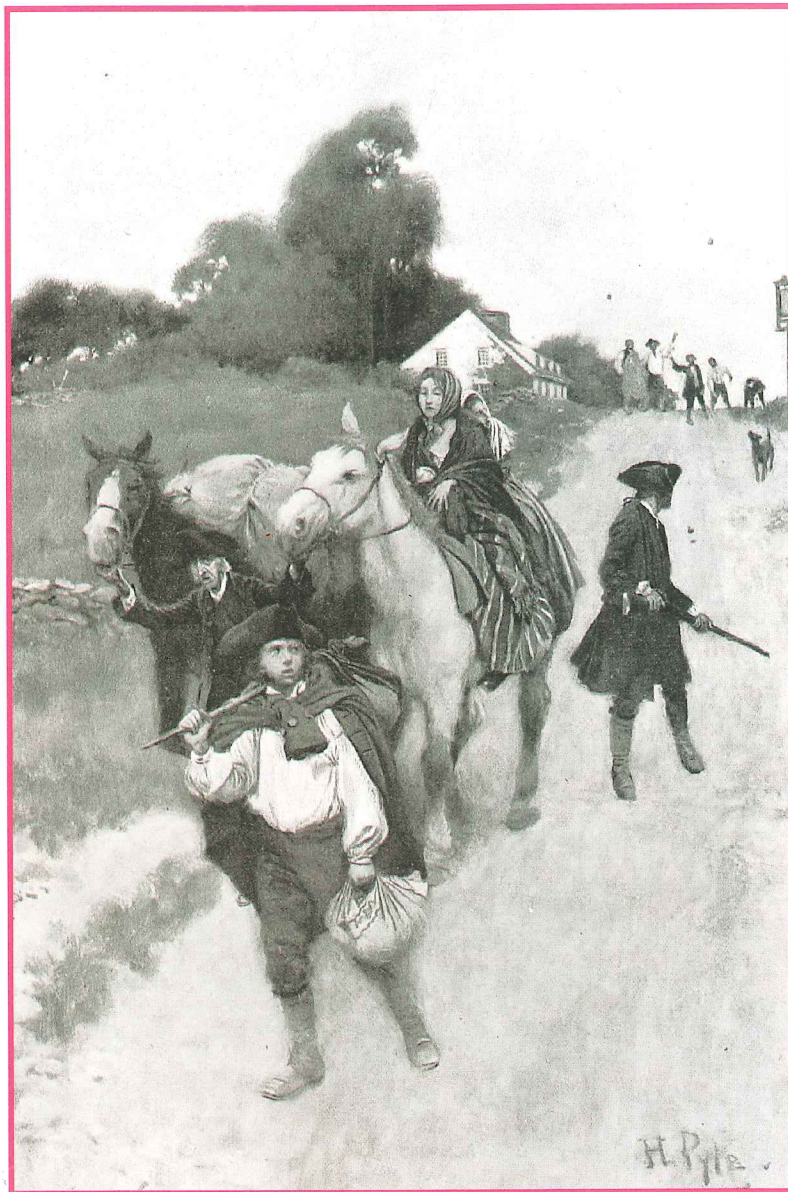


# The King's Friends



*Tory Refugees on Their Way to Canada.* During and after the American Revolution, thousands of Loyalists travelled north by land and sea to settle in British North America.

*Tories with their brats and wives  
Should fly to save their wretched lives.*

Beginning in 1776 and continuing for a decade, a steady stream of political **refugees**, called Tories, came to the British colonies of Quebec and Nova Scotia from the 13 American colonies. After the Treaty of Paris in 1783, these people came to be known as Loyalists.

**Refugee** — person who leaves home or country to seek safety elsewhere

The Tories fled from the Patriots because they did not agree with the Patriots' belief that British rule should be overthrown. They left the Thirteen Colonies in order to get to safer British territory. Since the colonies to the north had remained British and were close by, they settled there.

## An Unusual Kind of Punishment

Some Tories were killed by the Patriots. Others endured a punishment called being "tarred and feathered." Prospective victims sometimes received a warning in the form of a ball of cold tar with a couple of feathers attached. After this warning, the potential victims could usually be seen on their way to British North America.

