

# LOYALIST SETTLEMENT IN PRESENT DAY ONTARIO

## THE ROYAL TOWNSHIPS ( EASTERN ONTARIO)

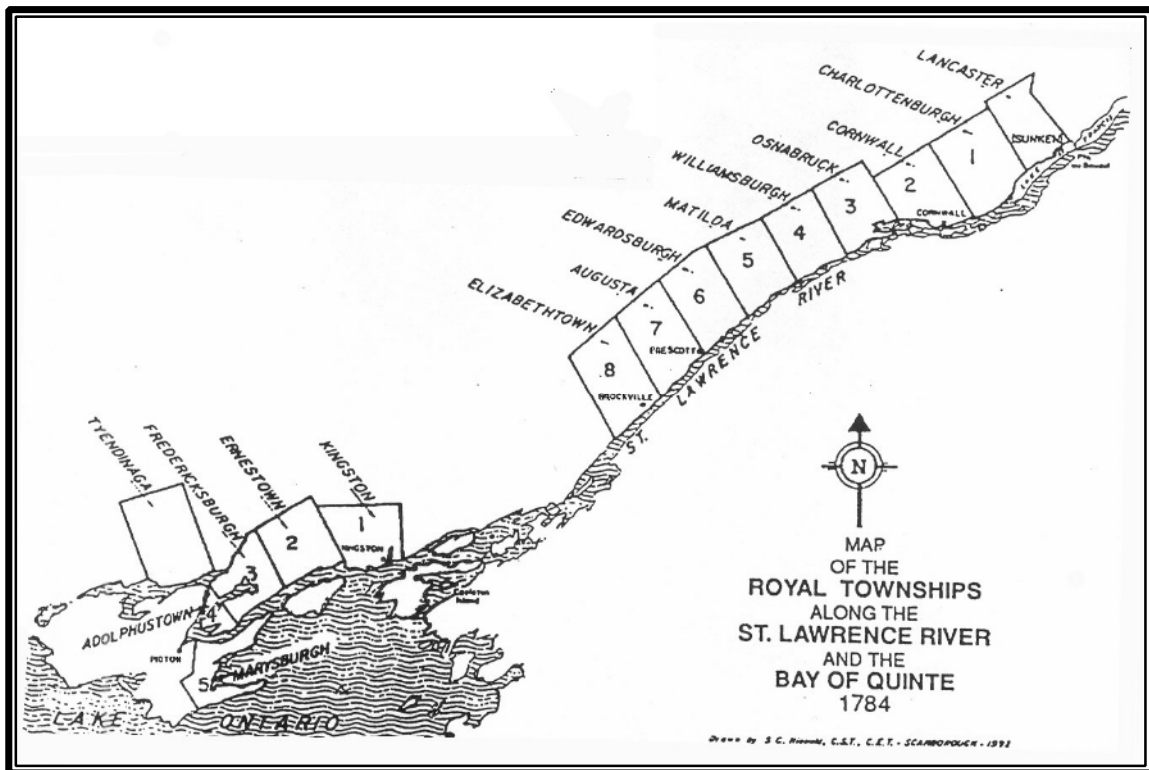
By 1783, large numbers of refugees had gathered at St. John's, on the Richelieu River and in the vicinity of Sorel at the mouth of the Richelieu River. New York City, which never fell to the rebel forces, was also home to many Loyalists.

The British government did not encourage Loyalists to settle in the present-day Eastern Townships, and the Loyalists themselves were not inclined to live under the seigneurial system of land tenure established by the Quebec Act of 1774. Loyalists arriving by sea from the former colonies flooded the Atlantic colonies, and officials there did not think they could deal with more refugees from Quebec.

Two parties, led by Captain Grass and Major Peter Van Alstine, sailed from New York when Sir Guy Carleton evacuated the city in 1783, and made their way to the Montreal area. Grass, who was familiar, from earlier trips, with the territory around the eastern end of Lake Ontario, convinced Governor Haldimand there wasn't a more desirable site for a settlement. Grass's opinions were supported by the findings of surveyors, who had been working along the St. Lawrence west of Lake St. Francis to provide land for Indian Loyalists.

Consequently, Michael Grass took 200 families to Cataraqui; townships were surveyed and settled beginning in the spring of 1784. Kingston was the major settlement in this area.

