

Historical Background to the 1784 Loyalist Arrival

The Seven Years' War (1756 – 1763)

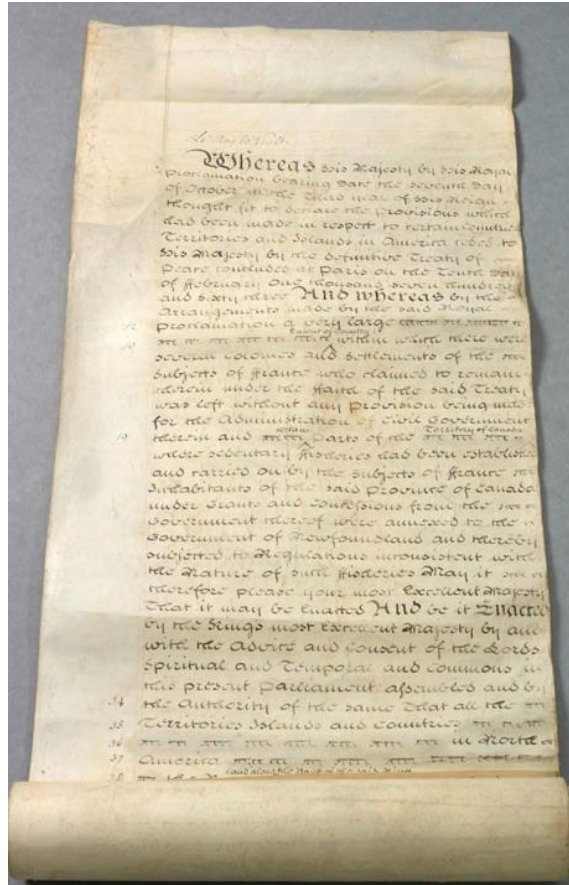
The Seven Years' War (also known as the French and Indian War) was primarily caused by the imperial and commercial rivalry between the Kingdom of France and Great Britain, involving also their respective North American colonies, indigenous allies, and European allies (Hanover and Prussia allied with Britain; Austria, Sweden, Saxony, Russia, and Spain allied with France). The Seven Years' War was arguably the first military conflict to have been fought on a global stage—with battlegrounds in Europe, India, at sea, and especially in North America¹.

Early in his reign, King George III saw to the end of the Seven Years' War. Peace was finally made with the signing of the Treaty of Paris (1763). The Kingdom of France ceded to Great Britain, who took possession of New France (including the colony of Canada), which was then renamed the Province of Quebec. The results of the conflict, in many ways, laid the foundation for what would ultimately become the modern country of Canada².

King George III issued a *Royal Proclamation on October 7th, 1763*, establishing the historic link between Canada and British parliamentary institutions. It also laid the foundation for First Nation rights and of the treaty making system still in-use today³.

The Quebec Act of 1774

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 in many ways intentionally disenfranchised and aimed to assimilate the French Catholic population of the colony by banning the practice of civil law (in favour of British common law) and by forcing those who wanted to work in government to proclaim allegiance to the King. As such, the Quebec Act of 1774 was passed under King George III to effectively replace the Royal Proclamation, which returned many rights to the French⁴.



(British Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/PU/1/1774/14G3n226 1774)

The American Revolutionary War and its Aftermath (1775 – 1783)

“No Taxation Without Representation”

The American Revolutionary War led to the United States claiming independence from Great Britain. Those who sided with the Crown during the war (i.e., Loyalists) then fled from fear of persecution, particularly from upstate New York to the Province of Quebec, which remained under British rule⁵.

“The term ‘Loyalists’ refers to American colonists who remained loyal to the British Crown. Many of them served under the British during the American Revolution (1775-1783). Loyalists settled in what are now the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Ontario.” – Library and Archives Canada

THE HUNGRY YEAR – by William Kirby
(As cited in Pringle, 1890)⁶

*The war was over, seven years of blood
Had scourged the land from mountain top to sea:*

...

*Rebellion won at last, and they who loved
The cause that lost, and who had kept their faith
To England's crown, and scorned an alien name,
Passed into exile, leaving all behind
Except their honour, and the conscious pride
Of duty done to country and King.*

...

