

LOYALIST SETTLEMENT IN QUEBEC

About half the 80,000 Loyalist refugees went to the remaining British North American provinces, 30,000 settling in the Maritimes, while the rest, including the loyal Mohawks, came to Quebec, which then included what is now Ontario. Most Loyalists originally settled in present-day Quebec, but were subsequently moved west of the Ottawa River to present-day Ontario, where Crown lands were surveyed and granted to them by the government, which favoured their settlement there.

Where did they settle in Quebec? Governor Frederick Haldimand believed that present-day Quebec was the rightful patrimony of French Canadians, and should be reserved for their future settlement. He preferred to maintain the area immediately north of the U.S. border, uninhabited for the moment, as a “buffer zone” between the two countries. He also feared that if the Loyalists settled there, renewed hostilities with the U.S. could result, as well as extensive smuggling. Therefore he insisted that most of the Loyalists move to what is now Ontario, where some had already settled in the Niagara and Detroit areas. These settlers, along with the First Nations, numbered 8,000 or more.

Those permitted to remain in Quebec settled at Sorel or in the Gaspé. Haldimand intended to forcibly remove Loyalists resident in the Missisquoi Bay area, but after his return to England in 1784, they were permitted to stay by Lt. Col. Henry Hamilton, who was more attentive to their petitions and more open to Loyalist settlement along the border. The administration had no control over Loyalists not receiving land grants or subsidies from the government, however; and there resulted a modest diffusion of the more affluent families throughout the province.

The majority of those residents around Missisquoi Bay were farmers, but also present were former army officers and some successful businessmen. All settled on territory belonging to English seigneurs, who permitted them to hold land for nominal fees. Those who settled at Sorel, which was intended as a military colony, were mostly former soldiers, while in the Gaspé, as at Missisquoi Bay, farmers predominated with a few fairly prosperous entrepreneurs also in the mix.

Many of the Sorel Loyalists, dissatisfied with the land there, later petitioned for grants in the Eastern Townships and moved to that area after 1791. In Gaspé, where there were already some English-speaking residents (largely fisherman from the Channel Islands between England and France), the Loyalists settled around New Carlisle. Today, the British Heritage Centre in New Richmond commemorates the contributions of the Channel Islanders and the Loyalists to the development of Gaspesia.



General Sir Frederick Haldimand
Library and Archives Canada
C-003221 copy of Abbott Messer's
original painting by
Mabel B. Lemuel-Francis

WHAT WAS THE SPECIAL CASE OF THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS?