The first nine townships west of the seigneurie of Longueuil (the most westerly of the established seigneuries in Quebec) were known as the Royal Townships. The next five townships, known as the Cataraqui townships, took up the area west to the Bay of Quinte. Land was granted according to military rank, with a minimum of 50 acres given to each member of a Loyalist family, including unborn children.



Disbanded military units settled together in townships. Sir John Johnson's Royal Yorkers, for example, held the first five of the Royal Townships; at the settlers' request and with Lord Dorchester's approval, they were organized according to nationality, language and religion. Catholic Highlanders, Scottish Presbyterians, German Calvinists, German Lutherans and Anglicans occupied those townships in that order. Initially, administration of justice and local government continued according to military custom under the authority of former officers. In the earliest days, some civilians even received military rank, in order to fill the offices necessary for basic administration.

By 1788, the authorities had given the numbered townships and settlements names that honoured the Royal family. Sophiasburg, Williamsburg and Matilda, for example, commemorated some of King George III's children, while Charlottenburg was named after the Queen. In that same year, the government divided the western part of the old province of Quebec, which would become Upper Canada, into four districts for the purposes of future political administration. These districts, from east to west, were Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nassau and Hesse. The names reflected the German origins of the Royal family, as well as the large German element among the Loyalists.

The Loyalists who came to Quebec brought with them the tradition of freehold land tenure, British laws and representative government. They did not want to give up these rights by living under the Quebec Act, which stuck to the seigneurial system of landholding and denied the people of that colony an elected assembly.

Shortly after their arrival, Loyalist representatives petitioned the government to alter the system of holding land to freehold tenure.

In 1791, the British Parliament passed the Canada Act, usually known as the Constitutional Act, which provided for the division of Quebec into Upper and Lower Canada. Both colonies were granted an elected assembly, and the freehold system of land tenure went into effect in Upper Canada (later Ontario). For purposes of parliamentary representation and militia organization, Colonel John Graves Simcoe, first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, proclaimed the creation of the original 19 counties in the colony, including Glengarry, Frontenac, York, Essex and Kent. The names of all 19 counties still designate administrative jurisdictions in the province of Ontario. The arrival of the Loyalists, therefore, changed the course of Canadian history and created the basic design of the province of Ontario.

(Ontario 10)

## **NIAGARA**

The earliest settlers to come to the colony of Quebec as a result of the American Revolution arrived on the west bank of the Niagara River during the war. Fort Niagara, on the east bank, had been a military installation since the French regime, and it was the base from which the British campaigned against the rebellious colonists in Pennsylvania and northern New York. It was the headquarters of Butler's Rangers, a Loyalist unit, British regular soldiers, members of the Indian Department and as many as 5,000 Indians from the Six Nations. Clearly overcrowded and needing enormous provisions, the commanders, including Colonel John Butler, decided to move some of Butler's Corps to the west bank. In 1779, Colonel Butler had a log barracks constructed for the Rangers and their families. One of the reasons for the barracks was that it would be a source of supplies for Fort Niagara. Another rationale is that the British wished to move the Rangers away from the poorly paid regular British soldiers.

By 1780, four or five families had built homes. It is possible that the presence of the Rangers had attracted non-military refugees to the west bank. The settlement was further secured when the British purchased land along the river from the Mississauga Indians in May 1781.



Col. John Butler  
The Valiants - Ottawa

Butler reported in 1782 that there were 16 farmers in the Niagara Settlement. Within two years, refugees from New York and Pennsylvania, many of German and Huguenot origin, found their way to the west bank of the Niagara River, making it the first permanent settlement west of Montreal since the arrival of the French around the Detroit River a generation earlier.

In the fall of 1783, arrangements were finalized for the purchase of more land from the Mississaugas. This included land along the north shore of Lake Ontario, from Cataract to the mouth of the Trent River, an area from Niagara west to the head of Lake Ontario and a stretch six miles wide on both banks of the Grand River from Lake Erie to its source. This territory was to become significant, as the government made arrangements to compensate the Six Nations for their losses during the war.

When Butler's Rangers were disbanded in 1784, many of the families decided to stay on at Niagara, thereby forming the first permanent British Settlement in what was to become Upper Canada. The significance of this settlement is further

indicated by the choice of Niagara as the location of the first capital of the new colony of Upper Canada in 1791.

