

THE HATFIELD GRANT & LIEUT. COL. ISAAC HATFIELD

By Brian McConnell, UE *

Although United Empire Loyalists arrived in June, 1783 on the shore of the Annapolis Basin in Nova Scotia as refugees at the close of the American Revolution to form a settlement to be called Digby, it was not until over twenty – seven years later some received good title to land. When the lands were first distributed in 1784 by the *Botsford Grant* under the administration of Amos Botsford, a Connecticut lawyer appointed by Sir Guy Carleton, there were errors with descriptions. It required a new survey to be done. On February 22, 1800, fifteen Loyalists petitioned for assistance by signing a document that was presented to the House of Representatives of Nova Scotia in Halifax. It read as follows:

**To the Honourable House of Representatives for the Province
of Nova Scotia in General Assembly convened.**

**The Petition of the Subscribers on behalf of the Land holders in the
Township of Digby
Humbly sheweth:**

That your Petitioners found the Township of Digby a wilderness which with great difficulty and expense they have settled and improved under grants from his Majesty, but owing to their remote situation from the seat of government and the great forces and hurry in the public offices at the time they formed their settlement, it became necessary to employ agents between them and the Governor, some of whom dying and others removing during their employment great irregularities took place in distributing the lands, and your Petitioners titles have become so involved and uncertain as to make it necessary to survey the Township anew, and from government to obtain a new grant.

That your Petitioners find the expense attending this undertaking grater than from their circumstances they are able to bear, but if the same be not accomplished it will greatly dishearten and discourage your Petitioners in pursuing their improvements of their lands, They

Therefore, humbly pray that your Honourable House will take their case into consideration, and grant them such relief toward lightening them of their charges as your Honourable House may think proper and your Petitioner as in duty bound will ever pray at

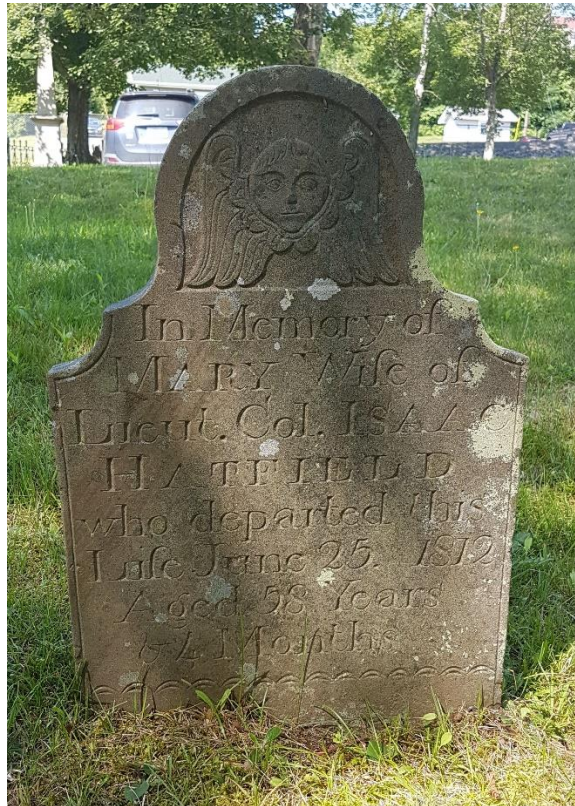
Digby: 22 February 1800

Signed: Richard Hill, Isaac Bonnell, Andrew Snodgrass, Robert Timpany, James A. Holdsworth, John Morford, Roger Viets, James Hughston, John Stewuart, Matt Stewart, John Hill, James Foreman, Frederick Williams, Isaac Roop, William Thomas (1)

On January 29, 1801 their hopes were realized when the Province after arranging for a new survey made a grant to 275 individuals to settle boundary and title issues and establish clear title. This grant called a Grant of Confirmation became known as the *Hatfield Grant*. It was named for Isaac Hatfield, a native of Westchester County, New York who was one of the larger Loyalist grantees.

