

Tracing Loyalist Lineages

Sources and Strategies

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Who were the Loyalists?

- Individuals who remained loyal to the British Crown during the American Revolution
- Also known as Tories, Royalists, and later, Refugees
- Lived in all thirteen colonies and hailed from all political, social, and economic groups
- Approximately 15-20% of the population
- Included Native Peoples, immigrants, and people of color

Reasons for Loyalty

- Identified as British subjects
- Politically conservative
- Family ties to the British Crown
- Business relationship with the British Crown
- Personal advantage to remaining loyal
- Employed by the British Crown
- Saw Patriot cause as radical
- Former soldiers who served in British Army
- Newly arrived immigrants from Britain
- Personal reasons

Events leading to the Revolution

Debts incurred by the British Crown after the Seven Years' War and the French and Indian War prompted British to raise revenue from their colonies. In turn, the British government taxed the thirteen colonies, e.g., Revenue or Sugar Act of 1764, Stamp Act of 1765, Townshend Acts of 1767. Met with wide disapproval in the colonies, these forms of taxation helped to sow the seeds for independence. The Tea Act of 1773 was passed to subdue financial difficulties of the East India Company, which allowed the company to avoid a tax and sell the tea at a reduced rate in the colonies. Outrage leads to the Boston Tea Party. To punish Massachusetts, Coercive Acts are passed, which closed the port of Boston and revoked the Massachusetts charter. A quartering act was also included, which required colonists to provide food and housing for British troops.

The First Continental Congress met in September of 1774, where the Articles of Association were adopted and the ban on the importation and consumption of British goods. Many local committees were established to enforce the Association and ban. Those found guilty of subversion were publicly slandered and renounced. The Articles of Association were seen as a catalyst in the formation of two groups: those supporting the patriot cause and those against, or Whigs versus Tories.

Persecution and Life in the Colonies

Test laws were passed in all colonies requiring allegiance to the patriot cause. Those who refused faced imprisonment, banishment, loss of legal rights, or even execution. Further laws limited freedom of speech, increased taxes, confiscated property, and criminalized loyalty to the British Crown.

Life in the colonies proved difficult for those with loyalist sympathies. Faced with violence, many fled to Britain, Canada, or to more secure locations within the colonies. There, they found protection and opportunity amongst stronger numbers of loyalists. Others joined the provincial units of the British Army where they fought alongside other loyalists.

After the Revolution and Resettlement

The Treaty of Paris was signed in September of 1783, ending the war. The British worked to withdraw troops from the southern colonies to New York City, leaving loyalists vulnerable. Many fled to the Bahamas and Jamaica; many remained in New York City. Evacuation transportation was organized by Sir Guy Carleton and other officials worked to ready lands and supplies for the influx of loyalists to Canada. In Nova Scotia, private lands were reacquired, and timber, tools, and rations obtained. Officials, engineers, clerks, and surveyors worked to prepare new communities. Large numbers of loyalists also settled in New Brunswick, Ontario, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island.

How to identify Loyalists in your Family Tree

Study your ancestor's location and residence

- Where did they reside? When did they reside there?
- Create a timeline of your ancestor's life
 - Use vital records, deeds, court, town, and tax records to track residences
- Note family, associates, and neighbors
 - Research all
 - Loyalist? Patriot?

Important questions

- Did your ancestor live in a town, county, or colony with Loyalist leanings?
- Were family members Loyalists?
- What about neighbors or associates?

Loyalist Population Rankings (by numbers, not percentage)

- | | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. New York | 8. Virginia | 5. Pennsylvania | 12. New Hampshire |
| 2. South Carolina | 9. Georgia | 6. North Carolina | 13. Delaware |
| 3. Massachusetts | 10. Maryland | 7. Connecticut | |
| 4. New Jersey | 11. Rhode Island | | |

Loyalist strongholds

- Savannah
- Boston
- Charleston
- Annapolis
- New York City
- Baltimore
- Newport, Rhode Island
- Philadelphia
- Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Timing

- Did your ancestor arrive in what is now Canada in the 1780s?
 - Ontario
 - Quebec
 - Nova Scotia
 - New Brunswick
 - Prince Edward Island
- Did they receive a land grant in 1783 or after?

Beware! Not everyone who settled in what is now Canada in the late 18th century were Loyalists. Many were drawn to the region by economic opportunity and available lands.

How can I tell the difference?

- Settlement
 - Loyalists often settled amongst themselves
 - Geography
 - Military
- Land grants given in and after 1783
- Who did they interact with?
- Identify and research all associates!

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 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, abstracted, and easy to read; AO-13 contains 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 use “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
- Search terms of Tory or Loyalist 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>

Loyalists to Canada

Passenger Lists

- During the evacuation from New York, nine transport ships left on October 19, 1782, and arrived at Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia a few days later
- The "Spring Fleet" launched on April 11, 1783; ships continued to travel throughout the spring and autumn, arriving as late as January 15, 1784
- United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada (UELAC) Loyalist Ships Database -
<https://uelac.ca/loyalist-ships>
 - Some of the passenger lists referenced have more detail than others: Some include little more than a name and whether a woman or child; Others may be more detailed (ex. Book of Negroes in the Carleton Papers)

Land Grants

- Petitions were submitted that stated whether the Loyalist was a soldier or supported the British in some other way
- Petitions could be submitted by the children of the Loyalist
- If petition was approved, the claimant was provided with a ticket with the township and lot # of the land they were awarded

