



THE ROYAL YORKER



*Quarterly Newsletter of the St. Lawrence Branch
United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada*



WINTER 2019

WHO WE ARE

The association is dedicated to promoting the history of the United Empire Loyalists: North Americans who remained loyal to the Crown during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), who later settled in Canada. The St. Lawrence Branch serves the Ontario counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry, comprising the former "Royal Townships" of Lancaster, Charlottenburgh, Cornwall, Osnabruck, Williamsburgh and Matilda.

WHERE TO FIND US

🖥 Branch website: uelac.org/st-lawrence/ 📘 Facebook: www.facebook.com/StLawrenceUELAC/

✉ Address (Loyalist Resource Centre): P.O. Box 607, 3 Augusta St., Morrisburg, ON, Canada, K0C 1X0

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S NOTE

The New Year brings a slightly different-looking newsletter. The first page, anyway. We've re-jigged it to accommodate more information. Fear not: It contains all the content you've come to expect!

Visitors to our branch website know that we recently launched a Loyalist crossword puzzle. Titled "Settlement of SD&G," it's publicly available on the site. As a membership inducement, we'll publish more, here in *The Royal Yorker*. This issue's puzzle is titled "Sir John Johnson." All the questions pertain to that prominent Loyalist leader whose connection to our region is significant.

Also of note in this issue of *The Royal Yorker*, our branch treasurer Michael Eamer reminds members to send their dues, and Carolyn Goddard gives an update on the Sir John Johnson Manor House renovation. It also contains our regular features "Loyalist Signposts" and "The Bookshelf," both of which deal with Loyalist John Crysler and his famous farm. We hope you enjoy the new look!

EVENT REMINDER:

Come see us at the **Cornwall Square Heritage Fair**,
on Saturday February 23rd, 9:00 - 4:00.

BRANCH EXECUTIVE

President:

Lorraine Reoch

Secretary:

Darlene Fawcett

Treasurer:

Michael Eamer

Genealogists:

Lorraine Reoch &

Darlene Fawcett

Social Convener:

Ashley Harper

Newsletter Editor &

Webmaster:

Stuart Manson

Directors:

Murray Barkley, Carolyn

Goddard, Archibald

McDonnell, William Pat-
terson, Gordon Reoch, Sandra
Shouldice, Michelle Walczak.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

There is an incredible amount of history in the small South Glengarry village of Williamstown and the Sir John Johnson Manor House, with its construction dating from the coming of the United Empire Loyalists to this area in 1784 following the conclusion of the American Revolution. It is one of several historical buildings in this municipality.

Sir John Johnson, 2nd Baronet of New York, inherited his title and approximately 240,000 acres of land upon the 1774 death of his father, Sir William Johnson, Indian Superintendent in the Mohawk Valley. At the time of the American Revolution, the younger Johnson remained loyal to the British crown and sought refuge in British North America before establishing King's Royal Regiment of New York.



Sir John. Johnson. (Library and Archives Canada)

After the hostilities ended, thousands of United Empire Loyalists began new lives in what is now Canada, with Johnson being tasked with ensuring the distribution of land to the loyal refugees. Johnson was granted approximately 40,000 acres of his own, including property where Williamstown is located.

Brent Lafave of Williamstown, a member of Sir John Johnson Manor House Committee, notes that Johnson was granted land on both sides of the Raisin River and established several mills in the area deriving power to operate them by damming the stream. Lafave relates that the settlement was almost feudal in nature, with people initially only owning the buildings on the property, explaining that Manor House owners began selling-off the land, with the last properties sold in the 1960's.

The Manor House, pictured below, was one of several buildings built by Johnson between 1784 and 1792, with the original two-story building described by Lafave as an example of five-bay architecture with a full basement while the later additions on either side had only crawlspaces. Sir John sent his eldest son Captain William Johnson to Williamstown to manage his business there and three Johnson children were in Williamstown during his tenure.



