

## LOYALIST SETTLEMENT IN NEW BRUNSWICK

### NEW BRUNSWICK LOYALISTS

based on an article by Linda Hansen Squires

Despite the fact that many, if not most, of the Loyalists considered themselves to be both American and British when the American War of Independence began, they felt obliged to offer their allegiance to the British government. In return, they expected that authority to protect their property and their persons. They further expected the British army to triumph over revolutionary forces, which talked so glibly of liberty while seeming to practise anarchy. Instead, the Loyalist "friends of government," as they were sometimes known, saw their property confiscated, their beliefs vilified as treasonous and found themselves forced to stand helplessly by while the British government signed a preliminary peace treaty that did little to ensure their safety. In fact, the months immediately following the treaty of January 1783 were perhaps the worst of all for Loyalists.

Seeking protection, they poured into New York City, which had been serving as British headquarters. There, they made hasty plans to depart their native land, mainly by ship, to seek refuge elsewhere. So many seemed to pour into the Maritime area of British North America that one Loyalist, Joshua Upham, wrote to his friend, Edward Winslow, "We shall all soon be with you - everybody, all the World moves on to Nova Scotia."

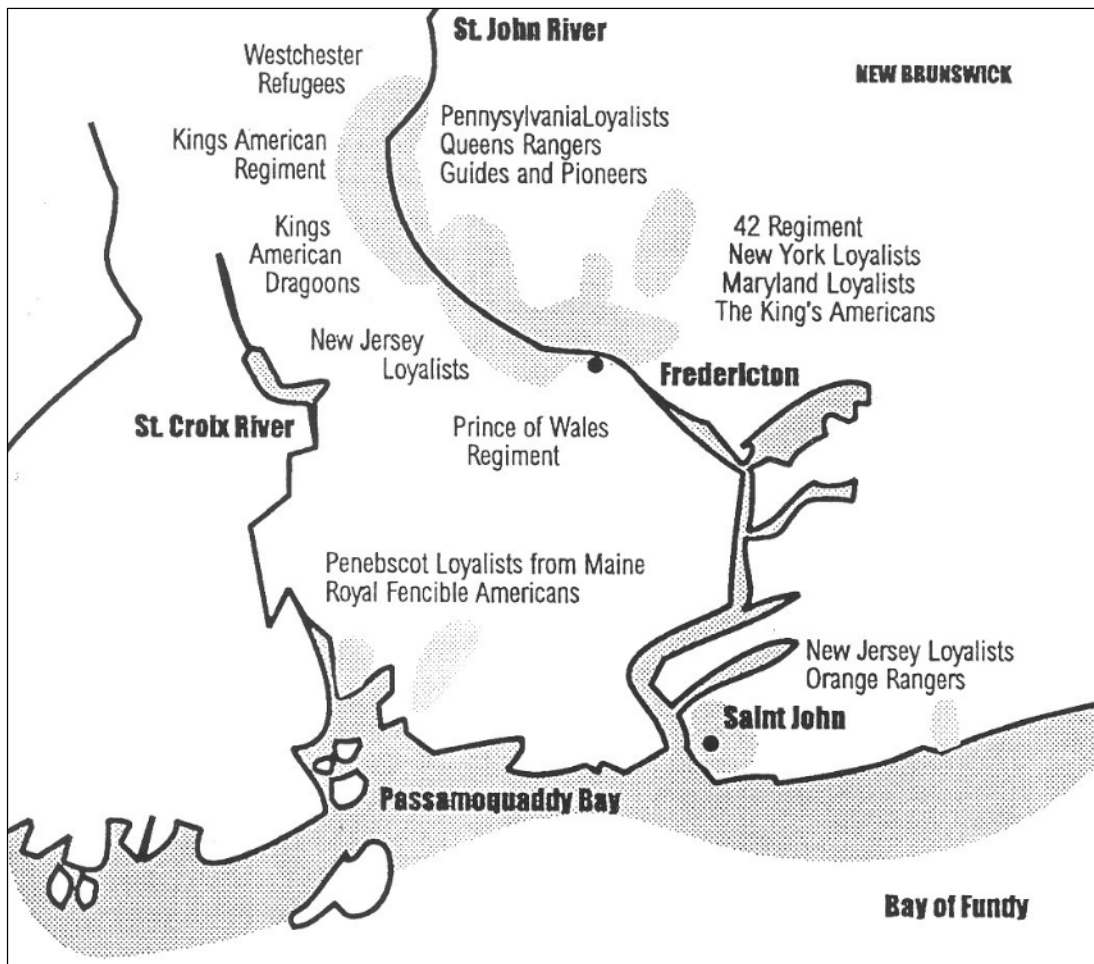
Not surprisingly, the influence on the area was incredible. In total, almost 35,000 people moved into the Maritime region. Nearly 15,000 of that number went to Sunbury and portions of Cumberland Counties. These counties, which formed part of Nova Scotia at that time, were separated and incorporated into a new province named New Brunswick by an Order-in-Council on June 18, 1784. A short while later, Thomas Carleton, brother of Sir Guy Carleton, was appointed the first Lieutenant Governor of the province.

