# Sailing to Sanctuary
# The Loyalists and their Evacuation Vessels

By Stephen Davidson

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Welcome to New Brunswick –- the only province to have a refugee evacuation ship in its coat of arms and on its provincial flag.

The ship on the flag looks nothing like an 18th century sailing vessel. Rather, New Brunswick's flag and coat of arms feature a galley, but that is because that is the conventional heraldic representation of a ship in the same way that the lion atop the flag is the standard form for a lion in coats of arms.

This design is based on the province's Great Seal, which – like New Brunswick-- was created in 1784. It shows a Loyalist evacuation ship sailing up the St. John River. Along the river's edge are the log cabins of loyalist refugees.

It's easy to forget that the majority of Loyalists who sought refuge in safer parts of the British Empire were North America's first "boat people".

Like the refugees of the 21st century, they fled persecution, imprisonment, and torture, relying entirely on the help of others to take them to sanctuary. They lost land, homes, and livestock, were separated from family and friends. Some even faced

execution if they were to return to the colony they had known as home all of their lives.

Today we will consider the loyalist evacuee experience:

- The Necessity for Evacuation
- Where and When evacuations occurred,
- Evacuation vessels and how they were acquired,
- Dangers at Sea, Refugee passenger experiences,
- Arrivals, Destinations, Shelter after disembarkation,
- Sources for passenger information: manifests & more

**The Necessity for Evacuation**

Many of the refugee loyalists who made their way to Canada and the Maritime Provinces during the American Revolution had assumed that they could return home and continue living in the towns or on the farms that had been theirs before 1776.

However…. In 1778, Massachusetts published a list of Loyalists who had been banished by the state. Should any of those listed return, they would be executed as traitors.

The January first edition of the *Royal Gazette* for 1783 reminded its readers of the execution of a Loyalist three weeks earlier. **Ezekial Tilton** was hanged for "high treason" in Monmouth, New Jersey on December 13th. **John Lokerson** and **Peter Eaton** were also executed on that day. The news was a grim reminder that it was not safe to be a Loyalist outside of the British lines.

Loyalists who lived within travelling distance of New York City may well have heard the stories of what happened to the Loyalists of Charleston, South Carolina once British troops left. With no one to protect them from Patriots, "***The Loyalists were seized, hove into dungeons, prisons, and provosts. Some were tied up and whipped, others were tarred and feathered; some were dragged to horse-ponds and drenched till near dead, others were carried about the town in carts with labels upon their breasts and back with the word "Tory," in capitals, written thereon.*** Could the Loyalists who had found refuge in New York City during the war expect anything less once the British forces left Manhattan?

The British Commander in chief ***Guy Carleton*** regularly received news of persecution. In one letter, Loyalists reported that were ***"set upon by a party of men and beaten … the reason assigned for the abuse being solely that they … had fought for the king."*** Even loyalist soldiers had entertained hopes that they would be able to return to their homes, but they were compelled to become refugees. In the weeks before peace was officially declared, **Stephen Jarvis** witnessed Connecticut loyalists being put backwards on bare-back horses and mocked.

Thousands upon thousands of loyal Americans flooded into New York City in the hopes of finding sanctuary elsewhere in the British Empire.

In one letter, Carleton wrote that it was "utterly impossible to leave exposed to the rage and violence of these people {the patriots} men of character whose only offence has been their attachment to the King's service".

And so Carleton's major concern from April 1782 till November 1783, was to evacuate some **30,000 troops and up to 40,000 refugees.**

It was Carleton who urged the lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia to grant loyalists free land and a year's provisions -- and prompted Haldimand to do the same for those who entered Canada.

**Departure site: New York City – British headquarters since the fall of 1776**

**Preparations**

Typically, loyalist evacuees travelled with people they knew: soldiers from loyalist regiments/militias, refugees from the same colonies, or members of the same religious community.

Refugees organized into companies under the supervision of a "captain". Such a person could be a civilian rather than a veteran of the war.

(David Bell's comprehensive book, *American Loyalists to New Brunswick: The Ship Passenger Lists* lists dozens of such evacuee companies and their captains).

