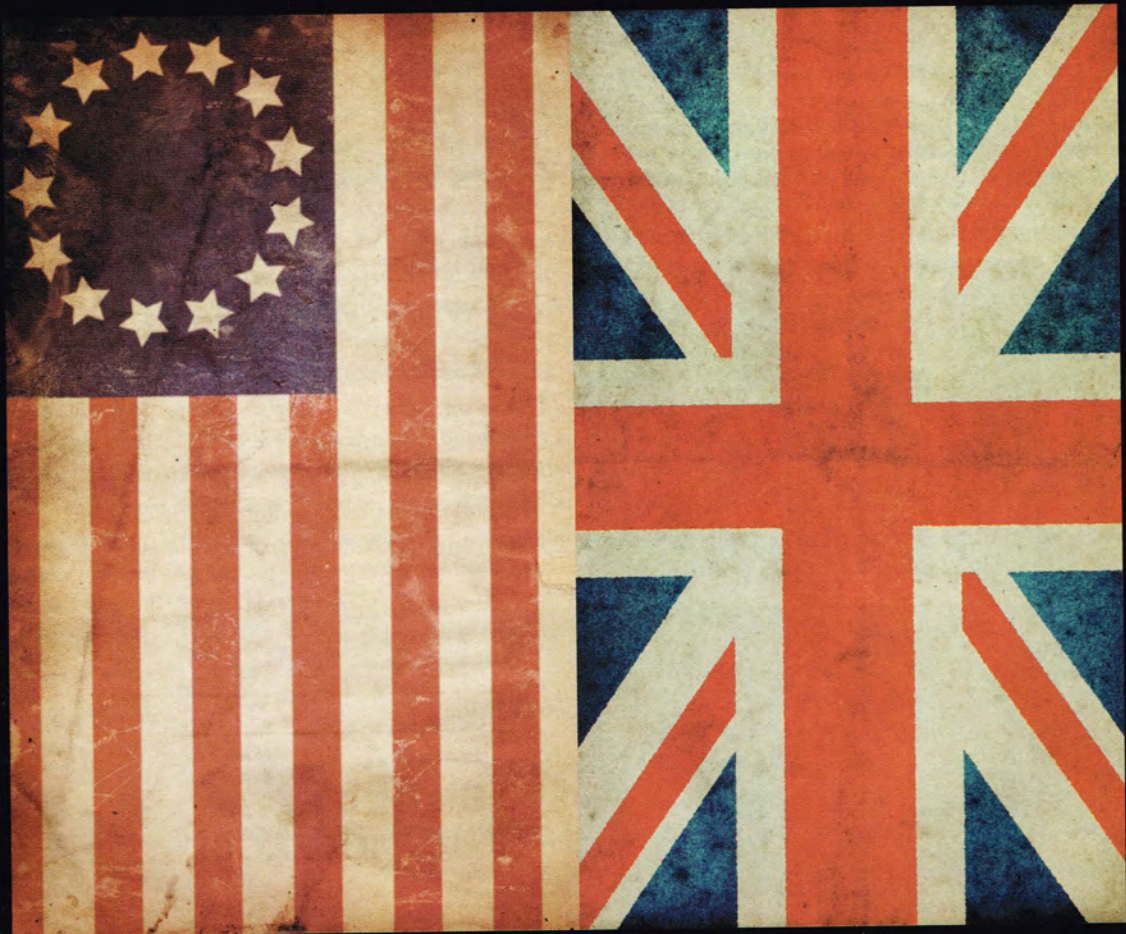


Once, They Were  
**AMERICANS**

*Our Loyalist Canadian Cousins*

By Deborah Cummings



*"Patriotism is as much a virtue as justice, and is as necessary for the support of societies as natural affection is for the support of families."*

— Benjamin Rush —

**T**hese words, penned by Benjamin Rush, a Founding Father and signer of the Declaration of Independence, could have also been repeated by the Loyalists during the Revolutionary War.

The year was 1774 and unrest was looming. After years of living on British-ruled soil, many Colonists sought out independence from Britain because they felt the laws imposed on the Colonies violated their rights. But others—the Loyalists, or Tories, as they were often referred to—remained loyal to the British Crown. While they agreed that the Colonists had suffered at the hands of the British, they hoped for a peaceful reconciliation. They also liked the protection that Great Britain provided from threats of other countries. It was that protection that the Loyalists eventually needed for themselves.

### THE COST OF LOYALTY

The largest concentration of Loyalists was located outside of New England. They came from all walks of life—there were farmers, artisans and wealthy merchants. There was also a large number of African-Americans who remained faithful to the Crown, due to Britain's promise to liberate slaves who fled their Patriot owners.

The Loyalists likely felt torn in their decision. Several Loyalists had fought with Great Britain against France in King George's War in the 1740s. Others again fought in the French and Indian War from 1754–1763.

