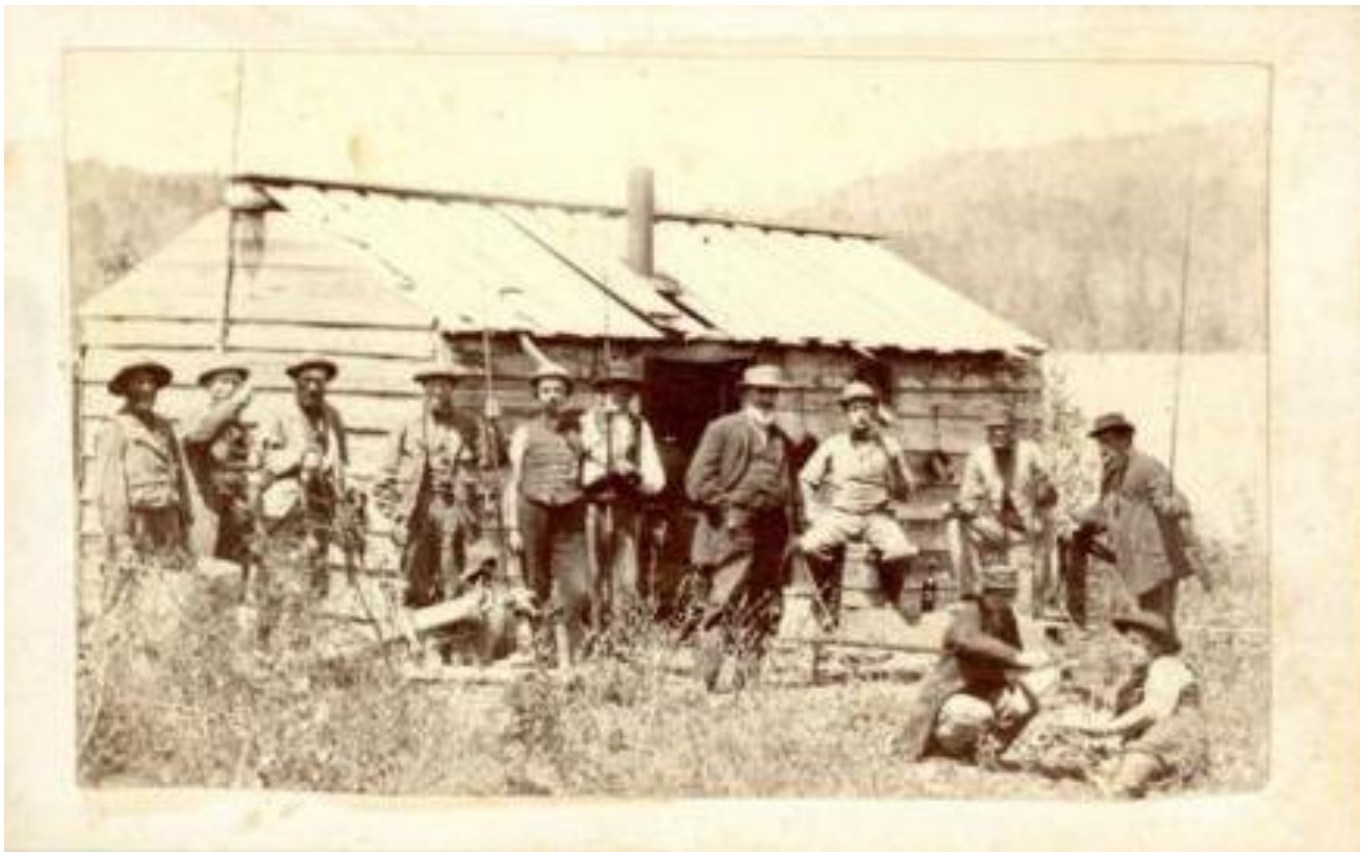

A Research Guide on United Empire Loyalists

The Brome County Historical Society



Lumber Camp in Stukely, Quebec. Brome County Historical Society, BCHS1066.