**Where and When evacuations occurred**

The first mass evacuation of Loyalists occurred on March 17, 1776 when British troops and 1,100 loyal refugees left Boston for Halifax, Nova Scotia. (Some Massachusetts loyalist families fled to Halifax in private vessels as early as May 1775.) Those who could afford it, boarded as many as 6 ships for England. Those who could not remained in Halifax.

Following the defeat of the British army at Yorktown, Virginia, fleets of ships evacuated 500 Loyalists from Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia in December of 1782. Some of those refugees went as far as New York City and others went to Nova Scotia, while wealthier passengers went to England.

While some Loyalists went overland to find sanctuary in Canada, six fleets of evacuation vessels brought the revolution's refugees to the Maritimes from New York City in 1783.

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|---|---|
| First (Spring) fleet: | May |
| Second fleet: | June (thirteen ships, two brigs, one frigate) |
| Third fleet: | July |
| Fourth fleet: | August |
| Fifth (Fall) fleet: | September |
| Sixth fleet: | October |

The last Loyalists to sail out of New York City under the direction of Sir Guy Carleton left in November of 1783; those refugees settled in Nova Scotia.

## Quebec bound

Two evacuation fleets took Loyalists to Quebec. The number of passengers and the names of all of the vessels are not known. The first fleet to take refugees to Canada left New York City on August 7, 1783. The second left on September 6th.

Sir Frederick Haldimand, the governor of Canada, sent an interesting note to Carleton nine days after the last fleet bound for Quebec had left New York. He reported that four loyalist families were returning to New York, *"disappointed in the sanguine hopes they had formed of this country".*

Letters contained in the collection of Sir Guy Carleton's correspondence indicate that some Loyalists hoped to leave for Quebec in a third fleet or in the following spring. No such opportunities ever materialized.

## Evacuation vessels and how they were acquired

Sir Guy Carleton purposely dragged his feet in orchestrating the British withdrawal from New York, giving himself time to rescue as many Loyalist refugees as he could. Some rebels expected that the British would have left by May 1, 1783. Thanks to Carleton, the last troops and Loyalists left New York City on November 30, 1783.

Finding evacuation vessels was also a slow process.

Despite the fact that Britain was the world's greatest sea power, chartering ships for Loyalists was difficult. Naval vessels were still guarding the British isles, patrolling the Caribbean, and protecting British interests. Carleton often had to hire ships from private citizens (even Patriots) to send Loyalists to safer shores.

Given that Carleton had to see to the safe removal of about 40,000 troops and up to 30,000 refugees, he required fleets of suitable seaworthy vessels.

The *Union*, the largest British troop ship immediately available to him, carried 209 refugees in April of 1783. That's far less than the passenger limit on most commercial airplanes.

Some ships were used as many as 6 times, shuttling back and forth between New York and points in Nova Scotia and Quebec during the summer of 1783.

Each evacuation vessel had to be equipped with enough provisions to feed its passengers for a minimum of two weeks (the length of the voyage to Nova Scotia). Trips to the Caribbean, Quebec, or Europe would require even more. Loyalists also travelled with worldly goods so cargo holds had to be sufficient for such items.

In the end, more than 120 ships were used to take Loyalist refugees to sanctuary.

Carleton was able to employ a number of British naval vessels, including transport ships such as the *Union* and the *L'Abondance*. The latter had been used to carry both troops, horses, and supplies.

The *L'Abondance*'s first mission began on July 31, 1783. She had a crew of 81 men that included seamen, a gunner, a carpenter, a carpenter's mate, a cook, a clerk, and a surgeon. The passengers on that first voyage were all Black Loyalists, comprised

of 179 men, 147 women, and 84 children, indicating the *L'Abondance* had room for at least 410 passengers.

The *Union* carried 209 passengers in April of 1783. Walter Bates, a 23-year-old passenger later recorded that the *Union* was "*the best ship in the British fleet*". While the other 19 captains of the Spring Fleet compelled their passengers to disembark as soon as their ships dropped anchor, Captain Wilson allowed his to stay aboard the *Union* for a week while three scouts sought out a suitable site for a settlement.