A victim who remained was often pulled out of his home by a crowd of men and taken to a bonfire. He was usually forced to watch the tar being melted over the fire, so that he could think about the pain he was going to experience. He was then stripped of his clothing, and the boiling tar was poured over him. The victim was then made to roll in a pile of feathers. Often he was made to sit with his legs on either side of a sharp rail, and his tormentors would carry him around the town so that everyone could see what happened to people who were loyal to their king. Removal of the tar was very painful. Often the person's blistered skin would peel off along with the cold tar.

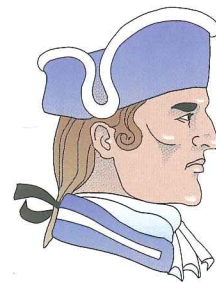
## Loyalists

Many of these Tories had been physically mistreated by the Patriots, their businesses destroyed, and their homes taken away from them. In the Treaty of Paris of 1783, which ended the American Revolution, the Americans promised to repay the people whose homes or other property had been destroyed. This promise was never kept.

The coming of the Loyalists changed British North America greatly. Their arrival resulted in the creation of two new colonies. The new colony of New Brunswick was formed from a part of the colony of Nova Scotia. Also, the colony of Quebec was split into Lower Canada (now the province of Quebec) and Upper Canada (now the province of Ontario). You will read about this later in the chapter.

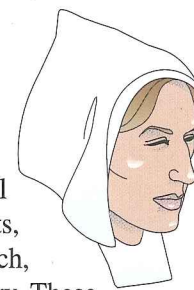
## There Were Many Kinds of Loyalists

The Patriots described a Loyalist as "someone whose head is in England, whose body is in America, and whose neck should be stretched." This saying meant that the Loyalists should be hanged for their loyalty to Britain and the British government. But did all of the Loyalists leave the Thirteen Colonies because they were loyal to Britain? Read the examples below to find out about some of the other reasons why people left the Thirteen Colonies.

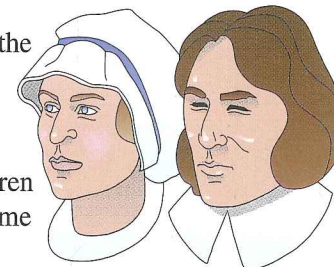


One of the Loyalists fled to Halifax when the rebels captured his home town of Boston. Nine days before he left, he had married a poor woman because he believed that she was rich. When he discovered that she was not, he abandoned her. In Halifax, he pretended to be a bachelor, and married a widow there. We can only wonder whether it was for her money.

A commonly held opinion has been that the Loyalists were mainly of British descent. It is now known that their nationalities varied. As well as the English, the Irish, and the Scots, there were Loyalists of German, Dutch, French, Iroquois, and African ancestry. These people hoped that Britain would protect their special customs and traditions.

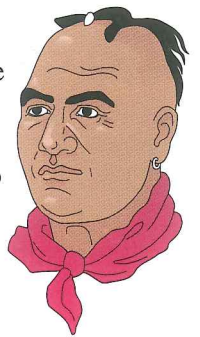


Some groups feared the democratic ideas of the Americans. They knew that if they stayed in the United States their children would be forced to become like everyone else (**homogeneous**). Many of the people came to America to keep their own culture and religion. They felt all this would be lost if they stayed in the United States, so they packed up and moved north to British territory, where they felt their way of life would be protected.



Some blacks came to British North America because they had no choice in the matter. They were slaves and went where their masters went. Many blacks came as free people, like the other Loyalists.\*

Most of the Iroquois, such as Thayendanegea (Joseph Brant),\*\* were Loyalists. They had fought alongside the British regiments. Many of the Iroquois believed that they had more to fear from American farmers, who wanted to move onto lands where the Iroquois lived, than from the British.

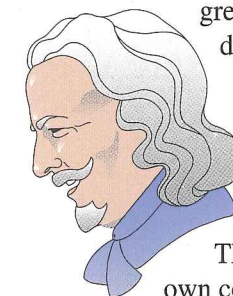


The Loyalists were people of many different religions. There were Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Quakers, and Mennonites. Some of these religious groups were afraid that their religion would be lost. They wanted Britain's protection.



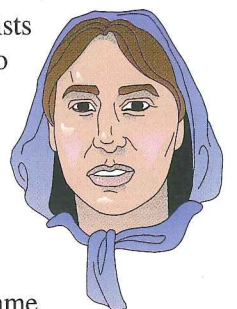
Most Loyalists came from colonies controlled by the British army. Loyalists who held British government jobs had no choice but to leave.

Some people became Loyalists on the basis of which recruiter, British or American, offered the best deal to settlers. Loyalists were offered free land in British North America. This greatly influenced their decision to go there.



