

A Capital Experience

UELAC Conference 2006 in Toronto

Four days of Loyalist fellowship, education and entertainment

By Doug Grant UE, UELAC Immediate Past President



After two years of planning, with a tremendous amount of help from members of Toronto Branch, a lot of last-minute scurrying and a bit of serendipity, the opening moments arrived early on the afternoon of Thursday, June 1st at Yorkdale Holiday Inn in Toronto, hosted by Governor Simcoe Branch.

Some early arrivals greeted the hosts – David Ellsworth and his mum, Betty, who have attended, I think, twenty or more consecutive conferences, were two who checked in the day before.

From left:

David Ellsworth UE,
Richard Atkinson UE,
Daryl Currie UE and
Bonnie Schepers UE,
Flag Bearers at Church.
Photo by Albert Schepers.



Ann Rahamut, Toronto Branch, managed the registration for the conference. Her job was very well done although the rest of us should have helped with other aspects of reception more – but I don't think any guest missed an event.

Although the hotel was a little remote from downtown, it turned out that it is the winner of several awards within the Holiday Inn Group as one of their best hotels. The staff was courteous and helpful. I only wish there had been an inexpensive fast-food place like *Tim Horton's* next door.

While several branches and the Promotions Committee, headed by Noreen Stapley and her chief helper and husband, Gord Dandy, set up their displays, a number of genealogists from the various branches across the country met in their annual conference workshop. Throughout the afternoon and evening people arrived to register for the conference. This year the displays and sales tables were only open on the Thursday and Saturday during the daytime as, at other times, the people who would want to staff the booths preferred to participate in conference events. The display area closed down in the late afternoon and reopened in early evening for those with tickets for the evening program, for which there were three key components.

"Salute to York" Reception

Colin Heath was master of ceremonies and introduced The Honourable Lincoln Alexander who was expected to give a few brief remarks to welcome the guests, but who enthralled the audience for much longer as he regaled us with his involvement with heritage, the government and the Queen, and what a wonderful experience his life has been, having been one who was born poor.

Karen Windover, President of Toronto Branch, introduced entertainer, historian and author Bruce Bell, our featured speaker for the evening. Bruce, who writes a periodic column about the historic details of the oldest part of Toronto in the area where the First Parliament Buildings were located, presented a history of a particular Tavern, with a focus on its "contribution" at the time of the Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837.

Karen had also arranged a large number of donated items that she organized into a Chinese Auction, for which she sold tickets here and at the Gala on Saturday where the winners were announced.

Rick and Sandra Roberts of Global Genealogy not only brought a number of Loyalist books for sale, but also arranged for three authors to do book signings: Gavin Watt with a revised edition of The History and Master Roll of The King's Royal Regiment of New York, Brenda Dougall Merriman with United Empire Loyalists, A Guide to Tracing Loyalist Ancestors in Upper Canada (Ontario), and William Lamb with his The Founders [of Hay Bay Church]. During the breaks and after the program ended, guests took advantage of the opportunity to meet the authors and acquire some good reference and history books.

In addition to the key speakers, there were shorter presentations of the UELAC logo goods offered by the Promotions Committee who brought a large display. Kim Hurst from Bicentennial Branch in Windsor invited us all to Conference 2007 that will run from May 31 to June 3. Doug Grant also spoke about some of the key activities going on in UELAC.

Many thanks to several branches that set up great displays and sales tables for this day and, in most cases, again on Saturday.


"Loyalist Toronto" Bus Trip

A beautiful day Friday saw us head off early for a half-day tour of Loyalist Toronto. Two buses, with commentators John Warburton of Toronto Branch and Robert Heath, took us on a tour that centred on the Cathedral of St. James. John and Robert did an amazing amount of research and uncovered a great number of Loyalist related sites that they showed and described as we made our way to the Old Town.

Nancy Mallett, archivist at St. James, had done extensive research to uncover a vast number of Loyalist-related aspects of St. James. In a presentation to the group in the cathedral proper she outlined the church's history and its people.

