

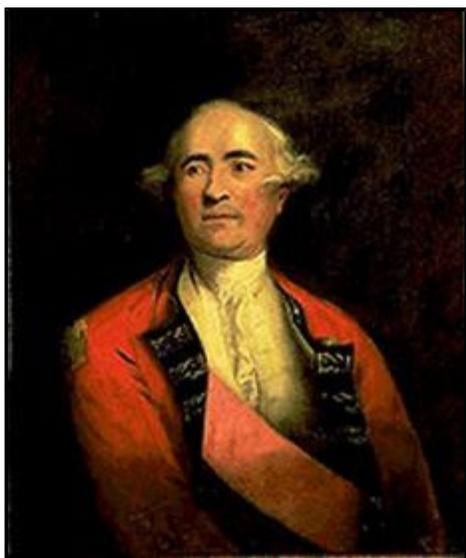
# The Merrickville and District Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009

Volume 7 Number 1

## Land for the Loyalists

In the summer of 1783, Governor-General Haldimand (later Sir Frederick) sent the Surveyor-General of Quebec up the St. Lawrence on an exploratory trip to view the area west of Montreal and north of the River St. Lawrence, and report on its possibilities for settlement. The situation was urgent. Loyalist refugees and disbanded soldiers with their families had been gathering in large numbers at Montreal, Sorel and other centres throughout Quebec during the American Revolutionary War, which was now over. Where were these homeless people to go? Some had chosen Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.



**Governor-General Frederick Haldimand**

Others could settle in Quebec, but there were still about three thousand who had nowhere to go. At the time of the American Revolution, the province of Ontario was essentially non-existent. Some Americans loyal to the British Crown or forced from their land by the "patriots", had gone from the American colonies to Niagara, but the vast region between Niagara and Montreal was hardly known except by the Indians, a few explorers and fur-traders. Even fewer people had travelled the land between the Rideau River and the St. Lawrence.

The surveys commissioned by Haldiman, primarily those conducted by Lieutenant Gershom French, an Assistant Engineer with the Corps of Loyal Rangers (also known as "Jessup's Corps") investigated the area between the Ottawa River and Kingston (Cataraqui) and indicated the land was suitable for farming and so a plan for settlement was developed. *ref. The Rideau Route: Exploring the*

*Pre-Canal Waterway" by Ken W. Watson.*

For their military service the British government gave free grants of land to decommissioned soldiers. Also grants were made for loyal non-combatants whose land and property had been seized and who had been forced to flee from their homes during the American Revolution.

The grants varied in size according to the military rank of the recipients and the size of the loyalist families:

- To every field officer - 1,000 acres
- To every captain - 700 acres
- To every subaltern, staff or warrant officer - 500 acres
- To every non-commissioned officer - 200 acres
- To every private - 100 acres
- For each member of their families - 50 acres

- To Loyalists of non-combatant status:
- Every master of a family - 100 acres
- Every person in the family - 50 acres
- Every single man - 50 acres



### Loyalists Crossing a Stream On way to new land grant - C.W. Jefferys

In order that no partiality should be shown, the settlers drew ballots from a hat, each ballot marked with a lot number. Naturally, the lots fronting on the rivers were the most desirable, but Governor Haldimand wanted everyone to have an equal opportunity. Those who drew lots they did not like were permitted to exchange with others.

## Increasing the Loyalist Grants



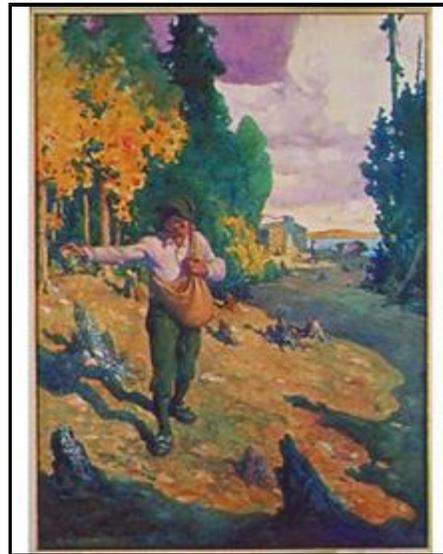
**Clearing the Land C.W. Jefferys**

In order to encourage greater settlement, the government increased the size of the land grants substantially for decommissioned officers and for non-combatants alike. After 1788, field officers became eligible for grants of 5,000 acres, while captains could receive 3,000 acres. Subalterns, staff and warrant officers were eligible for 2,000 acres, sergeants for 500, corporals for 400 and privates for 200 acres.

Non combatant Loyalists and their sons and daughters were allowed grants of 200 acres each. Those with large families, such as the McCrea's thus received substantial allotments. Land Boards were established to supervise the granting of the land.

