

The Queen and the United Empire Loyalists

Dorothy Meyerhof and Nancy Richards

Tuesday 29 June began as a pleasant summer day, a great day in fact for gardening in the morning and perhaps a trip to an archive in the afternoon. Then everything changed! Unknown to those of us in Ottawa, Fred Hayward received a telephone call at his home in Oakville from Rideau Hall, the residence of the Governor General, at 10 am that morning. Would he please provide the names of ten Loyalists who would be guests at the Queen's tree planting ceremony at Rideau Hall the next afternoon, and by noon time no less. He quickly contacted ten people but had great difficulty finding members of the Sir Guy Carleton Branch at home, reaching only George and Janet Anderson.

Imagine the sinking feeling of coming in at noon from a morning spent trimming lilacs and cedars to find his message on the phone and thinking that a more indolent morning spent reading the paper in the house would have resulted in an opportunity to see the Queen. All was not lost however. After a frantic phone call to Fred's wife and a return call from Fred he submitted more names to Rideau Hall and by late afternoon invitations had been received by Dorothy and Tom Meyerhof, and Nancy and Ron Richards.

On 30 June the Meyerhofs and Richards were among the first to present their invitations to the event, taking up a vantage point on the lawn right beside the tree to be planted. The time passed rapidly chatting with other guests. We were shown the ceremonial spade which is engraved with the names of all the dignitaries who have planted trees on the grounds, along with the dates.

When the Queen and Prince Phillip arrived at Rideau Hall at 1:45 pm the United Empire Loyalists were well represented. In addition to the Andersons, Meyerhofs and Richards; Fred Hayward, Dominion President; Michel Racicot, Genealogist for the Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch (Sir JJCB); Adelaide Lanktree, Past President of Sir JJCB; Robert Wilkins, President of the Heritage Branch, and his wife Maura; Roy Lewis, Vice President of Central Region East; Myrtle Johnson, President of Col. Edward Jessup Branch; Okill Stuart, Past President of Heritage and Dominion UELAC, and his wife Sylvia were there.

The Queen greeted visitors lining the driveway after alighting from her limousine where some of the Loyalists were waiting. She walked over to the red oak tree and, using the ceremonial spade, placed three scoops of earth around the base of the tree. She accepted a bouquet of flowers from a little girl and briefly chatted with visitors lining the front of Rideau Hall before retiring inside.

Following the ceremony, the Loyalists remained chatting with each other and were greeted by John Baird, MP for Ottawa West - Nepean, a Loyalist descendant himself and a relative of Charles Dufferin (Duff) Roblin, Premier of Manitoba from 1958 - 1967. Pictures of the Loyalist party were taken by photographer Frank Scheme a photographer with the magazine Diplomatic and International Canada. His photos of the event can be seen on his website, frankscheme.zenfolio.com, and purchased. Pictures taken by the Meyerhofs and Richards have been posted to the Sir Guy Carleton website, www.carletonuel.ca/.

To be able to see the Queen in such a beautiful and relatively intimate setting was extraordinary. We are all deeply grateful to Fred Hayward for his resourcefulness in making it possible. The memory of this event will last a lifetime.



Rideau Hall, Ottawa



Queen Elizabeth planting a tree



Adelaide Langtree, Robert & Maura Wilkins Roy Lewis, Myrtle Johnson, John Baird, Okill & Sylvia Stuart, George Anderson, Fred Hayward



Roy Lewis, Myrtle Johnson, Okill & Sylvia Stuart, Fred Hayward