However, it soon became evident that Carleton would need more vessels if he were to successfully evacuate the Loyalists who were pouring into New York City. This meant hiring a number of private vessels –- even ones that belonged to Patriots. The *Martha*, whose tragic shipwreck will be told later in this presentation, was one such American ship.

"Cabins" aboard evacuation vessels were cramped, and sometimes contained as many as 6 families. There was neither air conditioning for the hot summer voyages nor heaters for the cold fall journeys.

The only record we have of a privately chartered evacuation vessel bound for Canada is found in a letter that Carleton received in August of 1783. It listed the loyalists who were about to embark on the *Industry*. Unfortunately, those names are not recorded in the collection of Carleton's correspondence that is available online.

Hopefully, one day the full letter with the Industry's manifest will be found safely filed away in a British archive.

The last evacuation fleet bound for Quebec left New York on September 6, 1783. Only two of its ships' names are known: the Grace and the Three Sisters. Both of these vessels had transported loyalists to the St. John River back in July. Between them they carried nine enslaved Africans and six Black Loyalists to Quebec.

**Perilous Journeys: Fog**

Saturday, June 21
*I rose at eight o'clock and it was so foggy we could not see one ship belonging to our fleet. … At noon the fog came on again, so that we lost sight of them, but we could hear their bells all around us. This evening the captain showed us the map of the whole way we have come and the way we still have to go. He told us we were two hundred and and forty miles from Nova Scotia at this time. It is so foggy we have lost all our company and are entirely alone.*

Sunday, June 22
*This morning the fog is still dense. No ships in sight, nor any bells to be heard. Towards noon we heard some guns fired from our fleet, but could not tell in what quarter. The fog is so thick we cannot see ten rods, and the wind so ahead we have not made ten miles since yesterday noon.*

**Perilous Journeys: Hurricanes**

In October of 1783, the family of Joshua Chandler boarded a vessel bound for Annapolis Royal. The two week voyage was not a good one; it was the eastern seaboard's hurricane season. High winds and waves washed all of the Chandlers' stock and possessions off the decks of their ship. Mrs. Sarah Chandler was "overcome with the Passage. She languished, mourned and Died in about 3 weeks after Landing."

A month later, another fleet of evacuation vessels set sail from New York City for Annapolis Royal. Three ships, the Joseph, the William, and the Henry, only made it as far as the Bay of Fundy where they encountered hurricane winds that drove them south to Bermuda. Waiting for their ships to be repaired from the hurricane's damage, the loyalist passengers remained in Bermuda until April 1784. The three evacuation vessels did not arrive in Nova Scotia until May 1784.

**Perilous Journeys: Shipwrecks**

In September 1783, the British hired the *Martha* to transport two loyalist regiments, their families, and slaves to the mouth of the St. John River. Six days later, the evacuation vessel shipwrecked on a rocky shoal near Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

Despite the fact that the *Martha* was "a vessel known to be worn out, and long unworthy of the sea", it had been hired for refugee evacuation. Later correspondence would recount that it had run onto shoals, and within a matter of hours, powerful waves had broken the *Martha* into a thousand pieces.

Later there would be claims that "unseaworthy old hulk" had been "insured for a fabulous sum" and that its captain was "in collusion with the fraudulent underwriters." It is worth noting that the crew escaped in lifeboats, abandoning the refugee passengers as the ship sank into the ocean.

113 of the *Martha's* 181 passengers died. Only 57 men, 6 women, and 5 children survived the shipwreck. The ten slaves aboard all drowned.

Miraculously, a woman pregnant with twins lived to tell the tale. All ten slaves and the ship's dog died in the disaster. While no complete list of the survivors exists, most of them settled in and around Fredericton.

The historian Polly Hoppin has determined that the Martha was just one of forty vessels shipwrecked during the loyalist evacuations from the United States.

