

Who were the loyalists history essay



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The American Revolution was the leading cause of the Loyalists' emigration from the United States to Canada. When the British Empire expanded their territory in Quebec, the American/British subjects in the colonies were heavily disappointed as they were looking to annex this interior themselves. Thus, in the year 1775, the Americans decided to revolt against the British Empire, and the American Revolution began with the battle of Lexington.

[1]In the following year, in 1776, the 13 rebellious colonies announced their independence against the British. Nevertheless, it did not indicate that every colony had agreed to participate in this uprising. The British Empire was considered to be one of the most powerful nations in the world at the time due to their superior army and navy. As a result, many of the colonies (the Loyalists) refused to take part in arms against their opponent, choosing to remain loyal to them. Because they could no longer stay in their homeland, they decided to leave the United States and migrate to Canada.[2]This paper will analyze who the Loyalists were, and discuss what their roles were in impacting Nova Scotia and the rest of Canada in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

There were various classes among the Loyalists; they included struggling backwoods farmers, merchants, and artisans.[3]There were many degrees of Loyalism in this conflict. Some desired to express their Loyalism to the British by taking certain actions such as fighting for the defeat of the revolution. They supported the British Empire by taking arms against the Americans. Whereas, there were those who chose not to fight and simply attempted to fit in to the new environment in the maritime of Canada. They represented approximately a quarter of the population during this period in

the late eighteenth century (which was about 2 million).[4] Eventually, once they realized that the Americans started to take advantage against the British, many of these Loyalists began to believe that the revolution would be successful and they realized that they could no longer reside in America. Many of them, with the generals, decided to leave this land forever.[5] Some, however, did not leave until 1783 when the peace treaty was made.

Most non-assimilated Loyalists have made peace with the situation because of their families, farms, and other factors to take care of. In fact, there were about 50 000 people leaving as Loyalists - some chose to return to Britain, Bermuda, and to the West Indies. About 30 000 of them chose to go to Nova Scotia, and about 7 000 have gone to Quebec.[6] The American Revolution has lasted for a long period of time; and by the end of it, in 1780, there were Loyalists entering Quebec to what were essentially refugee camps.[7]

Immediately following the American Revolution, Nova Scotia faced the initial brunt of Loyalist immigration. Initially, Nova Scotia was considered to be insignificant in the eyes of Britain, as the colony only had about 20, 000 settlers. However, this has changed in 1783, as its population have suddenly doubled with Loyalist immigration. These Loyalists were mostly consisted of highly aristocratic or upper class people. They have settled in the region in order to be closer to their contemporaries and families in Britain. About 14, 000 of them have decided to settle along the Bay of Fundy into the St. John River region in 1783 alone.[8] Due to the sheer number of settlers in the region, it has led the British government to create the colony of New Brunswick in 1784. Furthermore, Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island were

splintered into two separate colonies in the same year. They were separated until 1820, when Cape Breton Island has rejoined Nova Scotia again.[9]

While the majority of the Loyalists were Caucasians, most of these English-speaking settlers decided to settle in Nova Scotia and by doing this, they have developed the Upper Canadian region. Furthermore, they were not the only immigrants who were residing in Nova Scotia, as there were also Black settlers who previously immigrated to the Maritimes as well.[10] Finally, the last group residing in the land were the Aboriginals who were given land in Upper Canada for staying loyal to the British Empire during the American Revolution.[11]

The British authorities in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia were having problems with the sudden entry of Loyalists to the Maritimes. In the 1760s, the British officials had offered lands in both colonies to soldiers, couriers, and politicians and they have become the new landlords. In return, these new landlords were to promise to settle the lands with farmers in a way that was used in the Seigniorial system in New France. In 1783, the Britain government promised to give: one hundred acres of free land to every Loyalist household head; an additional 50 acres of free land for each extra family member; even more land for those who held a military rank. Furthermore, they also provided food rations for many years to the settlers in Nova Scotia. Additionally, tools and building materials were given to them for free to help clear out and settle their land.[12]

However, the problem was that most Loyalists were inefficient at incorporating this system into good use and a great deal of these lands were

unused even by the 1770s.[13]Furthermore, once a land title had been granted, the British government could not easily control how these now occupied lands were to be used for. This issue was especially more problematic in the Prince Edward Island region, as many of the landlords there were able to trick several hundred Loyalists into settle in their domain. These settlers were mostly either Scottish or Irish, and the landlords who were also from Ireland were able to attract the new immigrants easily. [14]They have convinced them by telling them that they will be allowed to stay as long as they want, as long as they have promised to clear the land and then build roads and buildings. However, the fact of the matter is that these landlords never intended to keep their promise. They simply wished these settlers would do all the hard work for them for no charge.[15]The solution was created only in 1873, the year when P. E. I had decided to join the Confederation. At that point, the new province followed the recommendation of the Land Commission of 1860 and enacted the Tenants' Compensation Act of 1872.[16]This act had allowed compensation to be made available to those who could prove their Loyalist ancestors had been tricked by absentee landlords.[17]Absentee landlords in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island, on the other hand, simply did not bother to populate their land with new settlers at all. Thus, a land shortage crisis rose in the early 1780s, considering the massive influx of Loyalists coming into the region.[18]Unlike the situation in Prince Edward Island, however, the British government was able to immediately take some of this land back: about 2.5 million acres out of about 5.5 million acres in total.[19]