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INTRODUCTION

The interest of the United Empire Loyalists, or simply Loyalists for short, remains strong in the Eastern Townships. During the founding of Lower Canada, Loyalists played a crucial role in founding the towns and institutions of Brome County. The Brome County Historical Society has a long history of documenting and even working with notable Loyalist figures. This research guide will introduce topics and give an overview of various Loyalist individuals which will aid in furthering research on the subject. Using both internal and external resources, the BCHS hopes this guide will provide a foundation to pursue substantial Loyalist research of Brome County.

A brief history of Loyalists in Lower Canada

The American Revolutionary War, a battle that pitted American ideology against the British, resulted in the founding of the United States of America as an independent nation. Not only was the American Revolution a physical and political battle, it fostered many ideological conflicts as well. As Britain and its supporters were defeated, many would flee from the United States due to increased danger of prosecution for their loyal ties to the Crown. Canada, or British North-America, was a Crown-ruled colony of Britain still. As a large number of refugees that supported Britain were leaving the United States both during and after the War, Britain was welcoming refugees to settle on Canadian soil. The arrival of a large number of Loyalists after the Revolutionary War eventually lead to the creation of Canada's first two provinces; Upper Canada (modern day Southern Ontario) and Lower Canada (modern day Southern Quebec). The Loyalists were granted land mostly in the Eastern Townships and Montreal, which augmented Quebec's English-speaking population at the time. Around 10,000 Loyalists settled in Quebec during and prior the Revolution.

Loyalist: A misleading term

The term Loyalist was an honorary title given to those who plead or kept allegiance to the British Crown. In principle, this would have honored the influx of refugees around 1783 when the War ended. Indeed, it is credible to note that most of the refugees during this time relocated and settled to back the Crown in Canada. However, at the beginning of the next century and onwards, the idea of what and who a Loyalist was became more fluid. Since the Crown was giving land to those who were loyal to the British Empire, a large population of settlers in the 1800s were not actual Loyalists, but found interest in the new prospect of receiving free land on new territory. For research, it is important to distinguish between those who were in fact loyal to the Crown and those who settled for opportunity and other material needs. It is insufficient to suggest that these later “Loyalists” were not actually loyal to the Crown, however in many cases their allegiance was not what prompted them to re-settle in Canada.

Suggested Readings:

The previous section only offers a very basic view of a complex and deep history of Loyalist settlement. The following books (available at the BCHS) are useful for researching a broader scope of this history:

- Gossage, P & Little, J.I. *An Illustrated History of Quebec: Tradition & Modernity*, Oxford University Press, 2012. This large history of Quebec has a few chapters on the settlement of Quebec including Loyalists and topics of the post-war era.
- Little, J.I. *Loyalties in Conflict*, University of Toronto Press, 2008. This book presents an alternative argument for Loyalist relations in Quebec. The author directly discusses how the Canada-U.S. border shifted the political dynamics of Canada from 1812-1840.

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- *The Loyalists of the Eastern Townships* (various authors), Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch, United Empire Loyalists' Association, Mika Publishing Company, 1984. This book is a multi-faceted view of the Loyalists of Quebec. For specific research on individuals, the biographical elements of this book are beneficial.
 - *The Loyalists of Quebec 1774-1825: A Forgotten History* (various authors), Price-Patterson Ltd., 1989. The chapters of this book vary by subject, and includes lists of Loyalists in the appendix.

HOW DO I FIND INFORMATION ON LOYALIST FIGURES?

Loyalist soldiers and civilians during the Revolutionary War are indexed in documents known as the [Carleton Papers \(British Headquarters Papers\)](#). Although this is early on in Loyalist history, the soldiers and commanding officers active in the war can contain key information for family lineages along with the documents about civilian refugees. The database is searchable and contains over 50,000 documents pertaining to Loyalist soldiers and civilians.

Search tip: As many of the documents are not very readable and as the definition of what a Loyalist was expanded over the years, there are some inconsistencies and inaccurate material in the files. To negate this, search names with a wildcard character using an asterisk (Fran* for Frank, Francois, Francesco, Francis etc.). Generally, American officials, other Americans except slave owners already named in the *Book of Negroes*, British officials, British agents and contractors, leading British military figures in America, soldiers in British regiments, and people in the navy are consistently indexed.