Plans to renovate the Manor House began to form in the 1990's with the Sir John Johnson Manor House Committee working with Parks Canada (who own the building and property) to facilitate renovations to the historic building, including stabilizing the structure and upgrades to the

interior rooms. The downstairs area would be available for local organizations and residents to rent for meetings or community events, while the upstairs would see the development of three guest rooms and a self-contained suite available for overnight guests.

With the completion of the Parks Canada portion of the project, the interior renovations and upgrades have begun. Lafave reports the Committee has already spent approximately \$20,000 in the first phase of the project and expects another \$500,000 will be needed to complete the planned renovations. He also notes there will be several fundraising activities undertaken, including a "Go Fund Me" page at the following address:

<https://www.gofundme.com/the-manor-house-restoration-project>

-Carolyn Thompson Goddard

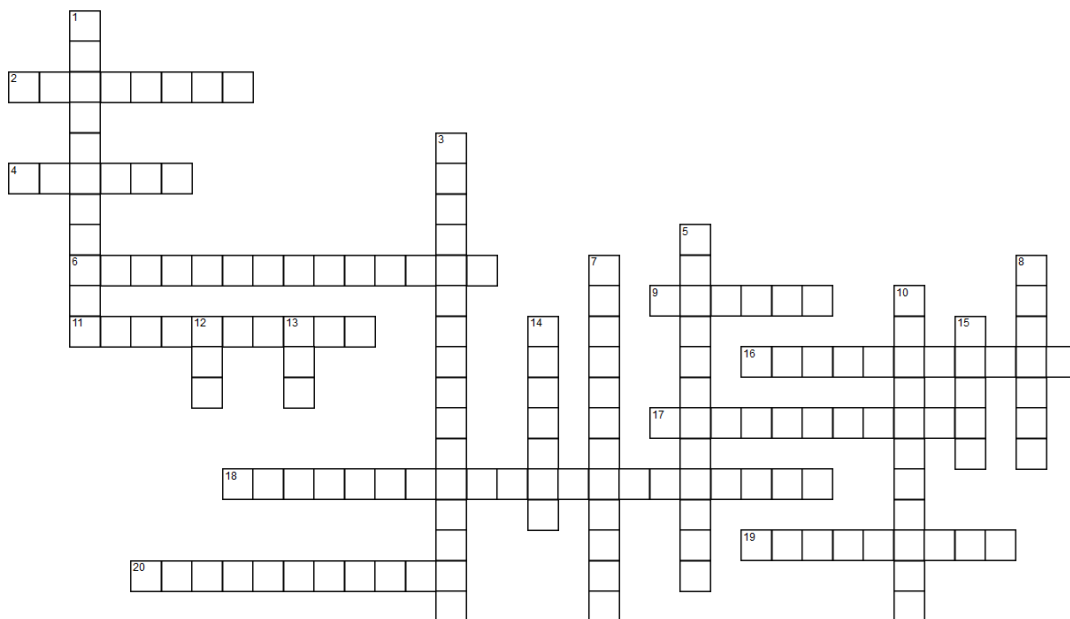
Lynn Lafave, President of the Sir John Johnson Manor House Committee and direct descendant of Sir John Johnson, is shown below in the recently-renovated Ball Room at the Manor House. She is married to Brent Lafave, who is mentioned in the article. (C.T. Goddard)



UELAC ST. LAWRENCE BRANCH CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Loyalist Crossword - Sir John Johnson

Created by Stuart Manson, United Empire Loyalists' Association
of Canada (St. Lawrence Branch)



ACROSS

- 2 Battle at which he commanded Crown forces, 1777.
- 4 European city where he lived in the 1790s.
- 6 Common-law wife's name (two words).
- 9 Province of burial.
- 11 Mohawk village where he arrived after escaping Johnstown in 1776 (two words).
- 16 His brother-in-arms and common-law brother-in-law (two words).
- 17 Home, prior to 1774 (two words).
- 18 Mother's name (two words).
- 19 Legal wife's name (two words).
- 20 Despite a strong recommendation, he was not appointed Lieutenant-Governor of this new colony (two words).

