

**PLAQUE TO COMMEMORATE THE UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS
IN UPPER CANADA**

Press Release issued by Department of Public Records & Archives (Historical Branch)
May 18, 1967

On Saturday, May 27, 1967, commencing at 2:00 p.m., an historical plaque commemorating the Loyalists in Upper Canada was unveiled adjacent to the Legislative Chambers in the Main Parliament Building at Queen's Park. This marker was one of a series being erected throughout the province by the Department of Public Records and Archives, acting on the advice of the Archaeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario.

Saturday's ceremony was being sponsored by the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. Dr. H.G. Walton-Ball, past President of the Dominion Council, acted as programme chairman, and Professor J.M.S. Careless of the University of Toronto, represented the Historic Sites Board. His Worship William Dennison, Mayor of Toronto, the Honourable Leslie M. Frost, and Mr. John G. Richardson, also took part in the ceremony. Mr. E.J. Chard, President of the Dominion Council, unveiled the plaque.

At the outbreak of the American Revolution a large number of the inhabitants of the thirteen revolting colonies were unwilling to forego their allegiance to the King, much less to take up arms against him. The numbers of these Royalist sympathizers cannot be estimated, but a contemporary estimate of one-third of all the people in the thirteen colonies may have been conservative. Certainly they constituted a considerable minority even in New England. In New York Province they may have been in the majority and they were very numerous in Pennsylvania, Georgia and Vermont.

When actual fighting broke out and the revolutionists captured the provincial governments, it became impossible to remain neutral. Already prominent Tories had been mobbed, violently mistreated and driven from their homes, which were plundered and burned. This sporadic persecution was now systematized and given a colour of legality. Committees were formed to administer oaths of allegiance to the new states and exact contributions to the expense of their armed forces. The ordinary Loyalist whose conscience would not allow him to take the oaths or pay the contribution was punished with a fine and his goods were liable to seizure and sale at auction to pay the fine and his contribution. He was subject to disabilities that often made it difficult for him to earn his living and was in constant danger of arrest and imprisonment under atrocious conditions. A number of Loyalists were hanged or shot.

Some prominent Tories were banished and thousands of others fled to avoid persecution and arrest. The whole property of these exiles was confiscated in most states and their wives and families, rendered homeless and destitute, had to make their way to safety as best they could. They took refuge within the British lines or went to Britain, the West Indies, Nova Scotia and Canada. When the war ended in 1783 a large number of these families were living in what is now the Province of Quebec, at St. Johns, Sorel and Montreal. Smaller numbers were gathered at the western forts, Carleton Island, Oswego, Niagara and Detroit. They were maintained by government rations, for the able-bodied men had joined the various Loyalist Volunteer Corps. These had been organized to the number of 28-30 and were doing good service with the Royal Armies.

It was obvious that most of these displaced persons could not return to their former homes. In fact some who tried this found it impossible to remain. It was, therefore, decided to settle several of the disbanded Loyalist Corps in the uninhabited part of the then Province of Quebec, along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario, around the Bay of Quinte and the Niagara Peninsula and near Detroit. At Niagara permission had been given in 1779 for a few Loyalists to clear farms on land purchased from the Indians. In 1783 this farming community of 102 persons on the west bank of the Niagara River and the small French settlement opposite Detroit were the only regular settlements in what is now the Province of Ontario.

In addition to the disbanded corps any Loyalist who wished could obtain a free grant in this part of Canada. In October, 1786, an official "Abstract of the Number of Loyalists settled in the Upper Parts of the Province of Quebec" gives a total of 5,960 persons. It is believed that this figure had increased by 1791 to nearly 10,000. Loyalists continued to come to Upper Canada, though in smaller numbers, and to have their names added to the "Loyalist List". This list, compiled after 1792, includes only the names of Loyalists who were adults when they came to the province, though their wives and children are frequently mentioned in the notes appended to the original list. From the number of names contained in the lists it would seem that by a conservative estimate some 15,000 Loyalists had come to Upper Canada by about 1810.