These grants for free land became attractive enough to Americans, and as increasing numbers of settlers came from south of the border, it became important to define who were bona fide Loyalists.

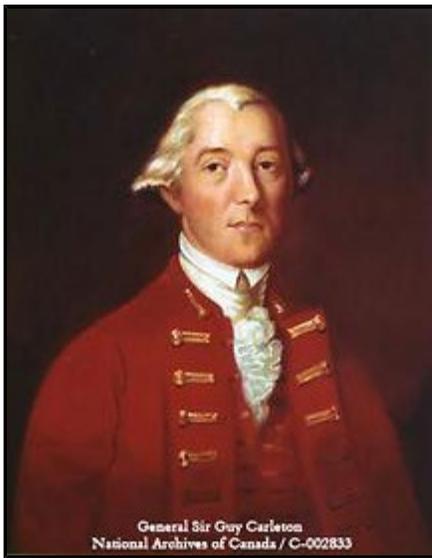
In 1789, the Governor General, Lord Dorchester, told his Council that "it was his wish to put a Mark of Honour upon the families who had adhered to the unity of the Empire and joined the Royal Standard in America before the Treaty of Separation in the year 1783." Henceforth the Loyalist settlers and their sons and daughters were entitled to add the letters "U.E." (for Unity of Empire) after their names.



**First Planting C.W. Jeffereys**

The time limit for evidence of loyalty, set by Lord Dorchester at 1783, the year of the peace treaty, was later extended to 1798. This meant that only Loyalists who had lived in Upper Canada on or before July 28, 1798, and their descendants were entitled to use the designation "U.E." (Note: The extension was fortunate for William Merrick who did not arrive in Canada until 1788.)

*References: Historical Sketch of Leeds and Grenville by Ruth McKenzie, as published in "Illustrated Historical Atlas of the Counties of Leeds and Grenville", (based on information from 1861 H.E. Wallings maps and*



**General Sir Guy Carleton, Lord  
Dorchester**

surveys.)

*Illustrations C. W. Jefferys, Library and archives  
Canada, Wikipedia Free University*

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## **An Epic Life that Words Fail to Fully Justify**

**Based on submission**

**by Gloria Beek, Merrickville, Rideau River Road**

*Many Merrickville area residents can trace their roots to pioneer days. Some, like Gloria Beek have been unaware of their "Rideau Connections" until they found themselves living here and began digging, genealogically of course.*

Eliz Ann Beek married John Maitland in Scotland in 1821. Eliza, born in 1798 in Bandon, County Cork, Ireland, was well educated and firmly grounded, and must have been an ideal mate for her husband. John was born in 1801 had been a cabin boy on his father's ship and later a soldier. John gave up the army life and joined the church of his wife's family ultimately becoming a Methodist preacher.

John went alone to Quebec City where his married sister, married sister Jane Prendergast was living and stayed there for a year before moving to the Rideau River to stay with his uncle, Loyalist James Maitland who had settled in the area now known as Kilmarnock, but then, Maitlands Rapids. Upon arrival in Kilmarnock, he was joined in Montague by his wife and child in 1824. A second child, James Maitland, was born in Montague Township.

John Maitland formed the first Methodist class in Bytown and in 1827 the first circuit in Hull along with other preachers and organizers. Lieut. James Prendergast, a land agent, asked John and Eliza Ann to come to Clarendon to set up a school in the Pontiac. Five of their children were born in Clarendon, Canada East. In 1853, the family moved to London, Ontario where John worked as a post office employee. However, he continued in his ministry and traveled throughout eastern Canada to share his beliefs.

Over 20 years after the death of his wife Eliza Ann, he died, age 90, at the home of his daughter in Holland Township, Ontario. John Maitland had been a witness to history on a grand scale. With his military experience and his travels from Scotland, France, England, Ireland, Quebec, the Maritimes and his ministry in Eastern and Southern Ontario, his epic life would make a great historical novel

For references and further information see "*Beek Family History*" a book that can be found in Merrickville and Smiths Falls Libraries. Further information can be found on the web site [www.kintrails.inkol.com](http://www.kintrails.inkol.com). Special thanks as always for the research of Alice Hughes, our mentor.

## Website Update (ca changed to org)



**Miles McGuigan**

Hopefully those of you who "surf the web" have noted that the web site address for the Merrickville & District Historical Society has been changed and now can be found at [www.merrickvillehistory.org](http://www.merrickvillehistory.org)

In addition to current information on events you will find there all of the past issues of this Newsletter (this is the 20th) and most recently a feature on the restoration in 1981 of the [McGuigan Cemetery](#). Learn of the long efforts to restore this historic site and of the enigmatic Miles McGuigan after whom the cemetery is named but whose grave has never been found.