**Refugee passenger experiences**

From a pregnant passenger's diary:

*"Our women, with their children, all came on board today, and there is a great confusion in the cabin {shared by seven families}. We bear with it pretty well through the day, but as it grows towards the night, one child cries in one place and one in another, whilst we are getting them to bed. I think sometimes I will be crazy."*
*"There are so many of them, if they were as still as common there would be a great noise among them. I stay on deck tonight till nigh eleven o'clock and now I think I will go down and retire for the night if I can find a place to sleep…We are so thronged on board I cannot set myself about any work. It is comfortable for nobody."*

(Sarah Frost was one of 250 refugees aboard the frigate, *Two Sisters*.)

**Child Refugees**

The manifest for the *Union* reveals the stunning fact that over half of the passengers on board were children -- youngsters whose childhood memories consisted of neighbours' attacks upon their homes, desperate flights to safety, and the miserable conditions of refugee camps. Grace Raymond, 12, and her brother Samuel, nine, clearly remembered watching the British forces set their town afire.

The older children aboard the *Union* all carried memories of crossing Long Island Sound to be reunited with fathers who had been forced to seek refuge at Lloyd's Neck. Jesse Raymond, five, had not seen his father in three years and refused to be carried by him when they met. As an adult he recalled *"I was as much afraid of him as if he was a bear."*

**Some passengers had unrealistic expectations…**

The letter of Mrs. Penuel Grant reveals a woman who lived in her own world, far from the day to day concerns of the average Loyalist refugee.

She was pleased that her five sons, three daughters, and three servants would be accommodated with good berths to Nova Scotia, but she was disappointed to learn that she could not bring any cattle with her on the ship. Mrs. Grant also wanted to take "furniture for two rooms and one kitchen, one horse and chaise". (She was eventually persuaded to leave her horse and chaise behind.)

Nevertheless, what some families brought exceeds our imaginations.

The Ingraham family of New York filled five wagons that included, among other things with a parcel of candles, thrashed our wheat, 20 bushels of wheat, a tub of butter, tub of pickles, and a good store of potatoes. They sailed down the Hudson River to board the ship that would take them to New Brunswick.

Loyalist refugees packed everything from four-poster beds to whale boats, from silverware to cribbage board & playing cards, from bedding to furniture, and – sadly– slaves. By the end of their evacuation, Loyalists had taken 15,000 slaves with them out of the new United States.

**Unwelcome "carry-on" luggage: smallpox and measles**

A former soldier in the 63rd Regiment, Charles Hunt petitioned Carleton for "some small relief". He was in distress, understandably, as he had "five children sick with smallpox". (This disease accounted for more deaths during the American Revolution than those caused by warfare.)

When Loyalists brought smallpox to Halifax after they had fled from Boston in March of 1776, it was understandable that ship captains were quick to put any sick passengers on shore. Though not as lethal, measles was the scourge of the Loyalist evacuation fleets. It commonly broke out on the long, two-week journey to Nova Scotia and spread throughout the entire ship.

## Lost Tales of Romance

There was at least one last minute wedding ceremony before the evacuation ship *Union*, set sail from a Long Island refugee camp. Rebecca, a 17 year-old Connecticut girl, married Martin Trecartin, a volunteer in DeLancey's Regiment, on April 13, 1783. Rebecca had been Mrs. Treating for only three days when the *Union* set sail -- an unusual honeymoon cruise, to be sure.

Another engaged couple on board the *Union* managed to seek out an Anglican minister in New York City, the Rev. Dr. J. Leaming. The loyalist pastor was able to marry them before they left the city. By the time the *Union* set sail for New Brunswick, there were two newlywed refugee couples aboard ship**.**

James Peters was about to sail with his family and his 20 year-old slave, Cairo – who was married to Pompey Rumsey, a 25 year-old free African. This Black Loyalist worked for Sir Guy Carleton. Peters asked that *"the Negro in question may accompany his wife and be furnished with a passport."* Carleton gave his permission, and the couple sailed north with the loyalist family on the Alexander. Twenty-three years later, the Rumseys were still happily married in Gagetown, New Brunswick. Cairo's status as a slave to the Peters family had not changed; her devoted Pompey was still a free man.

## Grateful Passengers

Those who had sailed together on the Bridgewater were so overwhelmed with gratitude for the treatment they received from the ship's captain, that they composed an address in his honour upon arriving at Parrtown.

