

The Hon. Alfred Gilpin Jones & the Loyalists of Nova Scotia

*By Brian McConnell**

In 2014 the oldest national organization in Canada dedicated to preserving the memory of the United Empire Loyalists celebrated its 100th anniversary. The United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada was founded in Toronto, Ontario in 1914. (1) Provincial ones existed earlier. A loyalist association started in 1897 in Nova Scotia had as its first President the Hon. Alfred Gilpin Jones, a prominent politician and former Minister of Militia and Defence.



Hon. Alfred Gilpin Jones

Alfred Gilpin Jones was born in Weymouth, Nova Scotia on September 24, 1824, the grandson of Stephen Jones, a Loyalist refugee from Massachusetts who settled on the Sissiboo River near present day Weymouth. Stephen Jones was originally from Weston, Massachusetts where his father Elisha Jones was active in local affairs. (2) Elisha Jones was town treasurer, selectman, justice of the peace, deputy sheriff and a representative to the General Court. He owned 274 acres of land around Weston as well as 60 acres in Princeton and almost 9000 acres in western Massachusetts. He also he ran a store in Weston and acted as a banker.

At the earliest stages of the struggle in the American Revolution, Elisha Jones made his support for the Crown clear by recruiting locals for an army to support King George III in the summer of 1774. His sons Elisha, Jonah, and Stephen are listed as members of the Third Company of Associators, which was formed in Boston on July 5, 1775, one of five Loyalist units organized in the Boston area to defend the British Crown in the early stages of the conflict. (3)

By the end of 1774 the political situation in Weston had become very dangerous. When a threatening crowd surrounded Jones' house one evening he left for Boston to join other Loyalists gathering there for the protection of British troops. He died on February 13, 1776, at the age of 66. The next month British troops along with many Loyalists were evacuated from Boston to Halifax. The home and property of Jones in Massachusetts was seized by the rebels and sold during the Revolution and its aftermath.



Elisha Jones' mansion in Weston, Massachusetts about 1755

After schooling in his hometown of Weymouth and at the Yarmouth Academy, Alfred Gilpin Jones went to Halifax where he was successful in business and elected to represent Halifax in the House of Commons in Ottawa as a Liberal in 1874. In 1878, he was sworn in as the Minister of Militia and Defence. He had been a Lieutenant - Colonel of the Halifax Volunteer Battalion.

Jones retired from politics in 1896. In 1900 he was appointed Lieutenant - Governor of Nova Scotia and he held the office until his death in Halifax on March 15, 1906.

The United Empire Loyalist Association of Nova Scotia was formed on May 11, 1897 with Hon. Alfred Gilpin Jones as its President. The Association had thirty members its first year and met in Halifax and Shelburne. Vice - Presidents were: the Hon. William J. Almon, Senator; Mrs. Ann McCauley; William Chamberlain Silver, Esquire; and Rev. Dr. T. Watson Smith.



Banner of the Nova Scotia Loyalists

The experience of some Loyalists who sought refuge in Nova Scotia at the end of the American Revolution had not been as prosperous as they might have hoped. The province had been called 'Nova Scarcity'. (4) However, in their banner, and its slogan "Resurgam" meaning 'I will rise again', they did not lose their spirit. Pictured above is a photo of the Loyalist Banner of the 1800s from the Public Archives of Canada. It was on black satin and identified as a Hatchment. Hatchments were also popularly used by Loyalist families in Halifax during this period and some appear on the inside walls of St. Paul's Church in the city.

The Loyalist ancestor of Alfred Gilpin Jones was active in the building of the first church on the Sissiboo River at Weymouth North, Nova Scotia. His grandfather, Stephen Jones, was appointed along with James Moody and John Taylor, two former officers in the New Jersey Volunteers during the American Revolution, to supervise the building of the church. The church congregation was asked to help in the establishment of a Church of England in the place, and after James led off with 15 pounds, followed by John with 10, Stephen indicated he would give five. Others then followed and it is interesting that a cousin of Stephen Jones, Cereno Upham Jones offered as well five days of ox-work.(5)

Another early leader of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Nova Scotia with prominent Loyalist ancestors was William Johnston Almon, one of the Vice - Presidents. He was the grandson of William James Almon, a physician in New York City at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War who joined the British forces and was appointed surgeon's mate to the 4th battalion, Royal Artillery. He was sent to Halifax to be surgeon to the Ordnance and artillery garrison there and when he retired from the post retained the honorary position as surgeon general to the Nova Scotia Militia.(6)

