

## Katherine Ritchie

### 2025 UELAC Loyalist Scholarship Award Recipient

Katherine (Katie) Ritchie is an M.A. history candidate completing her thesis research under the supervision of Dr. Jerry Bannister at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Originally from Belfast, Maine in the United States, Katie decided to pursue an undergraduate degree in secondary education with a concentration in social studies from the University of Maine beginning in 2020. Katie picked up a history double major in 2022 and she earned her Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education and History with the highest distinction, *summa cum laude*, in May of 2024.

It was during her first year of university in an American history course that Katie came face-to-face with the “other side” of the story of the American Revolution, a conflict which had been emphasized and celebrated throughout her time moving through the US public educational system in a New England state. Katie was particularly moved by the diary of Massachusetts Loyalist Peter Oliver and the dramatic differences between what she had been taught growing up and the narratives produced by individuals who had decided to stay loyal to the British Crown during the war. Katie’s fascination with the Loyalists culminated in the creation of her fourth-year history capstone paper titled “Revolutionary Pedagogy: The Value of Including Nova Scotia Loyalists’ Perspectives in American Education.” This writing, which was presented at the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference just a week after she graduated from UMaine, combined Katie’s backgrounds in accessible, well-rounded education and source-based historical research to argue for the inclusion of Loyalists’ experiences and primary sources in US public education.



In August 2024, Katie was given the incredible opportunity and privilege to leave the United States and move to Halifax where she began her graduate studies at Dalhousie University. While continuing to explore the experiences and perspectives of Loyalists after the American Revolution, she became particularly interested in Nova Scotia Loyalists’ interactions with the institution of slavery at the turn of the 19th century. According to recent historiography, slavery throughout the Atlantic Provinces in the early 1800s requires further exploration by researchers – Katie hopes that her work can be a part of the body of knowledge which fills in this gap. New York Loyalist James DeLancey and those closest to him have become a focal point of Katie’s research as she explores the legal, social and economic frameworks of the region and how they interacted with the institution of slavery. DeLancey arrived by ship to Nova Scotia with about six enslaved people in his possession after the war and he settled at Round Hill in Annapolis Valley, a small agricultural community located along the nutrient-rich shores of the Bay of Fundy. Renowned for his co-leadership of a rag-tag bunch of soldiers aptly-titled “DeLancey’s Cowboys”

after their guerilla-style warfare raged against Continental troops during the war, DeLancey served in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly in the early 1790s and was the brother-in-law of Speaker of the House Thomas Barclay. He is perhaps most well-known today for his lawsuit in 1801 submitted to the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia in which he sued a man named William Woodin over the wages of a formerly enslaved man named Jack. Jack had escaped from DeLancey's home at the turn of the century and was hired by Woodin to work for him in Halifax. While Woodin viewed Jack as a free man laboring for his own wages, DeLancey argued that he was employing "stolen property" and demanded either the return of Jack or full reimbursement of the man's earnings. The lawsuit sparked debates throughout Nova Scotia on the legality of slavery and even spurred publications in other provinces such as New Brunswick, which saw an entire pamphlet created and shared widely in 1802 on the case. These conversations paint a vivid and layered picture of the Maritimes and their approaches to an institution of oppression which by the early 1800s was in decline. After scouring legislative assembly records, court documents and various related secondary sources, Katie hopes to have her thesis written and defended before the end of 2025.

Katie is fortunate enough to be able to practice her passions of both teaching and public history while she continues her thesis work. She tutors students ranging from grades 3-8 in reading and writing and she shares Halifax's rich local history with visitors from around the world aboard amphibious LARC-V vessels as a Harbour Hopper tour guide. As co-president of the Dalhousie Graduate History Society, Katie co-coordinated the 2025 Dalhousie Graduate History Conference in May 2025 and she also serves as secretary of the Dalhousie Association of Canadian Archivists. Katie hopes to stay and work in Canada after she finishes her studies and she dreams of having a career as a public servant with the government, at a school, or perhaps one day in the public historical sector promoting the preservation of local history with a museum or a historical society. Thanks to the generous support provided by the UELAC's Loyalist Scholarship, Katie is able to worry less about generating income to pay for her tuition, international student fees and housing and focus more on her writing and research.