It said, *"Your humanity, and the kindness and attention you have shown, to render as happy as possible, each individual on board your Ship, during the passage, and till their disembarkation, has filled our hearts with sentiments of the deepest gratitude, and merit the warmest return of acknowledgements and thanks, which we most sincerely desire you to accept, wishing you a prosperous voyage to your intended port; we are your very much obliged and humble servants."*

## Arrival: Myth and Reality

After a long noisy, cramped, nauseating journey to points in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec, the arrival of the Loyalist evacuees was nothing like what was envisaged by Victorian historians.

When the Loyalists first arrived in what is now Saint John, the women passengers first priority was to find fresh water to wash clothes that had been worn for more than 2 weeks.

When an Anglican minister's family arrived in Halifax, the Loyalist vicar stood on his ship's quarterdeck and addressed the curious crowd that had gathered on the wharf:

"*Gentlemen, we are a company of fugitives from Kennebec in New England, driven by famine and persecution to take refuge among you, and therefore I must*

*entreat your candor and compassion to excuse the meanness and singularity of our dress."*

The clergyman and his company were utterly embarrassed by their appearance.

**Destinations**

Loyalist evacuation fleets and vessels hired by well-to-do Loyalists took their passengers to places of sanctuary throughout the British Empire.

In addition to destinations now located in modern day Canada, Loyalists also found refuge in Germany, England, the West Indies, and (temporarily) Florida. In less than two decades, some of those refugees could be found living in India, West Africa, and Australia. And wide as the loyalist diaspora eventually became, homesickness drove many back across the miles to their homes in the new United States.

As they were near at hand, the Maritime Provinces absorbed the majority of Loyalist refugees – as many as 40,000, while the colony of Canada received about 9,000.

Here is an overview of where evacuees disembarked in British North America.

**Canada**

Of all the evacuation vessels that sailed for Quebec, seven are known because they are listed in the *Book of Negroes*, a ledger listing free and enslaved Africans:

*The Baker and Atlee, the Blackett, the Camel, the Grace, the Hope, the Mary,* and the *Three Sisters*.

On May 3, 1783, Joseph Chew wrote to one of Carleton's officers. He said that *"about four or five hundred families will offer themselves for Canada when it is known transports are fitting for that place... They are anxious to know what provision is to be made for them, and in what manner they may expect grants of land."* Chew's letter included a list of the names of those who had applied to go to Canada, but –alas—the list is not in the record of Carleton's correspondence.

Twenty-three days later Chew wrote a second letter. *"Several persons belonging to Sir John Johnson's regiment and to Butler's Rangers have come in with other prisoners, destitute of money and clothing."* His postscript reminds his correspondent that *"numbers of persons are daily calling on him who are desirous of removing to Canada."*

Mary B. Fryer notes that 200 families sailed from New York City to Canada with Captain Michael Grass. They initially camped at Sorel. Grass helped 900 loyalists settle at Cataraqui (Kingston). Because of their poverty, they needed the "necessaries" for travel, medicine, powder, musket balls and farming implements from Carleton.

Surveying of the upper watershed of the St. Lawrence River began in 1783, and by the following year, five townships had been laid out between the Cataraqui River and the east end of the Isle of Quinte (Kingstown, Ernestown, Fredericksburgh, Adolphustown and Marysburgh). Loyalist refugees and discharged soldiers arrived to take up land grants in these five Cataraqui townships in 1784. That same year, Iroquois loyalists settled lands granted to them on the north shore of this bay.

These settlements would be made up of Loyalists with **two different refugee experiences:** those who had travelled to sanctuary overland and those who had found sanctuary by sailing in private vessels or Carleton's evacuation fleets.

On the other hand, the Loyalists who found refuge in the Maritimes all had one experience in common: **Sailing to safety by sea.** This map of the region's principal Black Loyalist settlements gives an overview of the final destinations for the loyalist evacuation fleets of 1782 and 1783.