Some Loyalists may have thought that it would not be long before their new home would be part of the United States anyway. Therefore, they were not leaving their own country forever.

Some people became Loyalists because they expected Britain to win the war. They wanted to be on the winning side. When Britain did not win, if their support of the Loyalist cause was known, they had to flee. Those who had not voiced their opinions as openly quickly became Patriots.



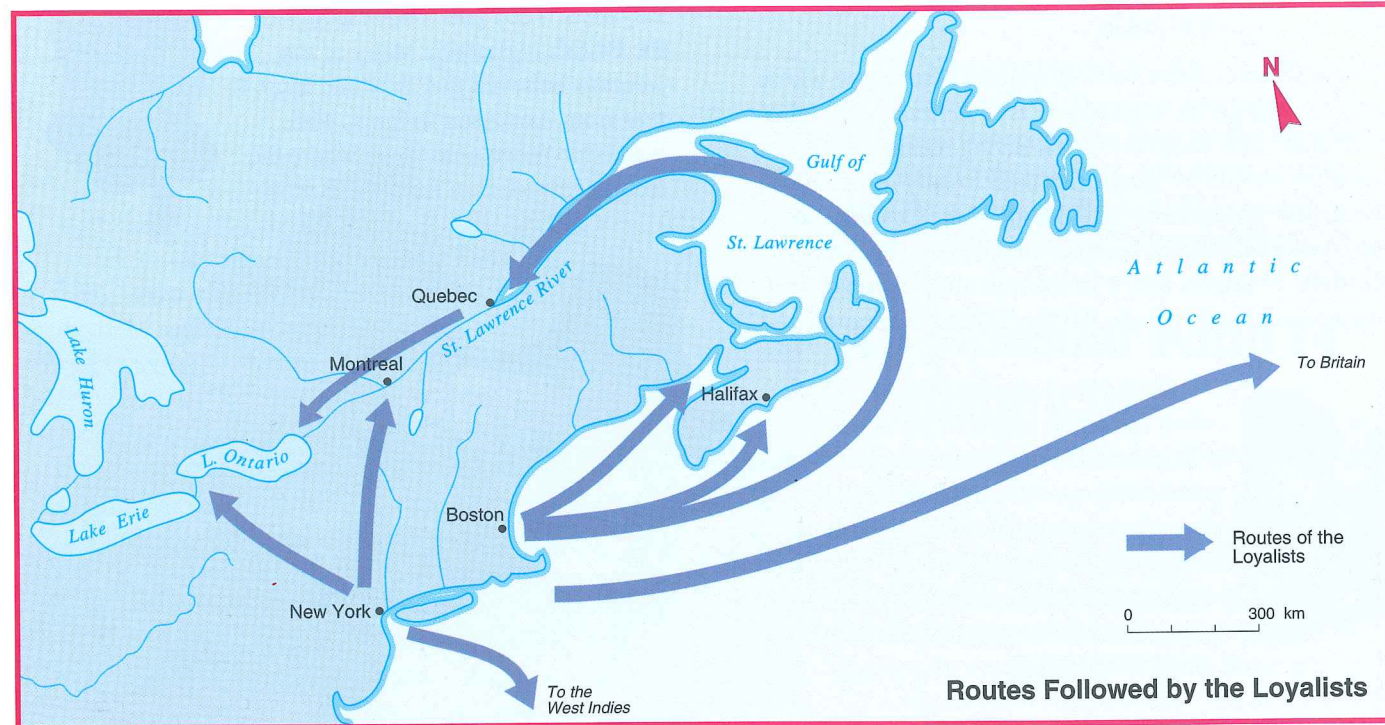
**Homogeneous** — similar; like everyone else

\*The British offered the black slaves their freedom if they helped the British cause.

\*\*See page 113.



## Where the Loyalists Went



Many of the Loyalists who went to Quebec travelled by land. This map shows the major routes they used. Most of them arrived between 1776 and 1785. The Loyalists who went to Nova Scotia travelled by sea.

The Loyalists had been leaving the Thirteen Colonies since 1776. In the Treaty of Paris of 1783,\* which ended the American Revolution, the American Congress agreed to ask the American states to pay the Loyalists back for any of their property that had been taken away or destroyed during the revolution. The American states refused to do this. In fact, after the revolution was over, there was still a great deal of anger against the Loyalists who remained in the United States. Some of them had their farms and businesses burned; others were beaten. The practice of tarring and feathering continued after the peace treaty as well.

