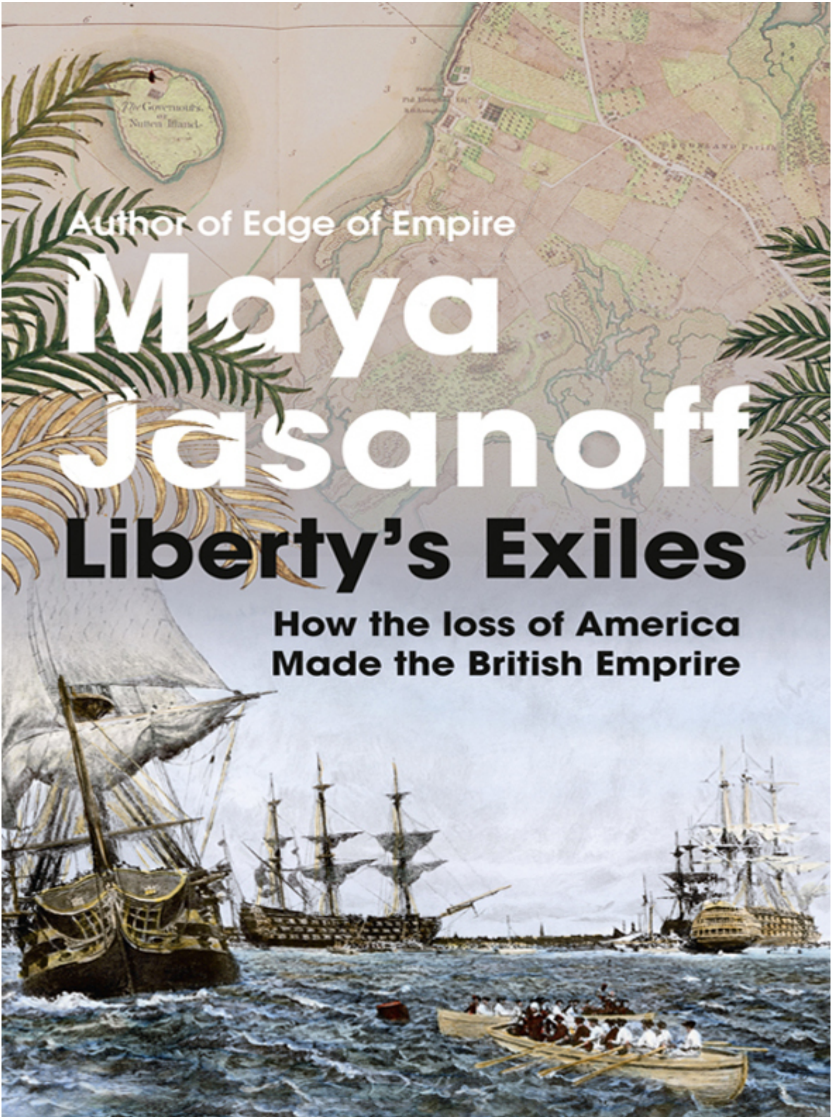

The Governours, or Nutten Island

Author of Edge of Empire

Maya Jasanoff

Liberty's Exiles

How the loss of America Made the British Emprire

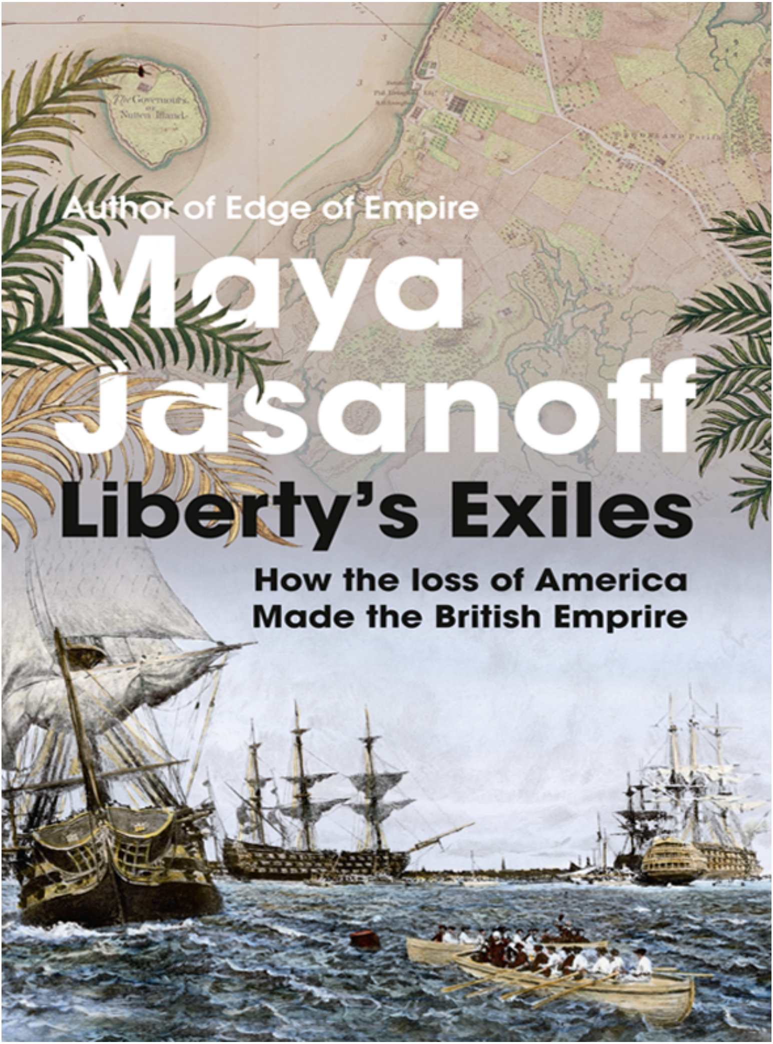
Maya Jasanoff

Liberty’s Exiles: The Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire.

Аннотация

From the author of ‘Edge of Empire’ comes a fascinating, thought-provoking and alternative history of the American Revolution – that of those Americans who remained loyal to the British Empire.George Washington's triumphant entrance into New York City in 1783 marked the end of the American Revolution; the British were gone, the patriots were back and a key moment inscribed itself in the annals of the emerging United States. Territorial independence had effectively begun.Although widely perceived as a struggle between nations, the reality of the American Revolution is a strikingly different one. This was a war in which Britons fought Britons and Americans fought Americans. It was also one in which hundreds of thousands of American Loyalists, from Georgia to Maine, took Britain's side. And, when George Washington arrived in New York on that November day, they were forced to face up to a very tough situation; would they be free? Would they be safe? Would they retain their property and their jobs? Would they have to leave?As many as 200,000 American Loyalists left the United States. They lost their homes and their

possessions and had little choice but to build new lives elsewhere in the British Empire. In ‘The Imperial Exile’, Maya Jasanoff examines the story of the Loyalist refugees, focusing on the life of one woman - Elizabeth Johnston - and her family, who reconstructed their lives in four different imperial settings: St Augustine, Edinburgh, Jamaica and Nova Scotia. Their movements speak eloquently of a larger history of exile, mobility and the shaping of the British Empire in the wake of the American War.A rich, compelling and untold history.