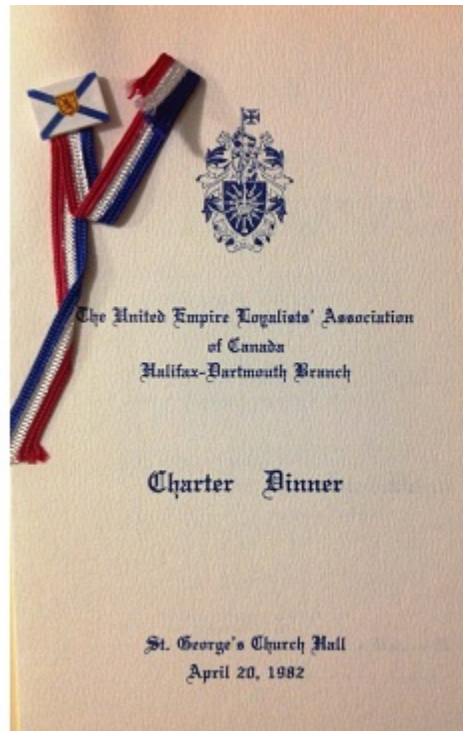


William Johnston Almon

Born in Halifax on January 27, 1816, William Johnston Almon, attended King's College in Windsor, founded by Loyalist Charles Inglis, Bishop of the Province. Almon studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh and graduated from medical school at the University of Glasgow, Scotland before being appointed in 1839 assistant surgeon to the 5th Regiment of Halifax militia. He was a founding member of the Medical Society of Nova Scotia in 1854 and served as its President for three terms.(7)

Almon opposed Confederation as did Alfred Gilpin Jones. Both were supporters of the Anti-Confederation League also called the League of the Maritime Provinces. Most of the Halifax commercial interests believed it would be ruinous to them. They sent a delegation to Britain which included Joseph Howe, son of Loyalist John Howe, and Premier of Nova Scotia, in an unsuccessful attempt to have the B.N.A. Act repealed. As well he was a strong sympathizer with the Confederacy during the American Civil War. In the 1872 federal election he was elected in one of the Halifax seats to the House of Commons in Ottawa but did not re-offer in the next election and in 1879 was appointed to the Senate.

The Nova Scotia Loyalist Association was not part of the United Empire Loyalists' Association when it started in 1914. It remained independent. A branch of the national organization was founded in Shelburne on February 15, 1975. Another one started in Halifax - Dartmouth on December 1, 1979. (8)



The first permanent Officers of the Halifax - Dartmouth branch elected were: President, Edward Morrissey, Vice-President, Ernest Clark; Treasurer, Donna Gorber; Recording Secretary, Gerald MacAlpine; Genealogist, Dr. Phyllis Blakeley (Archivist at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia); Corresponding Secretary, Sheila Layton.(9)

In the first Newsletter printed by the Branch it was noted: "The purposes of the Association were set down in the Act of Incorporation of 27 May 1914 and of those listed there are two of more concern to us at this time. They are: (i) to unite together irrespective of creed or political party, the descendants of those families who, as a result of the American Revolutionary War, sacrificed their homes in retaining their loyalty to the British Crown and also to perpetuate this loyalty, and (ii) to preserve the history and traditions of that important epoch in Canadian history by rescuing from oblivion the history and traditions of the Loyalist families before it is too late".

Nova Scotia members celebrate King George III's Birthday



Tree planted in Halifax Public Gardens in 1983 for Loyalist Bi-Centennial



NOTES

* This article was prepared by Brian McConnell, UE, B.A. (Hons.), LL.B, on November 28, 2014. To contact him please email brianm564@gmail.com

1. "Loyally Yours - 100 Years of the UELAC", Printed by Global Genealogy Inc., 2014, pages 17, 25, and 38. <http://www.uelac.org/PDF/Loyally-Yours-book-description-and-ordering.pdf>

2. "Alfred Gilpin Jones" by J. Murray Beck in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 13, University of Toronto/Universite' Laval, 1994.
http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/jones_alfred_gilpin_13E.html

3. "Elisha Jones, Weston Loyalist", by David Burzillo, published by Weston Historical Society. Also see: <http://www.westonhistory.org/Bulletins/Elisha-Jones-Fall-10-30.pdf>

4. See "This Unfriendly Soil - The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia 1783 - 1791", by Neil MacKinnon, Kingston and Montreal: McGill - Queen's University Press, 1986

5. "So Obstinate Loyal - James Moody, 1744 - 1809" by Susan Burgess Shensstone, McGill - Queen's University Press, 2000, p. 211

6. "William Johnston Almon", by Allan E. Marble in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 13, University of Toronto/Universite' Laval, 2003.
http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/almon_william_johnston_13E.html

7. "William James Almon", by Lois K. Kernaghan in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. 5, University of Toronto/Universite' Laval, 2003.
http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/almon_william_james_5E.html

8. At this time there is one branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. The Nova Scotia Branch has a website at <http://www.uelac.org/NovaScotia/>

9. See 1st Newsletter of Halifax - Dartmouth Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, printed March 1982. <http://brian.mcconnell.tripod.com/Newsletter.pdf>