DOWN

- 1 Mountains through which he passed on his escape from Johnstown in 1776.
- 3 Highest rank achieved during the American Revolutionary War (two words).
- 5 Name of his birthplace, which is also the name of burial place (two words).
- 7 Loyalist village, named after his father, where he built a manor house.
- 8 Original name of the fort that his regiment put under siege in 1777.
- 10 Home, 1774 onward (two words).
- 12 Number of battalions in his Loyalist regiment.
- 13 First name of the man who was both his cousin and his brother-in-law.
- 14 His hereditary title, personally conferred by King George II in 1765.
- 15 Acronym of his Loyalist regiment.

TREASURER'S REPORT



We're eager to receive membership dues for the 2019 calendar year. Please renew your branch membership, as soon as possible, by sending in your dues by one of the methods described below. If you have not already done so, of course.

If you'd like to pay cash, in person, you can visit us at the Cornwall Square Heritage Fair on February 23rd, between 9:00 and 4:00.

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 2019

Membership dues can be paid by cheque, made out to "St. Lawrence Br. UELAC" and mailed to Michael Eamer, 667 Hamilton Cr., Cornwall, ON K6H 5N6, or to the St. Lawrence Branch UELAC, 3 Augusta St., Morrisburg, ON K0C 1X0.

- \$50 for individual regular, associate, and affiliate members.
- \$65 for families (up to two people). Additional family members (same address) are \$5 each.
- \$10 for branch members who pay their dues to another branch, but wish to belong to the St. Lawrence Branch (\$15 for family branch memberships).

The treasurer also accepts e-transfer directly to the branch bank account. Please correspond with the treasurer via eamermc@yahoo.com

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

We're keen to receive newsletter submissions from our membership. Please send anything (articles, photos, news items) to the editor, Stuart Manson: manson1763@gmail.com

LOYALIST SIGNPOSTS

"Loyalist Signposts" is a recurring feature in *The Royal Yorker* that points to a current place name in our region, which has loyalist origins.

In this issue, we examine the two locations named after Loyalist drummer-boy John Crysler. One of those spots witnessed the most significant military event in the history of our region: The 1813 Battle of Crysler's Farm.

The engagement was an important one during the War of 1812, and one of the few that occurred far from the Niagara Peninsula, where most of the war's action took place. The Battle of Crysler's Farm in a nutshell: An American army, under Maj.-Gen. James Wilkinson, descends the St. Lawrence River on its way to capture Montreal. It is shadowed, and then defeated, by a smaller British-Canadian-Indigenous force commanded by Lt.-Col. Joseph Morrison. The battle occurred in Williamsburgh Township, east of the current Village of Morrisburg.



A British volley of musketry at one of the annual Battle of Crysler's Farm living history re-enactments.

The battle is named after John Crysler, a loyalist who settled in the area in 1784. He was born in 1770 in Schoharie, New York. Despite his young age

during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783), he enlisted as a drummer-boy in Butler's Rangers, a famous loyalist regiment that operated mainly out of Fort Niagara. It wreaked havoc on the north-west frontiers of the Thirteen Colonies. (Incidentally, his father, also named John, served in the King's Royal Regiment of New York.) After that war, Crysler settled on his land grants in Williamsburg Township, then known as Royal Township No. 4.



The regimental button of Butler's Rangers.

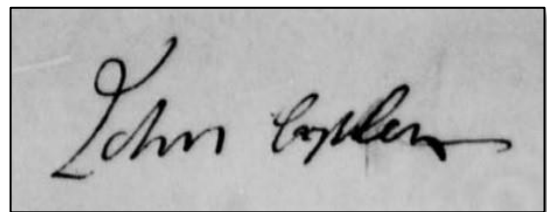
Crysler developed these lands, as well as others, and by 1813 he was a successful businessman and politician. He was present at the battle, as a lieutenant in the Dundas Militia. His house and farm became Lt.-Col. Morrison's British headquarters during the battle, and Crysler carried that commander's despatches to Montreal, which announced the victory. Many local historians will tell you, however, that the name Crysler is but one of many on whose land the battle was fought. Nevertheless, Crysler was the most prominent, and his name stuck.