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HarperCollins e-books

Dedication
In memory of Kamala Sen (1914–2005) and
Edith Jasanoff (1913–2007),
emigrants and storytellers

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Cast of Characters

(in order of appearance)

BEVERLEY ROBINSON AND FAMILY

A native Virginian, Beverley Robinson (1722–1792) moved to New York and married the wealthy heiress Susanna Philipse in 1748. He raised the Loyal American Regiment in 1777. After the evacuation of New York, Robinson settled in England, where he died in 1792. His widow and two daughters, Susan and Joanna, remained in England until their deaths. His five sons enjoyed profitable careers in different parts of the British Empire. The eldest, beverley robinson jr. (1754–1816), lieutenant colonel of the Loyal American Regiment, settled outside Fredericton in 1787 and became a member of the New Brunswick provincial elite. frederick philipse “phil” robinson (1763–1852) was a career soldier who attained considerable prominence as a general in the Peninsular War and War of 1812, for which services he earned a knighthood. At the time of his death, General Robinson was the “grandfather” of the British army, the longest-serving officer on its books. The youngest son, WILLIAM HENRY ROBINSON (1765–1836), distinguished himself in the British army’s commissariat department, for which he also received a knighthood. He married Catherine Skinner, daughter of loyalist general Cortlandt Skinner, and sister of Maria Skinner Nugent.

JOSEPH BRANT (THAYENDANEGEA) (1743–1807)

As a teenager in colonial New York, the Mohawk Indian Joseph Brant—or Thayendanegea in Mohawk—fell under the patronage of British superintendent of Indian affairs Sir William Johnson, who had married Brant’s elder sister molly (ca. 1736–1796). Brant was educated at Wheelock’s Indian school in Connecticut, and fought for the British in both the Seven Years’ War and Pontiac’s War. During the American Revolution, Joseph and Molly Brant helped recruit Iroquois to the British cause. In 1783 Brant initiated the resettlement of dislocated Mohawks in Canada. From his new home on the Grand River (today’s Brantford, Ontario), Brant tried to reunite Iroquois nations divided by the Canadian-U.S. border, and to establish a new Indian confederacy reaching to the west. He visited Britain twice, in 1775 and 1785, to advance Mohawk land claims; but as the 1790s wore on he found himself increasingly at odds with British colonial officials and saw his hopes for a western confederacy dashed. He died in 1807 and is buried next to the Mohawk

Chapel in Brantford.

ELIZABETH LICHTENSTEIN JOHNSTON (1764–1848)

Elizabeth Johnston spent almost half her life on the move. An only child, she lost her mother at the age of ten and spent the early years of the revolution in seclusion while her father, John Lichtenstein, fought in a loyalist regiment. In 1779, she married william martin johnston (1754–1807), a loyalist army captain, medical student, and son of prominent Georgia loyalist Dr. Lewis Johnston. Johnston evacuated with the British from Savannah, Charleston, and East Florida, settling in 1784 in Edinburgh. In 1786 the Johnstons moved to Jamaica, where William worked as a doctor. The years in Jamaica were trying ones for Johnston; she went back to Edinburgh from 1796 to 1802, and in 1806 relocated to Nova Scotia (returning to Jamaica from 1807 to 1810 to wrap up business following William's death in 1807). She spent her last four decades far more rooted than her first, surrounded by her adult children and her father, who died in Annapolis Royal in 1813. Six of Johnston's ten children predeceased her, including her eldest son Andrew, of yellow fever in Jamaica in 1805, and her eldest daughter Catherine, in a Boston madhouse in 1819.

DAVID GEORGE (ca. 1743–1810)

David George was born a slave in Virginia. He ran away from his master in 1762, eventually ending up in the custody of Indian trader George Galphin at Silver Bluff, South Carolina. There, partly under the influence of George Liele, George converted to the Baptist faith and became an elder of the Silver Bluff Baptist Church. In 1778, George followed British forces to Savannah, where he worked as a butcher and continued to preach with Liele. With the British evacuations, George and his family traveled to Nova Scotia as free black loyalists. There George became an active evangelist, establishing a church at Shelburne and preaching to white and black audiences around the Maritimes. In 1791 George emerged as a leading supporter of the Sierra Leone Company's project to relocate black loyalists to Africa, and helped John Clarkson recruit colonists for the scheme. He was among the founding settlers of Freetown in 1792. George visited England in 1792–93, but otherwise spent the rest of his life in Sierra Leone, where he set up another Baptist church (the first in Africa) and died in 1810.