What kind of people were the New Brunswick Loyalists? Characterizing them is not an easy task. Most of them were native-born Americans from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, though there were small groups from the Southern and various New England States. It has been frequently assumed that, like such prominent figures as Edward Winslow, Ward Chipman and John Coffin, large numbers of New Brunswick Loyalists came from Massachusetts. In actual fact, only about six percent were from that colony. Some of them had what might be called an "aristocratic" background, but many of them were farmers, disbanded soldiers and British-American regiments, or small merchants.

The majority of the Loyalists reached their new land via the Spring, Summer and Autumn Fleets anchored at the mouth of the St. John River. There, the Pre-Loyalists, or "old-comers," had established a military presence, represented by Fort Frederick and Fort Howe, and a small trading settlement. A number of Loyalists elected to stay in this trading settlement, even though they had been granted land farther up river. It was not long before the tiny community had grown into two bustling towns, known as Parr and Carleton. The increase in population and trade led to the eventual incorporation of the City of Saint John — "Canada's Loyalist City" — by Thomas Carleton in 1785.

Many Loyalists, however, preferred to seek their homes away from Saint John. When the leader of the Spring Fleet, the ship *Union*, loaded with Connecticut Loyalists, arrived at Partridge Island in Saint John harbour on May 10, 1783, its passengers, unlike some who were "precipitated" shore by impatient captains, "remained comfortable aboard" until a suitable place for settlement was found.

They shortly disembarked onto a small sloop and set sail up the St. John River to Belleisle Bay. Despite their caution in looking for a good place to settle, when they first arrived, they found "nothing but wilderness," and the "women and children did not refrain from tears!" Nevertheless, it was not long before an area at the head of Belleisle Creek was laid out by a surveyor who reserved land for a church and a school, as well as setting out lots. The Loyalists named their new village Kingston. By the time winter set in, according to Walter Bates' account, "every man in the district found himself and family covered under his own roof... enjoying in unity the blessings which God had provided... in the country into whose coves and wild woods we were driven through persecution."



New Brunswick Settled By Regiments

(Maritimes 44)

Other Loyalists were not so lucky. At St. Anne's Point (later to become Fredericton, the capital of New Brunswick), some 90 miles from Saint John, most of the settlers did not arrive until late in the fall of 1783. Although a few of them managed to build small log huts before the snow fell, a number of them spent the winter in tents with the cold ground serving as the floor. It wasn't until the following July that the first real house was constructed. It was also not until the early summer of 1784 that supply ships arrived and a King's Provision Store was opened to serve the needs of St. Anne's surrounding areas.

Nearly one-fifth of the New Brunswick Loyalists chose to reside in what is now called Charlotte County, in southwestern New Brunswick. As a result of the relocation of the border between Maine and New Brunswick in that area, the Loyalists had to evacuate their initial settlement. With the border being established at the St. Croix River, the Penobscot Loyalists, as they were called, moved by ship to settle in what is now the town of Saint Andrews. Some of the families moved their houses, as well as their household effects, by ship, a sailing distance of about 200 miles.

Late in 1783, they acquired, as neighbours, "such persons discharged from the several Departments of the Army and Navy as... agreed to form a joint settlement at Port Matoon..." This group headed first for Nova Scotia, but under the leadership of Nehemiah Marks, Thomas Grimmer and William Murchie, those who sailed with the Autumn Fleet laid out the town of St. Stephen.

There were, of course, many other areas of New Brunswick settled by Loyalists. Of these, a number were granted to disbanded regiments. Along the Saint John River, the King's American Dragoons inhabited Prince William; above them was the King's American Regiment; and nearer to Woodstock was Delancey's Brigade. On the banks of the Nashwaak, the Maryland Loyalists and the Forty-Second Highlanders received land. Although it was not mandatory that regiments be granted land all in one block, many of the soldiers preferred to stay together. In all, the Loyalists spread up the St. John River nearly as far as Grand Falls, and, in a period of readjustment following 1785, into the valley of the Miramichi, moving to Newcastle, Chatham and other settlements in eastern New Brunswick.

There are many tales of the hardships faced by New Brunswick Loyalists. After that first hard winter of 1783, however, most New Brunswick Loyalists probably took the attitude expressed by Edward Winslow, just being pleased not to be " in danger of starving, freezing, or being blown into the Bay of Fundy."

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