The BCHS holds a few topical files on Loyalists. The contents vary and include but are not limited to:

- Newspaper clippings about Loyalists
- Original hand-written copy of Loyalist history of Bedford account
- Various correspondences from 1783-1784 about Loyalists
- Claim for losses by Eastern Townships Loyalists 1786-1788
- Various documents regarding the Sir John Johnson Branch of the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada

The Haldimand Papers available at Library and Archives Canada (Finding Aid 599) contains lists of Loyalists in the province of Quebec. Fitzgerald, K.E. *Loyalist lists: over 2000 Loyalist names and families from the Haldimand papers*, Ontario Genealogical Society, 1984 is a book which lists the names found within the papers.

Another resource to consult is the [Sir John Johnson Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada](#). The national association preserves the memory and history of Loyalists and their decedents. The Sir John Johnson Centennial Branch is the South-Western chapter of the Eastern Townships. The branch holds historical documents about Loyalists as well as published books. Their [directory of Loyalists](#) can aid in searching for Loyalist figures.



Sir John Johnson Baronet of the Mohawks. United Empire Loyalists' Association.
<http://www.uelac.org/education/QuebecResource/Chapters/SIR%20JOHN%20JOHNSON.html>

SAMUEL WILLARD

Samuel Willard was born on December 1, 1766 in Petersham, Massachusetts to Joshua Willard and Lucretia Ward. The Willard family sided with the Loyalists during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and although he was just a young boy, Samuel helped clandestinely deliver dispatches. In Newfane, Samuel married Lucinda Knowlton in 1791 with whom he had two children. The following year, Willard signed a petition asking for land in Stukely and Orford Townships having previously visited Quebec in 1790. Frustrated by the administrative delays in ceding land in the Townships, Willard participated in drafting a statement of protest by Loyalists settled at Missisquoi Bay in 1797 and eventually helped finance Samuel Gale's trip to London where he lobbied for the Loyalists who wished to settle in the Townships. Having moved from Newfane to Sheldon, Vermont, Willard finally received 1,200 acres of land in Stukely Townships in November 1800. In 1803, Willard was named Justice of the Peace and had his commission renewed in 1810, 1821, and 1828. Willard also acted as Inspector of roads and bridges and played an important role in developing the road network between Montreal and the Eastern Townships. In 1806, Willard was offered but declined a commission as Lieutenant-Colonel in the Eastern Townships Militia established by Sir John Johnson. With the outbreak of the War of 1812 however, Willard petitioned to receive the commission. After two years of waiting, he was named Lieutenant-Colonel, second in command, in the 3rd Battalion of the Eastern Townships Militia in April 1814. Following the end of the War, Willard turned his attention to education and schooling in the Townships. In 1815, he received a commission for two schools in Stukely Township. Willard died on October 28, 1833 on his homestead in Stukely and was buried there three days later.

The Fonds:

As there exists over 1000 contextual records in the Samuel Willard fonds at the BCHS, (CA BCHS BCHS001) these records can offer helpful first-hand accounts of settlement and Loyalist life in Brome County.

- **Correspondence Letters:** These letters consist of correspondence between Samuel Willard and other members of Brome County. As they are dated from 1783, they can give first-hand accounts of Loyalist financial, land, personal, and business affairs during re-settlement.
- **Land Papers:** This series consists of land deeds concerning Samuel Willard. These documents are highly useful for locating and researching historical land ownership for various Brome County figures.
- **Legal Papers:** These legal documents give an idea on how the political and legal system worked during 1783-1899.
- **Journals, Diaries and Memos:** These documents include memos sent to/from Samuel Willard, diaries by Samuel Willard, as well as journals concerning Willard.
- **Business Papers:** The series consists of business papers and account books concerning Samuel Willard between the years 1784-1843. This includes account books, accounts, receipts, promissory notes and miscellaneous papers of Samuel Willard as general merchant in Newfane, Vt., 1784 to 1800, and in Stukely and Shefford from 1800 to 1833.