By 1785, two years after the end of the revolution, as many as 100 000 Loyalists may have left the Thirteen Colonies. The Loyalists did not have many choices for places to go. Some went to Britain. Others went to the West Indies. Between 40 000 and 45 000 went to British North America.\*\*

\*Note that there are two treaties called the Treaty of Paris. The treaty of 1763 ended the Seven Years' War; the treaty of 1783 ended the American Revolution.

\*\*Figures for the number of Loyalists who settled in present-day Canada are not exact. Some did not apply for aid and therefore did not make it into the official records. Also, some who came did not stay. Some returned to the United States. Others came to Nova Scotia and then moved on to other places.

## British North America

The Treaty of Paris of 1763,\* which ended the Seven Years' War between France and Britain, gave the colonies of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island to Britain.

Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island had very small populations. Nova Scotia had a population of about 20 000, most of whom were of British or German descent.

The province of Quebec was given to Britain, but it was definitely not British. Most of the people—about 98 000 of a population of 113 000—spoke French and had French traditions, but their government was British.

## The Loyalists in British North America

Because of their loyalty to Britain, the Loyalists would be protected by the British government in British North America. Also, the British government would give each Loyalist family or individual a piece of land and some supplies to help them start a new life. About 34 000 Loyalists went to the British colony of Nova Scotia. About 7000 went to the British colony of Quebec.\*\*

## The British Colony of Nova Scotia

At the end of the American Revolution, in 1783, the only major port in the American colonies still held by the defeated British was New York. Many Loyalists went there so that the British could protect them from the victorious American Patriots. At New York the Loyalists awaited British ships that would take them to Nova Scotia.

The Loyalists who went to New York included those who had fought in Loyalist regiments for the British army during the revolution. At the end of the revolution the British

government gave them a choice between being sent back to their homes with three months' pay or being transported to Nova Scotia.

Actually, there was no real choice because the Loyalists were in danger of being persecuted if they returned home. Many of the former soldiers decided that they would be much better off to take their families to Nova Scotia, where they could start a new life.

Here is part of a letter written by the wife of a Loyalist soldier, on June 6, 1783:

