



*The Most Honourable Order
Of
Meritorious Heritage.*

A Record of the history of The Most Honourable Order of Meritorious Heritage
submitted by UELAC Volunteer Recognition Awards Committee
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The Most Honourable Order of Meritorious Heritage was created in the mid 1970s, through the leadership of the late George Van Koughnett, CMH, UE founding President of Heritage Branch UELAC. With the bicentennial of 1783-84 approaching, Heritage Branch Montreal took as one project, on the first of May 1974, the establishment of The Most Honourable Order of Meritorious Heritage, with the view that it would be fully organized by 1984 to play an important role in the celebrations of the UE Loyalist Bicentennial and in the years to follow.

Its objective was to honour both members of the general public and of the UEL Association of Canada, who contributed with distinction and very substantially to our knowledge of the history of Canada in the Loyalist period, to the preservation of its culture and artefacts or to the UEL Association, either through scholarship, active work with the organization or through financial support. Up to this time a means of recognizing service to the Association across the entire Dominion, had not been developed.

The intent of the order was to confer a special distinction upon worthy individuals who enhanced our heritage as Canadian Loyalists in some significant manner, until such time as the Association adopted an awards system for this purpose. The Most Honourable Order of Meritorious Heritage received its letters patent dated May 5, 1978 with George Van Koughnett, Howard W. Warner and E. John Chard as the first directors of the Corporation. From 1974 to 2002, thirty eight persons were distinguished with induction into the Order on the recommendation of one or more branches of the UELAC.

Aims and Objectives of the Order

1. To assist the sick, especially those who have served our country
2. Promulgate the United Empire Loyalists' heritage
3. Stimulate a vigorous sentiment for National unity
4. Endeavour to revitalize chivalric ideals in our modern society

Companions of Meritorious Heritage are entitled to wear the official insignia of the Order and to bear the post-nominal letters 'CMH', signifying that they are Companions of Meritorious Heritage, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereunto

George Van Koughnett, founder of the Order, hoped that in time the award would be passed on intact to the Association as an alternative to the conferral of honorary offices. Included in his vision for the OMH, George Van Koughnett intended to inspire and support a petition for its institution as an officially recognized honour, that is as a Royal, or in view of the Governor General's patronage of the Association, a vice-regal one. The archaic form and language surrounding the conferral of the award were not readily accepted by Dominion Council. With the death of George Van Koughnett in 1983, this initiative languished.

In 1994, members of Heritage Branch began work on improving the style and status of the OMH award with the intent of resubmitting the project to Dominion Council. John Ruch UE spearheaded a proposal that the Order be officially recognized and adopted by the UELAC. His hope for the Order was that it would perform a useful and much needed role for the Association and raise its public profile without incurring substantial expenses.

Following the Annual Meeting in Peterborough 2004, the Regional Vice Presidents were asked to report on suitable recognition for volunteer service to UELAC. The Volunteer Awards Committee originally consisted of Shirley Dargatz RVP Pacific Region, Margaret A. Carter RVP Prairie Region, Fred H. Hayward RVP Central West Region, Marg Hall RVP Central East Region and Frances Morrissey RVP Maritime Region. As Chair of the committee Margaret Carter was asked to explore the adaptation of the original MHOMH. Considerable time was spent reviewing documents and guidelines to determine a proper fit for the Association.

In 2006 in a letter signed by the Chancellor and Secretary of the Most Honourable Order of Meritorious Heritage, an offer was made for the transfer to the UELAC of the assets of the existing MHOMH with the goal of establishing a new Order that would become the official honours system of the UEL Association. With the transferral of the MHOMH to the UELAC, the Association would have full and exclusive control over it and be entitled to make changes to the structure and mode of operation including its name, procedures, financing and ceremonial.

At the Fall Meeting 2006, the Dominion Council voted to accept the offer from Heritage Branch. At the Dominion Council of 3 March 2007 the original motion was rescinded and a new motion passed unanimously stating that the "UELAC accepts for historical and archival purposes the Most Honourable Order of Meritorious Heritage with accompanying funds from the Heritage Branch, and [to] develop their own volunteer recognition for significant contribution made by members, with policies and procedures to be developed by the Volunteer Awards Ad Hoc Committee and approved by Council, with the funds from Heritage Branch being used to defray the costs." The resolution was adopted at the Annual Meeting of the UELAC in Windsor on 2 June 2007.

During the five years leading up to acceptance of the transfer of the MHOMH, Margaret Carter, Chair of the Volunteer Awards Committee, worked endlessly to develop a new honours system for UELAC with clarity of communication and agreement by consensus.

In October of 2007 the UELAC Dorchester Award was established by Dominion Council.