

James Moody & the Loyalists of Weymouth

*By Brian McConnell, UE **



Gravestones of James Moody and wife Jane at St. Peter's Anglican Church, Weymouth North, N.S.

At the end of the American Revolution it was United Empire Loyalists who settled Sissiboo, now Weymouth, Nova Scotia. Sissiboo was renamed Weymouth in 1823 after Weymouth, Massachusetts. During the period 1783 -1787 Americans who had chosen to defend the Crown of England had to flee their homes in the United States to start a new life in Canada. Many of these United Empire Loyalists are buried in the cemetery at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Weymouth North, N.S. overlooking the Sissiboo River. Here are the gravestones of James Moody and his wife Jane. He was a New Jersey farmer who for refusing to pledge loyalty to the United States had his life threatened. He fled the area with other Loyalists to behind British lines and joined a Loyalist provincial corps to serve against the rebels. After the war he settled at Sissiboo, with other Loyalists, including Josiah Jones, John Taylor, and Reuben Hankinson, John Cosman and Benjamin McConnell. (1)

When the Loyalists arrived to settle at Sissiboo the land was heavily forested and uninhabited except for several small Mi'kmaq tribes. There was an Acadian population which was establishing itself further down the coast. The first attempts to colonize the area by New England Planters had been unsuccessful although a few families remained. Loyalists received land grants from the government for their efforts during the American Revolution. However, to receive grants of land the Loyalists were required to abide by:

Conditions for Land Grants to Loyalists in Nova Scotia (2)

- i) Pay to the Receiver General two shillings per hundred acres. Payment to be made on the Feast of St. Michael and to commence 10 years from date of grant;*
- ii) Clear and work one acres of land for every 50 acres of plantable land granted or clear and drain 3 acres of swampy or sunken ground or drain 3 acres of marsh land within three years of date of grant;*
- iii) Keep three cattle upon each 50 acres of cleared land;*
- iv) Erect a dwelling house at least 20' in length and 16' in width;*
- v) If granted lands were stony or rocky and not fit for planting or pasture operate a stone quarry and hire 1 able hand for every 50 acres;*
- vi) Swear an Oath of Loyalty to the King within 12 months of the grant.*

One Loyalist who settled near the mouth of the Sissiboo River, Stephen Jones, wrote: “God knows I am from habit as little acquainted with settling new countries as any loyalist now in Nova Scotia. Nevertheless, I have not been the most negligent...I have cut down and cut up twenty-odd acres, half of which is fit for immediate improvement. I raised this summer two acres of wheat and as much of oats and potatoes, and in a few days I shall put into the ground four acres of wheat and rye.”(3)

In 1786, when James Moody arrived at Sissiboo, there were barely one hundred people settled. They were all Loyalists except for six New England families and a few Acadians. (4) He arrived after traveling to England for his health and to plead for compensation for losses from the war. His published wartime experiences entitled “*Lieut. James Moody's narrative of his exertions and sufferings in the cause of government*” helped him obtain compensation for property confiscated during the war and expenses.(4)

Within a year, James Moody established a shipbuilding industry and called the first ship “The Loyalist”. It was the second full-rigged ship to be built in Nova Scotia. Over the next six years he built seven ocean going vessels. He also started a sheep farm that supplied ewes across the province. As well he worked with other Loyalists to build a dam for a tidal grist and two sawmills.



Sign on Weymouth, N.S. waterfront noting establishment of shipbuilding industry by Loyalists James Moody and John Taylor

John Taylor was a Captain in James Moody's battalion of the New Jersey Volunteers during the war. As well as assisting with the establishment of shipbuilding at Sissiboo he was a Surveyor of Highways. He owned 700 acres mostly on the south side of the Sissiboo River. Like Moody he was a slave owner and farmed the land with assistance of seven black slaves. When in 1793 local Militia were formed he was commander of the unit which included Acadians. At this time James Moody served in Halifax as an officer in the Nova Scotia Regiment. Moody also was elected to the House of Assembly from Annapolis Township (which then included Sissiboo) in 1793. He advocated for the separation of the Western portion of Annapolis County and also encouraged steps towards responsible government in the province including the continued right of the House of Assembly to control money bills.



