



FROM THE HISTORIAN'S CORNER:

Our Kawartha Branch UELAC Historian, Joan Lucas UE, has offered to share with you an article in each up-coming issue

of *The Kawartha Periodical* newsletter.

Here's the one that she wrote for this issue:

MY SEARCH FOR MY LOYALIST ANCESTOR, CAPT. JOHN ERNST DEFOE UE AND HIS SON, ABRAHAM DAFOE UE

I have had a keen interest in the United Empire Loyalists since learning of them in my Elementary School Days. I was taught that their settlement in Canada, was the cornerstone in the building of our great country and that they were an important part of our heritage. They had insisted on having a representative government, individual ownership of land and to be ruled under British law. They wanted someone to look after their interests among the law makers in this new country. They no longer wanted to be tenants of large land owners as they had been in the American Colonies, but owners of the land they lived on, and they wanted to be ruled by the British law that they knew. These demands became foundation blocks in today's Canadian Law. Because of their migration to Colonial Canada, two new Provinces were formed: New Brunswick and Ontario.

How does one find a UEL ancestor?

Again I knew from my grade school social studies that the United Empire Loyalists came into Nova Scotia in 1783 and into Quebec in 1784. I needed to prove that my family came in one of these migrations. I needed to research my genealogy to find my roots back to a Loyalist ancestor, about nine generations from me. I needed to know their names, dates of birth, marriage and death and where they lived. Knowing where they lived would lead me to records in those areas.

Family history buffs start with themselves

And work their way back, through every generation, and through both the male and female lines looking for the child-parent relationship. I would need to do this to find my Loyalist ancestors, hopefully John Ernst Defoe. I needed to search both the male and female lines of my family. I started with what I knew, which was what family lore I had been told, looking for my earliest family who came to Canada. I needed to know the difference between Family Lore / Stories and Family History based on Primary Sourced Documentary Evidence (PSDE)).

I learned that Family History based on Primary Sourced Documentary Evidence, (PSDE), are records recorded at the time an event took place. This was considered to be the proof that the event did take place. I would need to find my Dafoe family in these records through the generations.

These PSDE sources include:

Birth Registrations: the long form that includes the names of both parents.

Church Records such as Baptisms, marriage and burial records.

Baptismal records showing the names of both parents including the mother's maiden name.

Wills, where the child's name and relationship to the will maker are stated.

Family Bibles where the BMD are recorded.

I would need the date the bible was published, and also the difference in the hand writing of the recorders, generation to generation.

Land Records. These records are several pages long. I copied them all.

They included the request for land, the outcome of the request and if it was approved. I found other information included as well, such as Wills.

Township Vital Stat records. Most townships kept these records from the time the township was formed. (found in the Archives of Ontario)

Provincial Corps Provisioning Lists for soldiers and families settled in Quebec/Canada. (The Haldimand Papers are a good source.)

Rolls of Provincial corps: a list naming the soldier, his rank and unit.

The Haldimand Papers of Gen. Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Quebec at the time of the American Revolution. (AO, AN, University libraries)

If PSDE proof could not be found then I would need to gather other information that I could claim indicated that the event I was trying to prove actually took place. I would need to gather at least two pieces of information pointing to the claim being made.

Here is a list of secondary proofs that I may use:

Obituaries.

Dominion Census Returns.

Pictures of Grave Stones where the writing is clear.

Family histories.

Newspaper records.

Cemetery records, school records.

County Atlases.

Township Histories written by township historians.

Using these records would allow me to make a Genealogical Proof Argument in which I could claim that the event took place.

I kept track of what I found, and its source, until I could see whether or not I needed it for a PSDE proof or a claim as in a Genealogical Proof Argument. I would need to prove the child-parent relationship at each generation.

For example, I needed to prove that I was the child of my parents, not because my parents said I was, or that I looked like my father's side of the family, but by using Primary Source Documentation, the evidence that was recorded at the time the event (my birth) took place. To do this I needed to find those records and there are several places to look.

One might be a record kept in:

Family Bible records.

Birth Registration, the long-form birth certificate from the Ontario Registrar General's Office.

