

Stephanie Seal Walters
2016 UELAC Loyalist Scholarship Award Recipient

With great pleasure The United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada awarded Stephanie Seal Walters the 2016 UELAC Loyalist Scholarship Award. Ms. Walters is a PhD Candidate at George Mason University, Department of History and Art History, Fairfax, Virginia.

Ms. Walters' dissertation examines the forgotten Loyalist populations in Virginia during the American Revolution and seeks to have them recognized as a part of Virginia's Revolutionary narrative. Her work will argue that Loyalism was far more common in the Old Dominion than either scholars of the American Revolution or contemporaries have acknowledged. Without acknowledging the men and women who identified as Tories in the Old Dominion, historians have failed to properly assess how loyalism consistently thwarted Virginia's attempt to create a façade as a utopia of patriotism throughout the era. By adding accounts of loyalism in the state, much can be learned about Virginia's revolutionary struggle and how it ultimately affects the narrative of the American Revolution. Stephanie is conducting her research under the supervision of Dr. Cynthia A. Kierner, Director of the PhD program (History and Art History GMU), and past president of the Southern Association for Women Historians.



Stephanie plans travel to archives across Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States and will complete her PhD in American History at George Mason University in 2018.

In 2011, Ms. Walters received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History at University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS followed in 2013 by a Master of Arts degree in American History. Her MA thesis, under dissertation supervisor Dr. Kyle F. Zelner, was titled "Victims of Liberty: Virginia's Response to Loyalism in Williamsburg, 1765 -1781."

Stephanie has extensive work experience in the field of military history. Most recently Stephanie worked as a graduate assistant (2014-2015) in research, public projects, and education at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media. From 2015 – 2016, she was a teaching assistant in Western Civilization, Department of History and Art History at George Mason University, and a library associate in History and Genealogy at the Thomas Balch Library.

Stephanie has a number of speaking engagements scheduled in 2016 beginning in August at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, an historic site in Smithfield, Virginia; the Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, Virginia; and the Richmond American Revolution Roundtable at University of Richmond.

Following is an excerpt from Stephanie Seal Walters' research proposal – "As I Glory in the name of TORY": Loyalist Networks, Communities, and Rebellion in Revolutionary Virginia, 1765-1810."

For my dissertation I am taking my Master's thesis much further by evaluating beyond Williamsburg and across the entire state. My goal is to not only prove that loyalism played an integral role in Virginia society throughout the war, but that there were loyalist networks, communities, and individuals who—with much research and study—will change Virginia's Revolutionary narrative. As a digital history fellow at George Mason University's Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, I will create a computer program using 'R' to compile all of the statistical data surrounding loyalism in Virginia. This program will be used to create visualizations that reveal loyalism by region, economic status, occupation, etc. Additionally, I will create a network analysis of all known loyalists in Virginia via the loyalist claims. By taking the names of those who submitted loyalist claims and geographically locating those who wrote witness testimonies, I will be able to create a map visualization of Virginia's loyalists and connect each Tory geographically with other loyalists they knew and interacted with between 1765-1800. This map will show networks that existed locally and across the state, proving that loyalism was not necessarily experienced as an individual, but as active communities.

In addition to my digital work, I will use loyalist militia records, the loyalist claims, personal document collections, court records, and newspaper articles to trace the lives of Virginia's loyalist population and how their actions contributed to British efforts to regain control over America. This research will help to better define what constitutes as loyalism in the Old Dominion and the basis for their ideologies, actions, and "non-actions."

Research:

Starting in the summer of 2016 I will begin research at the Canadian National Archives in Ottawa, at the University of New Brunswick Archives and Special Collections. These archives have important document collections that surround social data of Virginia's loyalists, including family records and collections, court records, and military accounts. I also plan to visit libraries and archives in Virginia, including the Rockefeller Library, the Library of Virginia and the Virginia Historical Society. Additional trips will also be made to the David Library of the American Revolution and the Library of the Cincinnati. By the spring of 2017 I will make an important trip to the British National Archive to examine notes from the Loyalist Claims Commission which have not been transferred to microfilm and to go through over seventy family files and collections located at the library.