*Not drooping like poor fugitives they came
In exodus to our Canadian wild,
But full of heart and hope, with heads erect
And fearless eyes victorious in defeat.
With thousand toils they forced their devious way
Through the great wilderness of silent woods,
That gloomed o'er lake and stream, till higher rose
The northern star above the broad domain
Of half a continent still theirs to hold,
Defend and keep for ever as their own,
Their own and England's to the end of time.*

*The virgin forests carpeted with leaves
Of many autumns fallen crisp and sear,
Put on their woodland state ; while overhead
Green seas of foliage roared a welcome home
To the proud exiles, who for empire fought
And kept though losing much, this northern land*

*A refuge and defence for all who love
The broader freedom of commonwealth
That wears upon its head a kingly crown*

1784 – The Founding of New Johnstown and the Royal Townships

Montreal and Quebec City were the two most populous centers in what was then known as the Province of Quebec, predominantly French, with colonial settlement to the west of la seigneurie de Longueuil being virtually non-existent. The Loyalists then petitioned for new Crown Lands on which to settle, which led to the establishment of 13 Royal Townships, Cornwall among them.

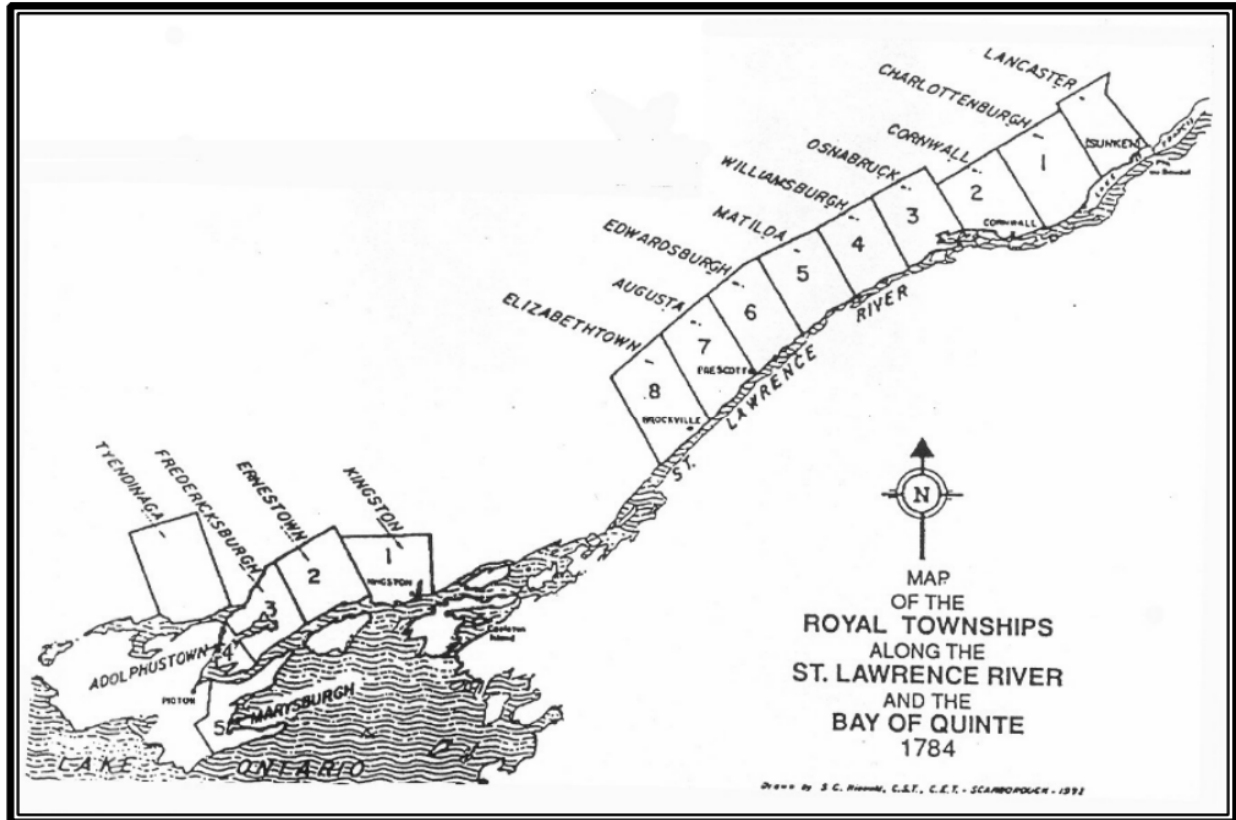
Eight consecutive Loyalist Townships were then created along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River and five others along the Bay of Quinte to house some 8,000 Loyalist refugees who desired to remain loyal to the British Crown and as a defence strategy against the Americans who had been invading what remained of British North America.