Most of the battlefield has been under water since the 1950's, a result of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project. Despite this unfortunate situation, the memory of the battle lives on: The battlefield

monument, first erected in 1895 on the original battlefield location, now sits atop a huge man-made mound overlooking the St. Lawrence River and surrounding countryside. Curiously and appropriately, this mound has the appearance of a crown when viewed from the air.

An annual re-enactment takes place near this spot, commemorating the battle and its associated military and social history. There's also a museum, called the Battlefield Memorial Building, at the base of the hill, containing audio-visuals and artifacts of the battle.

A generation after the battle, John Crysler eventually became the Lt.-Col. of the 1st Regiment of Dundas Militia, at which time he was known as "one of the oldest and most loyal inhabitants of the province." In 1838, despite his age (he was 68) he led his regiment into another fray: The Battle of the Windmill. This engagement, near Prescott, was the result of an informal (and unsuccessful) attempt by American raiders to invade Upper Canada during the Rebellions of 1837-1838.



John Crysler's signature.

The Crysler name has also been applied to a small village in the Township of North Stormont. Its origin is also connected to John Crysler, who settled there late in his life.

For more information on the Battle of Crysler's Farm, read Donald E. Graves' excellent book on the subject: *Field of Glory: The Battle of Crysler's Farm*, 1813, (Robin Brass Studio, 1999).

-Stuart Manson

LOYALIST BURIAL SITE – BRANCH PROJECT UPDATE

This June we will unveil the first two “Loyalist Burial Site” plaques in local cemeteries. Full details will be provided in the next issue of *The Royal Yorker*.

The two cemeteries in question are those surrounding Trinity Anglican Church in Cornwall, and St. Andrew’s United Church in Bainsville. Both congregations have graciously permitted us to erect these plaques, and will participate with us in the unveilings, along with members of the public.

This first phase of the project has been partially funded by the Edgar family, represented by James Edgar of Melville, Saskatchewan. We also recently received a \$500 grant from ULEAC headquarters, which we heartily appreciate!

The latest updates and news on this project will be available on our website. We’ve also created a special subset of webpages describing local Loyalist cemeteries, at the following address:

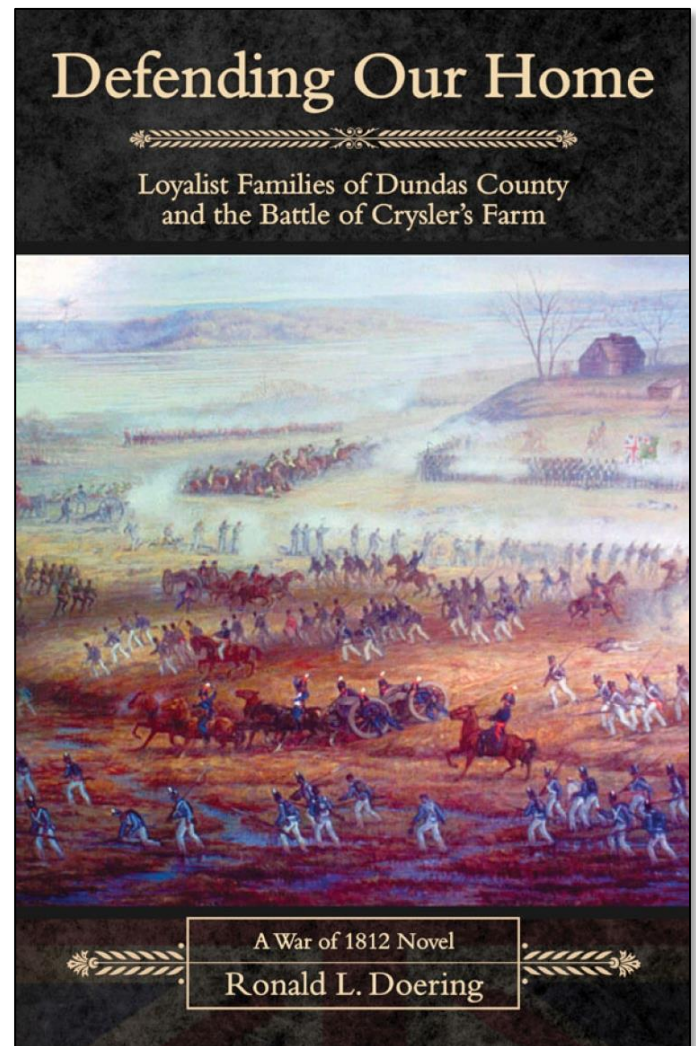
http://uelac.org/st-lawrence/?page_id=409



