

That the several Land Boards take course for preserving a Registry of the names of all persons falling under the description afore-mentioned to the end that their posterity may be discriminated, from future settlers, in the Parish Registers and Rolls of the Militia of their respective Districts, and other Public Remembrancers of the Province, as proper objects, by their persevering in the Fidelity and Conduct so honourable to their ancestors, for distinguished Benefits and Privileges.

And it is also ordered, that the said Land Boards may in every such case provide not only for the Sons of those Loyalists, as they arrive to full age, but for their Daughters also of that age, or on their Marriage, assigning to each a Lot of Two Hundred Acres, more or less, provided nevertheless that they respectively comply with the general Regulations, and that it shall satisfactorily appear that there has been no Default in the due Cultivation and Improvement of the Lands already assigned to the head of the family of which they are members.

This is where the UE or Unity of the Empire comes from.

The United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada (UELAC)

The Association is a patriotic, historical and genealogical society.

To become a member of the Association you must document an ancestor:

- Who was a resident in the American Colonies in 1775 and
- Who joined the Royal Standard prior to the treaty of Separation in 1783 and
- Who demonstrated loyalty to the Crown in some way and
- Who settled in British North America after the Revolution and/or

- Who was a soldier who served in one of the American Loyalist Regiments (Provincial) & was disbanded in BNA or

- Who was a member of the Six Nations – Grand River or Bay of Quinte (Tyendinaga)

Loyalist descendants of today uphold Canada's distinctive political and legal heritage. They are interested in the history of the American Revolution, and the stories of the Loyalists and their military role. They seek out historic sites, documents and artifacts. They recreate historic events and people and organize historic tours that visit places where their ancestors lived. Etc. Etc.

The Association has branches across Canada from British Columbia to Nova Scotia.

The Branches local to Eastern Ontario are: Sir Guy Carleton, St. Lawrence, Col. Edward Jessup, Kingston and Bay of Quinte.

I would like to refer you to the UELAC web site found at

URL: <http://www.uelac.org>

This URL gives you access to a very comprehensive bibliography.

If you click on the tab References and Links you will find an excellent article on the Significance of Loyalist Day in Ontario, June 19th.

Published Sources:

I am now going to describe several published sources where you can get a lead on your loyalist ancestor. I am going to talk mainly about Ontario sources, If I have time I will mention a few for New Brunswick and a couple of American sources.

For other sources please visit the Loyalist Bibliography found on my web site.

<http://www.magma.ca/~ekipp/loybib/hmt>

Ontario:

1) The Loyalists in Ontario: The Sons and Daughters of the American Loyalists of Upper Canada, by William D. Reid. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1994, reprint of 1973 edition.

Mr. Reid was employed at the Ontario Archives and over the years he extracted from the Orders-in-Council of Upper Canada thousands of references to land grants made to the sons and daughters of the Loyalists. He arranged them systematically under the name of the Loyalist parent. This evolved into a card collection of family group records.

The Orders-in-Council generally provided the name of the petitioner, place of residence and the name of the Loyalist father. For daughters the name of her Husband is stated.

Other information is provided in this book, which Mr. Reid obtained from other sources mostly found in the Ontario Archives. These sources would be, The Heir & Devisee Commission, the Township papers, Fiat Books, Warrant Books, and church registers etc.

The original index card file came to the University of Western Ontario, Regional Collection, where it was typescript and eventually published. On a personal note, I used this card file while I was at Western about the time it was being readied for publication.

The book is arranged in alphabetical order by family name. There is an index to names found in the Addenda and names of spouses. Therefore it is necessary to look in both places to ascertain if a particular name is in the book.

2) The Old United Empire Loyalists List, with a New Introduction by Milton Rubincam, Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1984. Originally published as the Centennial of the Settlement of Upper Canada by the United Empire Loyalists 1784-1884, Toronto, ON: Rose Publishing Company, 1885.

This book describes the Centennial celebrations held at Adolphustown, Toronto and Niagara in year of 1884. It also contains a transcript of the Order-in-Council of 9th November, 1789 ordering a record to be kept of the U.E. loyalists.

Also included is a copy of the old “U.E. List,” preserved in the Crown Lands Department at Toronto and a Supplementary list. Information provided includes their service and the general location of their home. A reminder here is that when reading a book for the first time, one should always read the introduction to find out how the book is arranged and where the data came from.

3) Loyalist Lists, Over 2000 Loyalist Names and Families from the Haldimand Papers, by E. Keith Fitzgerald, Toronto, ON: Ontario Genealogical Society, 1984.

This book contains transcriptions of several Loyalist lists found in the Haldimand Papers.