As the Revolutionary War raged on, many Colonists switched sides several times, based on their economic situation or how they were being treated. Businessmen sometimes chose sides based on who offered the most profits. Others, such as farmers, were often at the mercy of both sides and were swayed by the way their properties were handled.

Until waves of British troops began to arrive in June and July 1776, Loyalists were vulnerable to Patriot mobs and were beaten, attacked and persecuted. According to William Stewart Wallace in his book, *The United Empire Loyalists* (Glasgow, Brook & Company, 1921), there were two kinds of persecution faced by the Loyalists—"that which was perpetrated by 'lawless mobs,' and that which was carried out 'constitutionally.'"

"In 1765, at the time of the Stamp Act agitation, large crowds in Boston attacked and destroyed the magnificent houses of Andrew Oliver and Thomas Hutchinson [two prominent Loyalists]," Wallace wrote. "They broke down the doors with broadaxes, destroyed the furniture, stole the money and jewels, scattered the books and papers, and, having drunk the wines in the cellar, proceeded to the dismantling of the roof and walls. The owners of the houses barely escaped with their lives."

Loyalists were also tarred and feathered, meaning they were stripped naked, smeared with a coat of hot tar and feathers, and paraded around the streets in a cart to be mocked. Others were made to ride the rail—Loyalists were seated on sharp rails with one leg on each side. The rail was carried on



Pen-and-ink drawing by Charles W. Jefferys of Loyalists on their way to Northern Canada after the Revolution.

the shoulders of two men, while another man made sure the victim stayed on the rail.

In a June 13, 1776, letter to his brother, New Yorker Peter Eltin wrote, "We had some grand Tory rides in the city this week and in particular yesterday. Several of them were handled very roughly, being carried through the streets on rails, their clothes tore from their back and their bodies pretty well mingled with the dust."

### FAMILY TIES SEVERED

Many families were also divided by the War for Independence. William Franklin, the governor of New Jersey and son of Founding Father Benjamin Franklin, was a staunch Loyalist. William was imprisoned during the Revolutionary War and then later exiled to London. He and his father never reconciled over their different opinions.

In a letter dated July 22, 1784, Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Nothing has ever hurt me so much, and affect me with such keen sensations, as to find myself deserted in my old age by my only son, and not only deserted, but to find him taking up arms against me in a cause wherein my good fame, fortune and life were all at stake."

Other families, like the Purdy family of Westchester County, N.Y., were also separated. Samuel and Winifred Purdy had five sons. Three sons, Gabriel, Henry and Gilbert, took the side of Great Britain. The other two, Jacob and Samuel, fought for the Patriot cause. In fact, Jacob and Gabriel fought on opposing sides in the 1776 Battle of White Plains, in the very county where their parents lived. Though all five

brothers survived the war, the family was split: The three Loyalist brothers moved to Cumberland, Nova Scotia, and both Patriot sons resettled in Westchester County, N.Y.

### THE GREAT EXODUS

In the spring of 1776, the first group of Loyalists left the Colonies and traveled to Nova Scotia by ship. The British government gave them free passage. The signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783, officially ended the war between Great Britain and America. Though the treaty provided restitution to Loyalists for any property confiscated by the Continental Army, the Loyalists feared increased persecution from the Patriots. Starting in 1783, Great Britain began granting

free land in Canada to refugees. In the provinces of Quebec and Nova Scotia, immigrants received 200 acres. They were required to clear and cultivate the specific plot of land they received and build a lodging. Once done, a land grant was issued.

The British government made arrangements to transport between 60,000 and 80,000 Loyalists, their slaves, free African-Americans and American Indians to Canadian British territories in Nova Scotia (and what's now known as New Brunswick), Quebec, and St. John Island (known today as Prince Edward Island). Loyalists also went to Florida (then a British territory), the West Indies and back to Great Britain. More than 27 ships were commissioned to take passengers from New York, some making as many as three trips. Some Loyalists made the journey to Canada on foot.

### A NEW BEGINNING

It wasn't an easy transition for these migrants. The northern British territories were unsettled, as America was when the first colonists arrived in the 17th century. Mary Fisher, a Loyalist who left for Canada in October 1783, described her arrival in New Brunswick. When they arrived at Oromocto, on the west bank of the St. John River, their captain refused to go any farther because he had no knowledge of the river beyond. Ms. Fisher's family, and others, traveled the rest of the journey by canoes.

She wrote, "The season was wet and cold, and we were much discouraged at the gloomy prospect before us. Those who had arrived a little earlier in the fall had made

better preparations for the winter; some had built small log huts. This we were unable to do owing to the lateness of our arrival.”

Despite the promises of land and freedom, those who fled the Colonies faced food shortages, harsh living conditions and poor shelter. Many people did not live through the first winter.

In November 1789, Lord Dorchester, governor-in-chief of British North America, bestowed hereditary titles on Canadian Loyalists. He declared at the Council Chamber in

Quebec, “Those Loyalists who have adhered to the unity of the Empire, and joined the Royal Standard before the Treaty of Separation in the year 1783, and all their children and their descendants by either sex, are to be distinguished by the following capitals, affixed to their names: U.E. alluding to their great principle the unity of the Empire.”

