

The Revolution is Over, Now What?

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[Norman K Crowder is an experienced professional with numerous books to his credit. The BIFHSGO, Ottawa Branch OGS and Toronto Branch OGS have published many of his works. The Genealogical Publishing Company of Baltimore has published his Ontario People: 1796 – 1803; Early Ontario Settlers: A Source Book; and British Army Pensioners Abroad. In the spring of 1999 the Ontario Genealogical Society awarded him a Citation of Recognition and in the fall of 1999 the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa elected him to its Hall of Fame.]

It was a very long war. It was preceded by a number of serious early incidents - the Boston Tea Party in 1773 and the violent resistance to punitive acts against the city of Boston in 1774; but the outright warfare began in 1775 with the creation of the Continental Army and the appointment of George Washington as Commander in Chief of the American forces. In that year Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold led a group of men and took the British outposts at Ticonderoga and Crown Point. Richard Montgomery's 1200 troops invaded Canada and captured Montreal. The war effectively ended with the defeat of Lord Cornwallis in 1781 at Yorktown but peace was not declared until 1783, eight years after the beginning of the war.

It was a civil war – and a very uncivil one that divided families, neighbours and communities. Many historians consider that it was the first American civil war, some 90 years before the American Civil War of the 1860s. It affected all classes of society, with parents versus children, brothers versus brothers, even husbands versus wives. Near Kinderhook, New York, Andries Kittle left home to join the British army and his wife Catharine found their home confiscated by the Council of Safety. She proved with evidence from witnesses that she had always been opposed to her husband's conduct and subsequently the State Legislature restored the estate to her. At the other end of the social scale, Benjamin Franklin after many years of close ties to his son William became estranged from him; they were never reconciled even after the end of the war.

It was an unpopular war. On the British side, much of the public disapproved of waging war against their American compatriots, often considered as Englishmen overseas. The strength of the opposition was reflected in the failure to recruit soldiers for the war in America, resulting in the need to hire about 30,000 Germans in mercenary units. On the American side, John Adams, an educated and observant man who was present in the American Revolution and later was the second president of the United States, declared that one third of the people were in favour of independence, one third were opposed to it and the other third would have preferred to remain neutral. Even among those who fought for independence, morale was often poor on account of not being paid for months and being poorly equipped. There were several cases of outright mutiny over their poor conditions - to discourage such uprisings, in January 1781 several mutinous non-commissioned officers were shot by a firing squad composed of other prominent mutineers!

It was a bitter, brutal war with many atrocities committed by both sides. Many Loyalist families suffered

abuse and some were held hostage as bait to lure their husbands into traps to capture them. The German soldiers were reviled as infamous and cruel; curiously, however, many Germans were allowed to stay and settle in America after the war. Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton, the young commandant of the British Legion, was renowned for his daring and vigour but was hated by the Americans because he was cold-hearted, vindictive and utterly ruthless.

It was a strange war. When American General Richard Montgomery was killed in 1776, he was praised by British politicians as brave, able, humane and generous. Benedict Arnold, the hero of Saratoga who rallied the American troops in an attack that led to the defeat of General 'Gentleman Johnny' Burgoyne, later switched sides and joined the British. The British Commander in Chief, Sir William Howe, sympathized with the American rebel colonists and attempted unsuccessfully to meet and negotiate a settlement with George Washington in order to end the conflict.

It was a war that divided the powerful Iroquois Confederacy of Six Nations – the Continental Congress was supported by the Oneidas and Tuscaroras, while the Mohawks, Onandagas, Cayugas, and Senecas sided with the British. They were fierce and greatly feared warriors but unreliable as allies. In the Oriskany Campaign at the siege of Fort Stanwix in 1777 when it became obvious that there would be no opportunity to secure loot, the Indians plundered British supplies and then deserted. After Cornwallis' defeat in 1781, the Indians learned that negotiations were under way to secure a peace treaty and they had not been consulted on its terms. Upon learning that their interests had been neglected, they were on the verge of uprising and massacring their British and Loyalist allies; it took the combined efforts of both Mary and Joseph Brant to dissuade them.

It was a war in which both sides were humiliated or disgraced. The British suffered many defeats from incompetence and mismanagement. In 1777 General Burgoyne with a huge force of 10,000 British and German soldiers and some Loyalists encountered delays which eventually led to his defeat by a smaller force of 7,000 Americans. At the end of the war, Lord Cornwallis recklessly dashed about Virginia, confident that if he ran into difficulties he could make his way to the Atlantic coast where the British Navy would rescue him. When eventually he was in jeopardy he reached the coast and signaled to the offshore warships, he was astounded to find that the ships belonged to the French Navy, leading to his surrender. The Americans too had their share of misfortune - Burgoyne's

surrender was under a 'convention,' a European arrangement which meant that the defeated troops gave up their arms and then went home, promising not to take any further part in the war. This was a sensible practice which saved lives on both sides and conserved the victor's manpower by avoiding the necessity of using troops to guard and take care of the prisoners.

