

With the exception of some small settlements in the neighborhood of Frontenac, now Kingston, where there had for years been an old French post of considerable importance, the present Province of Ontario was a wilderness when Canada was ceded to Britain in 1761, and but a trifling amount of settlement took place before the advent of the United Empire Loyalists in 1782, 1783 and 1784. So the Loyalists, when they came into their new homes, found that there was no militia in the country, because there were no men to compose it. It did not take long for the new soldier-settlers to realize the need and supply the deficiency.

The first U. E. settlers to take up land in Upper Canada were men who had served in the various loyal colonial corps, horse and foot, which formed so large and important a part of the Imperial armies which for eight long years succeeded, in spite of poor government support, dispersed force, long lines of communication and great distance from the base of supplies—England—in maintaining themselves in the revolted colonies.* The property of these men had been confiscated by the various state legislatures early during the revolution; debts due them had been proscribed and they themselves had been outlawed. Many of their women and children sought safety in flight. And it was not only the King's loyal colonial soldiers in the contest, and their families, who were made to suffer for their old-fashioned belief in the Biblical injunction, "Fear God; honor the King"—the vengeance of the revolutionists extended to the non-combatant loyal colonists—"Tories," the revolutionists contemptuously called them. A large proportion of the population of all the revolted colonies, but particularly New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and the Carolinas, were opposed to the revolution, and staunchly refused to support it, though they acknowledged that there had been gross mismanagement of colonial affairs in England. They, during the war, in spite of threats and actual cruelty, refused to support the movement having for its object the displacement of a tried, dignified and stable system of government, guaranteeing equal and full liberty to all, and a substitution therefor of an experimental democracy. The lot of the non-combatant loyalists was made as unendurable as that of the King's colonial soldiers and their families, so they, too, were despoiled of their property and driven out of the country. It is estimated that 100,000 homeless American loyalists left the country by the port of New York alone. Many went to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada (now Quebec). Ten thousand from New York and Pennsylvania came to Upper Canada.

The real foulness of this blot on these early pages of United States history lies in the fact that the expulsion and spoliation of the loyalists was committed in flagrant violation of the treaty by virtue of which the Mother Country, at a time of tremendous strain upon her resources, occasioned by wars against France, Spain, Holland and some of the most powerful native princes of India, and an impending war against the Armed Neutrality, comprising Prussia, Sweden and Denmark, acknowledged, grudgingly, doubtless, but nevertheless of her own volition, the independence of her obstreperous offspring. Britain strongly held at the time she conceded independence to her thirteen oldest colonies, New York, the chief city; Charleston, Savannah, Niagara, Detroit, and many other important positions, and Rodney's smashing defeat of de Grasse in the West Indies had once more given her the command of the seas, the temporary loss of which had proved the undoing of Lord Cornwallis' gallant little army at Yorktown, weakened as it was by the losses sustained in its long and brilliant campaigns in the southern colonies, and shut off from its supplies by the French fleets.

* It is stated that at one time there were 25,000 native-born American Loyalists actually in service in the Imperial armies in America.