

Cornet Titus Knapp came at the same time as Capt. Palmer. They went into business together at Fort Cumberland. Palmer afterwards sold out to King and removed to Dorchester. Palmer's house, a stone one, was on the north side of Knapps. Their store was between them.

He was still a young man when the Loyalists came over (1783), but he appears to have been recognized at once as a man of character and importance. Among the first commissions issued by the newly organized government of New Brunswick, was one to Gideon Palmer, as Coroner and on the first Nisi Prius Court held in Westmorland County on 18th. September, 1787, we find him making his first return (The first court was held at the house of Mr. James Law, Westmorland. Mr. Justice Ludlow presided. There were present on the bench, James Law, Charles Dixon, Christopher Harper, Robert Scott and William Allen Esquires, Ward Chapman, afterwards Chief Justice acted as clerk, and Thomas Herritt as constable. The bar was represented by Messrs. Botsford, Chipman and Hardy. Gideon Palmer, Coroner, made return of an inquisition taken upon the body of Geo. Murphy, casually drowned).

He was captain of the Dorchester company of Militia. In those warlike days, when an enemy might be apprehended at any time, and when it was necessary to be prepared for attack, the militia were drilled 15 days, six in the spring, six in the fall and three in general muster which took place at Sackville. Capt. Palmer drilled his men at Charters. It is related at a General Muster at Dixon's Island, the officers were dining together, when an altercation arose between Capt. Palmer and Capt. Henry Chapman, one occupying a seat near the head of the table the other near the foot. Capt. Chapman in his excitement shouted out to his brother officer in language more warlike than parliamentary: "You're a liar." Capt. Palmer did not reply. He jumped up on the table, where his movements could not be hindered and made a dash at his opponent, clearing the table of its viands as he went. The results are not known beyond the fact that Capt. Palmer a few days afterwards paid £6 for broken dishes. Mr. Palmer married a daughter of Christopher Harper; he left four sons, Philip, Gideon, Marcus, and John. Philip Palmer was a leading J. P., and Crown Land Surveyor, and for years a representative in the General Assembly. Gideon became one of the most successful ship-builders and ship-owners in the Province.

Mr. Gideon Palmer Sr., lived when he first came with the Loyalists at Green Hill, Westmorland Point, which was then the political centre of the country between St. John and Halifax. Fifteen years after, when John Palmer was born, the country had made some slight progress, but the whole Province was then practically a wilderness, the few newly formed settlements being separated by almost interminable forests.

First Settlers in the Province

In 1784, the only English settler from Pictou to Miramichi was Mr. William Hannington, who that year purchased a tract of 5,000 acres at Shediac. It was only 20 years previously that Mr. William Davidson arrived from the north of Scotland and settled at Miramichi, and the next year obtained the Elm Tree grant of 100,000 acres. But it was not until 1786 that a number of Loyalists and disbanded soldiers settled there and Mr. Davidson was enabled to start two saw mills and two years later opened trade with England for the sale of masts. In 1786, Mr. Solomon Powell an American Loyalist from Poughkeepsie, settled on the Richibucto River, where the ferocity of the Indians had previously deterred any English settlers from attempting it. At this period there were but eight families including Acadians between Baie des Vents Miramichi and Baie Verte and from the entrance of the Richibucto River.