“Where Ontario Began”

Disbanded loyalist military units then settled these Royal Townships—with Sir John Johnson’s Royal Yorkers holding the first 5 townships, that would later become the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, & Glengarry⁹.

By 1788, the authorities had given the previously numbered townships proper names that honoured the Royal family of King George III ordered East to West by date of birth⁷:

1. Charlottenburgh – Queen Charlotte, wife of George III
2. Cornwall – Prince George, Duke of Cornwall, 1st son of George III (Later King George IV)
3. Osnabruck – Prince Frederick, Prince-Bishop of Osnabrück, 2nd son of George III
4. Williamsburgh – Prince William Henry, 3rd son of George III (Later King William IV)
5. Matilda – Charlotte Augusta Matilda, Princess Royal, 1st daughter of George III
6. Edwardsburgh – Prince Edward, 4th son of George III (Father of Queen Victoria)
7. Augusta – Princess Augusta-Sophia, 2nd daughter of George III
8. Elizabethtown – Princess Elizabeth, 3rd daughter of George III
9. Lancaster was later added, as it originally was deemed too low-lying and wet to settle – George III, Duke of Lancaster



New Johnstown (present-day Cornwall) would grow to become the administrative seat of the Lunenburg District—Province of Quebec (1788), followed by the Eastern District—Upper Canada (1792).

The Constitutional Act 1791

Following from the mass immigration of Loyalists to the province of Quebec and the establishment of the Royal Townships, the Constitutional Act of 1791 (aka the Canada Act) was passed by British parliament under King George III to replace the Quebec Act of 1774. The Constitutional Act of 1791 effectively split what once was the unified Province of Quebec into Lower Canada and Upper Canada, with upper and lower denoting their respective position along the St-Lawrence River (i.e., up and down river). The Constitutional Act then allowed the residents of Upper Canada and Lower Canada to establish their own separate administrations, laying the foundations for what would later become the province of Ontario⁸.

References

¹ Eccles, William John. "Seven Years' War". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 24 March 2021, *Historica Canada*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/seven-years-war. Accessed 16 May 2023.

² Jaenen, Cornelius J.. "Treaty of Paris 1763". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 26 April 2023, *Historica Canada*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/treaty-of-paris-1763. Accessed 16 May 2023.

³ Government of Canada; Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. "250th Anniversary of the Royal Proclamation of 1763." Government of Canada; Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 8 Mar. 2016, www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1370355181092/1607905122267.

⁴ Encyclopedia, The Canadian. "The Quebec Act, 1774 (Plain-Language Summary)". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 17 January 2020, *Historica Canada*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-quebec-act-1774-plain-language-summary. Accessed 16 May 2023.

⁵ Senior, Elinor Kyte. *From Royal Township to Industrial City: Cornwall, 1784-1984*. Mika Publishing Company, Belleville 1983.

⁶ Pringle, J. F.. *Lunenburg or the Old Eastern District*. Mika Silk Screening Limited, Belleville 1972 [1890]

⁷ Smith, Don. "Cornwall – Historic Neighbourhoods." Cornwall Community Museum, 12 Jan. 2020, cornwallcommunitymuseum.wordpress.com/cornwall-historic-neighbourhoods/.

⁸ Tousignant, Pierre. "Constitutional Act, 1791". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 23 April 2020, *Historica Canada*. www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/constitutional-act-1791. Accessed 16 May 2023.