Baptismal records having the name of both my parents on it.

Wills in which I was named and my relationship to the person making the Will stated.

(Had I been adopted the name of my adopting parents would be on the adoption papers and would have been considered PSDE.)

As I am attempting to prove a Loyalist ancestor, I am hoping that the UELAC Branch Genealogist, can help me by directing me to source material.

In my search, I needed to prove the child-parent relationship for nine generations. Sounded impossible, but it wasn't, as I found out.

My maiden name was Creighton and family lore said my Creighton family had been early settlers in Fredericksburg Township, Lennox and Addington County, Ontario. That took me back four generations; myself, my father, my grandfather, my great-grandfather and great-grandmother, who were John Curle Creighton married to Lillian Lucy Lake. The Creighton family were late arrivals to Ontario, coming from Scotland in 1810. They were not UE Loyalists. That meant I needed to research my great grandmother's Lake family.

I was able to find Baptismal Certificates for myself and my father with the parents' names on them. I found the marriage certificate for my grandfather that named his parents and, as well, all were recorded in the Creighton family bible. I found the marriage of John Curle Creighton and Lillian Lucy Lake in the Napanee Methodist Church records, that also named Lillian's parents as Cyrus Benjamin Lake and Hester Ann Hough.

From research into the Lake family I couldn't find a Dafoe name.

I was able to find in the Napanee Methodist Church records, the marriage of Cyrus Benjamin Lake and Hester Ann Hough, the daughter of Duncan Henry Hough and Lucy Ann Sharp. Still no Dafoe!

I went to the Lennox and Addington County Archives, located in Napanee, Ontario, where I found the Henry Sharp family bible. What a find that was ! In that Bible were recorded the births of the children of Henry Sharp and his wife, Elizabeth Dafoe. In that Bible record was the birth of Lucy Ann Sharp, her parents and that her mother was a Dafoe. It also included the husband of Lucy Ann as Duncan Hough. At last I had a Dafoe in my sights!

Also in the Sharp Bible was the record of the marriage of Elizabeth Dafoe to Henry Sharp giving the name of her father as Abraham Dafoe.

Now I just needed to trace him to John Ernst Defoe, and to learn why the spelling of their surname changed.

In the Archives of Ontario, I found the Archival list of United Empire Loyalists who received land grants in the Province of Upper Canada (today's Ontario). There was Abraham Dafoe receiving a land grant as a Loyalist and as a Corporal in Captain Henry Ruiter's Company of Roger's Rangers, a Provincial Corps.

In his petition for land, he named his father, John Defoe, who had died at Fort St. Jean, Quebec, before the family came to Upper Canada.

That was a PSDE find, proving Abraham Dafoe was a United Empire Loyalist.

In the papers of General Frederick Haldimand, Governor of Quebec at the time of the American Revolution, I found a letter between the General and Captain Justus Sherwood speaking of John Defoe as "*a trustworthy man and a good courier ...*" who knew his way from Quebec City to New York, through the woods, waterways and the Indian threat to General Guy Carlton on Long Island, New York.

This was a PSDE that John Defoe served in Captain Justus Sherwood's unit, in Major James Rogers' "*Rogers' Rangers*", and was a UE Loyalist.

My search was completed. Abraham Dafoe and John Defoe were both United Empire Loyalists.

I still wanted to find out why the spelling of their surname changed.

Other findings in my research:

One of John Defoe's sources of information came as he sheltered at his wife's home near Pownal, New York, now Vermont. John's wife, Mary, had yet to be forced out of their home and was there with their younger children. She was able to provide food, shelter and information to the British couriers who, like her husband, John, carried British dispatches. Her home was known as a "*Safe House*", although in the annals of New York it was called "*Old Dayfoot's*" house. She had many family and friend contacts who supplied her with information and political happenings in her area.

In the records of the Reformed Dutch Church in Albany, New York, I found the marriage of Johannes (John) Ernst Defoe and Maritje (Mary) Keller, on the 1st of February, 1749. The Reformed Dutch Church records are on line.

