

THE LOYALISTS



Loyalists Showing Love for Their Land. 1783

Many years after the landing of the Loyalists, Elizabeth Chipman described to her grandchildren her feelings of desolation when she was left in Saint John in 1783. "I climbed to the top of Chipman's Hill and watched the sails disappearing in the distance and such a feeling of loneliness came over me that, although I had shed not a tear through all that terrible war, I sat down on the damp moss with my baby in my lap and wept."

Following the American Revolutionary War, about 50,000 Loyalists came to the wilderness known as British North America. The coming of the Loyalists changed our land forever. They had lost everything -

homes, land, positions of honour, family members and although they had been granted amnesty in the peace agreement, they were turned out of their homeland with curses, jeers, and threats of death.

When it was shockingly certain that the British had lost the war and that the Loyalists would not be welcomed under any conditions, one group set up The Bay of Fundy Adventurers. In 1782, a group arrived at the mouth of the Saint John River to explore this almost uncharted area. Soon afterwards on May 27, 1783, fifty sailing ships left Sandy Hook destined for Nova Scotia. About 2,400 of the refugees on these ships arrived in the harbour at Saint John. They were shocked to discover nothing but a rocky wilderness. Elizabeth Chipman sat down on the grass and wept.

Sarah Frost wrote in her diary, "It is, I think, the roughest land I ever saw. We are all ordered to land tomorrow and not a shelter to go under." On the rough and forbidding hillside, brushwood was cleared away and the first rude settlement commenced. The English government had made a grant of ten million pounds for the relief of the outcasts. At the end of a year, they had issued nearly two million feet of boards, a million and a half of shingles and seven thousand five hundred clapboards. When winter arrived more than fifteen hundred dwellings had been erected.

The following is a brief account of living conditions taken from the diary of Hannah Ingraham who arrived with her family in the Fall Fleet. Her father, Benjamin Ingraham, was a disbanded soldier.

"There were no deaths on board, but several babies were born. It was a sad, sick time after we landed in Saint John. We had to live in tents. It was just at the first snow then and the melting snow and the rain would soak up into our beds as we lay. Mother got so chilled and developed rheumatism and was never well afterwards. (Gorham, ed., Narrative of Hannah Ingraham, P.A.C.)"

At the close of the Revolutionary war, there were within the British lines at New York about 2,000 escaped slaves. The British generals, notably Sir Henry Clinton, had offered protection to all slaves who escaped to the British lines. Some of the black refugees enlisted in the army as pioneers, drummers, and buglers; and one corps, The Black Pioneers, formed in 1776, consisted solely of Negroes.

During the peace negotiations, Washington demanded the restoration of the slaves to their former owners, but Sir Guy Carleton refused to consider such a move. He contended that if the Negroes were returned they would be executed or receive severe punishment. He added that if "sending them away should thereafter be deemed an infraction of the treaty of peace, compensation must be made by the British government." In view of that possibility he directed a register be kept of all the Negroes sent away with the Loyalists. In this register was entered the name, age, occupation, and also the name and residence of the former owner of

each slave. In a short time, transports were provided to carry them to different parts of Nova Scotia which included New Brunswick.

These black loyalists had endured great hardship to get to the British and they served with credit throughout the war. At its termination, the survivors were promised their freedom, land grants and the same treatment as the white loyalists. However, slavery was not abolished until 1834, their land grants were half what the white loyalists received and were on land nobody else wanted.

An added complication was that those of the Loyalists who had been in affluent circumstances in the old colonies as a rule brought with them their slaves. There was an exception. In Charlotte Co. a colony of Quaker Loyalists formed an association to settle together "on the River St. Johns in Nova Scotia". At the head of their agreement were the words, "No Slave Master Admitted." This gives them the distinction of being the only avowed anti-slavery settlement to have existed in British North America at this time.