JOHN MURRAY, FOURTH EARL OF DUNMORE (1732–1809)

Dunmore was a Scottish peer whose father supported the Young Pretender in 1745. Despite their Jacobite sympathies, the family retained their title, and Dunmore served for nearly thirty years as a representative peer for Scotland in the House of Lords. He went to North America in 1770 as governor of New York, and became governor of Virginia in 1771. He achieved considerable notoriety for his proclamation of 1775, which granted freedom to patriot-owned slaves who joined British military service. Dunmore became a notable advocate of loyalist interests, promoting numerous schemes to continue the war (including those of John Cruden), and championing loyalist efforts to win financial compensation. He was appointed governor of the Bahamas in 1786, in which capacity he supported William Augustus Bowles's bids to establish the state of Muskogee. Dunmore was recalled from the governorship in 1796 and remained in Britain until his death.

GUY CARLETON, FIRST BARON DORCHESTER (1724–1808)

A career soldier, the Anglo-Irish Carleton joined the army in 1742 and assisted in the 1759 capture of Quebec, a place he would remain involved with for almost forty years. Carleton served as governor of Quebec from 1766 to 1778, and is best known for his role in authoring the 1774 Quebec Act. Loyalists knew Carleton best, however, in his position as commander in chief of British forces from 1782 to 1783, in which capacity he superintended the evacuations of British-held cities and helped organize the loyalist exodus. Carleton returned to Quebec as governor in chief of British North America in 1786 (and newly ennobled as Lord Dorchester). Though beloved by loyalists, Dorchester found himself at odds with developments in British imperial policy enshrined in the 1791 Canada Act. As at other points in his career, Dorchester clashed repeatedly with his colleagues, and resigned his position in chagrin in 1794. He retired to England in 1796 and lived in comfort as a country squire. His younger brother thomas carleton (ca. 1735–1817) was governor of New Brunswick from 1784 to 1817, though from 1803 until his death he governed in absentia from England.

GEORGE LIELE (ca. 1750–1820)

Liele grew up in Georgia as a slave. He was baptized in 1772 and became an itinerant Baptist preacher, serving as a spiritual mentor to David George. Liele was granted freedom by his loyalist master and spent much of the war in British-occupied Savannah. He there baptized Andrew Bryan, who went on to found the First African Baptist Church in Savannah. On the evacuation of Savannah in 1782, Liele traveled to Jamaica as an indentured servant to loyalist planter Moses Kirkland. He established the island's first Baptist church in Kingston, but during the 1790s became the subject of increasing persecution for his religious activities. After a charge of sedition failed to stick, Liele was imprisoned for three years for debt. Though he continued to be active in a range of commercial ventures, he never returned to public preaching after 1800, and his last years remain obscure.

JOHN CRUDEN (1754–1787)

Cruden emigrated from Scotland to Wilmington, North Carolina, sometime before 1770, where he joined his uncle (and namesake) in the trading firm of John Cruden and Company. During the war, Cruden served in a loyalist regiment and was appointed commissioner of sequestered estates in Charleston in 1780, which required him to manage numerous patriot-owned plantations and a labor force of several thousand slaves to produce supplies for the British military and for commercial sale.

After Charleston was evacuated Cruden moved to East Florida, where he attempted to block the province's cession to Spain. In 1785, like many East Florida refugees, Cruden immigrated to the Bahamas, where he lived with his uncle on the island of Exuma. He continued to promote plans for the renewal of the British American empire. Cruden died, insane, in the Bahamas in 1787.