John Defoe was a supporter of the British who, two generations before, had rescued his grandfather's family from famine and starvation in Germany by bringing them from the Palatinate to England and then to the Colony of New York.

This was John's grandfather, Daniel Thevou, his wife, Marianne Delcour, and their two children, Abraham and Anna Marie Thevou. The family had immigrated from Missy, Switzerland, to the vineyards of Heidelberg in the Palatinate in Germany where Daniel worked as a vinedresser.

It was a period of religious unrest and violence between France and the Palatinate, when a terrible winter storm in 1707-1708 killed all the grape vines, leaving the workers without jobs. Destitute and starving, the family, along with other Palatinate families, fled to Amsterdam, Holland.

Queen Anne of England heard of these refugee people and sent ships to Holland to bring them to refugee camps on Hounslow Heath outside of London, where they were provided with food and shelter. England needed workers to work in their American Colonies to make tar to be used on the ships of the British navy.

The Palatine refugees were a ready work force and their emigration to America began by 1710-1712.

The Thevou/Defoe family went to the New York Colony where, sixty years later, that family's horrendous migration was still fresh in the minds of the younger Defoe families and was a good part of the reason they remained loyal to Britain.

John Ernst Defoe, raised on this family story, joined the British in Major James Rogers', "*Rogers' Rangers*", a Provincial Regiment, serving as a courier, spy, and recruiter of men for the British Provincial forces. John's devotion to the British cause, his success as a dispatch courier and spy, and at recruiting men for Rogers' Rangers, led to his rank of Captain. Many of the recruits were family members and loyal friends.

Until the Defoe family came to Quebec their name had many spellings. John was known as John Dayfoot in Petersberg, New York. John wrote his name as Defoe as did his wife, Mary. But once in Quebec the family name was changed to Dafoe by British enlists, and was used by the family as they moved unto their Loyalist Land grants. I have seen it spelled as Dafoe, Dayfoot, Defoe, Deffu, as well as Teffu, and Thevou . When the family arrived in Canada, only John and wife, Mary, spelled their name Defoe. The rest of the family began using the Dafoe spelling that continues today. The British recorders had changed the spelling of their surname to the English "*Dafoe*" !

Of the children of John Ernst Defoe and his wife, Mary Keller Defoe:

George Defoe/Dayfoot, was killed at the Battle of Bennington in August 1777, leaving three children; Mary, and a second daughter (Elizabeth?), as well as their son, Michael, using the surname Dayfoot. Later, as an adult, Michael Dayfoot came to Ontario where he settled and continued to spell his last name as Dayfoot. At the Dafoe family reunion in 1984, members of this Dayfoot family came from the Toronto/Markham area to join other Dafoe families gathered at Kingston, Ontario. George's second daughter (Elizabeth ?) stayed in Sorel, Quebec, with her Great Aunt Eva Defoe Katzebach's family.

Eva Defoe Katzebach and her sister-in-law, Mary Keller Defoe, with their several young children and other Loyalist women and their children, who had all been forced from their homes, had made their way from Pownal, Vermont, along the forest trails to Lake Champlain where they were rescued by a British ship and taken to Fort St. Jean, Quebec, on the Richelieu River.