The headstone of Martha Hatfield, wife of Isaac, is located in historic Trinity Anglican Church cemetery at Digby, Nova Scotia, along with over 200 other graves of Loyalists. Its' inscription reads:

In Memory of
MARY, Wife of
Lieut. Col. ISAAC
HATFIELD
Who departed this
Life June 25, 1812
Aged 58 Years
& 4 Months



Headstone of Martha Hatfield, wife of Isaac

Lieutenant Isaac Hatfield is reported to have been buried in the Trinity Anglican Church cemetery, however, his gravestone is no longer visible. (2) The inscription on it stated:

**ISAAC HATFIELD, Lieut. Col. of
Corps of Loyalists from the County of
Westchester, Province of New York,**

Jan. 3rd, 1822

In his 74th year

Isaac Hatfield was loyal to the British from the start of the American Revolution and when he was required by the rebels to serve in their militia and sign a declaration refused. In consequence he was fined which he would not pay and was forced to leave his home. (3) He joined other Loyalists as volunteer in the Queen's Rangers in 1776. In 1777 he became a member of General Oliver DeLanceys Brigade. Then he raised a militia in Westchester County and was given the commission of Lieutenant Colonel by Governor William Tryon of New York.

In January, 1780 the home of Hatfield at Morrisania, New York was attacked by the Connecticut militia. (4) It was reported that:

Early on the morning of the 18th instant, a detachment of rebel militia collected from the area of Horseneck under the command of Captain Lockwood attacked a house Kingsbridge and DeLancey Mills, in which Lieutenant Colonel Hatfield, Major Huggerford, Captain Knip, a Quarter-Master, and ten private Refugees of the Lieutenant – Colonel's corps were quartered:

The house being bravely defended for fifteen minutes, the Rebels were enabled to set fire to it, from the having gained possession of the ground floor; in consequence of which, this small party were reduced to necessity of abandoning their post, and laying down their arms; they were in course taken prisoners, and the enemy immediately began their retreat. (5)

Hatfield remained a prisoner for about five months. Upon his release he made his way to New York and at the close of the American Revolution in 1783 sailed with his second wife, Martha, and other Loyalist refugees including his brothers Abraham, David and Daniel to Parr Town, later re-named Saint John, New Brunswick. Born on October 28, 1747 to Thomas Hatfield, a prosperous farmer in Westchester County, New York, Isaac Hatfield was one of 4 brothers. His first wife Jane died and he married Martha Willett, daughter of Dr. Cornelius Willett and Elizabeth Willett.

In Saint John, Isaac Hatfield was granted a lot, however he moved across the Bay of Fundy to Digby where he was listed in the Muster Roll of June, 1784 with his wife and three servants, being negro slaves. (6) His second wife Martha died in 1786 and he re-married in Digby to Mary Boyeaux, daughter of Thomas Boyeaux, on September 11, 1786 according to records of Trinity Anglican Church.

Isaac's brother Daniel obtained a grant for 200 acres of land and settled at Hatfields Point, Belleisle, New Brunswick. There is a headstone marking his grave in the Hatfield Point Burial Ground.



Headstone of Daniel Hatfield

The headstone of Daniel Hatfield, brother of Isaac, located at Hatfields Point in New Brunswick is inscribed:

SACRED

To the memory of

DANIEL HATFIELD

Who departed this life

February 11th, 1825

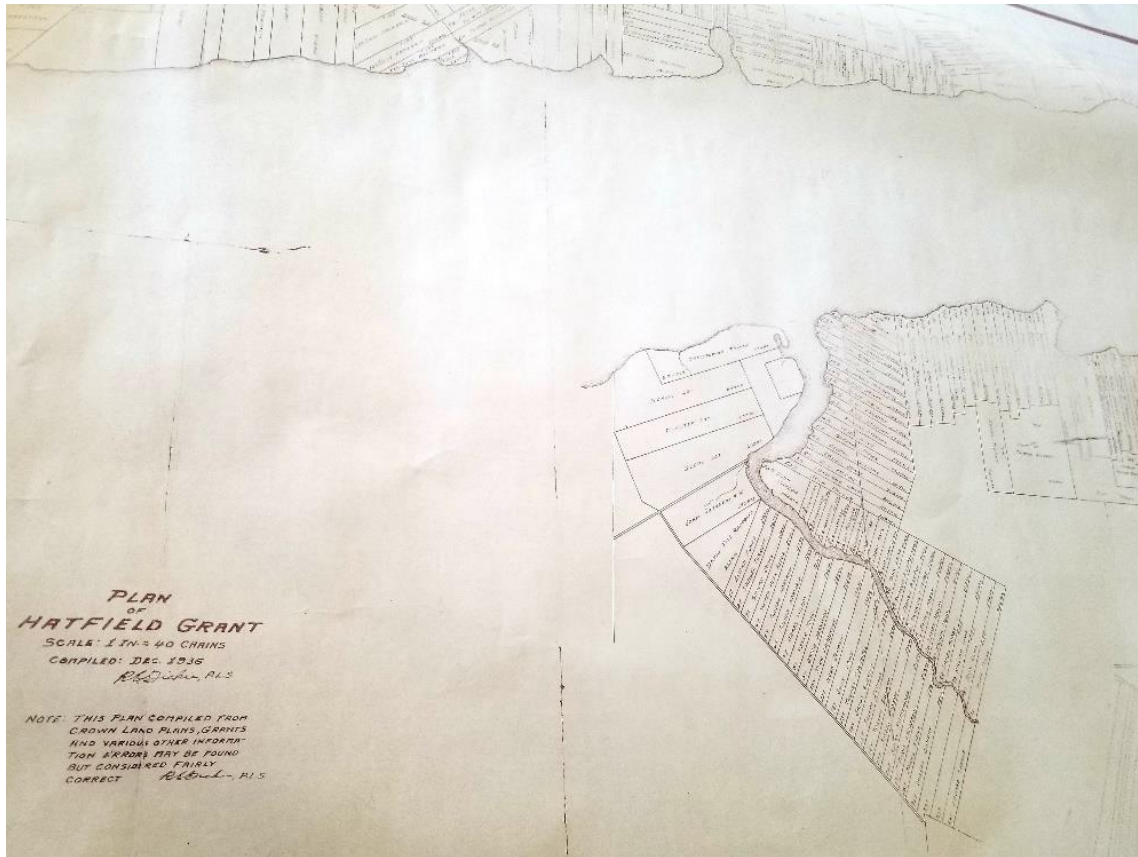
In the 80th year of his age

Being one of the Loyalists which

Emigrated to New Brunswick

in 1783

In Digby, Isaac Hatfield resided on a lot of land at the foot of Warwick Street. The Town had been divided into 732 lots, four rows deep and nine blocks back. He was also one of 334 Loyalists to whom the Province of Nova Scotia made a grant of lands known as the *Botsford Grant* in 1784 in the Township. It was named after Amos Botsford who had been appointed to assist in the settlement of Digby. After a disagreement over distribution of goods and supplies Botsford left Digby in 1784 and settled in Dorchester, New Brunswick where he was named clerk of the peace, judge, and registrar of deeds. Later he was elected to the House of Assembly and chosen Speaker. Unfortunately, the boundaries set out for lands by the *Botsford Grant* were not well defined leading to difficulties. The Province was petitioned to have a new survey carried out. This was done and in 1801 a new grant made which became known as the *Hatfield Grant*.

