

Divisions in Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia attitudes to the American Revolution differed among population groups. People in Halifax had mutual interests with Great Britain as did new immigrants from England. But those who had come in from New England felt sympathy with the Americans. Acadians and some of the Indians had old attachments to the French. The Scotch were loyal to Great Britain; the few Irish residents were not. In December 1775 came news throughout Nova Scotia of militia and tax bills of the province that fulfilled British requirements, and soon the country was in a "universal uproar". Those who had lived in New England also were stirred by the possibility of a draft forcing them to fight their relatives. Resistance developed. People in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, told a militia officer who was raising troops that they could not comply with the law, and they sent a remonstrance to the government in Halifax.

Next, troubles flared up along the Saint John River and in bays to the west. Here the population was overwhelmingly Indian, most of whom were loyal to Britain. However, there were those who wanted to support the actions of the Americans: about 400 Acadians and 1400 New Englanders centered in the farming community of Maugerville in Sunbury County; a few at the mouth of the Saint John River in the trading post of Simonds, Hazen and White; and some at Passamaquoddy Bay. A group in Maugerville drew up resolutions in sympathy with the American objectives less than two months before the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Writing from the Loyalist point of view Wood-Holt³ states that in Maugerville "many highly disloyal resolutions were adopted. . . . In this community the powerful influence of the pastor, and of the leading elders, and church members was on the side of the American congress." W. B. Kerr⁴ attributes the action taken in Sunbury County to fears of invasion by the Americans.

The Assembly of Sunbury County Pledges Lives and Fortunes⁵

The Inhabitants of the County of Sunbury in the province of Nova Scotia being Regularly assembled at the meeting house in Maugerville in Said County on Tuesday, 14th day of May, 1776 to consult on some measures necessary to be taken for the Safety of the Inhabitants Chose Jacob Barker, Israel Perley, Phin. Nevers, Daniel Palmer, Moses Pickard, Edward Coye, Tho. Hartt, Israel Kenney, Asa Kimball, Asa Perley, Hugh Quinton and Oliver Perley, a Committee to prepare a Draft proper for the proceedings of the assembly.

Later in the same day several 'Resolves' were submitted to the assembly:

The claims of the British government are tyrannical.

They desire to submit themselves to the government of Massachusetts.

The Committee shall have civil and military powers and each of the members of the assembly will support and defend measures prescribed by the Committee.

Specifics such as saving ammunition and paying sums of money are included.

³ B. Wood-Holt, *The King's Loyal Americans: The Canadian Fact*, Saint John, NB, Holland, 1990, 114

⁴ Wilfred B. Kerr, *The Maritime Provinces of British North America and the American Revolution*, Sachville, NB, ca 1941, 74-76. "In May, 1776, [American] privateers occupied the harbor of Saint John and sent boats up the river. The crews warned the people of Maugerville about a coming invasion and declared that if the Americans were put to the expense of conquest, they would confiscate the land. At the same time some Indians, returning from a meeting at Boston, reinforced the argument by threats of massacre. Under this pressure, the Rev. Seth Noble, Jacob Barker, Israel Perley and Phineas Nevers called a meeting at Maugerville on May 14, 1776."

⁵ *Massachusetts Archives*, Vol. 144, 154-156