

## Trip to Victoria Branch, Victoria, British Columbia: Saturday, 17 November 2012



My wife, Grietje, and I arrived in Victoria, British Columbia, just after lunch on Friday, 16 November 2012.

We were met by Al Huffman UE, a Past Recipient of the Philip Leith Award and Past Branch President of Victoria Branch. He graciously showed us Ogden Point on the Pacific Ocean and Beacon Hill Park where the Mayor's Grove is located and the place that holds Victoria Branch's Centennial Project for

2014 that is to restore the plaque beneath the Loyalist Maple Tree planted by their Majesties: King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth, in 1939. With a little help from Al, we also located the Hawthorne Tree planted ten years earlier in 1929 by Sir Winston Churchill.



Our next tour was the largest castle in Western Canada: Craigdarroch Castle

built by coal baron, Robert Dunsmuir. This magnificent monument to capitalism and private enterprise is now owned by a non-profit historical society that has the task of preserving this national historic site. One of the volunteer tour guides was none other than Victoria Branch Immediate Past President, Robert Ferguson UE, this year's recipient of the Philip Leith Award. He happened to be on duty and, to our great delight, took Al Huffman and ourselves on a tour of the ground floor of this amazing castle being transformed to depict a Victorian Christmas. We



were amazed with the knowledge that Robert has to share about the family and this castle and were very pleased to meet its curator, Bruce Davies, who also has Loyalist ancestry.

The next morning, we met Branch President, Elizabeth Aberdeen UE, who picked us up at our hotel and arranged for us to join members for lunch at the Ramada Inn. Here we met many enthusiastic members and visitors from Chilliwack, Vancouver and surrounding districts. We

also met soon-to-be new members of the Chilliwack Branch, my cousin, Lynn, and her husband, Peter Bokamyser, and Lynn's brother, Bob Proctor, member of Vancouver Branch.



This was a great opportunity to observe the Victoria Branch presentation of the Philip E.M. Leith Award to Immediate Past Branch President, Robert Ferguson UE. I also enjoyed presenting certificates to Victoria Branch members, Wendy Cramer Johnson UE and Marilyn Anne Dryden UE.



My talk that afternoon about the life of my ancestor, Captain John DeCou, and his adventures in the War of 1812, reminded several members of the trials of their own Loyalist ancestor in the conflict that affected so many people along the American and Canadian border. The connections we make across time and distance solidify the bonds we have as a national association.

I am very pleased to be able to be a part of the team that brings opportunities and funding for projects and studies about Loyalist history “*over the mountains*”.

Sincerely and loyally,  
Robert C. McBride UE,  
UELAC Dominion President 2011 – 2013.