Unfortunately the Continental Congress refused to ratify the convention and declared that the British troops would have to remain as prisoners of war. This decision disgraced the Americans in the eyes of the Europeans; but even worse was to follow. Congress decided not to feed the prisoners in their long trek to Virginia prison camps, where half of the prisoners died before the end of the war. This barbarous behaviour brought discredit upon the nation.

This long, uncivil, bitter and unpopular war finally officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 3 September 1783. It was almost eight years since the war began when American Generals Richard Montgomery and Benedict Arnold invaded Canada in the fall of 1775. During this eight-year struggle thousands of people on both sides of the conflict died, were wounded or went missing.

For the two years prior to the peace treaty there had been little military activity after Lord Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown on 19 October 1781 – effectively the war had ended with only scattered skirmishes since then. During this period British and German regulars and Loyalist provincials had little to do. Similarly on the American side Continental and militia soldiers were inactive and suffering from poor morale and no pay. Mutiny was a constant prospect among the Americans; it took strenuous efforts by George Washington and his officers to maintain discipline.

Added to the concerns on the American side was the desire of the men to return home to secure the bounty land that many of the states had promised to give to their native sons after the war. So long as the men were serving in the military, they could not go home and inspect their land, which increased their frustration and contributed to worsening morale.

Given the obvious advantage of accelerating the discharge of American men to economize and improve morale, why did it not happen? The problem lay in the terms of the enlistment process – the men signed on for an indefinite period with an assurance that their pay accounts would be settled in full when they were eventually discharged. The Continental Congress was, however, bankrupt and could not pay the troops so they faced the prospect of remaining in uniform indefinitely. This was a Catch 22 situation – the longer the men remained in uniform, the greater the amount of accrued back pay and the increased difficulty in settling their accounts. Eventually a solution was found which enabled most of the men to return home and acquire their bounty lands without violating the terms of their enlistment agreement – they were allowed to return home on "leave without pay!" As they were still technically in the army, it was not necessary at that time to give them their back pay. Eventually they were paid in scrip with an assurance that it would be redeemed in cash as soon as economic conditions permitted; unfortunately most of the men gave away or traded their scrip for almost nothing, so speculators were the ones who profited in the long run.

Most of the men benefitted from this arrangement but not all! Early in the Revolution, Major Moses Hazen, a retired English officer, approached the British authorities with an offer to raise troops on condition that he be promoted. When his offer was rejected he went to the Continental Congress with a similar proposition. This time it was welcomed and Colonel Hazen recruited Canadians for his unit, which became the 2nd Canadian Regiment or 'Hazen's Own.' Obviously there was no prospect of these men going to Quebec, much less receiving bounty land for their services to the enemy. After they had languished for some time in military camps, the stalemate was resolved when the State of New York adopted them and they were discharged and given bounty land in American territory.

The British too had severe problems. Its stronghold and centre of operations was in New York City with thousands of British and German regular troops as well as multitudes of Loyalists and refugees. The evacuation of all these people represented an enormous logistical problem for Sir Guy Carleton, the Commander in Chief. It was complicated by the arrival of more Loyalist families wishing to flee the hostile environment in America and take advantage of the offer to be transported to Nova Scotia and Canada, at the same time being harassed by American officials. The situation is described in Earle Thomas' book *Greener Pastures*; it was dramatically shown in an excellent National Film Board documentary entitled *The World Turned Upside Down*, which describes the plight of Ben Ingraham and his family who eventually settled in New Brunswick.

An unforeseen problem confronted the British authorities – the fate of the thousands of black persons in New York City. Early in the war black slaves of American masters had been induced to desert their owners and help the British forces, thus harming the American economy and increasing the supply of labour available to the British army. Some became soldiers by serving in the Black Pioneers; others supported the British cause in other ways. These people were promised their freedom from slavery at the end of the war but the difficulty in implementing this problem lay in the terms of the Treaty of Paris under which the British had agreed to return property to American owners – and slaves were considered 'property.' Thus the British faced a dilemma – keep their promise and they would ignore the provisions of the treaty or return the slaves and break their promise to the blacks who had aided the British forces. Fortunately an honourable solution was found which was acceptable to both sides – the British authorities agreed to pay compensation to the American owners of black slaves and permitted those who had arrived in New York City prior to the signing of the peace treaty to depart on the outgoing vessels. As black families approached the vessels, they were interrogated by a joint team of British and American officers, who recorded details in a record later known as *Carleton's Book of Negroes*. It forms part of a selective index to a record of the inhabitants of New York City in the British Military Headquarters Papers which were compiled by members of Sir Guy Carleton Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. This index has been published as *Carleton's Loyalist Index* and is available as a CD-ROM or a set of computer diskettes for \$25 postpaid from John Ruch, 1805-71 Somerset Street West,

Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2G2. It may also be purchased from Global Genealogy by telephoning 1-800-361-5168.