One of the guests was Okill Stuart, a past president of UELAC, who had last been at St. James early in the year to help kick-off the year leading up to the 200th anniversary of Jarvis Collegiate. Okill's ancestor George was the first principal of Jarvis when it was formed and the students met at his residence in the earliest days.

We split into two groups, one to enjoy the many historical aspects of the church and grounds, from plaques to banners, while the other toured the museum to see the Jarvis display. Meanwhile others delivered lunch to the buses.



Unarmed Teen Shot in the Back?

IN MEMORY
of
JOHN RIDOUT
Son of Tho^s Ridout,
Surveyor General.
*His filial affection, en-
gaging manners, and
nobleness of mind gave,
early promise of future
excellence. This promise
he gallantly fulfilled by
his brave, active & enter-
prising conduct which
gained the praise of his
superiors while serving
as Midshipman in the Pro-
vincial Navy during the
late War. At the return of
Peace he commenced with
ardour the study of the
Law and with the fairest
prospects, but a Blight
came, and he was compul-
sed to an early Grave on
the 12th day of July 1817.
Aged 18.
Deeply lamented by all
who knew him.*

In 1817 John Ridout, 18, was shot dead by Samuel Peters Jarvis, 25, on 12 July 1817 at the corner of (what is now) Bay St. and Grosvenor St. in Toronto. The reason for the duel was unclear. On the count of two, the nervous Ridout discharged his pistol early, missing Jarvis by a wide margin. Ridout's second, James Small (whose father survived the only other duel in York) and Jarvis' second, Henry John Boulton insisted that Jarvis be allowed to make his shot. Ridout protested loudly and asked for another pistol, but Small and Boulton were adamant that the strict code of duelling must be observed. Jarvis shot and killed Ridout instantly. [There was a story told at the time that Ridout lived long enough to forgive Jarvis for shooting him, but the autopsy discredited it.] Jarvis was pardoned by the courts, even though he had shot an unarmed man, duelling was illegal, and the autopsy showed that Ridout had been shot in the back. Jarvis, who later laid out the broad thoroughfare called Jarvis Street through his estate, maintained that the duel had been gallant and honourable.

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From the Cathedral, the tour proceeded to St. James Cemetery where our two leaders led a brief walking tour that illustrated some of the many Loyalist and important historical figures who are buried there – Jarvises, Ridouts, Fathers of Confederation and many more. As time was passing quickly the buses then returned directly to the Holiday Inn.

[Asst. Ed.'s Note: See boxed text about Jarvis and Ridout duel.]

History and Genealogy Seminars

Friday afternoon was filled with two streams of three speakers each, with one stream presenting genealogy topics and the other two being history presentations.

Kathie Orr of Toronto Branch did a wonderful job organizing the genealogy sessions:

- "Vital Signs Absent" by J. Brian Gilchrist
- "Crown Land Records" by Ruth Burkholder
- "Documenting Your Ontario Loyalist Ancestry" by Kathie Orr UE

With presentations loaded with information and good handouts, the audience was well rewarded.

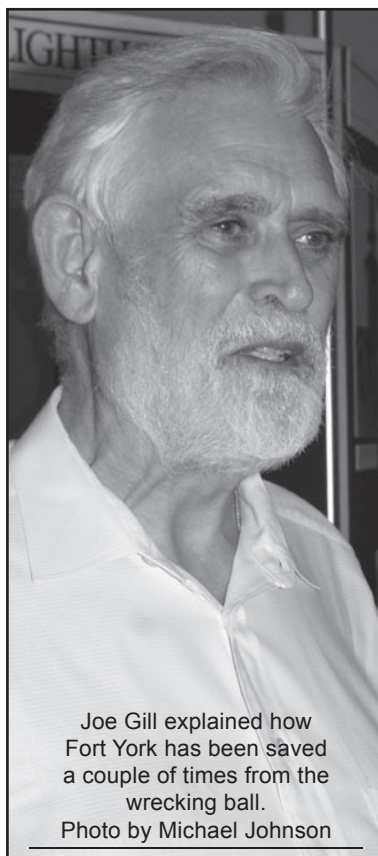
Similarly, the history stream was well done. Dr. Ron Williamson told the group about the archaeological work done a few years ago at the site of Upper Canada's first parliament buildings, which we had passed in the morning bus tour. He admonished us to keep working on this issue as only part of the site is yet in public hands.

