

Sir Conrad Swan, KCVO, PhD, MA, FSA.
Honorary Vice-President, UELAC

Serving UELAC since 1967, Sir Conrad M.J.F. Swan may hold the position of Honorary Vice-President far longer than anyone else. His many contributions to Canada predate the centennial celebrations in 1967.

In 1963, John R. Matheson, as Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, made a courtesy visit to the College of Arms in London to investigate possible assistance in the designing of a national flag. A year later, while flying to visit his grandfather on Vancouver Island, Swan held long conversations with Matheson in Ottawa. One result was a “Canadian Pale”, square in shape, the designation which was incorporated in the Royal Proclamation, dated 28 January 1965 establishing the National Flag of Canada effective 15 February 1965.

The next year, Matheson discussed Swan’s ideas for a proposed *Order of Canada*. This was to be a much delayed response to the Resolution of 1919 whereby titles, orders and decorations were not to be recommended by the Canadian Prime Minister to the King. The Letters Patent under the Royal Sign Manual of the Queen of Canada and the Great Seal of Canada became effective on 1 July 1967. The first investiture was held at Rideau Hall on 24 November 1967.



1972 was a very important year for the UELAC. In 1969, E.J. Chard approached C. Swan regarding the possibility of Armorial Bearings for the Association. A year later, His Excellency The Right Honorable Roland Michener, CC., C.D. , Governor General of Canada and Patron of UELAC, recommended to Garter Principal King of Arms that such a request be granted. That June, the Dominion Council unanimously agreed to submit a formal application. By March 1972, the granting of the Armorial Bearings for UELAC was recorded in the College of Arms, London. Further details can be found in [*Loyalist Gazette*, Vol. X, No. 2, Autumn 1972.](#)

In 1977, Swan’s book *Canada: Symbols of Sovereignty* was published by the University of Toronto Press. The book expounded, for the first time ever, the principles which governed the Arms of Dominion and Sovereignty, both in respect of the Arms of the United Kingdom and those of Colonial territories and the Old Dominions (those independent, completely sovereign Realms of the Monarch)ⁱ

Ten years later, with the concurrence of Secretary of State David E. Crombie, the Province of British Columbia invited Swan to be the Herald-in-Waiting upon the Queen when she signed the Warrant augmenting the pre-existing Arms of the Province. With only three months to complete the arrangements by the October 15th deadline, Swan credits the use of “correspondence by facsimile and the presence on

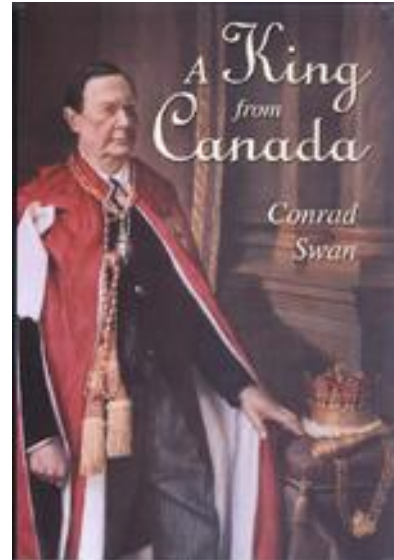
the spot in the province of Mr. Robert Watt, President of the Heraldry Society of Canada, A fellow British Columbian. Little wonder that when the Canadian Heraldic Authority was created in the following year, Watt's appointment as Chief Herald of Canada was confirmed".ⁱⁱ On the 4th June 1988, HM Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, transferred the exercise of her heraldic prerogative to the Governor General of Canada.

In 1992 Swan became the 35th Garter Principal of Arms, the most senior herald of the College of Arms and an officer of the Order of The Garter. He held this position for three years.

Sir Conrad Swan was knighted by Her Majesty The Queen in 1994 as a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order.

On a more personal level, Sir Conrad Marshall John Fisher Swan was born in 1924 in Duncan, Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

In 1957, he married Lady Hilda Mary Northcote, daughter of the Earl of Iddesleigh, and cousin of Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K.G. Lady Hilda is also the great-granddaughter of The Right Honourable Sir Stafford Northcote, Bart., G.C.B., P.C., M.P., who as Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company was responsible for persuading the Company to transfer Rupert's Land to the then New Dominion Government, 1869.



Sir Conrad and Lady Hilda Swan and their five children (from whom now 20 grandchildren) made their home at Boxford House, Boxford, Suffolk, an historic property (recorded in Domesday Book, 1086) in the Constable Country.

Loyalist Gazette Editor's Note - E.J. Chard (Loyalist Gazette, Vol. X, No. 2, Autumn 1972)

Throughout the negotiations culminating in the Grant of Armorial Bearings to the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, we have been most fortunate to have received the guidance, advice, counsel and generosity of Sir. Conrad Swan, Ph.D., M.A., F.S.A., York Herald of Arms-in-Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen. York Herald is the well known expert on Canadian heraldry and genealogy, who is already familiar to many through his scholarly contributions to various learned journals as well as his lectures in almost every Province of Canada. It will therefore be of interest to readers to have available a brief selection of some of the more out-standing points from his distinguished career:

- Served in World War II, Europe and India (Capt. Madras Regt. IA., 1942-47).
- Educated at St. George's College, Weybridge, England; School of Oriental and South African Studies, University of London; University of Western Ontario (B.A. 1949, M.A. 1951); Cambridge (Peterhouse, Ph.D., 1955).
- York Herald of Arms from 1968 Rouge Dragon Pursuivant of Arms 1962-68.
- As an Officer of Arms and Member of the Royal Household and as such the first Canadian to have been appointed.
- Genealogist of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath and to be invested with the insignia of the office by Her Majesty at Windsor Castle on October 26th.
- Lecturer in History 1955-57, Assistant Professor of History 1957-60, University Beadle 1957-60, Assumption University of Windsor, Ontario.

- Woodward Lecturer, Yale 1964.
- Confederation Centennial Lecturer, St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan 1967
- Inaugural Sir Wm. Scott Memorial Lecturer (Ulster-Scot Historical Society) 1968.
- Heraldic Advisor to the Prime Minister of Canada concerning the Canadian Flag 1964-66, and the Order of Canada 1966.
- First Herald of the British Crown to execute duties in Tabard on the Western side of the Atlantic (Bermuda 1969); to visit Australia, 1970 and South America, 1972.
- On Earl Marshal's Staff for the State Funeral of Sir Winston Churchill, K.G., 1965 and for the Investiture of the Prince of Wales, 1969.
- Kt. of Grace and Devotion of the Sovereign and Military Order of Malta, and Deputy Director of Ceremonies of the British Association of that Order.
- Hon. Citizen of State of Texas 1965: Freeman of Shreveport, Louisiana 1967. Loudon County, Virginia 1968. Birmingham, Alabama 1968. St. George's Bermuda 1969.
- Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (elected 1971 - one of the seven Canadian members).
- Fellow of American Heraldry Society 1967: Hon. President and a founder of Heraldry Society of Canada.

ⁱ Swan, Conrad. *York Herald of Arms. Canada: Symbols of Sovereignty.* University of Toronto Press 1977; ISBN 0-8020-5346-7; pg 248

ⁱⁱ Swan, Conrad. *A King from Canada*, The Memoir Club, Dartmoor Suite, Arya House, Langley Park, Durham, DH79XE, England.2005; ISBN 1-84104-072X; page 267
The Royal Encyclopedia (Swan, C. ack. P.viii:48 articles) ed. Allison, Ronald and Riddell, Sarah (Macmillan Press, London, 1991: ISBN 0-333-53810-2) page 632