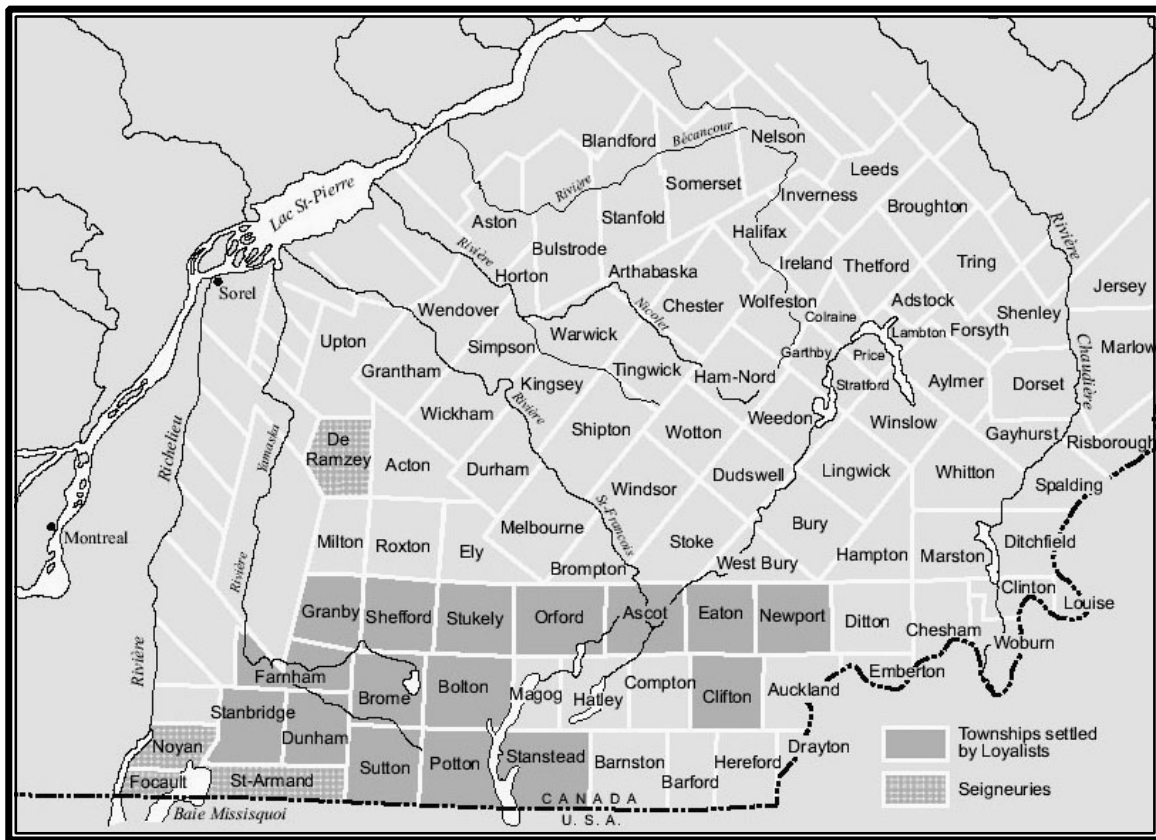
Perhaps the greatest role of the Loyalists in Quebec was their contribution to the settlement of the Eastern Townships, which began in 1792. It is there that the Loyalists are best remembered, although the majority of the original settlers were not Loyalist. The story begins during the American Revolution, where the Loyalists drifted into the Missisquoi Bay area.

The land there was controlled by three English seigneurs. Colonel Henry Caldwell had purchased what had been the Foucault Seigneurie, which ran along the Richelieu River and a little over the

present-day frontier. Col. Gabriel Christie was seigneur of Noyan, and Thomas Dunn was seigneur of St-Armand.

The land was good and the Loyalists settled in, prospering by selling their crops at relatively high prices, thanks to the wartime market, during which demand for food and other necessities of life was high. When the Revolutionary War ended, Haldimand expected them to move westwards with the rest of the Loyalists, and cut off government rations. At first, the Loyalists resisted efforts to be moved by force, but were permitted to stay by Lt. Gov. Henry Hamilton after Haldimand's return to England.

The status of the Missisquoi Bay Loyalists was resolved when the seigneurs agreed to permit them to stay on their land for a nominal fee. The exact number cannot be ascertained, but a petition they sent to the governor included 378 names (each name denoting a family of up to five people). This suggests a population of about 1,600 or so. The land they settled on, the present-day area of Noyan, Clarenceville and St. Armand, was not part of the Eastern Townships, which were not opened to settlement until 1791, but have since been regarded as part of the Townships.



Map of the Eastern Townships settled by Loyalists
by Victor Dohar

Under the terms of the Constitutional Act of 1791, the Eastern Townships were opened to settlement; a land rush followed. Most of the 3,000 or so settlers came from the United States. A few were Loyalist, at least in spirit, but most simply wanted land, and had no strong feeling about nationality.

The Missisquoi Loyalists were in a unique position to play a leading role in this population movement. Perhaps the most conspicuous of them was Gilbert Hyatt, who founded Hyatt's Mills; it later became Sherbrooke, now the metropolis of the Townships.

