



A Message from the President and CEO

When we think of the American Revolution, we often picture the determined Patriot, musket in hand, fighting for liberty. But the Revolution was also America's first civil war: a conflict that divided towns, congregations, and even families. Historians estimate that about 40 percent of the population supported the Patriot cause. In comparison, 20 percent remained loyal to the Crown, generally for reasons of principle, livelihood, or personal safety.

At American Ancestors, we believe these Loyalist stories are essential to understanding the Revolution through the lens of family history. Our extensive holdings and research resources bring these Loyalist lives into sharper focus, revealing a more multifaceted picture of the era.

We maintain numerous resources for tracing Loyalists. *New Englanders in Nova Scotia*, a database drawn from our Fred E. Crowell Collection, documents tens of thousands of New England Planters and Loyalists who resettled in the Maritime provinces before and after the war. Through our genealogical articles and original research material, you can trace families who left Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York to begin new lives under continued British rule.

Another powerful resource available on AmericanAncestors.org is the *Black Loyalist Directory*. This database provides the names, ages, physical descriptions, and evacuation records of thousands of formerly enslaved people who were transported to Canada by the British at the end of the war. These individuals risked everything, seeking the freedom promised in proclamations like Lord Dunmore's in 1775. Their stories—marked by courage, peril, and hope—invite us to reflect on liberty not as an abstract ideal, but as a deeply personal pursuit.

For those eager to explore Loyalist ancestry further, our staff offers deep expertise and regular educational programs on the subject. Through live seminars and online content, we provide guidance on how to navigate muster rolls, land petitions, and Loyalist claims—tools that help uncover the motivations and movements of those who lived through this transformational period.



United Empire Loyalist statue in Hamilton, Ontario, 1929.
Saforrest/Wikimedia Commons.

Studying Loyalists invites us to ask new and sometimes challenging questions: Who in our families fought—and for what cause? What principles did they stand for? What risks did they take? These questions matter because family history matters. It connects us to the decisions, dilemmas, and dreams of those who came before us. And it reminds us that the American Revolution was not a single story, but a mosaic of human experience—marked by loyalty, loss, resilience, and reinvention.

During these 250th anniversary years, I encourage you to explore all sides of your family's Revolutionary past. Let your discoveries anchor you in the broader arc of American history—a history where the personal and the national are inseparable.

Whether your ancestors supported the Revolution or the British Crown or found themselves in the uncertain spaces between, their stories belong to the tapestry of America. This Revolutionary history can be meaningful and powerful for all Americans, no matter when our ancestors arrived in this country. By recovering and remembering the wide range of experiences of those who lived through the Revolution, we honor the full complexity of our past—and the diverse legacies that still shape our future.

Warmest regards,

Ryan J. Woods, President & CEO