The Irish were not the only ones who were tricked by the British government. During the 1870s, there were a significant number of Black Loyalist immigration movements. In fact, about 3, 000 of them have moved into the British North American region this year, and most of them chose Nova Scotia to settle.[20]Some of the Black slaves in America have fought against the Patriots during the revolution, and to reward them, and convince more to fight for them, the British Crown had promised to give them freedom, equality and land to settle in the colonies.[21]Nevertheless, when these immigrants arrived from the newly created United States, the lands that were given to them as reward were either small or poor in quality in comparison to the lands that were given to the white Loyalists. Therefore, this caused many of the Black settlers to leave Nova Scotia, and find a new place to settle in.[22]

Thomas Peters was a black Loyalist settler who was given permission to head to Britain in order to plead on the behalf of black immigrants in Nova Scotia. While the British were having problems with the complaints made by the citizens of Canada due to their inability to keep their promise, Peters met up with the Sierra Leone Company which was a land firm that was willing to provide Blacks with free land in Africa.[23]Ultimately, because of Peters' action, many black settlers were able to leave Nova Scotia in the 1790s for search of a new opportunity and start a new life overseas in the new colony of Freetown at Sierra Leone. Some however, decided to stay behind and continue their lives in Nova Scotia since they felt their life there was content. [24]In fact, between 1790s and 1830s, the British government began to slowly start outlawing slavery in its colonies. Eventually, by 1833, slavery

was finally abolished in all of British colonies. Nevertheless, this did not indicate that prejudice and racism have disappeared in British North America for a lasting time.[25] Instead, it demonstrated that the Maritime region generally became a more tolerant and free place for black settlers to reside and live compared to the United States. In fact, the Americans have not outlawed slavery until 1865, which became the reason why some of the Black settlers decided to stay in Canada. Thanks to this new freedom, in Upper Canada during early to mid 1800s, it has attracted more and more fugitive slaves to enter during the period of the Underground Railroad.[26]

The new arrival of Loyalists signified the beginning of English Canada. These new settlers, who had homes and farms back in their old homeland, had to start their lives anew in the new environment, as most of them deserted all of their possessions back in their old homes.[27] Furthermore, there was another problem, as the new region was untouched by civilization. Meaning, even though there was a vast amount of land, it mostly consisted of dense forests full of large trees and were considered to be useless. Therefore, they could not start farming, until they logged the region's trees and bushes. In fact, it was even difficult for these settlers to build even a cabin.[28] To make matters worse, most of them were no longer young. Thankfully, in the Upper Canadian region, the accidents of war and the revolution has brought a large amount of people who were experienced at settling; they were loyal to the Crown and most importantly, they understood how to start farming in an environment they were not used to.[29] In addition, they were supported by the government, which has alleviated the difficulties of establishing the settlers.[30] Another significance that was made by the movement of

Loyalists to Canada in the eighteenth century is that it has created dualism (French and English) within the nation. Before the movement, in the Quebec area, most of the settlers consisted of French speakers. However, this changed after 1783, when a significant number of English merchants migrated to the area; meaning, dualism has emerged in Quebec, which consisted of a large French majority and an English minority.[31]The impact on French Canada is very important as more and more English Loyalists came into what is now Ontario. In effect, it has also forced the government to reconsider the Quebec Act. Into the 1780s or 90s, there were even more immigrants coming into Ontario from the United States who were known as the Late Loyalists. They did not come for ideological reasons; but rather they decided to migrate for the search for better lands, as they were skilled pioneer farmers.[32]

These Loyalists have affected Nova Scotia and Quebec to help Canada to develop into a nation that exists today. First, population growth was possible thanks to Loyalists, as many European settlers of all different kinds of social classes and races, including, farmers, merchants, both Black and White settlers, and even aristocrats (mostly Late Loyalists) have decided to move to Canada. Second, despite the fact that these Loyalists were used by the landlords who were misusing their authority that was given by the British government for their own benefit, their actions helped develop Canada as these new settlers have cleared out the useless lands and started farming in the region. Lastly, Loyalists have made bilingualism possible in Canada. In the beginning, the majority of settlers were French speakers and no English

settlers were to be found. However, after the movement two different groups were formed in the nation.