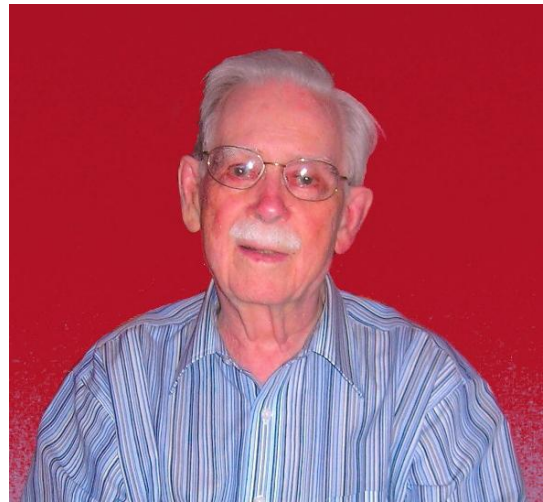


## UELAC Honorary Vice-President Earle Thomas M.A, Ph.D. - 2005

I was born, the first of a family of ten, on 12 July 1916 in Tay Creek, New Brunswick, in the hills about 20 miles north of Fredericton on the tract of rock and swamp they called land, granted to my great great grandfather in 1825. Here my parents managed to eke out a living during the Great Depression, as well as before and after, and I attended the somewhat dilapidated one-room rural school for eight years. I then went to Fredericton to high school and the Provincial Normal School.



I taught in the Upper Bear Island one-room school and grew to love the place, on the bank of the beautiful St. John River and settled mainly by descendants of the United Empire Loyalists. It was here that I met Faith Ingraham, who later became my wife, and her family, living in the house that now graces King's Landing and in which the famed Hannah Ingraham lived out the latter part of her life. The attic was full of relics, among them the surviving part of the diary kept by Sergeant Benjamin Ingraham during the Revolutionary War. It was here also that I acquired my intense interest in the Loyalists.

I spent a year teaching middle school in Sackville and half a year teaching Grades 8 and 9 in Chipman before entering the RCAF in early February 1941. Upon discharge in September 1945, I taught subjects in Grades 10 and II in Macadam New Brunswick while Faith taught Grade 6 in the same school for part of the year. Our first child was born in June.

We moved to Fredericton in August 1946, where I entered my third year as a student at the University of New Brunswick (I had done my first two years at summer schools while teaching before the War). I graduated in the spring of 1948 with first class honours in History and Economics. Having been awarded a fellowship at Queen's University, we moved to Kingston in September where I began work on my MA in history.

In 1950, it was time to move on again. I had an offer as assistant professor of history at UNB but the pay was less than I thought we could live on. I accepted an offer from the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal and we were there for 27 years. I began as a teacher of history and English at Montreal West High School and was then promoted to Principal of Courtland Park School. Five years later, I was moved to Westpark School, the second largest elementary school in the Board, with nearly 1000 students. Two years later the Board moved me to a high school, Northmount High, as vice-principal, and two years later on to Dunton High as principal. Two and a half years later I was appointed assistant superintendent of one of the five districts of the Board. The Superintendent and I were in charge of six high schools and 12 to 15 elementary schools. It was a busy job, but I enjoyed it. But time rolls on and in 1975 I had reached the time to retire.

What to do next? I had no difficulty deciding. I had always wanted a Ph.D. Now was my chance. I arranged interviews with McGill and Concordia and was amazed to find that one of my interviewers had been a Grade 8 history student of mine. After examining their programs I decided on Concordia, submitted application, was accepted, and started in September 1975. By 1977 I had completed the required courses, language exam and the four reading lists of about 100 books each. The Quebec situation was bad, or so it seemed to Faith and me. We decided to leave the province as had nearly all of our friends. We decided on

Kingston, to the dismay of all our Fredericton relatives. Our daughter was married and living in British Columbia, our older son was working in Germany, and our younger was in high school. We were lucky to sell our house in Dorval in a few weeks, considering that every third house or so sported a "For Sale" sign.

We moved to Kingston in August 1977 and have enjoyed living here. When I needed to see my thesis director at Concordia, I could take a train to Montreal in the morning and back at night, working at editing or reading both ways. I finished in the summer of 1977, called before a board to defend my thesis, and granted my degree at the next convocation in the fall. I was 63 years old.

I then turned to writing as a full time occupation, always on Loyalists or that period of Canadian and American history. My Ph.D. thesis had been a case study of a Loyalist common man in the American Revolution (Benjamin Ingraham). I rewrote it as *Greener Pastures: The Loyalist Experience of Benjamin Ingraham*, a book that was published and sold well. My next publications were : *Sir John Johnson: Loyalist Baronet* and *The Three Faces of Molly Brant*. I wrote the piece on Sir John Johnson for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, the one on the Reverend John Stuart in St. George's Cathedral, and the ones on Loyalists in the Montreal Area and Sir John Johnson in *The Loyalists of Quebec, 1774-1783*. I wrote a large number of articles for periodicals in various parts of Canada, the Kingston Whig-Standard included. I enjoyed every minute of it, the research as well as the writing. I was also an associate editor of the UELAC magazine when John Chard was editor.

Earle Thomas  
Kingston, 2011

At the Annual General Meeting in June 2005, the Kingston and District Branch of the UELAC nominated Dr. Earle Thomas as Honorary Vice-President.

Many of his articles on Sir John Johnson are available on the Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch [website](#).