THE BOOKSHELF

“The Bookshelf” is a recurring feature in *The Royal Yorker*. Here we examine books of interest - old or new - whose subject matter is dear to our hearts: The early history of our region, genealogy, the American Revolutionary War, and related topics.

In this issue, we take a peek at a work of fiction. Consequently, we must be careful to avoid “spoilers,” because our objective is to promote books, not to ruin the experience for prospective readers!



Several years ago, at the time of the War of 1812 bicentennial, Ottawa lawyer (and Dundas County native) Ronald L. Doering published *Defending Our*

Home: Loyalist Families of Dundas County and the Battle of Crysler's Farm - A War of 1812 Novel. At that time, in the autumn of 2012, our branch executive member Carolyn Goddard reviewed the book for the *Loyalist Gazette*.

As indicated by the title, the book follows the lives of families who found themselves suddenly thrust into the cauldron of war. They or their parents had, a generation earlier, felt the sting of conflict during the American Revolutionary War. After resettlement in Canada, these Loyalists hoped never again to witness such events. It was not to be: The United States declared war on the British Empire in June of 1812. More importantly, the next year they launched into the St. Lawrence River the largest army it had ever seen. It resulted in the Battle of Crysler's Farm, fought between that army and a combined Crown force of mainly British Regulars, with auxiliaries of Canadian militia and Indigenous warriors. (Spoiler Alert: We won!)

The book focusses its attention on the Marselis family, in particular Thomas Marselis. Other families include the Cooks, Dorans, and of course the Crysler's. It narrates their daily lives and activities, serving as an interesting description of pioneer practices in early Upper Canada. It breathes life into the state of fear and anxiety that prevailed in our region prior to the appearance of a large enemy army on our doorstep.

This book has everything, including more than one love story, family secrets kept under wraps for decades, and domestic discord. While Loyalist families and British army officers have prominent roles, Doering also features supporting characters from different backgrounds, including French Canadian Voltigeurs and Mohawk warriors. In fact, the Marselis family connection to Mohawks supplies an interesting subplot to the novel,

informed by the author's connection with a former chief of the Mohawks of Akwesasne.

The horrors of war are on full display within these pages, not only from the perspective of those on the front lines, but also those who supported them. But the author is measured in his description of battle scenes; you need not worry about being overloaded with gory detail.

While reading the book, I kept wondering whether the author would "pull a fast one" on us, and make the book a work of alternative fiction. I worried that he might make the U.S. army victorious: They subsequently take Montreal, placing a stranglehold on the rest of Upper Canada resulting in its conquest and integration into the United States of America. Oh, the Humanity! I'm glad he didn't go down that route... but that would actually be an interesting concept for a book. Credit me if you choose to write *that* horror novel!

It must be challenging, in historical fiction, to get the dialogue right. One can easily fall into the trap of using current vocabulary, phrases, or tone. At times I thought the dialogue in the novel was perhaps a smidge too modern, but can't put my finger on why. This is a very minor criticism, if it's one at all. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in our Loyalist and military history.