*Kind husband,*

*I am sorry to acquaint you that our farme is sold . . .*

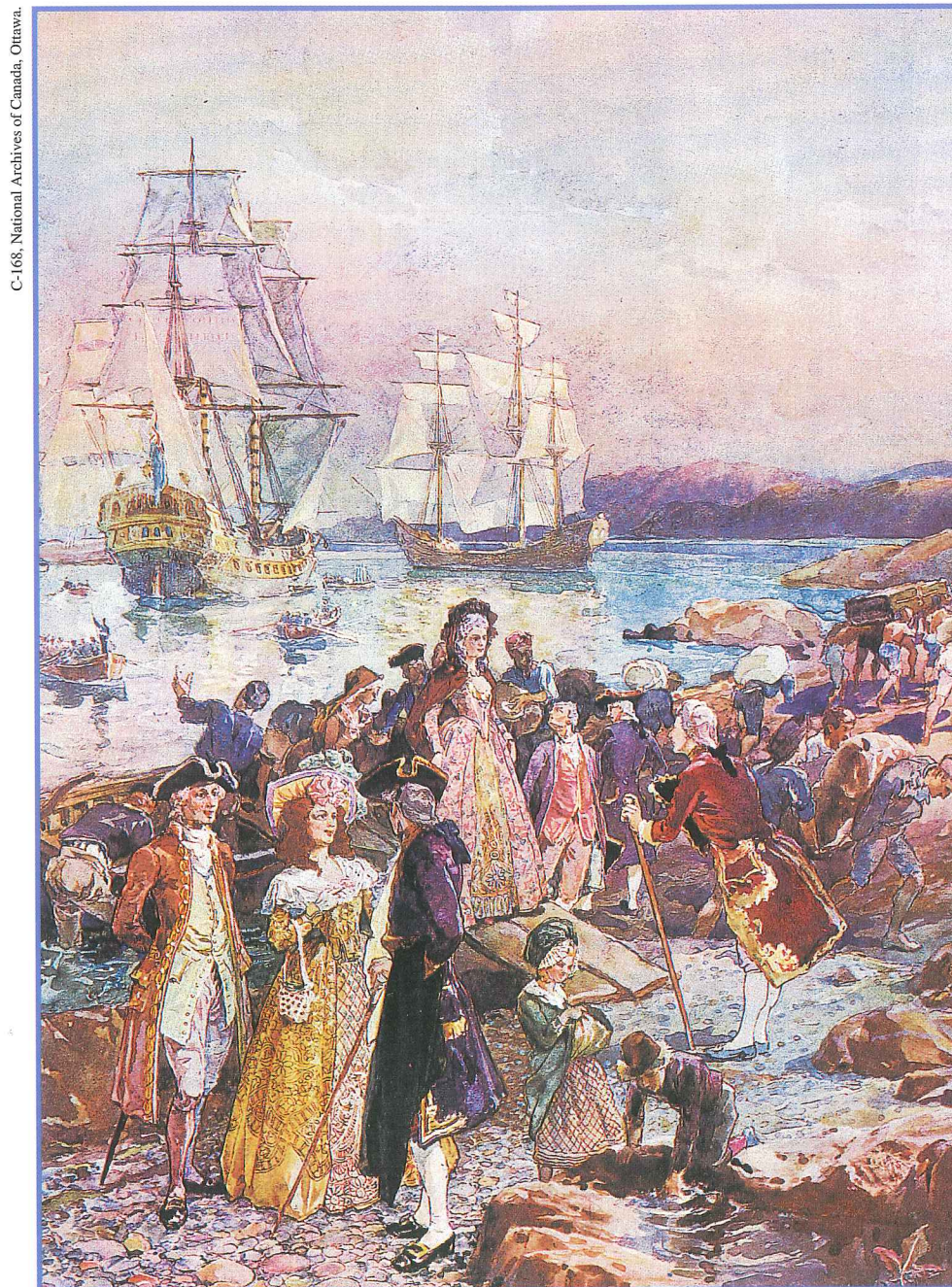
*they said if I did not quitt posesion that they had aright to take anythink on the farme or in the house to pay the cost of a law sute and imprisen me—I have suffered most every thing but death it self in your long absens pray grant me speddy releaf or God only knows what will become of me and me frendles children. . . . They say my posesion was nothing youre husband has forfeited his estate by joining the British Enemy with a free and vollentary will and thereby was forfeited to the Stat and sold. All at present from you cind and loveing wife.*

*Phoebe Ward*

For families like the Wards, Nova Scotia seemed like a good place to go. Even though it was a British colony, very few people lived there. The low population ensured that there would be plenty of land available for the Loyalists.

Some of the Loyalists were so thankful to arrive on British soil that they knelt and kissed the ground. One Loyalist, the Reverend Jonathan Beecher, wrote:

*As soon as we had set up a kind of tent, we knelt down, my wife and I and my two boys, and kissed the dear ground and thanked God that the flag of England floated there. We resolved that we would work with the rest to become again prosperous and happy.*



*The Coming of the Loyalists, 1783.* Many Loyalists faced great hardships when they had to start new farms or businesses in British North America.



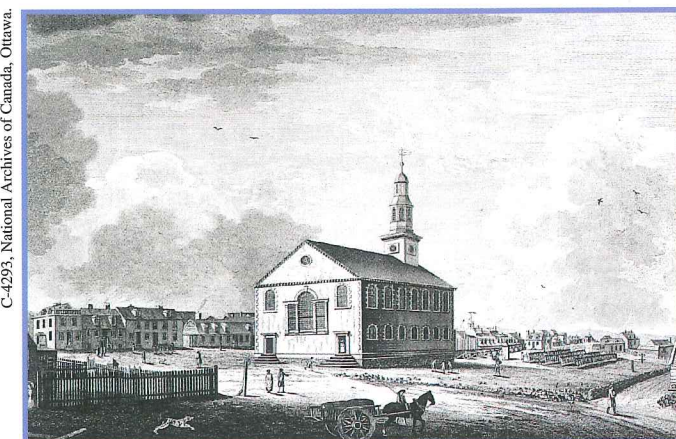
Unfortunately, some Loyalists were soon disappointed in their new home. They called it “Nova Scarcity.” The winters were harsh, and food was scarce. In many areas the land was unproductive. They complained bitterly at how poorly the British government had rewarded them for their loyalty to Britain during the revolution.

By 1785, about 34 000 Loyalists had made the journey to Nova Scotia. This was over one and one-half times as many people as the 20 000 already there. The Loyalists settled in three main areas —Halifax, Shelburne, and the St. John River Valley.