- General Return of Refugee Loyalists in the Province of Quebec, Exclusive of those Quartered, and residing at the Upper Posts.
- Roll of King’s Rangers (Roger’s Rangers)
- Return of the 1st Battalion of the King’s Royal Regiment of New York (1KRRNY)
- Return of Loyal Rangers – Company of Pensioners (Jessup’s Rangers)

The index of names leads one to an entry in one of the lists. Information provided includes number of people of certain age in the family, from what province or country. remarks, usually occupation etc.

4) The Kings Royal Regiment of New York, by Brig. Gen. Ernest A. Cruikshank, with the addition of an Index, Appendices and a Master Muster Roll prepared by Gavin K. Watt. Toronto, 1984. The original text was published by The Ontario Historical Society in 1931.

This book describes the Revolution in the Mohawk Valley of New York and the flight of the Loyalists to Canada.

The main reason I have included this book is the Master Muster Roll of the KRRNY. The information is listed alphabetically by surname and includes place of birth, year of birth, Battalion number, highest rank, enlistment date, service comments, settlement in 1784, family details, numbers of sons and daughters occupation and comments.

5) Early Ontario Settlers, A Source Book, by Norman K. Crowder, Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1993.

This book contains a bibliography and an index to all of the names in the transcribed lists.

It is about the people who settled in Ontario in the 1780s when it was part of Quebec. These people were discharged British and German servicemen, American Loyalists who served in provincial regiments or who aided the British cause in various ways, and some refugees.

Lists transcribed include: 1783 Niagara Return, 1784 Provisioning List, 1785 Location List, 1784-5, 1785-6 Fort Erie Provisioning List, 1784-6 Detroit Provisioning List, 1784-5 Niagara Return, 1786 Provisioning List, 1786-7 Highland Emigrants and 1787-9 Detroit Returns. Information provided includes name, number of people by category in the family rations per day, remarks etc.

6) Loyalist Lineages of Canada 1783-1983, Toronto, ON: Toronto Branch U.E.L. Association of Canada, 1984. and **Loyalist Lineages of Canada Volume II, Parts 1 & 2**, Toronto, ON: Toronto Branch U.E.L. Association of Canada, 1991.

The listings are of those ancestral lines that have been documented by Loyalist descendants. The applications and documentation are held by the UELAC head office in Toronto. The lineages in these volumes are arranged

alphabetically by surname of the Loyalist ancestor. Each volume contains an index of those names not matching the Loyalist name in each lineage. The lineages provided are of Loyalists from throughout Canada, which would be mostly Ontario and New Brunswick.

I would now like to discuss the two sets of books that contain transcriptions of the evidence presented to the special Commission created in Britain in 1783 and renewed in 1785.

This was the Commission "...to enquire into the Losses and Services of all such Persons who have suffered in their Rights, Properties, and Possessions, during the late unhappy Dissentions in America, in consequence of their Loyalty to His Majesty, and Attachment to the British Government..." This is referred to as the Loyalist Claims Commission. The number of claims for losses is a fraction of those Loyalists who fled the colonies.

The official record of the hearings of the two commissioners Jeremy Pemberton and Thomas Dundas is found in Audit Office series 12 and 13 at the Public Record Office in England. The National Archives of Canada has them on microfilm. The claims are of interest because they contain proof of the Loyalty of service, an inventory of lost possessions, proof of property title, evidence from credible witnesses etc.

Audit Office 12 records appear to be written copies of the original commissioners books. The original books ended up in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC and were later transferred to the Library of Congress (MSS 18,662) where they were forgotten for over a hundred years.

Audit Office 12 includes the minute books and reports of the Commissioners, various tables and lists of claims, claimants and decisions, as well as certain types of "evidence" received in support of claims and administrative records.

Audit Office 13 contains the memorials of claimants together with supporting documentation. This includes affidavits and depositions, originals, transcripts and certified copies of legal documents such as property deeds and wills, correspondence and a variety of notes compiled during the hearings or on receipt of the claims.

7) United Empire Loyalists, Second Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, by Alexander Fraser, 1904, Toronto, ON: The Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 1905. Republished in 1994 as the United Empire Loyalists, Enquiry into the Losses and Services in Consequence of Their Loyalty, Evidence in the Canadian Claims. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1994.

The second report contains a transcription of the material found in MSS 18,662 in the Library of Congress. This transcription was made by Cannif Haight about 1900. MSS 18,662 is missing ten of the commissioners' books for which a transcription is found in Audit Office 12. An eleventh book for New York state is also missing. So the second report is missing the evidence from 11 commissioners' volumes. In addition he did not transcribe claims that were rejected or that had strikeouts across them.

8) Loyalist Settlements 1783-1789, New Evidence of Canadian Loyalist Claims, research and transcription by W. Bruce Antliff, Toronto, ON: Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, 1985.