## The Gananoque Story

In our March 24 speakers meeting we heard a presentation by Douglas Bickerton, From the 1790s to now: the Development of Gananoque



**Gananoque Town Hall  
former home of John and Henrietta  
McDonald**

Like most north shore Lake Ontario communities, "Gan" owes its beginning to the American Revolution. Joel Stone, a Loyalist from Guilford, Connecticut joined the many Loyalists who crossed the St. Lawrence River to arrive in Upper Canada. Upon receiving a grant of 700 acres west of the Gananoque River, he became the founder of the town. Charles McDonald, another American, teamed up with Joel Stone and became an economic benefactor for many years.

By the 1850s, writes historian John Nalon, *"the Gananoque River was lined with factories on both banks from its mouth to the upper falls, and these establishments depended on water as a prime source of energy. That decade, embracing the middle of that century, was one of the most significant in the history of the town. Some well known companies had their beginnings through the years in Gananoque and several still operate in the town today."*

### What's in a Name?

For years it has been said that the name of the town of Gananoque in the Indian language means "the place of health" or "the place where water runs over the rocks". In the spring, Indians tribes having spent the winter hunting in the shelter of upstream forests would make their way down to the shores where the Gananoque River flows into the St. Lawrence and where salmon would be climbing upstream to spawning grounds and fishing would have been abundant and a welcome and healthy change from the winter diet.

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## The Clergy Reserves

Property owners along the Rideau River in researching the titles of their properties are sometimes surprised to learn that the original titles for their properties were not obtained from Loyalists nor military Crown grants but from the Church of England.

In 1791 the British Parliament passed an Act known as the Clergy Reserves Act, which provided among other things, that one seventh of all land grants in Canada would not be available for settlement, but should go to support the Protestant Clergy and to be used solely to erect and endow Rectories according to the Establishment of the Church of England. These lands were to be known as the Clergy Reserves. Owing to widespread criticism the policy was changed to permit settlers to buy some land outright if they so desired, the proceeds going solely to the Anglican Church.

Perhaps the British parliamentarians were unaware of the vastness of their Canadian colony as the number of acres involved as Clergy Reserves in Upper Canada was over 2 million. From these figures, it is not surprising to find that some of the farms here in the Rideau Valley have the distinction of having been set aside for rent or sale in support of our early religious institutions. Eventually, but not until 1854, this monopoly was broken, when the Canada Act proclaimed that the income derived from the Clergy Reserve lands must henceforth be available to all denominations.

*Ref Leonard Newman, Andrewsville and Adjacent Properties.*

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## The Cox Chapel

One of the most interesting but little known historic sites in the Lower Rideau settlement is marked by a small winding stream which joins the Rideau River from the north side just west of Burritts Rapids. (More prosaically near the former prison farm). It is called Cox Creek and marks the spot on the Rideau where Stephen Burritt built his raft to drift downstream through the rapids to the area that he would claim for his new community.

Some 25 years after Burritt, Joseph Cox, a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars who fought under Wellington, gave the stream his name and built perhaps the earliest Methodist church in the Lower Rideau Settlement.

Joseph Cox was born in 1788 and died May 29, 1860 at the age of 72. He and his wife are buried in McGuigan Cemetery. He enlisted in the 82nd Regiment, and fought under Wellington through the Peninsular wars against Napoleon and, like Miles McGuigan, came to Canada to serve with his regiment during the War of 1812. When his term of service was over in 1815 he was given his discharge, a small pension and 100 acres of land in Montague.

He married Rosannah Stafford, daughter of Samuel Stafford, a Loyalist from Saratoga Springs who had settled on 250 acres in Montague. In 1822 Joseph Cox built a small Church and parsonage on his farm to serve the Methodist community. It became known as Cox Chapel and was built some 30 years before the first Merrickville Methodist Church. For over 100 years the little Church operated but was eventually torn down and the stones used in construction of homes in the area. It is a shame that today nothing visible remains to mark the place of this historic chapel.

*Ref Record News, Smiths Falls, Oct 15, 1953, A letter from Norman Walsh, Andrewsville*

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## Membership Matters

As always we are very grateful for the support of our members and of the community in general, and are pleased to share our local history and heritage.

Membership in the historical Society is renewed annually from January to December at a present cost of \$5 per person or \$10 per family. Last year a number of members joined through our \$50 life membership per person category.

If you have not already done so, Membership Chair Sheena Cowan asks that you please renew your membership with a cheque payable to the Merrickville & District Historical Society, and sent to "MDHS Membership, Box 294, Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0". Also, if you are interested in keeping in touch via email, be sure and send us your telephone as well as your current email address.

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## These Shoes Were Meant for Walking

A number of folks in doing renovations in this area have been surprised to find a pair of shoes hidden within their walls of their old homes. Apparently, in the old days superstition said that spirits of the recently deceased were more likely to leave the premises if they were provided with adequate footwear to protect from nasty winter weather.

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