Loyalists who settled in Quebec struggled with living under the ruling of the Quebec Act of 1774, which restored French civil law and institutions. They petitioned the British government, and in 1791, the Constitutional Act 1791 was enacted to accommodate the Loyalists. On December 26, 1791, Quebec was divided into Upper and Lower Canada. Upper Canada (what became Ontario) was under British law, while Lower Canada (Quebec) retained French ruling.

### SAME IDEALS, DIFFERENT OUTCOMES

The Patriots and Loyalists had the same ideology: a staunch devotion to country. In the eyes of Americans, the Loyalists came out on the wrong side of history. But the Loyalists’ move to Canada proved influential.

In his essay “The Loyalist Cause in Canada” in a 1904 issue of *Macmillian’s Magazine*, Professor John Davidson wrote, “Certain outstanding qualities in Canadian public life and history can be traced back to their influence. Other causes, no doubt, have been at work intensifying and modifying, and it would be a mistake to attribute the loyalty, the absorption in politics, the tendency of officialdom, which have marked Canadian history, to the Loyalist influence alone. . . . But the Loyalist tradition has been the most powerful influence at work.”

Today, the mottoes of Ontario and New Brunswick reflect the new beginnings for the Loyalists. The Ontario motto reads, *Ut incepit Fidelis sic permanet* meaning “Loyal she began, loyal she remains,” while New Brunswick’s is *Spem reduxit*—“Hope restored.” 🐾



United Empire Loyalist Monument  
and Loyalist flag garden in  
Hamilton, Ontario

## Sharing a Colonial Heritage

The United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada (UELAC) was formed in 1914 to preserve, promote and celebrate the history and traditions of the United Empire Loyalists. Twenty-seven branches are located in five Canadian provinces. Many UELAC members use the designation UE after their names.

The UELAC maintains an online database of ships that transported Loyalists to Canada. The site includes information on the name of the ship, departure and arrival dates, the number of passengers on each ship, and where they landed. In some cases, the names of the passengers are included. The site also includes a newsletter, *Loyalist Trails*, which covers many historical topics on Loyalists in the Revolution. The UELAC welcomes updates to its database.

Peter Johnson, president for the UELAC Bay of Quinte Branch in Ontario, Canada, and member of the Saratoga Battle Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution, regularly presents to genealogy groups in Canada and the United States. “I’ve always felt that cooperation between the UELAC and American lineage societies benefits all as we do share a Colonial heritage,” he said.

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## From the President General

Last October I had the privilege of visiting Ferry Farm, the site of George Washington's boyhood home and the subject of our cover feature. After spending almost a century as an endangered site, Ferry Farm is rising again, as a team of archaeologists, historians and volunteers with the George Washington Foundation work to reconstruct



SCOTT BRAMAN

the circa-1740 house and uncover new information about the early life of America's first commander in chief. As part of the current State Regent's Project, Virginia Daughters have so far raised more than \$125,000, including a \$5,000 donation from the National Society, to fund a downstairs room at the home.

Once one of His Majesty George III's premier warships, the HMS *Augusta* was sunk by Patriots in the Delaware River, where its decaying hulk lay for more than 100 years until some of its timbers were salvaged and used in the New Jersey Room at DAR's Memorial Hall. The ship's odd journey is one more of the many stories that comprise DAR's history.

Because of *American Spirit's* focus on the lives of Patriots—this issue's subject is General Hugh Mercer—we rarely talk about the lives of Loyalists. Some faced mob violence and property seizures because of their allegiance to the Crown, and others changed their allegiances throughout the war depending on their treatment. Fearing persecution after the Revolutionary War, thousands of Loyalists fled to Canada, where they faced new hardships before becoming a vital part of the fabric of their new country.

Another feature explores the trade and art of furniture-making in Colonial America, as well as discusses how Americans continue to incorporate Colonial styles into their homes. Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Trades programs provided beautiful photos of its skilled artisans at work, recreating Colonial-era trades such as carpentry, joining and cabinet-making.

In our Historic Homes section, you'll read about the Paxton Inn, an early 1800s-era inn that has been revitalized by members of the Limestone DAR Chapter, Maysville, Ky. The inn, along with the adjoining Paxton House, tells the history of one of the first settlements in Kentucky.

Our article on Maryland's Benjamin Banneker illuminates a remarkable, but little-known individual who made major achievements in astronomy, mathematics, surveying and publishing. Largely self-educated, Banneker's accomplishments were all the more impressive because he was a free African-American in a slave state. Though he took no part in the Revolution, he later upbraided Thomas Jefferson and fellow Founders for allowing slavery to continue.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of *American Spirit*. Our circulation has hit a new high thanks to your support. It is a joy to Celebrate America with you!

*Lynn Forney Young*

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