During 1783 priority was given to evacuating, from New York City, those people who wished to settle in Nova Scotia: Loyalists, some British and German soldiers, and two small groups of Loyalists who wished to go on to Quebec and settle on Lake Ontario. The two small groups are the subject of Larry Turner's *Voyage of a Different Kind*. Once these people had been removed in two major armadas called the Spring Fleet and the Fall Fleet, the withdrawal of the regular troops was effected by the end of November 1783. The reception of the settlers in Nova Scotia was chaotic; plans to distribute land and provisions were completely inadequate; many spent the winter of 1783-84 in unheated tents. The fate of the freed black people was even worse, when they received land at all, it was in small lots and generally of poor quality. Many blacks did not obtain provisions and they had no civil rights. Consequently when an opportunity arose in 1792 to remove to Sierra Leone in Africa, about one third of the community accepted it.

Discontent with the poor conditions in Nova Scotia caused agitation for a separate colony and in 1784 New Brunswick was severed from Nova Scotia and came largely under Loyalist control. Marion Gilroy's *Loyalists and Land Settlement in Nova Scotia* and Esther Clark Wright's *The Loyalists of New Brunswick* provide details of land allotted to these settlers. Records of petitions for land in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are held by the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick respectively.

Many Loyalists and their families came overland from Vermont and New York to join their friends and relatives in military and refugee camps in Quebec. During 1783 Governor Haldimand arranged for surveys of land to be carried out in what is now Ontario and made vigorous efforts to secure provisions and tools to be distributed to the settlers. Settlement in Quebec was discouraged; transport was provided up the St. Lawrence River in the spring of 1784 to areas which had been surveyed for settlement by regiments and rations, clothing, tools and tents were distributed. Arrangements were much more efficient than in

the Maritimes and morale was much higher.

All did not run smoothly however when the Loyalists learned in 1786 that they were not to have freehold possession of their land grants. The Crown's intention was to let them settle without payment of rent for ten years and then levy substantial annual charges. Adding to the discontent was the discovery that the Royal Highland Emigrants had received much larger land grants than the other Loyalist units. These problems were settled by changing the policy in 1788 to make outright land grants and make them as large as those of the Royal Highland Emigrants. Moreover grants were permitted to the children of the Loyalists when they came of age or, in the case of daughters, when they married. There was still the continuing concern about being forced to live under French civil law; this was eventually resolved in 1791 by the expedient of dividing Quebec into two parts; the eastern part, called Lower Canada, retained the French civil law and seigneurial land tenure, and the western part, called Upper Canada, was given English common law and freehold land tenure. For a good account of the Upper Canada (Ontario) settlement process see Mary Beacock Fryer's *The King's Men*; Norman K. Crowder's *Early Ontario Settlers* provides details of the names of the settlers and where they were located.

The National Archives of Canada in Ottawa has a vast store of Loyalist records including petitions for land in present-day Ontario and Quebec. It has muster rolls for military units and for Loyalist settlements in Upper and Lower Canada as well as the Ward Chipman papers with rolls of disbanded soldiers and Loyalists settlers in the Maritimes. It also has copies of the British Audit Office records of Loyalist claims for compensation for losses sustained; they frequently give information on their residences and standard of living in the American colonies as well as details of their treatment at the hands of former neighbours and friends.

Britain lost the war and its thirteen American colonies. The American colonies lost up to 100,000 people, many of them good citizens. Canada gained two new colonies: New Brunswick and Upper Canada (later Canada West and still later Ontario) and thousands of new settlers. ©

Internet Sources of Information

The Global Gazette <<http://globalgazette.net/>>, see especially articles on Loyalists by Brenda Dougall Merriman

The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies <<http://www.royalprovincial.com/>>.

The UEL Association of Canada <<http://people.becon.org/~uela/uela.htm>>.

The Olive Tree <<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ote/>>.

Bill Martin's Page <<http://www.tbaytel/bmartin/index2.htm>>.

[Editor's Note: The above article is a transcript of a talk given by Norman K Crowder at the Sixth Annual BIFHSGO Conference]

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been allowed to photograph the personal records of 3.5 million British soldiers, sailors and airmen from the First World War. Usually known as the 'burnt documents' they were badly damaged in an air raid in 1940 and have not been available to the general public because of their fragile condition. As a result of the PRO/Mormon co-operation 2.75 million records will become available, joining the 750,000 files that escaped damage. Some are available now and the rest will be released in the next two to three years.