

## THE STORY OF THE LOYALISTS

The story of the Loyalists really begins with the prolonged fighting known as the French and Indian War, the American portion of the Seven Years War (1756-1763), in which British and colonial troops protected the 13 American colonies. With the fall of Quebec in 1759, they took possession of French Canada. England, now heavily in debt, unwisely levied the Stamp Act in the colonies to help meet the costs of the recent war. The colonists, however, had found themselves not only free of the French threat to the north, but also with some anti-monarchist elements ready to make the most of grievances such as unfair taxes. At first, only constitutional changes were sought by men of such standing as Franklin, Jefferson and Washington. The majority of the colonists did not want to break away from England but were urged on by hot-headed insurgents. Soon, open rebellion developed. Those who remained actively loyal to Britain were subjected to indignities, imprisonment, confiscation of property and even death. The rebellion lasted from 1775 to 1783.

In the end, the rebels were victorious and the Loyalists were forced to leave the country. Many returned to England, some went to the West Indies and the Bahamas, and about 40,000 found their way north to the colonies of Nova Scotia and Quebec. Not all of these families were of British descent. There were large numbers of Dutch, Swiss, German Palatines, Quakers and the entire Mohawk tribe of the Six Nations Indians.

Beginning in 1783, some 30,000 were transported by sea from Boston and New York to settle in the Maritimes. Little or nothing had been done to prepare for their reception on the wild and lonely shores. As many of the settlers were disbanded soldiers from the Loyalists regiments, they tended to settle on adjoining land grants gaining the support and assistance of fellow troops. Due to the greatly increased population and distance from Halifax, New Brunswick and Cape Breton Island were created the following year.

Thousands of others from upper New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Vermont had to find their way along dangerous forest trails or by water to Sorel, the main refugee camp east of Montreal. The King's Royal Regiment of New York followed Sir John Johnson from the Mohawk valley to Quebec.

By 1784, newly acquired lands in the colony had been surveyed for settlement. While some families chose to settle in the Bay of Chaleur area or stay in the Eastern Townships, the majority moved west to what later in 1791 would be called Upper Canada. They, in time, settled on the north shore of Lake Ontario in the regions around Kingston and the Bay of Quinte, in addition to the newly created townships on the upper St. Lawrence.

Sir Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Canada, granted a track of land, six miles on both sides of the Grand River, from its mouth to its source, to the Loyal Indians in compensation for the loss of their ancestral home in the Mohawk Valley of New York.

The best known Provincial Corps in the Niagara area was Butler's Rangers (1777-1784), commanded by Colonel John Butler. They had been based at Fort Niagara and were an effective fighting force allied with their Indian brothers in a civil war against the rebels. Thus the first white settlers in Niagara were the disbanded members of Butler's Rangers and their families.

This influx of over 1,000 Loyalists, of the estimated 10,000 who eventually came to Upper Canada, rapidly spread over this area. They moved westward along the south shore of Lake Ontario to the head of the lake, southward along the Niagara River, and westward along Lake Erie to Long Point and beyond to the Detroit River region.

The sons of these settlers helped preserve Canada for the British Crown in the War of 1812.

### THE LOYALIST FLAG

The First Royal Union Flag, which came into being in England in 1606, is the flag that symbolizes the heritage of the United Empire Loyalists. This flag was composed of the Cross of St. George, patron saint of England (a red cross on a white background) and the Cross of St. Andrew, patron saint of Scotland (a diagonal white cross on a blue background). It was meant to symbolize the unity of the two countries under James I of England (James VI of Scotland). In 1707, Queen Anne officially adopted it as the national flag of Great Britain; thus it was the flag of Canada from 1759 until 1801 when Ireland joined the Union. The diagonal red Cross of St. Patrick was added to form the present Union Jack of the United Kingdom.

On May 11, 1974, the First Union Flag (1606), sometimes called the "Queen Anne Flag", became known as the United Empire Loyalist Flag.