
United Empire Loyalist Records

227 Research Guide

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As a result of the American Revolution, approximately 8,000 United Empire Loyalists (individuals who had remained loyal to the British cause) migrated to what is now southern Ontario. They were among the first white settlers of the province and were influential in creating the Province of Upper Canada in 1791.

This research guide will help you to find and use records at the Archives of Ontario that have information on United Empire Loyalists.

All descriptions for records mentioned in this guide are available in our online Archives Descriptive Database. You will find the database and all guides mentioned in this guide in the “Accessing Our Collection” section of our website.

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GETTING STARTED

Who Is an United Empire Loyalist?

The term “United Empire Loyalists” usually refers to individuals who:

- were living in the British colonies that had declared their independence as the United States in 1776, and
- fought on the British side during the American Revolution, and
- later fled to the colonies that had remained British.

In 1789, Lord Dorchester, Governor-General of British North America, issued a proclamation granting families that had defended the unity of the British Empire the hereditary right to add the capital letters UE after their name. Originally, only people who had arrived in the British colonies before the date of the proclamation could qualify as United Empire Loyalists but, in the case of Upper Canada, the deadline was later extended to 1798.

The proclamation also granted Loyalists and their families the right to obtain land (and later, to have fees waived for free grants), and to have the mark “UE” inscribed on militia rolls. Loyalists in Upper Canada and their families mostly used the land-related privileges. In the records, you may find the mark “UE”, or “DUE” (daughter), or “SUE” (son) of United Empire Loyalists.

Not all individuals who had supported the British cause were considered United Empire Loyalists, even though their names may appear in official records. Those not considered to be United Empire Loyalists included, but were not limited to:

- **two groups of military claimants:** residents of the provinces of Québec or Nova Scotia before the Revolution who had fought in British regular or colonial troops AND disbanded soldiers of the British regular army and auxiliary German mercenary corps. Both of these groups qualified for land-related privileges similar to those that the Loyalists enjoyed.
- **conscientious objectors** (e.g., Mennonites and Quakers) who had supported the British but refused to take arms for religious reasons.

THE RECORDS

Military Records

The British military created various records documenting the activities of the Loyalists during the War, as well as government assistance thereafter. These include:

- Muster rolls for Loyalist units are in the records British military "C" series (D2), available on microfilm in the Archives' Reading Room. [Click here to access the British military "C" series \(D2\).](#)
- The *Military Records Collection (F 895)* of the Archives has lists and other records on Loyalist units. These records are *not available on microfilm*, and can only be viewed on the Archives' reading room. [Click here to access the Military Records Collection \(F 895\).](#)
- The Frederick Haldimand records (D 7) document Haldimand's role as the Governor of the Province of Québec (which included southern Ontario). They contain records on Loyalist units during the war and assistance to Loyalists after the war. These records are available on microfilm in the Archives of Ontario's Reading Room. [Click here to access the Frederick Haldimand records \(D 7\).](#)

Loyalists' Claims for Losses

In 1783, the British government appointed two commissioners to visit British North America to receive and adjudicate claims submitted by Loyalists for losses of land, houses and other possessions in the United States. The commissioners heard evidence during 1785 and 1786, but they did not complete their work until 1790. The claims' records have information on the lives of the Loyalists at the time of their arrival and before the American Revolution.

The official ***Loyalist Claim Records (D 12)*** contain:

- administrative and official records
- evidence books (submissions made by claimants, and commissioners' decision, arranged by the American state of origin of the claimant)
- supporting documentation (such as land records, affidavits, notices of confiscation issued by American authorities).

[Click here to access the Loyalist claim records \(D 12\).](#)

These records are available on microfilm in the Archives' Reading Room. Some of the volumes of evidence for former residents of New York State are missing.