PAUL HOLLAND KNOWLTON

Paul Holland Knowlton was born in Newfane, Vermont in 1787 to Sally Holbrook and Silas Knowlton, an astute supporter and judge of the Loyalists. Paul Holland Knowlton went to the township of Stukely, where his parents had previously settled in 1796. Paul Holland Knowlton would continue to expand as he settled in the township of Brome in 1815. Among the multiple buildings and operations he established, he successfully laid the plans for a village on the shore of Brome Lake. The village became an established industrial and commercial hub as he emphasized road and land development. This village is now known as Knowlton, named after Paul Holland and his family. He successfully helped establish a church, school, and agricultural society. Paul Holland Knowlton was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1841. He also was mayor of the Township of Brome, and elected Warden of Brome County in 1855. He served on the Legislative Council until his death in 1863.

Paul Holland Knowlton House

The Paul Holland Knowlton House was built in the early 1800s, and was occupied by Paul Holland Knowlton in 1815. It is one of the oldest log buildings in the Eastern Townships, and it is on display at the BCHS. Its original location was at the Knowlton Golf Club and was moved to the BCHS and restored in 2015. The house showcases the contributions of Paul Holland Knowlton and other Loyalists of Brome County.

Located on the first floor of the Paul Holland Knowlton House at the Brome Museum, researchers will find artifacts relating to prominent Loyalist figures including:

- Sir John Johnson
- Sir William Johnson
- Paul Holland Knowlton



Paul Holland Knowlton Fonds

The Fonds of Paul Holland Knowlton (CA BCHS BCHS149) are accessible for research. Among the fonds is included:

- Land Papers from 1801-1869
- Legal Papers
- Correspondences
- Petitions
- Commissions

Marion L. Phelps, longtime BCHS curator, composed a biography on Paul Holland Knowlton: Marion L. Phelps. *KNOWLTON, PAUL HOLLAND*, Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003.

NICHOLAS AUSTIN

Nicholas Austin was born in 1736 to a Quaker family. After the American Revolution, he arrived on foot with his family and settled on the shores of Lake Memphremagog in Bolton. Initially, Nicholas Austin settled in the Vale Perkins area of the lake. He began building a road from Potton to Bolton, however the Land Committee initially ignored his petition. He was eventually granted land on the shores of Memphremagog in the Bolton township, and not in Potton or Sutton which he also petitioned for. His cabin was built there as he cleared the surrounding land. Nicholas Austin would travel to Quebec to register his land. A series of setbacks would eventually force Austin to sell portions of his land in 1808. After he lost a court battle due to land disputes with George Cook and got sued by the widow of Samuel Willard, he was left severely in debt. Nicholas Austin died in 1821, however his descendants, notably his son and nephew named Nicholas II and III, carried over his work in Gibraltar Point. Expanding north, his descendants resourcefully brought industry to the area as they built farms, mills, and a general store. Grace to Nicholas Austin, the first settlers of the area from New Hampshire helped develop the modern-day municipality of Austin, from whom it received its name.

Nicholas Austin Fonds

The fonds (CA BCHS BCHSo10) consist of primary source information regarding Nicholas Austin.

- Correspondence: This series consists of correspondences between Austin and Willard. Likewise, there are correspondences relating to the court action taken against Austin by Willard, as well as other documents relating to the court action taken in Montreal.
- Legal Papers: These files contain an agreement and a deed regarding a farm in the Township of Bolton.

Suggested Readings:

- [Nicholas Austin and the Leader and Associate System](#)

ASA PORTER

Asa Porter was born in Boxford, Massachusetts in 1742. He was an immediate Loyalist supporter during the Revolutionary War, and was named Colonel for the second regiment of the Provincial Militia prior to the War. He would eventually be tried in New Hampshire on charges of conspiracy for organizing a British raid. He was found guilty and sentenced to confinement but escaped and fled to Quebec. Asa Porter received a Charter to his Township in 1797, the same year as Nicholas Austin. He and Austin were quite acquainted with the Governor of New Hampshire and built and rapport together. His land in Brome was granted to him by the Crown due to his Loyalist roots. Asa Porter held extensive ownership of lands both in Brome and New Hampshire, which included 100,000 acres in the state alone. Colonel Porter's six children were quite accomplished as well, notably his son John, who practiced law in New Hampshire and later settled in Brome. Asa Porter's daughter Sarah married Mills Olcott who purchased Colonel Porter's claim on the Township of Brome. In his late-life, Colonel Porter left his land matters to his family in Brome. He later died 1818 at the age of 77 in Haverhill, New Hampshire.