## THE NATIVE AMERICAN SETTLEMENTS

The Six Nations, who lived in the northern part of the colony of New York, maintained their loyalty to the king partly because of the influence of Sir William Johnson, a British Indian Superintendent whose estate was located near the Indian villages. The leadership of Thayendanegea (Chief Joseph Brant), who was elected war chief during the Revolution, was of enormous importance as well. When their lands were devastated in 1779, the homeless Six Nations fled to Fort Niagara and remained there until the end of the year.

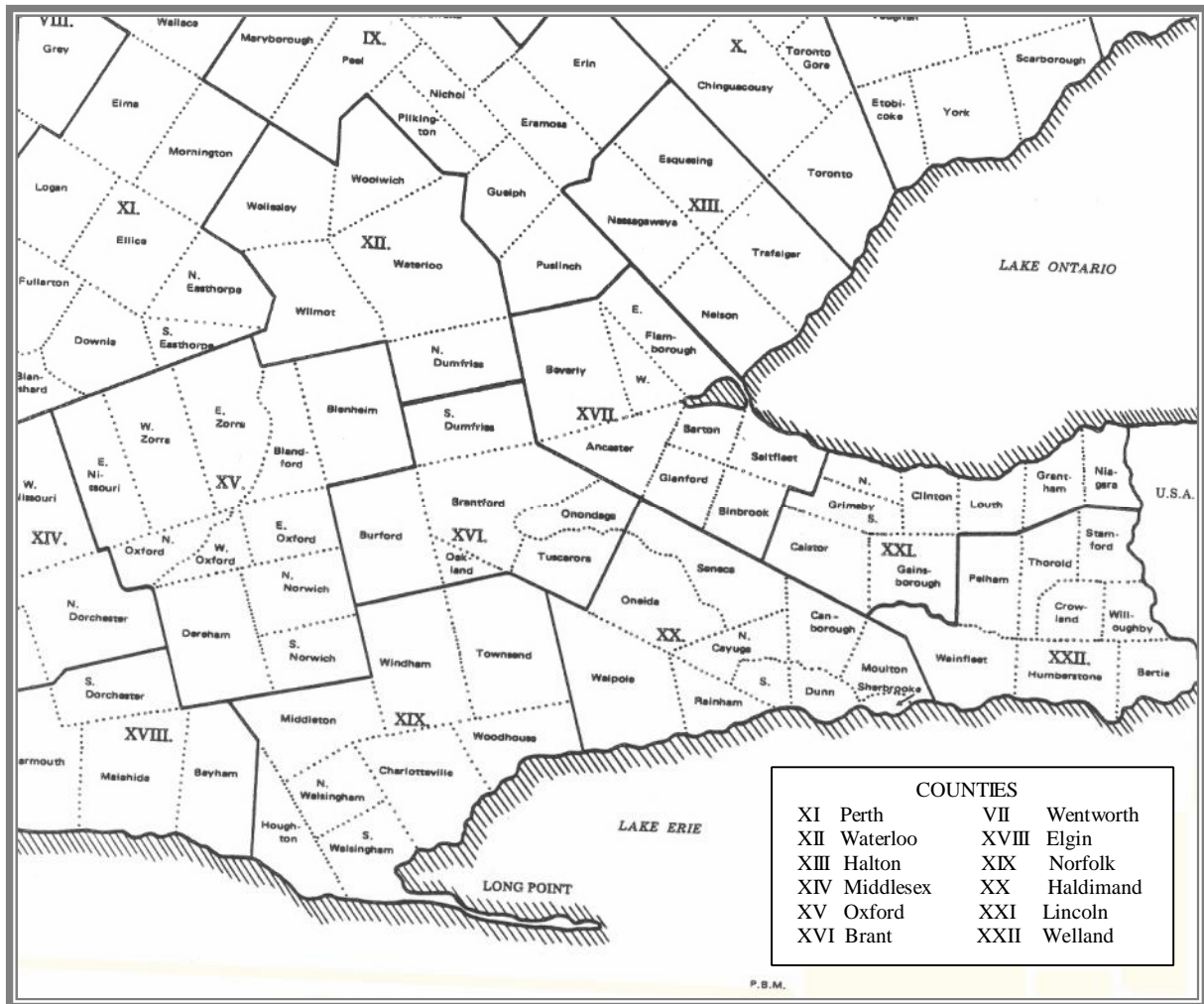
The British realized that these native Loyalists needed land to compensate for what they had lost in New York, and decided to provide them with territory in additional tracts purchased from the Mississaugas in 1784. Brant initially accepted the offer of land in the vicinity of the Bay of Quinte, but then decided that the west end of Lake Ontario would be preferable, because it would be more accessible to the Senecas and other members of the Six Nations who had decided to stay in New York. He pointed out to the British that from that location, his people would also have better contact with the "Western Nation" in the Ohio Valley, whose loyalty the British wished to maintain.