In the acknowledgement section of the book, Doering makes note of our branch Loyalist Resource Centre. He used it while conducting the background research for his novel. He also made extensive use of Donald Graves' landmark book on the battle, *Field of Glory*.

Doering's book can still be purchased through Amazon and other fine online booksellers. I'd imagine it's also available at places like Upper Canada Village. It ought to be. Money well spent!

-Stuart Manson

VALENTINE CRYDERMAN

DOCUMENT FROM LAST ISSUE

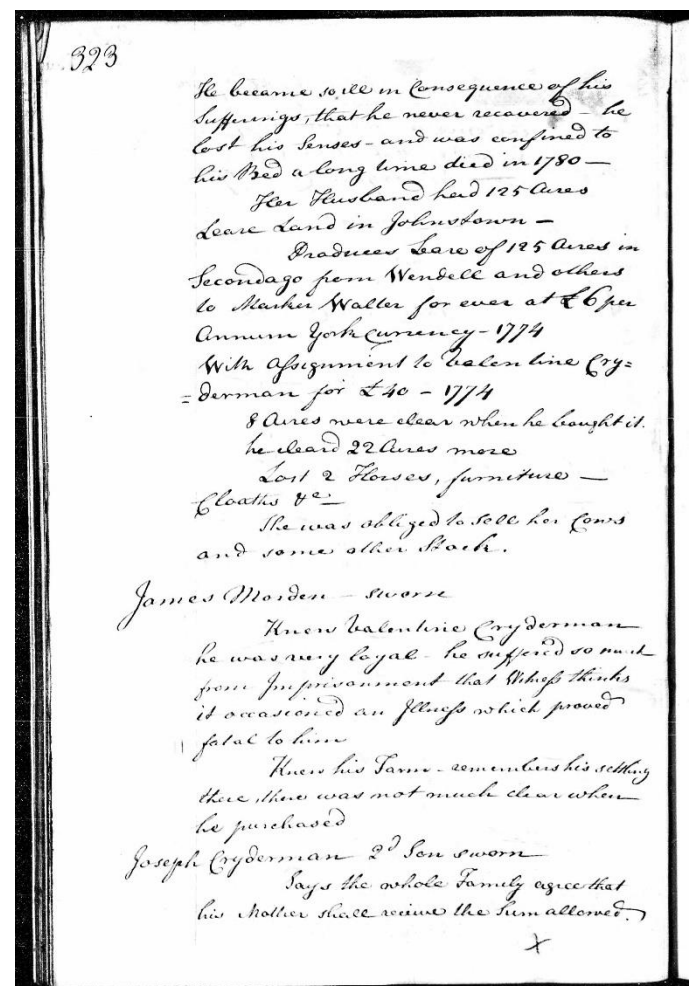
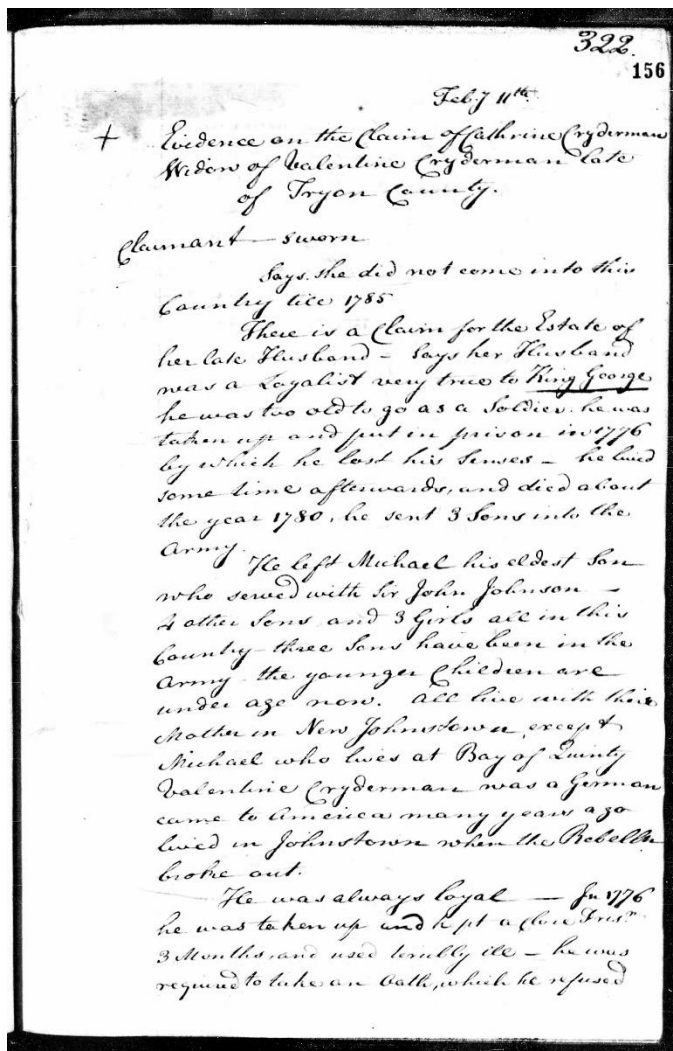
We had a request for the source document that informed a piece from our last issue - "Valentine Cryderman: The Loyalist Left Behind."