Asa Porter Fonds

The archives at the BCHS hold the fonds of Asa Porter (CA BCHS BCHS295) which includes legal papers regarding various subjects:

- Reports of the Land Committee regarding Asa Porter's application for land on the East Side of Lake Mempremagog
- Typed copy of Asa Porter's hand-written text regarding his trial
- Information regarding his property in Vermont
- A picture of his house in North Haverhill, N.H.

HOW DO I FIND INFORMATION ON LAND GRANTS?

Since the 1600s as settlement first began in Quebec, the processes for acquiring lands shifted throughout time. Initially, land was distributed based on what was called the “seigneurial” system, whereas seigneuries were high ranking former military officers, members of important families, or members of the bourgeoisie. Seigneuries had an obligation to the King and therefore they decided who would inhabit these lands.

In 1763, the Township system in Quebec began and new land was divided among this system. The Eastern Townships however performed under a different system than the Western Townships. The lands were usually granted to a Loyalist and their subsequent associates.

There were three primary steps in achieving a land grant:

- Land Petitions: Early settlers submitted petitions to the governing ruler of lands in the townships to obtain Crown land.
- Land Allotments: Once approved, settlers would be given an allotment to work and live on. Many times, conditions had to be met for permanent settlement.
- Letter Patents: A document would be issued confirming final confirmation of land granted to a settler.

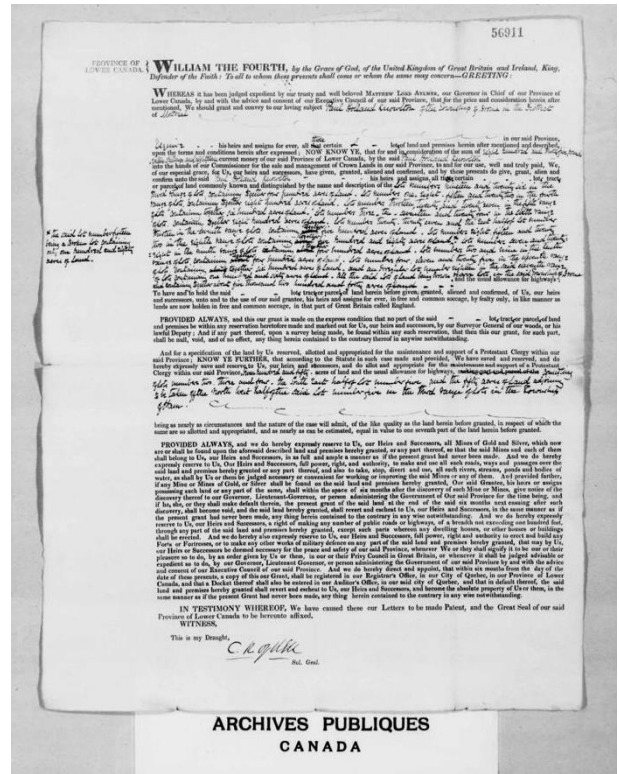
Some of these documents can be found in the land papers of the Loyalist figures previously discussed. Online resources also contain this information for research.

[The Land Petitions Database of Lower Canada](#) retains the documents of land petitions in Quebec. The database is searchable by name, and will yield JPG format files of the petitions.

[The List of lands granted by the crown in the province of Quebec, from 1763 to 31st December 1890](#) lists the land grants in Quebec. The document is dense, but indexed alphabetically by name, county, and township. The French version is available [here](#). The BANQ can be contacted for copies or references of these documents in their holdings. The BCHS has a physical copy of the book as well.

Researchers may also want to consult the Brome Valuation Rolls at the BCHS archives as they contain contextual information such as land value and ownership.

[Le Greffe de l'arpenteur générale du Québec](#) has an online resource showing the townships and how they are divided. Searchable terms by year will show results of old land divisions compared to modern day ones.



Paul H. Knowlton Land Grants. Library and Archives Canada, RG 1 L3L

CONTACT US/ FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information or for research assistance please do not hesitate to reach out to us at archives@shcb.ca. You can also reach us by phone at 450-243-6782.

To read the BCHS's research policy [click here](#).