## Areas Where the Loyalists Settled

### Halifax

Halifax was founded in 1749. By the time the Loyalists began to arrive in 1783, Halifax was a well-established community, with schools, churches, and stores. It was the British military centre and capital of Nova Scotia. The British-appointed governor and many soldiers, as well as families, lived there. Only a small number of Loyalists settled in Halifax. In Halifax, the Loyalists had to fit into the community, rather than make their own new life, as they did in Shelburne and the St. John River Valley.



*The Church of St. Paul, and the Parade at Halifax in Nova Scotia.*

### Shelburne

About 10 000 Loyalists went to settle at Port Roseway. They renamed it Shelburne and made it, for a short time, one of the largest cities in all of North America. The Loyalists had high hopes for the new lives they would have in Shelburne. There was an excellent harbour and few people, which meant that they would be able to live their own lives and not have to fit into an established community, as the Loyalists who settled in Halifax had to do.

A thriving town developed, with stores, taverns, churches, three newspapers, and a shipbuilding industry. Benjamin Marston, a resident of Shelburne, describes how early in 1784 some 50 citizens of the city “danced, drank

tea, and played cards in a house where six months ago there was an almost impenetrable swamp.”

Unfortunately, though, the land around Shelburne was unsuitable for farming, and when the British government’s food rations began to run out, people began to leave. In a short time, it went from a boom town of 10 000 people to a few hundred people. Many of the new houses were either taken apart and shipped to Halifax, where they were set up again, or they were destroyed for firewood. Soon much of the city looked like a grassy ghost town with stone fireplaces scattered about.

### The St. John River Valley

About 15 000 Loyalists settled in the St. John River Valley. This was the area that would later become the colony of New Brunswick. Before this could happen, problems between the Loyalist settlers and the British government needed to be solved.

This group of Loyalists began to ask for a separate colony almost immediately. They did not want to be part of the colony of Nova Scotia. They felt that Halifax, the capital, where most of the government officials were located, was too far away.

The government was not well prepared for the arrival of the Loyalists. The first night after landing, the Loyalists had to hack away bushes and trees in order to find room to set up their tents. Some were so dismayed by this situation that they simply sat down and cried.

The government did not provide enough tools and building materials to help the Loyalists build their new homes. As a result, some of the women and children died from cold weather or starvation during the first winter.

The distribution of land to the Loyalists was another major problem. The land had not been divided into lots when the first Loyalists arrived. Therefore, they could not be sure that they actually owned the land upon which they were building their homes. In fact, some of the first Loyalists had already built 1500 frame houses and 400 log huts near the harbour, when the government informed them that the area was needed as a refugee settlement area for new arrivals.

Later arrivals were unhappy because the lots that they were given were much smaller than the lots given to Loyalists who had arrived earlier. In fact, in Parrrtown (later renamed St. John) the last town lots were one-sixteenth the size of the first lots.

Favouritism was also a problem. Loyalists who had held important positions in the Thirteen Colonies received more land than Loyalists who were not so important.

### Thomas Peters (1738–1792)

Thomas Peters was a former slave. He served with the Black Pioneers, an all-black regiment, during the American Revolution. In 1783, Peters and other veterans of the Black Pioneers were transported to Nova Scotia, where they had been promised town lots of approximately eight hectares each, outside of the city of Shelburne.

Instead, the British government gave them only poor land outside of Shelburne. When they built on this land, their homes were burned down by people from Shelburne. They finally settled in an all-black community called Birchtown.

After six years of waiting for the land he had been promised, Peters went to Britain for help. There he met William Wilberforce, a famous anti-slavery crusader. Wilberforce organized the start of a new colony in Africa, called Sierra Leone. About 1200 black people, including Thomas Peters, sailed from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone. There was to be equality between blacks and whites in this new colony.

Unfortunately, the colony only lasted a year. There were many difficulties from the beginning. Many colonists died on the voyage to Africa. Droughts, tornadoes, fever, and feuds among the colonists made the first year a disaster. However, even though the colony collapsed, there are still descendants of the Nova Scotia colonists in Sierra Leone today.\*

## The British Colony of New Brunswick

### A New Colony Is Formed

In 1784, Nova Scotia was divided along the Missiquash River and the British colony of New Brunswick was created.