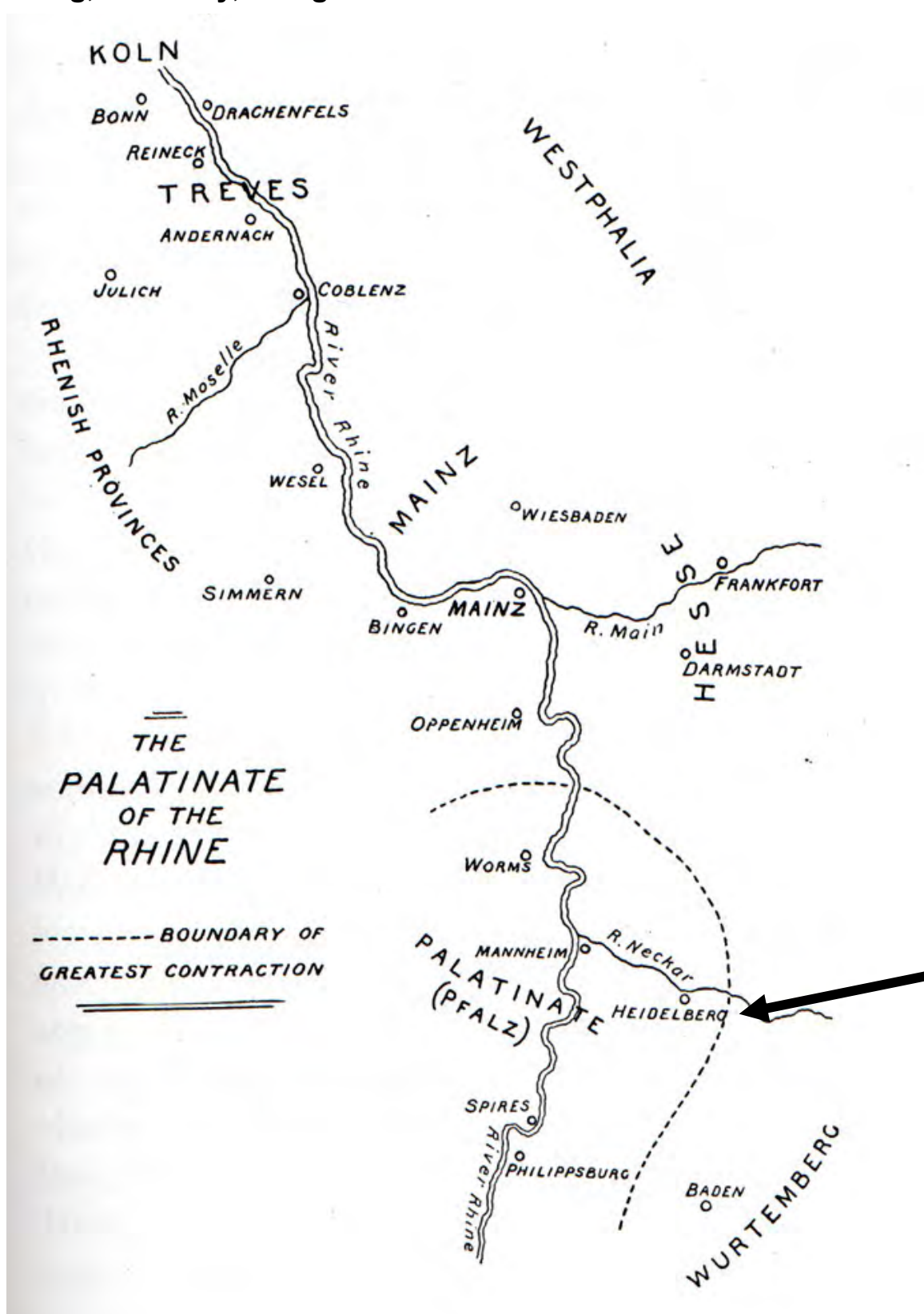
Conrad Dafoe, settled in Osnabruck Township, one of the Royal Townships, along the St. Lawrence River in Upper Canada (Ontario).

Abraham, Jacob, John Jr., Michael and Daniel Dafoe settled in Fredericksburg Township, as did John Ernst Defoe's widow, Mary.

Jacob Dafoe, unwed, died soon after coming to Upper Canada.

Mary Keller Defoe also had with her, her son George's daughter, Mary Dayfoot/Dafoe, who later married Henry Young and remained in the Township.

Map of the Palatinate where the Thevou (Dafoe) family lived near Heidelberg, Germany, along the Rhine River.



The Rhine River, sourced in the mountains of Switzerland, passes through Liechtenstein, Germany, Belgium, and Holland to the North Sea. Note the position of Heidelberg where Daniel Thevou worked.

John, born on the Manor of Rensselaer near Fort Orange, (now Albany, county seat Troy, New York), was a millwright, literate and an intelligent man, who had already built two grist mills for grinding wheat and other grains. He had been a fence and road inspector in both Petersburg, New York, and Pownal, Vermont.