- Land grant petitions for Lower Canada (Quebec) and Upper Canada (Ontario) can be found on the Library and Archives Canada website
- Land records for New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island are held at the provincial level:
 - New Brunswick - <https://archives.gnb.ca/Archives/?culture=en-CA>
 - Land Petitions: Original Series, 1783-1918
 - New Brunswick Land Grants, 1784-1997
 - Nova Scotia
 - Nova Scotia Land Papers 1765-1800 - <https://archives.novascotia.ca/land-papers/>
 - Prince Edward Island
 - Master Name Index - <https://peigs.ca/search-master-name-index/>
- Also check FamilySearch.org (see “Online Collections” below for links)

Black Loyalists

- Dunmore Proclamation decreed that any enslaved person who joined the British to fight against the American rebels would be freed from slavery
- Thousands joined British forces and were separated into military units; often served as scouts, raiders, and military engineers; sometimes they did engage in direct combat
- Following the end of the Revolutionary War, General George Washington demanded the return of all American property, including the enslaved
- Thousands of enslaved persons were relocated; Sir Guy Carleton oversaw the evacuation of Black Loyalists to other British territories, including Jamaica, London, and Nova Scotia
- Major settlements included:
 - Birchtown (near Shelburne)
 - Brindley (near Digby)
 - Negro Line (now Southville, Digby County)
 - Old Tracadie Road (Guysborough County)
 - Preston
- Due to poor economic, social, and political conditions, thousands of Black Loyalists left Nova Scotia on ships headed to Sierra Leone to settle in the colony known as Freetown
- Approximately 50 families remained in Halifax and other cities in Nova Scotia

Loyalists to Great Britain

- There is no estimate for the total number of Loyalists that fled to Great Britain, however, many went to Canada first, and then returned to England later to file for claims for compensation
- Pensions were paid out by the Treasury before the American Loyalist Commission was formed; the pension and allowance payments to American Loyalists and other refugees (which included women and children) are held at the National Archives in Kew, England under AO 3/276 - <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C2573124>.

- Many Loyalists that returned fought for compensation for losses in the American colonies (record set AO 12 and 13); the American Loyalist Claims database on Ancestry.com has the digitized records from these series (see Class 2 for more information on these records)
- Military officers (and their surviving widows and family members) filed for pensions and other benefits; record set WO 42 includes the personnel records of the military officers and contains details such as vital records, probate records, and other papers (digitized on Ancestry.com)
- Military pension records include the Royal Hospital Chelsea (WO 97 and 120 series); the Royal Hospital Chelsea was the administrative office for the British Army (digitized on Ancestry.com)
- Look for probate records in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and York, and the Episcopal Consistory Court in London for Loyalists who returned to England or died overseas

Loyalists to the Caribbean

- According to a report presented to the Bahamas House of Assembly in 1789, 1,200 Whites and 3,600 Blacks arrived between 1784 and 1785 [the enslaved were listed as "servants" to avoid possible claims issues with the United States]
- Most Loyalists who went to Jamaica came from Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Virginia; there were 3,000 Loyalists who took 8,000 enslaved persons to Jamaica
- Research land, probate, and church records in these areas; some records may be offline and held in the country's archives

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Resources: Online Collections & Databases

FamilySearch.org

- Bahamas Land and Property Records, 1788-1955 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/228489>
- British Military Records "C" Series, 1757-1899, Location at the National Archives of Canada - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/397529>
- Church of England, Diocese of Jamaica, Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/255086>
- Lower Canada Land Petitions and Related Records, 1637-1842 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/500672>
- Upper Canada Petitions for Land Grants and Leases, 1791-1867 - <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/2186363>

Library and Archives of Canada Databases:

- Black Loyalist Refugees, 1782-1807 – Port Roseway Associates - <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/loyalist-port-roseway/Pages/port-roseway-associates-loyalists.aspx>
- British Military and Naval Records - <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/mass-digitized-archives/british-military-naval-records-index>
- Carleton Papers – Book of Negroes, 1783 - <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/loyalists/book-of-negroes/Pages/search.aspx>
- Land Petitions of Lower Canada - <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-lower-canada-1764-1841>
- Land Petitions of Upper Canada - <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-petitions-upper-canada-1763-1865>

Ancestry.com Databases (\$):

- England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5111>
- London, England, Wills and Probate, 1507-1858 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1704>
- UK, American Loyalist Claims, 1776-1835 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3712>
- UK, Pension Applications for Widows and Family of Military Officers, 1776-1881 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3353/>
- UK, Royal Hospital, Chelsea: Regimental Registers of Pensioners, 1713-1882 - <https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/3255>

Resources: Websites

- American Ancestors – <https://www.americanancestors.org>
- Ancestry – www.ancestry.com
- Black Loyalist Heritage Society - <https://blackloyalist.com/cdc/>
- FamilySearch – www.familysearch.org
- Jamaican Family Search - <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/>
- Library and Archives Canada - <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Pages/home.aspx>
- Loyalist Collection at the University of New Brunswick - <https://loyalist.lib.unb.ca/>
- Nova Scotia Archives - <https://archives.novascotia.ca/>
- Provincial Archives of New Brunswick - <https://archives.gnb.ca/Archives/?culture=en-CA>
- Public Archives and Records Office (Prince Edward Island) - <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/search-public-archives-material-online>
- United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada - <https://uelac.ca/>
- University of Illinois Chicago – Sierra Leone Collection - https://collections.carli.illinois.edu/digital/collection/uic_sierra