### The Loyalists Want a New Colony

The Loyalists in the St. John River Valley had many reasons for wanting a new colony. They felt that they were too far from the government capital in Halifax. They felt that the distant government treated them unfairly. The Loyalists also believed that they were unlike the people who were already settled in the colony of Nova Scotia. Many of these people were formerly from the New England colonies and had remained neutral, favouring neither side during the revolution. They had not been forced to leave their homes.

The Loyalists thought that all they had suffered during and after the revolution made it difficult to live with people who had not suffered or taken part in the revolution. They thought a separate Loyalist colony where they could live with people like themselves would be better.

This idea was expressed by Edward Winslow, one of the Loyalist leaders:

*A large proportion of the old inhabitants of this country are natives of New England, or descendants from New Englanders. They never experienced the violence of political bad feelings. They remained quiet during all the persecutions. They kept an affection for their former country. On our side are people who served in the military. They are angry from a series of misfortunes and are jealous to an extreme. Either of these kinds of people may form useful societies among themselves, but they can't be mixed.*

A final reason had to do with the possibilities of the area. The St. John River was easy to navigate. The soil was fertile. Fish and timber were plentiful and the coastline had many good harbours. It looked like a place where new settlers could become prosperous.

### The British Government Agrees

The British government recognized certain advantages in the formation of a Loyalist colony separate from the colony of Nova Scotia.

- If the colony of Nova Scotia were split, it would be less difficult to control because there would be a governor in each of the two colonies. The governor in Halifax would no longer have to worry about governing a place so far away.
- A new colony would provide government positions for wealthy and well-educated Loyalists who were demanding them.
- A strong Loyalist colony on the American border would provide protection against the American idea that colonists should rebel and govern themselves. The British government did not want the people in its remaining North American colonies to be influenced by this idea.

New Brunswick developed representative government soon after its formation as a colony. The first Legislature met in 1786, just two years after it became the separate colony of New Brunswick. Representative government means that the people of New Brunswick could “rule” by choosing others to act for, or represent, them in government.

\*Note: there are thousands of descendants of the Black Loyalists living in Nova Scotia today.



## The British Colony of Prince Edward Island



In 1763, by the Treaty of Paris, Île St. Jean (as Prince Edward Island was called then) became British property. The British renamed it St. John Island. It was called St. John Island until 1799, when it took the name of Prince Edward Island.

In 1767, the British divided the island into 67 townships of approximately 8000 hectares. The townships were given to British noblemen or officers. These people were absentee landlords, which meant they owned the land but did not choose to live on it. The owners chose to live in Britain instead of the colonies.

The landowning system on St. John Island was like an English version of New France's seigneurial system. All the land was owned by a favoured group of people. The difference between the landholding system in St. John Island and that in New France was that the St. John Island landholders did not bring in settlers as they had promised and many of them did not even pay their taxes.

In 1774, when the Thirteen Colonies had their First Continental Congress (a meeting to discuss their complaints about Britain), the people of St. John Island, as well as the people of Quebec and Nova Scotia, were invited to attend. They were not worried about gaining independence from Britain, but did want to gain some rights as colonies. But these colonies decided not to send any representatives to the meeting.

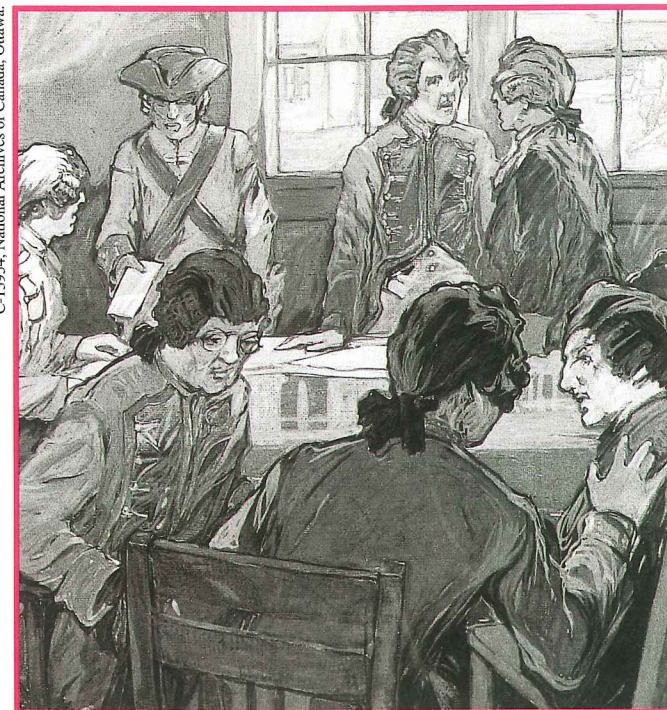
By 1784, there were still only about 1000 people living on St. John Island. Approximately 600 Loyalists decided to try to settle there. They found that they had to pay high rents and could not buy their land, since it was already owned by the absentee landlords.

