

Researching Loyalist Ancestors

Class 2: Finding Loyalists in U.S. Records

David Allen Lambert, dalambert@nehgs.org

Loyalist Muster Rolls

- Online Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies:
<http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/musters/musters.htm>
- Ward Chipman “Muster Master’s Office, 1773-1785 Fonds (MG 23 D1):
<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/loyalists-ward-chipman>
- Carleton Papers, Loyalist and British Soldiers 1772-1784:
<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/loyalists-british-soldiers-1722-1784>

TIP: Adopt the Regiment – FAN Approach

Confiscations

- Determine the confiscated property of your ancestors from published accounts or “Memorials”
- Note the physical location of land, and buildings for auctions and deeds
- Personal property confiscated from Loyalists will generally be listed in “Memorials” of Loyalist Claims
- Ancestry.com database of New York Sales of Loyalist Land, 1762-1830:
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5368/>
- Fold3.com database of Revolutionary War Prize Cases – Captured Vessels:
<https://www.fold3.com/publication/468/revolutionary-war-prize-cases-captured-vessels>

Loyalist Claims

- Often include evidence and "memorials" given by witnesses about a Loyalists Claim
- List of losses of both land and personal possessions
- Associated documents relating to the claim are also provided in these collections
- Name of the person or family affected for the purpose of the claim
- Residence(s) of the individual or family
- Financial estimates of their losses
- Actual documents to support the claim
- Details of the Loyalist’s life in America before, during, and after the Revolution
- Audit Office (AO-12) and Audit Office (AO-13)
- Ancestry.com database of American Loyalist Claims, 1776-1835:
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3712/>

TIP: AO-12 is consolidated and easy to read; more abstracted than AO-13 that contain the original documents



Prisoners

- Fold3.com database of the Continental Congress Papers (which contain lists of Loyalist prisoners): <https://www.fold3.com/publication/63/continental-congress-papers>

TIP: When searching us “Tory” and “Loyalist”

Town Records

- Examine Town Records for mention of Loyalists
- Selectmen’s records often report Loyalists and confiscations
- Example: *Boston Record Commissioners Series, Selectmen’s Minutes from 1776 through 1786*
- Use FamilySearch.org catalog for searching Town Records by place

Newspaper Accounts

- Early American Newspapers via AmericanAncestors.org External Databases: <https://www.americanancestors.org/search/external-databases>
- Remember to search by name, location, and time frame
- Depending on if it is a paper published by the Loyalists or Americans search criteria will vary with the use Tory or Loyalist
- Include Arrests, obituaries, confiscated property auctions, and later historical context

Published Town Histories and Diaries

- Many 19th- and 20th- century town and county histories are written with a varied approach to Loyalist history; some ignore the fact there were loyalists in the community and focus on the Revolutionary veterans and supportive families
- Often Town histories will publish oral traditions in the community, and some will quote from town records verbatim
- Example: Daniel T. V. Huntoon’s *History of Canton, Massachusetts*
- Example: Rev. William Clark Papers, NEHGS Manuscript Mss 987
- Ancestry.com database, *The Diary of Thomas Vernon, a loyalist banished from Newport by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1776*: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/23194/>
- For a variety of Loyalist papers and diaries search using ArchiveGrid: <http://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/> and WorldCat <http://worldcat.org>

Study Projects

- AmericanAncestors.org database of David E. Maas published research *Divided Hearts, Massachusetts Loyalists, 1765-1790*: <https://www.americanancestors.org/search/databasesearch/80/massachusetts-divided-hearts-massachusetts-loyalists-1765-1790>
- American Philosophy Society Study Project on Maryland Loyalists: <https://www.amphilsoc.org/blog/announcing-maryland-loyalism-project>



Sources

Robert S. Allen, *The Loyal Americans: the military role of the Loyalist Provincial Corps and their settlement in British North America, 1775-1784* (Ottawa, ON: National Museum of Man: National Museums of Canada, 1983).

Paul J. Bunnell, *Research Guide to Loyalist Ancestors. A Directory to Archives and Published Sources* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1990).

_____, *The New Loyalist Index* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1989).

J.M. Bumstead, *Understanding the Loyalists* (Sackville, N.B.: Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison University, 1986).

Peter Wilson Coldham, F.A.S.G., *American Loyalist Claims. Abstracted from the Public Record Office Audit Office Series 13, Bundles 1-35 & 37* (Washington, D.C., National Genealogical Society, 1980).

Andrew McFarland Davis, "The Confiscation Laws of Massachusetts." *The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Publications*, VIII (January 1903), 50-72.

Eugene R. Fingerhut, "Uses and Abuses of the American Loyalists' Claims: A Critique of Quantitative Analysis." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XXV (April 1968), 245-258.

John Tyler Hassam, *The Confiscated estates of Boston Loyalists* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, University Press, 1895).

Edward Alfred Jones, *The Loyalists of Massachusetts: their memorials, petitions and claims* (London: The Saint Catherine Press, 1930).

Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution with an Historical Essay* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1966).

John W. Tyler, *Connecticut Loyalists. An analysis of Land Confiscation in Greenwich, Stamford and Norwalk* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977).