The *original evidence books (D 357)* of one of the commissioners are available on microfilm in the Archives' Reading Room — the originals are at the *Library of Congress* in Washington, DC. [Click here to access the original evidence books \(D 357\).](#) [Click here to access the Library of Congress Website.](#) These records are arranged chronologically and some volumes are missing. See the online description for further information on these records and the published transcripts that are available in the Archives' Reading Room.

United Empire Loyalist Lists

Various government offices prepared lists of United Empire Loyalists. In conducting your research, please keep in mind that:

- There was no definitive list.
- Lists often contradict themselves.
- Individuals inscribed on a list as Loyalists may have later been considered not to be Loyalists and omitted from later lists, and vice-versa.
- Some people who qualified as United Empire Loyalists may not appear at all.

In 1796, John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada ordered the preparation of the first Loyalist Rolls for each District in 1796. People inscribed on these rolls could exchange certificates of land occupancy they had received for land patents giving them ownership. There is a transcript on microfilm reel MS 803 in the Archives' Reading Room.

The district loyalist rolls were the basis for other government lists. Names were added or removed as each list was put together. For information on the lists that the Archives has, [click here to see the descriptions for the Inspector General's Loyalist Registers \(Series RG 1-515\)](#) and the [Executive Council United Empire Loyalist List Diffusion Material \(D 360\)](#).

For lists of Loyalists pre-dating the District rolls (i.e., before 1796), see the Frederick Haldimand records (D 7) and British military "C" series (D2) records, available on microfilm in the Archives' Reading Room. [Click here to access the Frederick Haldimand records \(D 7\)](#) and [Click here to access the British military "C" series \(D2\)](#) records.

Land Records

United Empire Loyalists were among the first British settlers in what is now Ontario and their names figure predominantly in the early land records. Also, they and their families were entitled to a waiver of administrative fees for free grants of land from the Crown. For information on early land records, [click here to access the Research Guide 215: From Grant to Patent: A Guide to Early Land Settlement Records \(ca. 1790 to ca. 1850\)](#).

First Nations Loyalists

Members of the Iroquois Confederacy fought on the British side and were forced to flee their homeland. In recognition for their service, Governor General Sir Frederick Haldimand granted them a vast track of land, six miles on each side of the Grand River in 1785. Records on this grant are in the *Frederick Haldimand records (D 7)* and *Indian Affair records (D 9)*, available on microfilm in the Archives' Reading Room. [Click here to access the Frederick Haldimand records \(D 7\)](#). [Click here to access the Indian Affair records \(D 9\)](#).

Other Resources

Brenda Merriman's book *United Empire Loyalists: A Guide to Tracing Loyalist Ancestors in Upper Canada* (Campbellville, Ont.; Global Genealogy, 2006) has information on Loyalists, records and other sources pertaining to them, and how to research Loyalist ancestors. There is a reference (non-circulating) copy in the Archives' Reading Room.

William Reid's book *The Loyalists in Ontario: The Sons and Daughters of the American Loyalists* lists people mentioned in orders-in-council authorizing grants of land to United Empire Loyalists or their sons and daughters. It is available on microfilm in the Archives' Reading Room (reel B 31).

MAKING CONTACT

Ready and Willing

Although unable to do your United Empire Loyalist records research for you, our reference staff are waiting to assist you. You may telephone or write to them by mail or email or — best of all — visit the Archives of Ontario.

Contact us

Telephone: 416-327-1600 Toll free (Ontario): 1-800-668-9933
Fax: 416-327-1999
Email: [Click here to email Archives of Ontario](#)
Address: Archives of Ontario, 134 Ian Macdonald Blvd., Toronto, ON M7A 2C5

Website

For information about the Archives' holdings, as well as access to research guides and other customer service materials available through the Archives of Ontario, [please click here to visit our website.](#)

Customer Service and Research Guides

The Archives of Ontario has published a series of in-depth research guides on a variety of specific topics. For more information, please see “Research Guides and Tools” under “Accessing Our Collection” on the home page of the Archives website.

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