Eventually some of the Loyalist farmers decided that if the British landlords did not have to pay taxes, then they should not have to pay the high rents. The story is told that the first person in a neighbourhood to see a rent collector coming would blow on a large seashell to sound an alarm. Then the farmers would drive away the collector with clubs and pitchforks.

Some of the farmers were so discouraged by the fact that they could not own their own land that they left St. John Island. Others stayed on in the hope that one day the land would be theirs.

## The British Colony of Cape Breton Island

Like New Brunswick, Cape Breton was made a separate colony from Nova Scotia in 1784. Up to this time the British government had not allowed people to settle there. There was coal on the island but the British government did not allow factories to be built because they would compete with the factories in Britain. However, in 1784 Cape Breton Island was opened to the Loyalists. About 3000 settled there. Most did not stay long. They did not like the fact that they could only rent, not buy, their land. As on St. John Island, most of the land on Cape Breton Island was owned by absentee landlords who lived in Britain. In 1820, Cape Breton was **re-annexed** to Nova Scotia.



*Cape Breton Council*, by Charles Walter Simpson. The Cape Breton council had to deal with the large numbers of Loyalist refugees moving into the area.

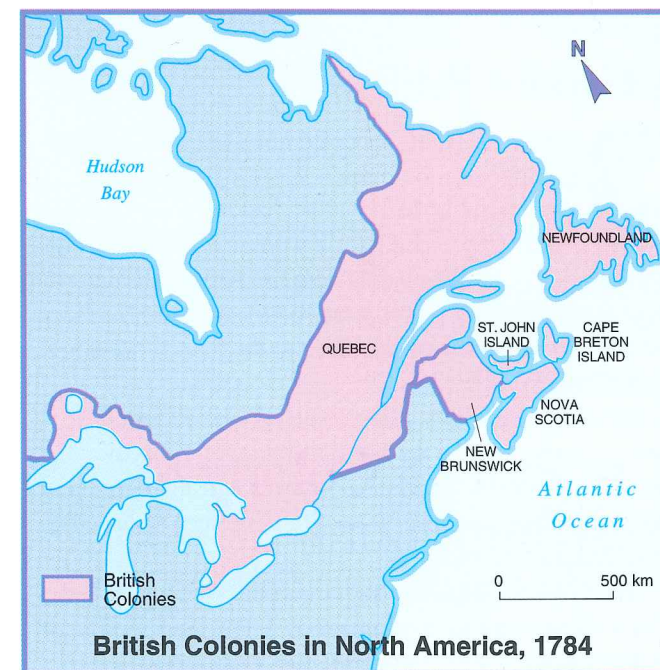
## The British Colony of Newfoundland

The British still showed no interest in having Newfoundland grow in population. All of the attention of the British government was still directed toward the fishing industry there. As a result, settlement was not encouraged. The government did not transport any Loyalists to Newfoundland.

C-105230, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.



By the 1760s, semi-permanent fishing stations were settled in many of Newfoundland's harbours.



Britain gained Quebec in 1763, then lost the Thirteen Colonies during the American Revolution. The result was a very different British North America by 1784.

### For Your Notebook

1. In which three areas did the Loyalists settle in Nova Scotia? Briefly summarize the Loyalist experience in each of these places.
2. Why did the Loyalists in the St. John River Valley want the British government to create a new colony for them?
3. Why did the British government agree that a new colony should be created in the St. John River Valley?
4. Explain the landholding system on St. John Island (later called Prince Edward Island) at the time of the arrival of the Loyalists.

### Exploring Further

1. Benedict Arnold is an interesting person from these times. He began as a Patriot, married a Loyalist, and then offered to spy for the British. He escaped from the Patriots on a British ship, but left his British contact behind to be hanged as a spy. After the war he was hated by both Patriots and Loyalists (for abandoning his contact). Read more details about Benedict Arnold. Decide whether you think he was a Patriot, a Loyalist, or an **opportunist**. Justify your answer.

**Opportunist**—a person who takes advantage of a situation for his or her own benefit

**Re-annex**—to unite with a province or country again