Reproduced here is the two-page document in question. It details the submission made by Cryderman's widow to the commission in charge of granting compensation benefits to Loyalists.

The document, along with hundreds of others, is available on Ancestry.ca. The sub-collection related to the commission is searchable by name and other keywords.

Documents in the commission's holdings do much to dispel the old myth that the Loyalists were, as a rule, financially well-off. Many of the claims are for small losses, made by farmers who didn't even own their own lands. Most Loyalists did not even bother to make a claim, for example.

One of the commissioners, Henry Dundas, estimated in 1787 that there were between 1,100 and 1,200 claims made. He considered this number of be "very numerous," but also "in amount very small, being mostly farmers in the back part of New York Province." Dundas called the Loyalists with whom he met as "happy, flourishing people."



SHAVER MYSTERY

Do you have Shavers (Shaeffers, Shafers) in your family tree? The name is a common Loyalist surname. David Miller, whose wife has Shafer ancestry, is struggling with a genealogical riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. He calls it “a decades-old road block.”

The specific details of the issue are too long and complex to be reprinted here. Suffice to say it deals with one Harry Shafer, the specific identity of whom is obscure. It’s a representative example of a challenging aspect of genealogy: Being able to confidently connect an individual described in one document, with an individual described in another document.

Miller has at least four possibilities for this puzzling Harry Shafer:

- 1) The son of Henrich Shafer of Claverock, NY;
- 2) The son of a family from Schoharie, NY;
- 3) A man related to a father-son pair of billiards experts, Jacob and Jake Schaefer;
- 4) Descendants of Maria Elizabeth Shafer, a German immigrant who settled in the Cobleskill, NY area.

David Miller can be contacted at the following email address: davidlmillerpc@msn.com

Thanks to Edward Kipp for passing this along.

THE LAST WORD

“A soldier’s musket, if not exceedingly ill-bored (as many are) will strike the figure of a man at 80 yards; it may even at a hundred; but a soldier must be very unfortunate indeed who shall be wounded by a common musket at 150 yards, provided his antagonist aims at him; and as to firing at a man at 200 yards with a common musket, you may as well fire at the moon...”

-Colonel George Hanger, who served with the Hessian Jaegers and Tarleton’s Legion during the American Revolutionary War.

Acknowledgement: The Ontario Ministry of Culture provides a heritage grant to the UELAC St. Lawrence Branch for its outreach program.

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The next issue of *The Royal Yorker* will be published in May 2019.