**The Mouth of the St. John River: Parrtown**

Until 1783, the mouth of the St. John River had been the site of a small trading post operated by New England Planters--settlers who had come to the region in the 1760s. The British fort that had guarded the entrance to the 418- mile long river had been destroyed by Patriot privateers during the revolution, and it was replaced by Fort Howe in 1777.

Upon arrival, some Loyalist refugees immediately travelled up river to found settlements at present day Kingston, Gagetown, Fredericton, and Woodstock.

From the diary of Sarah Frost:

*Sunday, June 29, 1783*

*It is now afternoon and I have been ashore. It is, I think, the roughest land I ever saw. It beats Short Rocks, indeed, I think, that is nothing in comparison; but this is to be the city, they say! We are to settle here, but are to have our land sixty miles farther up the river. We are all ordered to land tomorrow, and not a shelter to go under.*

**Fort Cumberland (today's border between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick)**

Initially settled by Acadians, New England Planters, and immigrants from England, this area was the site of the only battle of the American Revolution to be fought in what is now Nova Scotia. Once they disembarked, more than 800 Loyalist refugees established settlements in the regions around what is now Sackville, New Brunswick, as well as Wallace, Pugwash, Parrsboro and Amherst, Nova Scotia. Many of the stories of these Loyalists can be found in the claims they made for compensation from the British government.

At least three evacuation vessels are known to have brought Loyalists to the Fort Cumberland area: *The Thetis, the Nicholas & Jane,* and the *Trepassey.*

**Port Roseway/Shelburne**

The majority of Loyalist refugees who settled in what is now Nova Scotia disembarked on a site that had been an abandoned French fishing station whose name had been Anglicized to Port Roseway. On July 22, 1783, it was renamed Shelburne.

17,000 Loyalists settled in Shelburne, making it North America's 4th largest city. Only New York, Philadelphia and Boston were bigger.

**Birchtown**

Just outside of Shelburne was Canada's first Black Loyalist settlement. At the time of its founding, it was the largest community of free Blacks outside of Africa. (1,200 in all.)

Within a year of its founding, it would receive Blacks fleeing from white violence in Canada's first race riot in Shelburne. Lasting ten days in July of 1784, the rioting only stopped due to the intervention of troops from Halifax.

**Port Mouton, Nova Scotia**

Just 26 miles further up the Atlantic coast from Shelburne was the site of another former French settlement, Port Mouton. When Loyalist refugees arrived there in the fall of 1783, they renamed it Guysborough in honour of Sir Guy Carleton. In the spring of 1784, a fire completely devastated the settlement.

Its Loyalists decided to seek out new homes in New Brunswick and other parts of Nova Scotia. Determining the evacuation vessels that brought those dispersed Loyalists to the Maritimes is practically impossible unless one knows that the Loyalists in question initially settled in Port Mouton for 6 short months.

A significant number of former settlers -- both white and Black Loyalists-- relocated to the northeast corner of mainland Nova Scotia, giving it the name of their first failed settlement: Guysborough.

**Halifax**

Founded in 1745, Halifax was a strategic naval base and shipyard for the Royal Navy. It first received Loyalist refugees in March of 1776 when 1,100 loyal Americans fled Boston.

Throughout the revolution, ships would bring Loyalists to the port city both in trickles as well as in evacuation fleets in late 1782 and throughout 1783. Its last loyalists arrived on the Argo in July of 1784, comprised of those who had first found refuge in St. Augustine, Florida.

The city was often only a temporary settlement for Loyalists who would then set sail for better prospects in England.

**Annapolis Royal/Digby**

The *Amphitrite* sailed to Annapolis Royal on October 19, 1782, carrying 360 passengers. As many as 300 more would have left New York, but sufficient ships could not be found for them at that time.

*The Book of Negroes* cites 45 slave owners and 68 of their slaves bound for Annapolis Royal in 1783.

Evacuation vessels made a minimum of 17 voyages to the Annapolis Basin.

One of the first Loyalists of distinction to settle in Annapolis Royal arrived in the town on an evacuation vessel as a child of Black Loyalists. As an adult, Rose Fortune became the first female police officer in what is now Canada.

She also operated a successful baggage carting business. Her image is one of the few that we have for the Black Loyalists who settled in Nova Scotia.

