

HISTORICAL SKETCH of the  
COUNTIES OF LINCOLN & WELLAND :::

Declaration of Independence was promulgated by the Americans were many of the Colonists that were fully alive to the importance asking Great Britian to do away with what they thought were existing grievances, but who were not by any means , prepared , nor did they wish to remove all allegiance to their mother country;and consequently they adhered to the crown, and received the name of United Empire Loyalists; so called because they advocated the unity of the British Empire.

There were Loyalists in every part of the Colonies, belonging to all ranks os society; who took up arms for their king and remained loyal throughout the Revolutionary War, and suffered severely for their adherence to the dictates of their consciences, at the hands of the Americans after the Revolution terminated.

After peace had been declared, many of the Loyalists rather than live in the new Republic, and submit to the insults and humiliations which were thrown upon them, emigrated to Canada; though many of the Loyalists ( or Tories as the Americans called them) through exstreme poverty were forced to remain and suffer the indignities- and not a few suffered death- which the victorious Revolutionists dealt out to them. the love of liberty and personal rights that the Amerricans claimed they thought for, manifested itself towards those who remianed to their sovereign, in a far different way, then would be expected from those who claimed so much for justice and personal rights.

To the United Empire Loyalists belongs the credit of being the first ones who took up land in the Counties of Lincoln and Welland.

Without doubt , persons before the U.E. Loyalists settled on the Niagara Peninsula , but they were not permanent land-holders and only sought trade with the Indians.

Butler's Rangers , a Company of U.E. Loyalists who had performed efficient services during the Revolution, under the command of Colonel John Butler , came to Niagara in 1784, and many of the members commenced to build themselves homes upon the land, which was granted to them, as to all Loyalists, who had done service for their Sovereign during the Revolution ; and not a few of the residents of Lincoln and Welland Counties at the present time hold the same land that their ancestors received from the Government in 1784, and the few succeeding years.

During the winter of the Revolution, Colonel John Butler, Capt. Joseph Brant , and several other commanders of His Majesty's forces , had wintered at Niagara, from which place many expeditons were sent against the Americans. After the war Colonel John Butler settled in Niagara where he held various offices of Trust under the Government? He died in Niagara , and is buried on Butlers Farm , near that village.

First the land was settled along the only French Road leading around Niagara Falls, then along the shores of lake Ontario, and Erie, and on the river banks. Gradually as the roads were exstended inland , the settlers took up the land and made homes , back from the water front.

Many of the refugees that settled in the Counties of Lincoln and Welland endured many hardships, during 1784 and the few succeeding years. Secres of families made their ways , hundreds of miles through the trackless forests, or by narrow Indian trails to the Canadian frontier. Those who took the land given them by the Government, and intended to cultivate it, erected log houses. Certainly the house of the early pioneers of Lincoln and Welland Counties, were not very elaborate affairs- for it did not take more then a day or two to build one- but who is there to say that those that lived in them, and had families of healthy brown faced children, when the land about them was cleared and

covered with various crops; were not as happy as the people of the present day, who live in the magnificent structures of wood and brick, furnished with costly furniture and sickly-pale faced children?

many of the early settlers for want of other clothing, dressed in buckskin; having learned the process of making it soft and pliable from the Indians; then they commenced to raise flax and hemp, from which they wove cloth and made their own clothing, and though coarse in texture, still many a maiden had good reason to feel proud in a dress made from the cloth she had woven from the flax herself: as those of to-day who dress in fine silks.

Too much praise cannot be given to the pioneer mothers of the Counties of Lincoln and Welland; they as well as their husbands, suffered all the hardships incident to the settlement of a new country; and by their example and willingness, they encouraged their husbands to overcome discouragements, which many times would seem almost too great for humanity to bear with few comforts and a great deal of hard work, they did their full share towards the building up of the new homes, and making the Counties of Lincoln and Welland as we see them to-day.

Their common hardships made the early settlers as brothers, and schooled them into a feeling for each other, which never permitted a fellow pioneer to ask for help without receiving it.

In 1787, owing to very poor crops, a period of extreme suffering came upon the people, which lasted with all nearly a year, and with some more than a year. During this year of want many of the settlers were forced to live upon anything which could be had that would sustain life; the buds of trees and plants in the woods were gathered and eaten; also wheat bran, from which they made a tasteless sort of bread, was used; and the "Ten", "Twelve", and other Creeks gave fish to the settlers. In fact the settlers were forced to live upon anything that was supposed to contain nourishment. The "scarce" year was a bad year for the early settlers and it was along time before all fully recovered from the suffering which they had been forced to endure for the want of food.

In 1788 Lord Dorchester, then Governor General of Canada issued a proclamation, by which he gave notice of forming new districts. Western Canada was at that time formed into four districts, and the name of Nassau was given to the district between the River Trent, on the east and to a line extending from Long Point for the Westerly boundary, which included the Niagara Peninsula. To the District of Nassau was appointed a Judge, a Sheriff, and other officers; and at once the new settlers emerged from a martial-like law, which they had never liked; to all the rights of Civil Law, as administered in a Court of Common Pleas. Hon. Robert Hamilton, of Queenston was first Judge of the District of Nassau, and was looked upon by the pioneers with great respect for the many good qualities which he possessed.

The punishments for committing certain crimes were various; hanging was the penalty for certain crimes, including felony; but by far one of the most common punishments, was banishment to the Straits, which was much dreaded. Whipping on the bare back or imprisonment in goal, or the pillory was also meted out to the criminals; but the new settlers were with but few exceptions, a law abiding people.

In 1791, Colonel John Graves Simcoe was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada. In 1795, Governor Simcoe named the Capital Newark--now the Village of Niagara on the Lake. The first assembly of the Provincial Parliament of Upper Canada, took place on the 18th., of September, 1792.

"Account taken from--THE OFFICIAL ATLAS OF THE COUNTIES OF LINCOLN & WELLAND 1876