

## A passion for the past: Maryfield couple delves into geneology

BY AMANDA STEPHENSON

Fluttering proudly in the wind in Pat and Gerry Adair's farmyard near Maryfield is a flag that at first glance, looks like the British Union Jack. But look a little closer, and you realize it's not exactly the same flag—it's missing one diagonal red cross.

This flag is an older British flag dating back to 1606, and it is the symbol of the United Empire Loyalists. Here on the Adair farm, it is also a symbol of the family's pride in their heritage.

The Adairs are geneology buffs who have spent countless hours tracing their family tree. And what they have discovered is that Gerry's heritage can be traced back to a fascinating time in Canadian history—a time when close to 40,000 people fled the United States to seek refuge north of the border.

United Empire Loyalists is the term given to people who remained loyal to Britain during the American Revolution. After American independence, many of these people fled their homes for Canada, where they could continue to live under the British flag.

The approximately 40,000 Loyalists who flooded into Canada in the early 1780s had a huge impact on this country's population. It is estimated that five to six million Canadians today—about one-fifth of the country's population—are descended from a Loyalist ancestor.

Gerry Adair is one of them. While he only has evidentiary



Amanda Stephenson photo

Gerry and Pat Adair holding the certificates that officially proclaim that Gerry is descended from two United Empire Loyalists.

proof linking him to two Loyalist ancestors, he believes it is more likely that there are up to 12 in his family tree.

"I always knew my family was Loyalist—my grandma was very proud of it," Gerry says.

The Adairs' interest in geneology actually began with Pat's family, and a realization that if stories from the past aren't preserved, they could be lost forever.

"When my dad died, we real-

ized that we really didn't have much information and there was another link gone," Pat explains.

What the Adairs quickly discovered is that geneology can be addictive. Piecing together a family tree is like historical detective work—and once you get a taste for it, you're always on the lookout for one more discovery, one more piece to add to the puzzle.

The Adairs' sleuthing has enabled them to fill in quite a bit of that puzzle, and what they have found is fascinating. Gerry's family can be traced back to New York state prior to the American revolution, during which they fought for the British and later fled to Ontario.

One of Gerry's Loyalist ancestors was Valentine Detlor, the son of a German immigrant. Detlor's daughter Elizabeth married Darius Dunham, who became the first ordained Methodist minister in Canada.

Another ancestor was Jacob Bailey Chamberlain. At the age of 13 or 14, Chamberlain served as a spy for the British during the American Revolution—there are papers documenting secret meetings in the woods in which Chamberlain passed information to members of the British military. In later years, Chamberlain

became a doctor in Napanee, Ontario.

The family also boasts a distant link to Laura Secord, who went down in history as a Canadian hero after overhearing American troops talking about an impending surprise attack on Canadian and British forces during the War of 1812. Secord walked 19 miles through marshy swampland to warn the British, foiling the American plans.

Gerry and Pat are members of the Pipestone Branch of the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society and in 1999, they became members of the Regina Chapter of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. He now serves as Prairie Regional Vice-President for the organization, whose mandate is to keep alive the memory and help preserve the history of the Loyalists. The organization is also a great way for amateur geneologists to share information with each other. Gerry and Pat enjoy going to the annual conventions, not just for the camaraderie but also for the knowledge that is shared.

"You never know—you talk to the right people and you just might glean some more information," Gerry says.

Once geneology becomes a passion, it is easy to start logging long hours in pursuit of the family story. The Adairs have been to Ontario numerous times, exploring the places Gerry's ancestors lived long ago. And two years ago, they spent a week in Toronto poring through the archives looking for land grants and other documents.

"When we got back people said they wanted to see our pictures of Toronto. I said, 'what pictures?' all I saw were filing cabinets," Pat says with a laugh.

For anyone wanting to investigate their own family history but uncertain about where to begin, Gerry recommends starting slowly. "You start by doing yourself and your parents and you just work backwards," he says. "And don't believe your family lore—a lot of what the old folks remember is not always right."

There are many United Empire Loyalist descendants living in the Maryfield area. In addition to the Adairs, names like Ketcheson and Dunham can be traced back to Loyalist settlers. Anyone interested in getting involved with the United Empire Loyalists' Association is encouraged to contact Gerry Adair at 646-4952. The association's Regina branch is currently working on a book about Saskatchewan's Loyalist connections.



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The Adairs have amassed quite a collection of old family photos while researching the family tree.



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