

The Contributions to the UELAC by E. John Chard UE, 2009 UELAC Dorchester Award

As president of Kawartha Branch in 2004, I asked for a show of hands from the sea of happy diners during the festive banquet UELAC Conference and AGM in Peterborough. My question was, how many branches in the room were started with the assistance of John Chard. I was overwhelmed by the upraised hands before me! Realizing that my own Kawartha Branch was one of the many fostered by John's efforts, I determined some day to ask John how he went about encouraging so many loyalist descendants to take out charters and form new branches between 1959 and 1984. John Chard does not like to promote his own name, but, in the interest of setting the record straight, he agreed to review his role and reveal his method of promoting branch formation.

In the early 1950s, there were only seven branches in the United Empire Loyalists' Association covering three provinces. No office space or building for the Association existed. According to one publication from the 1930s, there have been many branches in both Canada and the United States. The early Canadian ones were: Hamilton (1896), or Toronto (1896) St. Catharines (1901), Victoria (1927), Vancouver (1932), Winnipeg (1933) and Governor Simcoe (1937).



Historically, a branch requires at least nine regular members whose membership applications are approved by the Dominion Genealogist. They then sign a branch application form for a branch charter. That application must be approved at a meeting of the UELAC or its Executive Council. The date of approval becomes the official date for the new branch charter. Membership must be renewed annually.

The first branch formed after World War Two was the Bay of Quinte Branch in Picton, Ontario, on 225 June 1956. Using the initiative, leadership and financial support of Mrs. Adelaide McLaughlin of Oshawa, the branch was firmly established and supported the very large region from Brighton to Kingston. By 1959, John Chard was president of this branch and attended his first annual meeting of the Association held at the Toronto Branch office. It lasted about twenty minutes! Other representatives were: St. Catharines Branch, Miss Kathleen O'Laughlin; Hamilton Branch President; Governor Simcoe Branch, Dr. H. G. Walton Ball; Toronto Branch, Mr. H.S. Honsberger; and Dominion Officers: President, Mr. H.S. Honsberger; Secretary, Miss Marion Ketcheson; Treasurer, Mr. Ross Glassford; Genealogist, Mrs. Ross Glassford. The existing branches were optimistic about attracting new members but little was being done to encourage the growth of new branches to serve the wide areas across Canada.

Some efforts that have proven worthwhile took place during the 1960s when the president of the Vancouver Branch sent a message stating that he was sending all documents of the branch to the national office and closing out the Vancouver Branch. Mr. Chard returned a sympathetic letter but vowed he would have the branch re-opened before the end of the year. He then, on his own, sent short ads and brief notes with contact addresses requesting memberships to as many newspapers in the greater Vancouver area as existed. There was no cost to any Loyalist organization. Upon receiving a few replies, he selected

a pro-tem president until members of the new branch could hold an election. In a short time the Vancouver Branch was regenerated!



June 2009 - Douglas W. Grant UE, President 2004-2006; John E. Chard UE, President 19---19--; Frederick H. Hayward UE, President 2008-2011; Peter W. Johnson UE, President 2006-2008

What proved successful in Vancouver was tried again with success in Winnipeg with newspapers covering a fifty mile radius and, again, at no expense to the branch or organization.

At a Dominion Council meeting in early 1963, Miss Kathleen O'Loughlin, president of St. Catharines Branch, proposed that the Council needed better communication with the branches. From the ensuing discussion, Mr. Chard was given the task to provide the means. By April 1963, he published Volume 1, No. 1 of The Loyalist Gazette and was its continuous editor and collector of magazine material for the semi-annual publication until his last edition: Volume XXIV, No. 2, December 1986 (twenty-four years with forty eight editions)! It was not until two years after he began that John realized that at least two issues had been published in the early 1930's. One outstanding contributor and helper in producing the Gazette was Dr. A. G. Dorland, a retired history professor from Western University,

who was a marvelous and constant support. The only cost to the Association for many years of volunteer work was for printing and mailing.

In the 1960's, the UELAC decided to pursue armorial bearings. An official, request was made by E. John Chard UE, in 1969. With the assistance of Sir Conrad Swan, York Herald of Arms-in-Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen, a formal application was made and accepted. Design work commenced and the Armorial bearings were granted by Royal Authority through the legal instrument known as Letters Patent, dated 28 March 1972.

During his term as Dominion President 1966-1968, John Chard sought to establish a permanent Dominion Office and Library as there had not been one since World War II. He asked Colonel R.S. McLaughlin of Oshawa who donated \$125,000.00 from which the interest was to be used to rent and furnish premises, including a lounge. The new office, located on the second level of the Toronto Women's Art Club at 23 Prince Arthur Avenue, Toronto, opened for the September 1968 Dominion Council Meeting.

Gradually a few bookcases were added to accommodate often rare and also exceptionally informative books on Loyalist history, movements and background to major events. In the 1980's, Mr. Chard arranged with a professor of Canadian History from the nearby University of Toronto to allow the occasional postgraduate student to research at our office library to write a thesis. The professor told Mr. Chard, after his visit, that we had more reference books on the Loyalists than the nearby Robarts

Reference Library. Our office library books were distributed among several branches when the office moved.

While The Loyalist Gazette brought news of events and Loyalist history to members, there were many areas without a branch within a reasonable driving distance. John took steps to remedy that. While living in Ottawa during the 1960's, John assisted several persons to prove their Loyalist ancestors and meet other newly proven Loyalist descendants. Encouragement was also given by the Rt. Hon. John R. Cartwright, retired Chief Justice of Canada, who was of Loyalist descent and lived in the area. Before long the Sir Guy Carlton Branch received its charter on 14 April 1962. This was the first branch in which John established a need for the branch and then encouraged its development while remaining a member to help the branch until it was firmly established. As well, to help the newly formed Grand River Branch, he served as its Branch President in 1974.

The following branches have their own fascinating story of the people and events leading up to their charters and all shared one common denominator: Mr. John Chard with his dedication to the promotion of Loyalist branches and accessibility to Loyalist history for everyone:

- New Brunswick Branch (18 May 1976)
- Sir John Johnson Centennial branch (16 December 1967)
- Col. Edward Jessup Branch (11 May 1968)
- London Branch (04 November 1972)
- Abegweit Branch (14 February 1973)
- Grand River Branch (24 February 1973)
- Heritage Branch (12 May 1973)
- Fredericton Branch (11 May 1974)
- Shelburne Branch (03 February 1975)
- St. Lawrence Branch (14 May 1977)
- Kingston and District Branch (04 November 1978)
- Kawartha Branch (23 June 1979)
- Halifax and Dartmouth Branch (01 December 1979)
- Bicentennial Branch (24 March 1984)
- and Regina Branch (02 June 1984).

Of the current twenty-seven UELAC branches, from coast to coast, John Chard was involved with the founding of sixteen (i.e. 59.3%). What an accomplishment!

By Grietje R. McBride UE
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