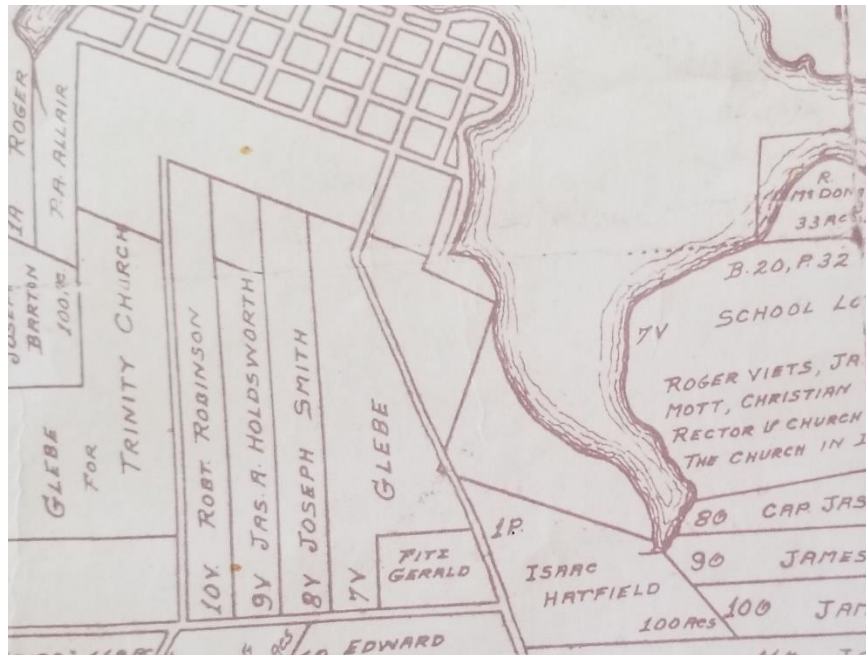


Plan of Hatfield Grant

The *Hatfield Grant* consisted of 91,632 acres. As by the time some people had settled on lands which created further problems and a large grant was made to Isaac Hatfield and five others. It included the north, south and middle ranges, each one and a quarter mile in width, from north to south, and extending westwardly to the Sissiboo River, amounting to some 65,000 acres. The area of the *Hatfield Grant* was designated by the name of the Township of Digby and there were conditions attached to land received by each person. These required each Grantee to:

1. Pay to the Province 2 shillings per 100 acres beginning 10 years from the date of the grant;
2. Clear and work 3 acres of land for every 50 acres of plantable land or clear and drain 3 acres of swamp or marsh land within 3 years of date of grant;
3. Keep 3 cattle upon each 50 acres of cleared land;
4. Erect a dwelling at least 20 feet long and 16 feet wide;
5. If land was rocky and not for planting or pasture to operate a stone quarry and hire one person for every 50 acres;
6. Swear Oath of Loyalty to King within 12 months.

The Loyalists were enabled by the *Hatfield Grant* to obtain proper legal title to their lands which encouraged them to make improvements. As well this meant they were able to mortgage or sell as they wished. The Province reserved on the lands the right to all white pine, as well as silver, copper, lead and coal. Following this grant the Township of Digby developed and the population increased. In January 1837 Digby County was created as a County separate from Annapolis County. The division was made at the Bear River.



100 acres granted to Isaac Hatfield at bottom left on above portion of Plan of Hatfield Grant

The map above shows 100 acres of land granted to Isaac Hatfield as appeared on the Plan of the *Hatfield Grant*. These lands were located a short distance from Digby and near the Joggin, a body of water adjacent to the Annapolis Basin which connects to the Bay of Fundy

During his time in Digby, Isaac Hatfield took a prominent role in the life of the community of Digby and held several positions of leadership and responsibility. He was elected as Church Warden of Trinity Anglican Church in 1785 and again in 1815. The Regiment of Militia at Digby in 1793 had him as its Lieutenant Colonel. In 1795 he was appointed a Commissioner to administer the taking of a poll tax for Digby. (7)

On his death the lands which Isaac Hatfield held were disposed of by his nephew Peter Hatfield of New Brunswick who he named as Executor of his Will. Although he had been married four times, Isaac Hatfield had no children. After the death of his third wife Mary Boyeaux he married Ann Hecht, daughter of Frederic N. Hecht. When he made his Will in 1822, the same year which he died, she was not living.

Notes:

* Brian McConnell, UE completed this article on May 20, 2021. To contact him email brianm564@gmail.com

- (1) “22 February Petition of some grantees of Digby Township (15 signatures) for a new survey of the Township, Nova Scotia House of Assembly Archives RG 5 Series A volume 7 number 11
- (2) Hatfield, Abraham, “A Genealogy of the Descendants of Thomas Hatfield”, published by New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, 1935
- (3) The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; *American Loyalist Claims, Series I*; Class: AO 13; Piece: 023
- (4) “Raid on Isaac Hatfield’s House” posted on <http://boston1775.blogspot.com/2020/01/raid-on-isaac-hatfields-house.html>
- (5) Reported in James Rivingtons Royal Gazette in New York on January 22, 1780
- (6) Isaac Hatfield was one of 27 owners of black slaves who signed a Petition on December 3, 1807 that was presented to the Nova Scotia House seeking compensation in the event of the abolition of slavery. He was identified as having two male, two female, and one child black slaves. The Petitioners hoped a law would be passed to secure their ownership of the black slaves, however, it was not. Source: House of Assembly, Nova Scotia Archives, RG 5 series A volume 14 number 49 (microfilm 15591)
- (7) Evenden, Doreen, “The Loyalists and the Victorians Build a Church: Trinity Anglican, Digby Nova Scotia”, published by Scallop Boat Press, 2018