St. Peter's Anglican Church, Weymouth North, Nova Scotia

There are many other graves of Loyalists at St. Peter's Cemetery in Weymouth North. These include Josiah Jones. He graduated from Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts and became the Chief Magistrate of the County of Annapolis. His son Stephen Jones was for many years a Justice of the Peace and Registrar of Deeds. His monument in St. Peter's Cemetery read: "Stedfast in allegiance to the King, he exchanged his native Country, A.D. 1783 for the wilderness of Nova Scotia; and by the blessing of God and upon his industry and judicious economy was enabled to live in it comfortably, happily, and independently."(5)

Captain Reuben Hankinson, born in Shrewsbury, Monmouth County, New Jersey, served like James Moody and John Taylor in the New Jersey Volunteers. After the war he went to present day Fredericton, New Brunswick with thousands of other United Empire Loyalists. He crossed over the Bay of Fundy to settle around the Sissiboo River. He assisted James Moody in construction of St. Peter's Church in 1790 and was Captain of the Nova Scotia Legion in 1794. The land for St. Peter's was donated by James Moody.(6)

The Muster Roll for Sissiboo taken in June, 1784 includes 49 names of Loyalists who settled in Sissiboo and nearby St. Mary's Bay. See Appendix A. (7) In addition to Captain John Taylor, these include Captain Benjamin McConnell and his brother James McConnell. Benjamin McConnell was another friend of James Moody and witness to his first land purchase. The McConnells came to Sissiboo from New York in May, 1784 in the sloop *Shoulderham*. The voyage lasted nine weeks as the sloop lost its bowsprit in Grand Passage. Benjamin McConnell located on a farm east of Weymouth Point. A gravestone in St. Peter's Cemetery notes he died on December 28, 1808 at the age of 60.

Captain John Cosman, also appears on the Muster Roll of Loyalists in 1794 for Sissiboo. He married Susanna McConnell, daughter of Benjamin McConnell. John Cosman's brother James, another Loyalist was arrested in 1784 for being a Tory and then following release moved to Nova Scotia.



Gravestone of Loyalist John Taylor in St. Peter's Cemetery

NOTES:

* This article was prepared on September 7, 2014 by Brian McConnell, UE. To contact him email: brianm564@gmail.com

1. See "So Obstinate Loyal - James Moody, 1744 - 1809", by Susan Burgess Shensstone, published by McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2000, and "Celebration of Loyalist Leader Col. James Moody" by Karla Kelly for the Digby Courier, NovaNewsNow.com, June 2, 2009

2. See: History of Weymouth at <http://www.hankinsononline.com/Weymouth.php>

3. See "The Loyalists - Revolution, Exile, Settlement" by Christopher Moore, McClelland and Stewart Inc., Toronto, 1994, page 214

4. See "'Lieut James Moody's Narrative of His Exertions and Sufferings in the Cause of Government, Since the Year 1776; authenticated by proper certificates," The New York Times and Arno Press, 1968

5. See "A Geography and History of the County of Digby, Nova Scotia" by Isaiah W. Wilson, Mika Publishing Company, Belleville, ON, 1975, page 327

6. See: Reuben Hankinson, United Empire Loyalist (1758 - 1819) at <http://www.hankinsononline.com/Reuben.php>

7. See: Muster Roll at Gulliver's Hole, S. Mary's Bay and Sissiboo, 1st and 6th of June, 1784 in "Supplement to the History of the County of Annapolis" by A.W. Savary, Toronto, William Briggs, 1913, Appendix G

