Remembering Loyalist Philipsburg and St. Armand

Imagine being told to take what personal possessions you could carry and leave the only home you have ever known. That's what happened to people called Loyalists, American colonists who supported the British King during the American Revolution (1777-1783). Thousands were forced to immigrate to Canada leaving all that they knew behind. They even had to live in refugee camps. Nearly 1,000 people settled in the seigneury of St. Armand at Missisquoi Bay (Philipsburg). The majority were farmers, but also army officers and businessmen, women and children.

While the British government was not in favour of Loyalists living next to the American border, these Loyalist “squatters” petitioned the governor to stay. The Loyalists of Missisquoi Bay contributed in a significant way to the colonization of the Eastern Townships and to the region’s social, economic and political development. They brought their languages, including German and Dutch, cultures, religions and politics with them and forever changed this region of Quebec, making it unique in its history and heritage.

Three signs in the community park on rue Champlain

Beginning your heritage tour at the interpretation panels about the Loyalists will help you understand who they were and why they came here. They started their lives as trespassers and yet became prosperous citizens in their new home. These panels will provide you with useful background information; what better way to start your tour? Notice the bronze plaque dedicated to the Loyalists in the park.

Simon Lyster’s Cabin

226 ave. Champlain

The oldest log cabin in Quebec was built here in Philipsburg in 1784, the very year the first Loyalists came to Missisquoi Bay. It was the home of blacksmith and Loyalist Simon Lyster. His role was crucial in the community as he was needed for shoeing horses and making the tools necessary for clearing forests.

Philip Henry Moore’s Regency cottage

192 rue Philip

Farmer, merchant, soldier, politician and railroad buff, Philip Henry Moore (1799-1889) built this Regency cottage in 1849. Son of Loyalists Nicholas Moore (1760-1833) and Catherine Streit (1773-1843), he was the first registrar of Missisquoi County, and, in the union of the provinces, he served on the Legislative Council. Moore was loathed by many in the community when he declared for the neighbouring Congregational Church. Their son William was a “mechanic,” a specialized craftsman, and a tailor. The family were members of the neighbourhood Congregational Church. Their son William was baptized by Joel Fisk in 1846. Sadly, their son David died in this house at age 4 in 1857.

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The Loyalist Philipsburg

In 1784, two young couples, descendants of Loyalists, built their twin red-brick Georgian houses side by side on what was originally called Bay Street. Wheelwright and carriage maker Nelson Merritt and his wife Hannah Eliza Shedler lived here from 1842 to about 1890. They welcomed their first child John in 1843, but in 1850 and 1855, they buried their baby daughters in the local cemetery.

The Congregational Church

127 ave. Montgomery

It is hard to imagine now, but this house used to be a church that had a steeple, boxed pews and Gothic windows. Can you see the point of the last window? Congregationalists first met in Philipsburg in 1818 and the Reverend Joel Fisk built this church in 1843. By 1854, however, the Congregationalists were gone and no records tell us why. The building was used by St. Paul’s Anglican Church and was renamed Whitwell Hall.

The Crothers House

137 ave. Montgomery

This Georgian house was built in 1842 by Thomas Crothers (1823-1908) and Mary Stewart (1824-1895). Crothers was a “mechanic,” a specialized craftsman, and a tailor. The family were members of the neighbouring Congregational Church. Their son William was baptized by Joel Fisk in 1846. Sadly, their son David died in this house at age 4 in 1857.

The Merritt House

133 ave. Montgomery

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The Hogle House and School House

163 ave. Montgomery

In 1834, John R. Hogle built his Gothic Revival house and, for nearly 100 years, it remained in the Hogle family. The back end of the house served as a Protestant school. One disinterested teacher named Mr. Mitchell carved a mirror frame with his pocket knife while he listened to his students recite their lessons. His work of art is in the Missisquoi Museum.
Heritage Tour
Philipsburg and St. Armand

This Heritage Tour was created as part of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network’s “Diversity and Achievement in Anglophone Quebec” project, which explores the history of social and cultural communities across the province. The project also features “Your Story, Our Story,” which is both a bilingual travelling exhibition profiling several cultural groups and geographical regions and a lavishly illustrated companion book. “Diversity and Achievement” reflects OAHN’s ongoing mandate to promote the history and heritage of people in Quebec who have identified with the English language as first official language spoken, regardless of place of origin, cultural background, or time spent in Quebec.

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The Methodist Church and parsonage
200 ave. Montgomery
In 1819, Loyalists built this church from Missisquoi marble. It was a refuge on the Underground Railroad for Black people fleeing slavery and during the Rebellion of 1837, it was used to store muskets and feed hungry soldiers. It is said that ministers could see the arrival of trade ships from the pulpit and ended their sermons quickly so the community could help unload vessels.

The Whitwell House
156 rue Quinn
This 1823 house was the home of Anglican priest Reverend Richard Whitwell (1787-1864) and his daughters. For several years, they hired a local teenager named Eliza Joy (1837-1912) as their maid. Eliza became a circus performer and then married a Prussian prince. Princess Salm-Salm was a nurse during the Civil War and remained in contact with the Whitwells for the rest of her life.

The Hiram Moore House
654 che. St. Henri
Hiram Moore was outraged when invading Patriots stormed and barricaded his new home on December 6, 1837. Moore, captain of the local militia, was unable to defend his house at the centre of the Battle of Moore’s Corner. Overzealous farmer Solomon Walbridge refused to wait for the militia and kicked in the front door and captured the intruders inside. Also visit Continue east on chemin St. Armand and visit the Protestant Kirans Cemetery where early Loyalists, including the Miller family, are buried

The Sixby House
324 che. Bradley
This 1850s Georgian house was built by Loyalist Garrett Sixby Jr. (c. 1797-1881). The home was overrun by Patriots just prior to the Battle of Moore’s Corners; they had stopped to drink milk from cooling pans in the milk house. The Sixby horses were also stolen, but unfortunately were then shot by local farmer Solomon Walbridge in his attempts to slow the Patriots’ progress.

The Miller House
122 che. Bradley
German-speaking Loyalist Peter Miller (1740-1819) and his wife Agnes Benor (1731-1852) settled this land in 1784. Miller was a weaver and one of his woolen shirts is in the Missisquoi Museum. His son Charles Miller (1768-1852) built this fieldstone house, called “Millerholme,” in 1827. On December 6, 1837, his barn was burned to the ground by Patriots. To his sorrow, he lost eight horses and 17 cows in the blaze; he never forgave Patriote supporters.