**Shelter after disembarkation**

Winter arrived early in 1783 and produced memorable snowfalls. An eleven year-old Loyalist girl remembered:

*There were no deaths on board, but several babies were born. It was sad, sick time after we landed; in St. John we had to live in tents, the Government gave them to us and rations too. It was just at the first snow then, and the melting snow and rain would soak up into our beds as we lay. Mother got so chilled with rheumatism that she was never very well afterwards.*

Loyalists who arrived in the Maritimes in the spring and summer had time to build log cabins. Those who came in the late fall had to make do with canvas

Army surplus tents insulated with pine boughs. Green wood was the only fuel to heat the interior of the tents, producing a lot of smoke.

The New Brunswick historian, the Rev. W.O. Raymond, described a typical loyalist house as being a *"a rude log dwelling with rough hewn floor, stone chimney and huge fire place, the chinks and joinings of the walls well caulked with moss and clay, the roof covered with spruce bark or with split cedar, the furniture of the plainest and most primitive description, largely home-made, but with here and there some article of greater pretensions brought with the family from New England."*

Some white Loyalists who arrived in Shelburne late in the season spent the winter in the cellars of their unfinished houses or lived on board their evacuation ships until the spring.

The Black Loyalists who arrived in Birchtown in the late fall of 1783 had no time to build log cabins. Instead, they created pit houses. Found nowhere else in any loyalist settlements, pit houses may have been based on the temporary shelters that members of the Black Pioneers built for British army as they travelled through the rebellious colonies.

A typical pit house was a hole 1.5 metres by 1.5 metres and was about half a metre deep. A peaked wooden roof protected the inhabitants from rain and snow. Access was through a trapdoor in the roof or a small doorway.

**Three key Sources for evacuation ship passenger information: manifests & more**

**Evacuation Ship Passenger Lists**

Only a handful of manifests are known to exist. Of the more than 120 ships that took Loyalists to sanctuary, to date, transcripts of evacuation ships' manifests are only known to exist for a handful of loyalist refugee vessels.

<u>Complete:</u>
*Union, Esther, Eagle* (Saint John, N.B)
*The Amphitrite (Annapolis Royal, N.S.)*

*L'Abondance (Shelburne & Port Mouton, N.S.),*
*The Argo (Halifax, N.S.)*
*The Clinton (various Nova Scotia)*

Partial:
*The Martha, The Symmetry, The Montague, The Three Sisters, The William, The Elizabeth, The Sovereign, The Ann, The Grace, The Cyrus, The John & Jane, The Mercury, The Jason, The Nancy, The Neptune, The Alexander, and The Sally.*

**Fort Howe's Victualing Musters**

The victualing muster records for Fort Howe record the names of Loyalists who received food and provisions from the British military during their first year at the mouth of St. John River. (Parrtown)

In addition to the names, occupations and colonies of origin, the musters contain the names of the ships that brought individual Loyalists to Parrtown. By using the data found in the victualing musters, one can partially re-assemble the passenger lists for 12 evacuation vessels bound for New Brunswick.

The data for Fort Howe's victualing musters (as well as the data found in partial manifests for evacuation ships) can be found in David Bell's book, American Loyalists to New Brunswick: The Ship Passenger Lists.

Unfortunately, no such scholarly work exists for Loyalist vessels going to Annapolis Royal, Shelburne, Halifax, Cumberland County, or Port Mouton.

**One in Ten of the Maritimes' Loyalist Refugees**

Sir Guy Carleton, the British commander in chief in New York, refused to regard Black Loyalists as property — or as allies that could be abandoned at the end of the Revolution. The British Crown had promised them their freedom, and — despite vigorous opposition from the new United States government — Carleton was determined to treat them as free citizens of the empire.

He considered every Black man and woman who had sided with Britain by December 31, 1782, to be emancipated and therefore no longer the "property of American inhabitants." To placate American fears that Patriot slaves had been part of the Loyalist evacuation, Carleton commissioned the creation of a ledger to list the names, circumstances and former masters of every Black who left New York City by ship in 1783.