These were responsible jobs in the communities, to make sure the settlers adhered to the local laws. He had built at least two homes for his family, was an experienced settler who knew what was needed and how to accomplish it. He had seven sons who were all UE Loyalists. Two sons died as a result of the American Revolution, but five more were an influence in the communities where they settled in Ontario. His daughter, Mary, married Sgt. Andrew Rikely UE, of Rogers' Rangers and settled in Cataraqui Township, Number 3, as well.



John would have built a grist mill like this one on both Dayfoot Brook, Petersburg, New York, and Washtub (Tub) Creek near Pownal, Vermont.

Pictured below is a grist mill for grinding wheat, oats, corn and barley in the 1700-1800's as John would have built on Washtub Creek, Vermont.

Often the family would live in the upper floor of the mill until the miller had time to build their home.

First came what was essential for the family: jobs, food and housing. The mill site was usually on a creek with a good year-round flow of water. A dam was constructed above the mill site where water would be contained in a mill pond. A man-made channel, called a millrace, carried the water to a sluice where the sluiceway carried the water to the top of the mill wheel. This was an "overshoot" mill where the water came in at the top of the mill wheel, turning the wheel, and with it, also turned the millstones inside the mill, grinding the grain.

Both of John Ernst Defoe's mills were "overshoot" mills. The volume of the water for this came from the mill pond further upstream, and the overflow water went into the creek downstream.

Grist mills were essential to early pioneers as it allowed them to grind their own wheat into flour for baking bread and other foods.





Dayfoot Brook. Note the small channel running to the left side of the brook. This man-made channel (known as a raceway), ran to a sluice that would direct water to the mill wheel.



Washtub (Tub) Creek near Pownal, Vermont, is a rushing mountain stream down a steep hillside and was the site of John Defoe's second mill and home.



The home of John Ernst Defoe on Dayfoot Brook, Petersburg, New York, 1753. In the basement can be seen the original logs supporting the ceiling and resting on the rock foundation. The siding, porch and add-ons were later renovations.

Photo taken on 27 October 1995 with the owner of the time.



John Ernst Defoe mill site on Dayfoot Brook, Petersburg, New York.

One can see part of the mill wall and where it was located to the brook.

The mill, dam and sluice are gone. This little stream, beside the larger Dayfoot Brook, was called a millrace, and would have carried the water to a sluice where the sluiceway directed the water to the top of the mill wheel, turning the wheel.

Pictured below is a wooden peg used to connect pieces of logs and lumber together when building in 1750-1800. This peg came from the John Ernst Defoe house at Dayfoot Brook, Petersburg, New York. This kind of peg would have been used by John Defoe when building his mills and homes.

The family, parents and older children, would have spent the winter months whittling these pegs for use in their construction projects.

When we visited the Dayfoot Brook mill site the new owner of the property had the old boards and logs, which had been removed from part of the old house for renovations, stacked in a pile. He removed two of these pegs for us to have as a memory of the earlier home of the John Ernst Defoe family.

The use of wooden pegs was eventually replaced by forged nails.

This peg is five and a half inches long, one inch at the top and one half inch at bottom.

We were also shown the basement beams still in use. The bark was removed from one side only where it was joined to a second beam. We could still see the bark on the under-side of the logs. The house was built in 1753 and still in use in 1995 when we visited.



John survived the rigors of war and the perils of being a courier-dispatch carrier, and spy. He had reached the safety of Fort St. Jean, Quebec, on the Richelieu River and was with his family when he died during the winter of 1783-84.

His wife, Mary Keller Defoe, came into Cataraqui Township, No. 3, (now Fredericksburg Township) with her younger children and with her twenty-nine-year-old son, Abraham Dafoe, and his family, where they all received land grants as Loyalists.



The Pownal homestead of John Ernst Defoe built in 1760

The home of the John Ernst Defoe family on Tub Creek, Vermont., built in 1760, as it looked in 1995. The original log home was the section where the chimney sits.

As you research your family history you too will find many similar stories, much of it substantiated by Primary Sourced Documentary Evidence. Cherish your Loyalist heritage and tell your family about it.

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