Dr. Carl Benn's discussion of Iroquois Warfare, with his knowledge of and access to museum was most informative. In response to a question, he noted that the total Six Nations' population at the time of the Revolutionary War was only about 9,000.

Bill Lamb, on very short notice, filled in for Rosemary Sadlier (Black Loyalist History) and spoke about the topic he spends much time on, Methodism in Early Ontario. We were all fascinated by the information Bill provided about the early nineteenth Century.

Evening at Fort York

By bus, the group set off for Fort York on Toronto's waterfront. Rented for the evening for our enjoyment, the fort was a perfect setting. As rain threatened, the caterers set up dinner and the bar in the Blue Barracks. They served hors d'oeuvres while two groups toured the fort, with interpretation by guides



Joe Gill explained how Fort York has been saved a couple of times from the wrecking ball.

Photo by Michael Johnson



Peter Johnson UE (left) with speakers Bruce Bell and Lincoln Alexander (right).

from Fort York. Ewan Wardle and his artillery crew provided the evening's fireworks that signalled the beginning of dinner. The cadets joined different tables and answered questions that we posed.

Following dinner, Peter Johnson, as fifer, and Ewan, as drummer, led the *costume parade* down the long path to the gates and back. It was wonderful to see so many people on the path – what great participation.

The formal program was short with a few people including Promotions Committee Chair Noreen Stapley, UELAC Secretary Bev Craig, Central West Region VP Fred Hayward and Drummer Ewan Wardle, each describing their period clothing and military uniforms. The chair of the Friends of Fort York, Joe Gill, explained how Fort York has been saved a couple of times from the wrecking ball, how the Friends and the City of Toronto have developed a strong working relationship and some of the plans and ideas they have to move forward with Fort York.



David Morrison UE, (Ka'nowake'ron)
Photo by Shirley Dargatz UE



Bill Lamb



Peter Johnson UE, 2nd Battn. King's Royal Yorkers, Revolutionary War, and drummer Ewan Wardle, Canadian Fencibles, War of 1812 lead Friday night Costume Parade at Fort York. Photo by B. Schepers.



Richard Atkinson (left) with John Warburton. Photo by A. Schepers

When the bar and the canteen closed, the buses headed back to the Holiday Inn. It was a wonderful jam-packed day with a lot for everyone to do.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday it rained and we were given a larger room by the hotel that allowed display and sales tables to be set up in the coffee and lunch area. The annual meeting progressed reasonably well, with the usual two or three discussions that caused people to take opposing positions and get into lengthy debates. We do seem to usually get bogged down in bylaw changes. Of particular note: a donation of up to \$5,000 is to be given to the Nova Scotia Black Loyalist Heritage Society to help recover from a fire at their research and reference library and a new slate of officers was installed. The main changes were: President Peter Johnson (Bay of Quinte), Sr. VP Fred Hayward (Hamilton), and Secretary Diane Reid (Toronto).

A short Council Meeting followed. Peter noted the Committees for 2006 – 2007 and the schedule of main dates between now and the Conference next year in Windsor.

Conference Gala Banquet

The rainy weather did not dampen the spirits of those at our Gala banquet at Rameses Shrine Club on Keele Street. Joining us were several reenactors in uniform of the day. A carload of four had driven a long distance from eastern Ontario just for this event and to be our guest speaker's military escort. Following a reception with hors d'oeuvres, those in period clothing formed up. David Ellsworth, our UELAC standard-bearer, and his mother, Betty, brought the standard flags as well as a flag for each of our provinces. Fifer, Peter Johnson, led the way as the group entered the banquet hall and paraded around the room before placing the flags. The tables were set off by wonderful centrepieces, organized by Diane Reid of Toronto Branch and given