Historians estimate that 4,000 Black Loyalists left New York in 1783. Although only half of that number is recorded in the *Book of Negroes*, the ledger is an important document in piecing together the stories of Black Loyalists.

***The Book of Negroes*: "The Inspection Rolls of Negroes"**

This detailed ledger contains the names of almost 3,000 Black men, women, and children who travelled (some as **free** people, and others as the **slaves** or **indentured**

**servants** of white United Empire Loyalists) in just over 120 ships that sailed from New York between April and November 1783.

The ledger gives the **name** and **age** of every Black person who sailed from New York under British protection, and, for the most part, it also gives a **description** of each person, information about how he or she **escaped**, his or her military **record**, names of former slave **masters**, and the names of white masters in cases where the Blacks remained enslaved or indentured -- such information would be the basis in deciding any future compensation claims from Patriot slave owners.

The *Book of Negroes* also gives the name of the ship on which they sailed, its destination, and its date of departure.

To demonstrate that the destinations of free Blacks were being "tracked", Carleton had a column in the *Book of Negroes* that gave the name of the white Loyalist or the company of settlers who served as "escorts" for Black Loyalists aboard their evacuation vessels. Sometimes the escort was a slave owner, but the ledger clearly distinguishes between those who escorted enslaved passengers and free Black passengers. This column of the ledger is often the only proof of the vessel and date on which those white "escorts" travelled.

The example below lists the names of the white passengers who escorted Black Loyalists as well as the date of departure from New York and the name of the evacuation vessel.

**13 June 1783 - *Bridgewater* bound for St. John's River**
Daniel Cary, 22, stout fellow, **(William Bogle) GBC**
Jack Coley & 3 children, 34, stout fellow, **(John White)**
Cuffie, 40, stout fellow, **(Enoch Garish)**
John Wilkins, 26, stout fellow, scar on his chin, **(Peter Toner)**
Dolly, 24, stout squat wench, **(James Morrel)**
Philip, 40, stout fellow, low sized, **(Dr. Clarke)**
Ann, 15, fine wench, **(John McPherson)**

**Loyalist Slave owners and their slaves**

Of course, the *Book of Negroes* also lists those Blacks who were enslaved and the names of the Loyalists who considered them their property.

Descendants of more well-to-do Loyalists (ministers, merchants, and aristocrats) are most likely to discover that their ancestors were once slave owners. (Genealogy is not for the faint of heart).

139 enslaved Africans "belonging" to 89 Loyalists came to New Brunswick.

213 enslaved Africans are documented as being the property of 124 Loyalists that came to what is now Nova Scotia in 1783. That's a total of 352 slaves. However, more slaves came that were not listed in the *Book of Negroes*.

It is a sad fact of our history that no group has brought more enslaved people into what is now Canada than the Loyalists.

The Loyalists who sailed to sanctuary had been participants in the largest refugee evacuation in North American history. They survived persecution, disease, dangerous ocean journeys, disappointing living conditions, and a lingering

homesickness for all that they had known. It is an epic exodus that is worthy of ongoing study – a story of ordinary people who found themselves in extraordinary times.

**About Stephen Davidson**

A retired teacher, Stephen Davidson has ancestors who sailed aboard the *Union*, the flagship of the Spring Fleet, which brought the first Loyalists to New Brunswick in May of 1783. His 1975 bachelor's thesis on an aspect of Black Loyalist history became the basis for his contribution to the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography.*

In addition to contributing articles to *The Loyalist Gazette* and submitting over 940 articles to *Loyalist Trails*, Stephen's research has appeared in multiple genealogical periodicals, a national children's magazine, and a number of Maritime newspapers. His 2008 article in *The Beaver* was based on his research into the manifest of a loyalist evacuation vessel.

Stephen has served as a consultant for two websites created by the University of New Brunswick (Black Loyalists in New Brunswick and Loyalist Women in New Brunswick), has spoken at 3 previous UELAC Dominion conferences, served as Peter C. Newman's historical consultant and researcher, and has authored two books on Black Loyalists.

**Questions?** Contact me at loyalistsed@gmail.com.