

## Treadwell Loyalists

By Donna (Brockway) Neilson, Sept 2024

My great-great-great-great grandparents were Ephraim and Meriam (Treadwell) Treadwell.

According to Loyalist Petitions, and other documents, I found at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, in Fredericton, they were loyalists. This is their story.

Ephraim and Meriam married in February of 1759 in Connecticut. In 1772 they purchased a thirty-three-acre farm in North Fairfield, Conn. The property had a chore house and good acreage, half of it was considered plough land suitable for growing crops, and the other half was meadow. Meriam had twenty well-fatted sheep.

Following the years of marriage, the couple went on to have at least 9 children whose names (in undetermined birth order) were Matthew, Nathaniel, Samuel, Ruth, Mary, Ephraim Jr., Abel, Rebecca and Reuben.

When the Revolutionary War broke out Ephraim and Meriam were Loyalists. Because of that, in 1778 Ephraim became a wanted man and an arrest warrant was put out on him. As a result, he and his eldest son (believed to be Matthew) went to Danbury, Connecticut and joined the British forces there.

Meriam was left behind on the family farm with the rest of the children, some of whom were still quite young. When the rebel army drafted her second son Nathaniel into their militia, he refused to join them and went into the British lines too. So, she had three members of her family away at war. Then came the news that her oldest son had died or been killed.

In 1780 Meriam petitioned the rebels for permission to leave Connecticut, which was granted. She left her sheep with a neighbour and vacated the family farm. She went into the lines with a white flag and made her way to Long Island, New York. She made her way to Eaton's Neck on the north shore and found a place for her family to live, but they were still not secure because they were attacked by rebels who came in from the water. Though no one was killed, the Treadwells were plundered of many things they had managed to bring with them, such as clothing, bedding and money. They also had ten cords of firewood burned. In the meantime, while in the army her husband had a boat of his own, and from which items were also stolen.

Meriam then moved to Lloyd's Neck on Long Island where many of the Connecticut Loyalists had gathered and she set up housekeeping, somehow. As far as I can tell, this is where the family lived for three years.

Meriam received word from her brother-in-law that their property in Fairfield had been confiscated and sold for 100 pounds, and another man was in possession of her sheep. The family home was gone.

Meriam was also to learn that her father Adonirum and a brother who had moved to and lived in North Carolina were supporting the Rebels. A case of the war splitting a family.

When the war ended, early in 1783 Ephraim Treadwell was listed as a distressed Loyalist who had taken refuge with the British Lines at New York and to whom allowances were recommended for his family's support.

This Treadwell family chose to go to Nova Scotia as there was offered free passage, 200 acres of free land, supplies for two years, and other assorted tools. They were part of the Spring Fleet and traveled on "The Hope". It was a slow process to actually get underway, and with waiting on board, time passed slowly. Ephraim, Meriam and the six youngest children were listed as a family, but Samuel and Nathaniel were on the ship as traveling alone so they might be considered for land grants as well.

When the ship finally came in view of the Saint John River, it was seen as a crude and rough land. The Treadwells did not stop in the settlement of St. John but boarded a sloop and traveled up the river about 45 miles to some islands. It was thus the family settled on a 15-acre lot on the north of Lower Musquash Island. Son Nathaniel got an adjoining same-sized lot. The lots were not assigned to them, so they set out to make improvements so they would be eligible for ownership.

Spring came to Musquash Island. A muster roll taken in June 1784 indicated that all the Treadwell family had survived the winter. That same year Nova Scotia was split and New Brunswick was created in which the family then lived. Suddenly, Ephraim, the head of the household died suddenly with no will, and they had not yet been granted ownership of the land. Meriam was left in a dire situation, but she was eventually able to get herself registered as the owner of the small lot.

She got word of bigger land grants in Beaver Harbour, so she sold her Musquash property for eight dollars to a Mr. Crossing, but received only five of it. However, the deal at Beaver Harbour fell through, and once again the family was in a difficult situation. Meriam petitioned the government for another lot, unsuccessfully, in which she stressed that she was a widow with a large number of orphans. Then she petitioned to get her Musquash lot back because the buyer had not made any improvements and had drawn 200 acres elsewhere. She repeatedly told officials that her family was much distressed and she desired to go on the land early and get something in the ground to support herself and her family.

The government finally helped her by informing Mr. Crossing that he should vacate the island repay the five dollars. Before the situation was resolved, Mother Nature set in and the spring of 1785 saw an unusually high freshet and the islands were all flooded. Meriam tried! In one document she stated that she had "showed loyalty to her king and attachment to the British Government". She had endured a long war, lost most of her possessions, as well as a son and a husband.

She and her two oldest sons repeatedly asked for land, and then she started making Loyalist Claims, which she and her son Nathaniel did on at least 4 occasions. The Treadwells claimed

152 pounds sterling for the losses in Connecticut and Long Island. In 1787 their loss was proved, and they were granted 80 pounds. Did they get the money? I don't know.

During the time Meriam was making the claims, she remarried to Nicholas Rideout, who had lived in the Mougerville, NB area since the 1760s. She started appearing as Meriam Rideout. Her new husband was a widower with a number of children, but he had an established home and farm, so hopefully Meriam's life improved. Her family grew up, married, and scattered, but most as far as I know, many stayed in the province.

I am not yet aware of whether any of them ever received their promised 200 acre lots. Ephraim and Meriam's son Samuel was my great-great-great grandfather. He married Hannah Rideout (daughter of Nicholas Rideout and his first wife). And it is through them down through several more generations that leads to me.