to a person at each table at the end of the evening. Our Master of Ceremonies, Ralph Lewis, introduced Lloyd Oakes of Hamilton Branch who led our singing of the anthems at the beginning and end of the program. We celebrated with toasts to the Queen, the Association, our Loyalist Ancestors and to past Prairie Region VP Marg Carter. A few people: Marg Hall, Pat Adair, Shirley Dargatz and reenactor Ron Wannamaker, described their period clothing. The highlight for this was David Morrison describing his unique traditional headdress. During the evening, Norm Lawton, a member of New Brunswick Branch but who resides in the Toronto area, was presented with his certificate by New Brunswick Branch President, Jim McKenzie.

Our featured speaker of the evening, Gavin Watt, an Honorary VP of the UELAC, spoke about reenacting. With a number of slides helping to describe various situations, Gavin gave us a fascinating perspective of different elements of reenactments and some of the challenges that the participants face.



Flag bearers,
Nancy Conn UE and Daryl
Currie UE, in parade.

On top of that, nothing remains constant. Researchers continually find new information that too often results in sometimes-expensive changes to uniforms – an insight for many of us into the dedication of those who help bring history to life.

In a brief ceremony, UELAC Past-President Doug Grant presented the President's Medal and collar to the new UELAC President Peter Johnson. Peter in turn presented Doug with his UELAC Past-President's Medal, and then challenged all of us to continue with our dedication to Loyalists.

To conclude the evening, Karen Windover, with help from Adam Donnelly, Daryl Currie's grandson, announced the winners of the Chinese Auction items. There were many smiling faces as the buses prepared for departure.

Black Creek Pioneer Village

John Warburton, past-president of Toronto Branch, and Anne Neuman, with Robert Heath, were the main organizers of the concluding day. The sun shone on us as we left the reception area and paraded off to the Fisherville Presbyterian Church at the rear corner of the park. Captain John Westgate led the service, with help from many. Such a full church and rich service it was!

John described Roblin Mill, First House and the Grain Barn, with their Loyalist connections, as we returned to the reception centre for lunch.

Our UELAC honorary president, the Honourable Peter Milliken UE, congratulated the group on the conference and challenged us to keep our history alive before he caught a flight to Ottawa. The wonderful buffet lunch, served by Black Creek staff, took us to our guest speaker, Kelly Bennett. The first winner of the Bernice Wood Flett Scholarship, Kelly had just



Our new Dominion President,
Peter Johnson UE, and First Lady,
Angela Johnson UE.
Photo by Shirley Dargatz UE.

completed her Masters degree at Queen's University – her graduation exercises were on the Friday prior. Kelly's thesis was on the influence of Loyalist women from the end of the Revolutionary War through 1812. It is titled "*Becoming 'Daughters of the Empire': The Loyalist Refugee Women's Experience in Upper Canada, 1783-1812.*" She spoke about portions of her thesis material. Kelly will be continuing her studies towards a PhD beginning in the fall.

Following a few closing remarks and words of appreciation, Colin Heath, Governor Simcoe Branch President, called forward Kim Hurst of Bicentennial Branch for the ceremonial passing of the Loyalist flag from one Conference hosting branch to the next.

It was a good conference with a good deal of excellent content. At the risk of omitting a name, thanks to Toronto Branch members: Karen Windover, John Warburton, Anne Rahamut, David Ellsworth, Diane Reid, Kathie Orr, Wanda Sinclair and to Governor Simcoe Branch members: Daryl Currie, Robert Heath, Lloyd Mellor, Anne Neuman, Margaret Taylor, Matt Warner, Doug Grant and Colin Heath.

Many meetings were held to prepare for the Conference and a special vote of thanks was given to Toronto Branch for the use of their Branch Office for those meetings.

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UELAC Honorary President, The
Hon. Peter Milliken BA, LLB, MA
(OXON), LLD, MP, UE, addresses
the luncheon guests at
Black Creek Pioneer Village.
Photo by Shirley Dargatz UE.