APPENDIX A

**MUSTER ROLL AT GULLIVER'S HOLE, ST. MARY'S BAY AND SISSIBOO,
1ST AND 6TH, JUNE, 1784**

NAMES	Men	Women	Children above 10	Children under 10	Servants / #	Description / Settled In	In Family
B							
Bunnell, Soleman	1	1	4	1	7	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Bannister, Thomas	1				1	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Burns, George	1				1	D.S.King's Amer. Regt	Sissiboo
Burns, George	1				1	D.S.King's Orange Rangers	Sissiboo
C							
Caniff, Daniel	1	1		2	4	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Cornwell, Benjamin	1	1		1	1	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Collins, William	1				1	Loyalist	Wilmot
Cossman, John	1				1	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Cameron, John	1				1	D.S. K's Am. Drag.	Sissiboo
Cummings, Wm.	1				1	D.S. K's Am. Drag.	Sissiboo
Cameron, John	1				1	D.S. 42nd Regt.	Sissiboo
Cummins, Wm.	1				1	D.S. 42nd Regt.	Sissiboo
D							
Doughty, Samuel	1				1	Mariner	Not settled
Doughty, Samuel	1				1	Mariner	Not settled
F							
FitzRandolph, Dr.	1				1	Loyalist	Sissiboo
FitzRandolph, David	1				1	Loyalist	Sissiboo
G							
Gilbert, Thomas	1	2			3	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Gilbert, Thomas, Jr.	1	1	3	1	1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Gilbert, Thomas	1				1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Gilbert, Pearce	1				1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Gidney, James	1				1	Loyalist	Wilmot

NAMES	Men	Women	Children above 10	Children under 10	Servants	#	Description	Settled In
						In Family		
H								
Hains, Alexander	1	1	5			7	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Hoyt, Jesse	1	1	3	1		6	Loyalist	Sissiboo
J								
Jones, Josiah	1	1	3	1		6	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Jones, Widow	1	1		2	2	6	Loyalist	Sissiboo
John, Peter	1	1	4			6	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Jones, Cornet S.	1	1	4		1	7	D.O.K'gs Am.Regt.	Sissiboo
Johnson, Wm.	1	2	1			4	Loyalist	St. Mary's
L								
Lowe, John	1	1	5	3		10	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Lowe, Wm.	1					1	Loyalist	Sissiboo
LeRoy, R.P.R.	1	1	4	1		7	Loyalist	Sissiboo
M								
Morehouse, Jonathon	1	1	2	1		5	Loyalist	Gulliver's
McGuire, Patrick	1	1		1		3	Loyalist	Gulliver's
McKay, John	1					1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
McCulloch, James	1					1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
McConnell, Benjamin	1					1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
McConnell, Joseph	1					1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
McDonald, Donald	1					1	D.S.K. Am. Regt.	St. Mary's
McDonald, ---	1					1	D.S. 1st. N.J. Vols.	St. Mary's
N								
Northrop, Joseph	1	1		1		3	Loyalist	Sissiboo
O								
Outhouse, Nicholas	1	1	5	1		8	Loyalist	Gulliver's
Outhouse, Rob't.	1					1	Loyalist	Gulliver's
P								
Petit, Isaac	1	1		2		4	Loyalist	Sissiboo

NAMES	Men	Women	Children		Servants / #	Description	Settled In
			above 10	under 10			
R							
Raymond, Simon	1	1	2	4	8	Loyalist	Sissiboo
Reid, James	1	1			2	Loyalist	Sissiboo
S							
Saxton, Wm	1	1	2	1	5	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Saxton, John	1				1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Saxton, Timothy	1				1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Stephens, Enos	1				1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Stephens, Phineas	1				1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
T							
Tonge, Joshua	1	1	1		3	Loyalist	Gulliver'
Thomas, Ebenezer	1				1	Loyalist	St. Mary's
Taylor, Capt. John	1				4	5	D.O.1st N.J Vols. Sissiboo
Taylor, Lieut. S	1	1	1	1	3	7	D.O.K. Am.Drag. Sissiboo
Tarbell, James	1				1	1	Volunteer Sissiboo
W							
Wheeler, Hezekiah	1				1	1	Loyalist Gulliver's
Weeks, Simon	1		1	3	5	1	Loyalist St. Mary's
Wilson, Benjamin	1				1	1	D.S.1stN.J. Vols. St. Mary's
Wilson, William	1				1	1	D.S. 1 st N.J. Vols Carpenter
Williams, Johnm	1				1	1	Loyalist Sissiboo