Antliff has reconstructed from Audit Office 12 records ten volumes of evidence missing from the second report and MSS 18,662. This still leaves one missing volume for New York State. He also included the claims that were rejected or that had strike outs across them.

Antliff also provides a comparison index for names found in the second report, those found in his book and those found in Audit Office 12. The Preface and Introduction to this book should be read in detail to understand the history of these records.

9) American Migrations 1765-1799, The lives, times and families of colonial Americans who remained loyal to the British Crown before, during and after the Revolutionary War, as related in their own words and through their correspondence, by Peter Wilson Coldham, Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2000.

This book contains a series of biographical abstracts arranged by Province (State) and within that alphabetical by surname. References to location in Audit Office 12 and 13 are provided. An all person name index provides easy access. There are several appendices provided including a bibliography,

a summary of claims by Province and a listing of ships employed to transport Loyalists 1782-1786.

The books I have chosen are only a selection which I have used. The first five deal with Ontario Loyalists and the other four with Loyalists from all geographic areas of Canada where they settled.

New Brunswick:

1) The Loyalists of New Brunswick, by Esther Clark Wright, Yarmouth, NS: 1985 (originally published in 1955).

This is a history of the coming of the Loyalists to Nova Scotia (New Brunswick in 1784)

The item that sets this book apart is the Appendix, which is a list of The New Brunswick Loyalists. Here Clark has list alphabetically by Loyalist surname the heads of families, or single men of eighteen years of age and upwards, their former homes, their service during the Revolution, their first grants, and their subsequent grants and/or place of residence.

This book also contains a bibliography and an index to the history.

2) New Brunswick Loyalists, A Bicentennial Tribute, by Sharon Dubeau, Agincourt, ON: Generation Press, 1983.

Dubeau has listed the Loyalist names alphabetically with a descriptive paragraph about each one. Information has been pulled from many sources. This book also contains a couple of maps, a bibliography and a curious alphabetical list of names at the back with no description of what it is.

3) Early New Brunswick Probate Records 1785-1835, by R. Wallace Hale, Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1989.

This book contains information from about two thousand estate files from the New Brunswick Provincial Archives. The abstracts are listed alphabetically by surname. There is an index of names mentioned in the abstracts other than the main loyalist name.

4) Loyalist Families, by Cleadie B. Barnett & Elizabeth S. Sewell, Fredericton Branch, UELAC, [1983].

The book contains information on Loyalist names documented by members of the Fredericton Branch UELAC. The names are listed alphabetically by surname. Sources of information used are listed. The addresses of members of the Branch in [1983]. There is an index of the surnames mentioned in the text.

American and Other:

1) Compendium of Early Mohawk Valley Families, by Maryly B. Penrose, Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1990.

This book contains a brief history of the Mohawk Valley of New York. The histories of the first families of the Mohawk Valley are set forth in alphabetical order with sources cited. This is the result of more than 25 years of research. The researched data is from 18th and 19th century record sources such as marriage, birth/baptism, death, probate, military, pension, land and census.

There is a cross index listing individuals with different surnames who have a collateral relationship. There are two appendices: A – Tryon County Militia; B – Alphabetical list of heads of families from the 1790 census of Montgomery County New York.

2) Carleton's Loyalist Index, by John E. Ruch and editor Elizabeth Kipp, Ottawa, ON: Sir Guy Carleton Branch UEALC, 1996.

This is a database of 54, 568 records. It is a select index to the names of Loyalists and their associates contained in the British Headquarters Papers, New York City 1774-1783. The papers include records kept by several Commanders-in-Chief of the British Army during the Revolution but they are referred to as the Carleton papers, because Sir Guy Carleton was the last British Commander in New York.

It is an important finding aid as it includes many people who were on Manhattan Island, or the adjacent mainland, dominated by the British, during the American Revolution: loyalist soldiers and civilian refugees, (white and black), many British and German soldiers who settled in Canada later, and also rebels.

Sources (other than those discussed in the text):

“The King’s Men: The United Empire Loyalists,” by Lieutenant Colonel William A. Smy. Family Chronicle, July/August 1997, p. 12-15.

The United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada (brochure).

United Empire Loyalist Genealogy & History Articles as published in The Global Gazette online Family History Magazine, especially articles by Brenda Dougall Merriman. URL: <http://globalgazette.net/cda-ue.htm>

“Who were the Loyalists?” by F. Eleanor Chapin. Loyalist Families of the Grand River Branch, United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada, p. 43-4. Pro Familia Publishing, Toronto, ON: 1991.

“Persecution of the Loyalists (or Tories),” by Angela E.M. Files. Loyalist Families of the Grand River Branch, United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada, p. 48-53. Pro Familia Publishing, Toronto, ON: 1991.

Dictionary of Canadian Biography