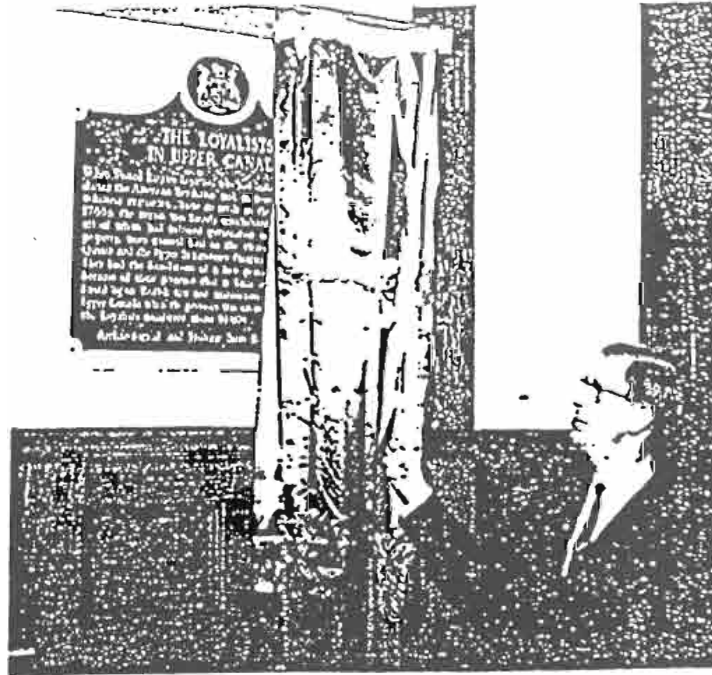
In 1789 Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester, the Governor of the Province of Quebec, had ordered that as a "Mark of Honor" all Loyalists and their descendants should have the right to place the letters "U.E." after their names and that the Land Boards should prepare registers of all Loyalists who applied for grants and were able to establish their credentials. Not every Land Board obeyed this order and when Lieutenant Governor Simcoe caused a general list to be prepared for Upper Canada, it was compiled from a number of sources.

The list with additions and a long "supplementary list" contains upwards of 5,000 names of adult Loyalists, mostly men. Wives and minor children were not listed, though they are often mentioned in the notes. As the "Marke of Honor" descends in both the male and female lines, the number of people entitled to it must by now be very large. The list, of course, covers only the Loyalists of Upper Canada, not those of Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island.

The American Revolution did not divide the colonists on lines of class, race or religion. It cut through all classes and groups, often separating brother from brother or father from son. Few of the wealthiest Loyalists came to Upper Canada and not all who did remained there permanently. But apart from this wealthiest class of great landowners and rich merchants, Upper Canada received a fair cross section of colonial society from the well-to-do farmers, merchants and professional men to those who had little to lose but the lease and stock of a new bush farm or their clothes, furniture and tools. All had lost heavily by their loyalty and most had lost all they possessed. The Loyalists had acted from principle, with full knowledge of the risks involved. They could easily have avoided these risks by a compromise with their conscience, as many who had little or no sympathy with the revolution were certainly doing. But, in their thousands, they refused this compromise and risked all they had to do what they considered their duty.

Nor can it be denied that in laying the foundations of settlement in this province they showed on the whole a great deal of courage and determination. The compensation they received in return for what they had sacrificed was not ungenerous, but it was certainly not excessive. It is not much wonder that they showed themselves anxious to obtain all they could get that would add even a little to their security. The greater part of what they were given was untouched woodland and would be nearly worthless until it was improved by their labour. They showed themselves well equipped for the task and those who came after built on foundations laid by the first wave of Loyalists.

Unveiling Memorial Plaque



—Department of Tourism & Information, Province of Ontario

An historical plaque commemorating the Loyalists in Upper Canada was unveiled adjacent to the Legislature Chambers in the main Parliament Building at Queen's Park, Toronto, on May 27, 1967, by the Dominion President Mr. E.J. Chard.

The plaque bears the following inscription:

THE LOYALISTS IN UPPER CANADA

When the United Empire Loyalists who had "adhered to the Crown" during the American Revolution and, in most cases, served in volunteer regiments, came to settle in this Province in the 1780's, the region was largely uninhabited. These Loyalists, all of whom had suffered persecution and confiscation of property, were granted land in the vicinity of the Bay of Quinte and the Upper St. Lawrence, Niagara and Detroit Rivers. They laid the foundation of a new province. It was largely because of their presence that a form of self-government, based on British law and institutions, was established in Upper Canada when the province was created in 1791. By then the Loyalists numbered about 10,000.

From The Loyalist Gazette, Autumn, 1967