Loyalist families like the Ruiters were originally from the Palatinate in Germany. In the early years of the 18th century, several thousand German Protestants left the "Palatinate" area along the Rhine River and took refuge in England to escape the poverty of their homeland — which had been ravaged by European wars — and because of alleged religious persecution. The British Government sent many "Palatines" to Ireland and then to America, where most settled in the colony of New York. During the American Revolution, their descendants tended to support the Crown. Henry Ruiter, for example, served as a Loyalist officer, and subsequently became a Justice of the Peace in Quebec. John Ruiter became an officer for the administration of oaths and Jacob Ruiter established a sawmill near Cowansville.

Captain John Savage, born in Ireland, had immigrated to New York, where he was a large landowner near Albany, when the Revolution began. He then became a Loyalist. In Quebec, he first settled on the part of Caldwell Manor that was assigned to Vermont in 1791. He moved again to lead a party of fellow Loyalists to the Shefford area. There was also Henry Bolton, a preacher who helped form Bolton Township, as well as the Baptist Ebenezer Clark, who settled in Stanbridge Townships; and the Methodist Samuel Embury in St. Armand. Loyalist founding fathers can be found in most areas of the Townships and families of long residence usually have Loyalist ancestors.

Like the Puritan families in New England, the Loyalists set the tone of the Eastern Townships' development. Loyalists provided the one positive political idea among the early settlers. In a sense, the Eastern Townships may be recorded as the outstanding achievement of the Loyalists in the province, and the Loyalist tradition is still preserved in local historical societies, and in Township branches of the United Empire Loyalist Association. Sir John Johnson, perhaps the most eminent of the Loyalists, is buried at Mont Saint-Grégoire (formerly called "Mount Johnson"), not far from the Townships. (PQ7)

WHAT WAS THE LASTING CONTRIBUTION OF THE LOYALISTS TO QUEBEC?

The Constitutional Act of 1791 divided the old Province of Quebec into two new provinces - Upper Canada (now Ontario) and Lower Canada (now Quebec). It also provided both the new provinces with an elected legislative assembly — something the Loyalists had long wanted. The Act also permitted the settlement of the Eastern Townships on lands that the settlers would own in freehold tenure (without being obliged to pay seigneurial dues), another longstanding demand of the Loyalists.

Settlement of the Townships began in 1792, after the passage of the Constitutional Act. The Loyalists already established at Missisquoi Bay were ideally situated to take the lead. Prominent among them was Gilbert Hyatt, the founder of Hyatt's Mills (now Sherbrooke), as well as representatives of the Savage and Ruiter families. The Ruiters, for example, included Henry, an agent for the seigneur, Thomas Dunn, and John, a member of the board of commissioners for administering oaths to American settlers. Captain Jacob Odell founded Odelltown, while Frederick Scriver did the same at Hemmingford, as did Nicholas Austin at Bolton and Samuel Willard at Stukely. The Loyalists made a signal contribution in organizing the colonization of the

Eastern Townships, although Americans (or at best "late Loyalists") soon came to form the majority of the settlers.

Loyalists and their descendants were active in economic and political life. Among them was Chief Justice William Smith and his son-in-law, Jonathan Sewell, also a Chief Justice. John Richardson was responsible for the construction of the Lachine Canal, and among early champions of French-Canadian institutions, Andrew Stuart featured prominently. During the Rebellion of 1837, Wolfred Nelson and Thomas Storrow Brown commanded Patriote forces, while Attorney General Charles Richard Ogden served the government.

Apart from this, Loyalists dispersed throughout the province as artisans, domestic servants, merchants and professionals. That at least some Loyalists (or their direct descendants) intermarried with French Canadians is indicated by the fact that both former Quebec Premier René Levesque and former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau had Loyalist ancestors. Loyalists appear in many family trees of both English-speaking and French-speaking Quebecers, and thanks to intermarriage, Loyalist descendants can be found today among newer Canadians as well, in Quebec as elsewhere in the country.

(PQ9)



Philipsburg United Church - 1819
Oldest continuously operating former Methodist chapel in Quebec