Joseph Brant,  
The Valiants, Ottawa

In 1784 and 1785, Brant and about 1,600 of his followers took possession of 768,000 acres along the Grand River. A few hundred others followed Brant's cousin Chief Deserontyon to the Bay of Quinte because they thought the more isolated site would provide them with better protection from the Americans.

The Mohawks consolidated themselves at Brant's Ford on the Grand River. Brant received Power of Attorney from the Six Nations Council to disperse tracts of land to persons he might deem "meet and proper." Beginning in 1787, he invited old friends from the Indian Agency and Loyalist soldiers to settle on Indian lands. He realized that the original tract was much too large to be opened by the Six Nations alone, and he thought that white farmers and merchants would be useful in the development of farms and businesses. As time passed, non-Loyalists began to arrive and develop settlements along the fertile banks of the Grand River. The result was that the Six Nations lost control of all but approximately twenty per cent of their original grant.



Townships and Counties in Southern Ontario before Regional Government  
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## **THE LONG POINT SETTLEMENT**

by Wm. Yeager

Halfway across the north of Lake Erie, the peninsula of Long Point stretches about 20 miles to the east as part of the old Norfolk County. In the early 1790s, Loyalists began to arrive from New Brunswick, Eastern Ontario and Niagara to establish settlements in the townships of Charlotteville, Walsingham, Woodhouse, Townsend, Windham, Middleton and Houghton. The town of Simcoe, named for the lieutenant-governor, was one of the centres of government for Talbot District and later Norfolk County. On a tour through the Long Point area in 1795, Simcoe camped along the Lynn River, where the future town would develop.

The Loyalists had left their former homes in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, many joining Loyalist regiments when the war broke out. Some of these were first-generation settlers from overseas, but many others were children or grandchildren of immigrants from the German states, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and the Netherlands.

Captain Samuel Ryerse (later spelled Ryerson), a friend of Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe, was one of the leaders of the community. His brother, Col. Joseph Ryerson, another Long Point Loyalist, was the father of Egerton Ryerson, who was instrumental in the establishment of the public school system in the colony (later Ontario).

Ryerse's daughter, Amelia, married John Harris, who held a number of government posts, including that of treasurer of the London District, whose original capital was located at Vittoria on Long Point. In 1826, after fire destroyed the courthouse there, the capital was moved to London. The Harris family became one of the leading families in London and their home, Eldon House, built in 1835 and still standing, became the city's social centre.

## **THE NEW SETTLEMENT (ESSEX COUNTY)**

When Butler's Rangers were disbanded in 1784, a select group of veterans and people from the Indian Department were invited to settle the north shore of Lake Erie from the Detroit River to the site of present-day Kingsville. The purpose of this settlement was to protect the frontier and to continue good relations with the Indians in the Ohio Valley and the western Great Lakes regions.

Captain William Caldwell of Butler's Rangers obtained a tract of land near the mouth of the Detroit River and named it "The New Settlement" to distinguish it from the "Old" French settlements at Petite Côte and L'Assomption. He also obtained an additional parcel of land to the east that came to be known as "The Two Connected Townships." Captains Bird, McKee and Elliott, all former Indian agents, made their own arrangements with the Indians to acquire land in the Amherstburg area.

With the support of Governor Haldimand, Captain Caldwell encouraged disbanded Butler's Rangers to come to establish a settlement with a strong military influence and structure. By 1787, a total of 173 heads of households had applied for lots. One-third of these were Butler's Rangers, and the rest were simply designated "Loyalists". Among these were civilian refugees from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland and New York who had made their way to Fort Detroit. While they waited for lots in the New Settlement, they rented farm plots from large landholders on Grosse Isle and Hog Island in the Detroit River. Although many had moved on by 1794, a strong Loyalist influence, characterized by Pennsylvania German and Black traditions along with French and British backgrounds, remained.

The various Loyalists who established the New Settlement were united by military ties as well as ties of language, tradition and culture, and often shared hardships because of their races and beliefs. Although they came from many backgrounds and experiences, they learned to cooperate and persevere in order to survive.

