

ABOUT OUR LOYALIST HERITAGE

When the Revolutionary War ended, the American colonists who fought on the side of the British were ostracised by the new Americans and their United States. Their land and possessions were confiscated, causing many to flee to what is now Canada, because it remained under British rule before, during, and after the Revolution.

On May 18, 1783, twenty ships carrying 3,000 Loyalists, men, women, and children, arrived in the Saint John harbour under the direction of Sir Guy Carleton (known as the Liberator of the Loyalists). They landed at what was believed to be the foot of present day King Street at Market Slip. A flag and commemorative plaque mark the site today. A second group landed at Lower Cove which is further south of the King Street site. By the end of the year 11,000 more Loyalists had arrived in Saint John harbour.

The Loyalists lived in tents while their homes were being built. This arrangement resulted in a lot of illness, especially among children. By the end of the first year, 276 buildings were erected. Unfortunately a fire destroyed them and they had to be rebuilt. The large majority of early homes and businesses were located in the south end of the peninsula, then known as Parrrtown. This name was chosen in honour of the Governor of Nova Scotia, of which this area was still a part. The settlement on the opposite side of the harbour was called Carleton, after the commander-in-chief of the Loyalists, Sir Guy Carleton.

Many who came the first year were farmers or soldiers by profession and were granted land along the fertile Kennebecasis and St. John Rivers. After the first winter most of them moved out of the settlements of Carleton and Parrrtown. Those who stayed in the burgeoning communities at the mouth of the St. John River were mainly merchants, tradesmen, and professionals. James Putnam, was one such individual. He had been the Attorney General for Massachusetts and went on to become the City's first Attorney General.

Creation of the Colony of New Brunswick

After petitioning the British government for a partition of the new settlements from the colony of Nova Scotia, the new colony of New Brunswick was created on June 18, 1784. The creation of a new colonial administration ensued and Thomas Carleton, Sir Guy Carleton's brother, became the first Governor of New Brunswick.

Incorporation of the City of Saint John

May 18, 1785, two years after the landing of the Loyalists, Parrrtown and Carleton were united and incorporated as the City of Saint John by a Royal Charter from King George III of England. Saint John thus became Canada's first incorporated city. At this time, Major Studholme's garrison at Fort Howe became the City's first police force.