

Benjamin Anderson

2021 UELAC Loyalist Scholarship Recipient

The 2021 UELAC Loyalist Scholarship was awarded to Benjamin Anderson. Raised in Fife, Scotland, Benjamin graduated with a First Class Bachelor of Arts with Honours degree in History from the University of Stirling in 2016. It was in his fourth year of study that Benjamin was exposed to the American Revolution by Dr. Colin Nicolson. In 2017 Benjamin then graduated with a Master of Letters with Merit in Modern History from the University of St. Andrews. Timing and staff absences prevented Benjamin from producing an undergraduate or postgraduate dissertation on the American Revolution: instead, his undergraduate dissertation explored British humanitarianism in continental Europe after the Second World War (available through University of Stirling's 'STORRE: Stirling online Research Repository'), and his postgraduate dissertation was a microhistorical study of the Jewish community in Glasgow.

After three years out of higher education, Benjamin started his PhD in 2020 at the University of Edinburgh under Professors Frank Cogliano and Gordon Pentland. Initially, Benjamin's dissertation would focus on the reintegration of Loyalists in post-war America, but as he delved further into the literature on the American Revolution, he realized Vermont's and the northern borderland's conspicuous absence from the story. Upon zoning in on this region, he then discovered the non-existent



literature on the Loyalists that lived there. Thus the thesis 'The Loyalists of Vermont and the Northern Borderland, 1749-1791' was born. Benjamin's fondness for Vermont stretches back to 2010, when he visited it as part of a school trip. He hopes to return to the state in the summer of 2022 and intends to use the opportunity to visit Canada for the first time. Over the years, he has produced articles for the *Journal of the American Revolution*, U. S. Studies Online, Pubs and Publications, and the Institute for Research of Expelled Germans. He currently has articles waiting to be published at *Commonplace*, *Borealia: Early Canadian History*, and H-Net, while

he is also working on a journal article on Ethan Allen's revolutionary allegiance for *Vermont History*.

Benjamin believes in helping others fulfill their academic potential and the power of literature in educating society. After working at Dunfermline Carnegie Library and Galleries, then Rothes Halls Library, he joined the University of St. Andrews Library in 2021, where he assists students in their own research. Simultaneously, Benjamin worked as a tutor at the University of Edinburgh. He intends to become an Academic Librarian after his PhD, while continuing to pursue his interests in Loyalists, the American Revolution, and borderland history on the side.

Below is an abstract of Benjamin's thesis:

When studying the "Age of Revolutions" in British North America, Vermont offers the most intriguing case-study because it experienced simultaneous revolutions. Before it revolted against the British Empire, Vermont's inhabitants revolted against New York, which claimed jurisdiction over the land. Sandwiched between the Connecticut River and twenty miles east of the Hudson River, Vermont lacked a governing elite and was predominantly inhabited by New England commoners. During the American Revolution, it was beset by land disputes, local political divisions, and a constant fear of Britain re-invading it through Lake Champlain; therefore, its leaders and inhabitants played both sides of the Revolutionary War. Survival, it seemed, transcended patriotism and ideals.

My research project strives to recover the voices of the Loyalists on the northern borderland and provide a comprehensive account of how they experienced the American Revolution, thus contributing to the historiographies of New York, Vermont, and Loyalism. It adds nuance to our understanding of Loyalists, challenging the Loyalist historians' generalisations that elite and common Loyalists shared the same revolutionary experiences and motivations. By considering Vermont and the northern borderland, my project complicates our understanding of allegiance in Revolutionary America. Further, it challenges the romantic notion that ideals guided the participants in the American Revolution by demonstrating the importance of self-interest in dictating why one became involved in the Revolution and who one sided with.