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS BOWLES (1763–1805)

Bowles was the most flamboyant loyalist adventurer of his period. He joined a loyalist regiment in 1777 but deserted in 1779 to settle with the Creek Indians. He married the daughter of a Creek chief and spent several years living in her village. After the revolution, Bowles began plotting to unseat political and commercial rivals in Creek country (which had become part of Spanish Florida). He was supported in these aims by Lord Dunmore and various other imperial officials. A first foray into Florida in 1788 ended in fiasco. A second, more ambitious expedition in 1791 brought Bowles closer to his dream of founding a pro-British Creek state, called Muskogee—but he was captured by the Spanish in 1792 and imprisoned in Havana, Cádiz, and the Philippines in turn. In 1798 Bowles escaped, via Sierra Leone, and returned to Florida for a final effort to establish Muskogee. Though this was the most successful bid of all—he built a capital in 1800 near present-day Tallahassee and presided over his domain for several years—he was betrayed in 1803 by Creeks under U.S. influence. He died in Havana, a Spanish prisoner, in 1805.

SUPPORTING FIGURES

Thirteen Colonies

Thomas Brown, loyalist commander, superintendent of Indian affairs.

Joseph Galloway, advocate of imperial union and loyalist lobbyist.

Charles Inglis, clergyman, loyalist pamphleteer, later bishop of Nova Scotia.

William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin, former governor of Pennsylvania, loyalist organizer.

William Smith, chief justice of New York and later Quebec, confidant of Sir Guy Carleton.

Patrick Tonyn, governor of East Florida, 1774–85.

Britain

Samuel Shoemaker, Pennsylvania refugee and friend of painter Benjamin West.

John Eardley Wilmot, MP and loyalist claims commissioner.

Isaac Low, former New York congressman and merchant.

Granville Sharp, abolitionist and sponsor of Sierra Leone settlement.

Nova Scotia

Jacob Bailey, clergyman and author.

John Parr, governor of Nova Scotia, 1782–91.

Benjamin Marston, surveyor of Shelburne.

Boston King, black loyalist carpenter.

“Daddy” Moses Wilkinson, black Methodist preacher.

New Brunswick and Quebec

Edward Winslow, lobbyist for creation of New Brunswick.

Frederick Haldimand, governor of Quebec, 1777–85.

John Graves Simcoe, governor of Upper Canada, 1791–98.

The Bahamas

John Maxwell, governor of the Bahamas, 1780–85 (active).

John Wells, printer and critic of government.

William Wylly, solicitor-general and opponent of Lord Dunmore.

Jamaica

Louisa Wells Aikman, member of loyalist printer family.

Maria Skinner Nugent, diarist, governor's wife.

Sierra Leone

Thomas Peters, Black Pioneer veteran, leader of resettlement project.

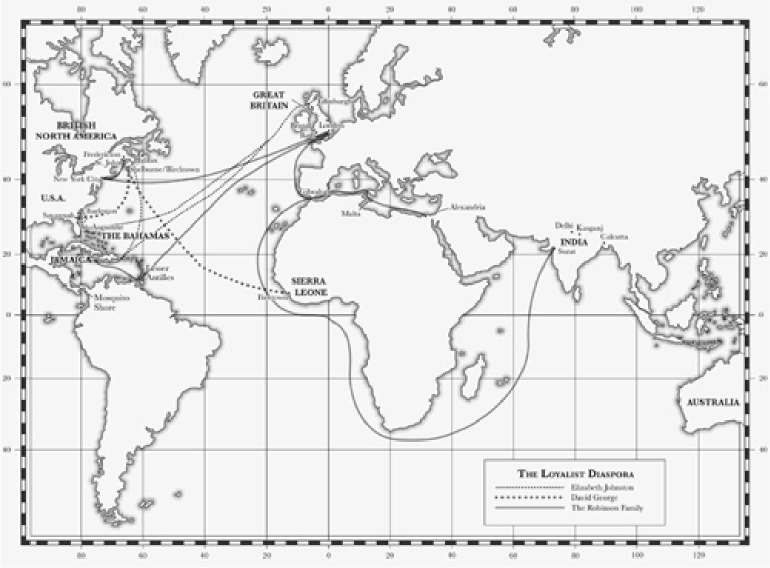
John Clarkson, organizer of loyalist migration, superintendent of Freetown, 1791–92.

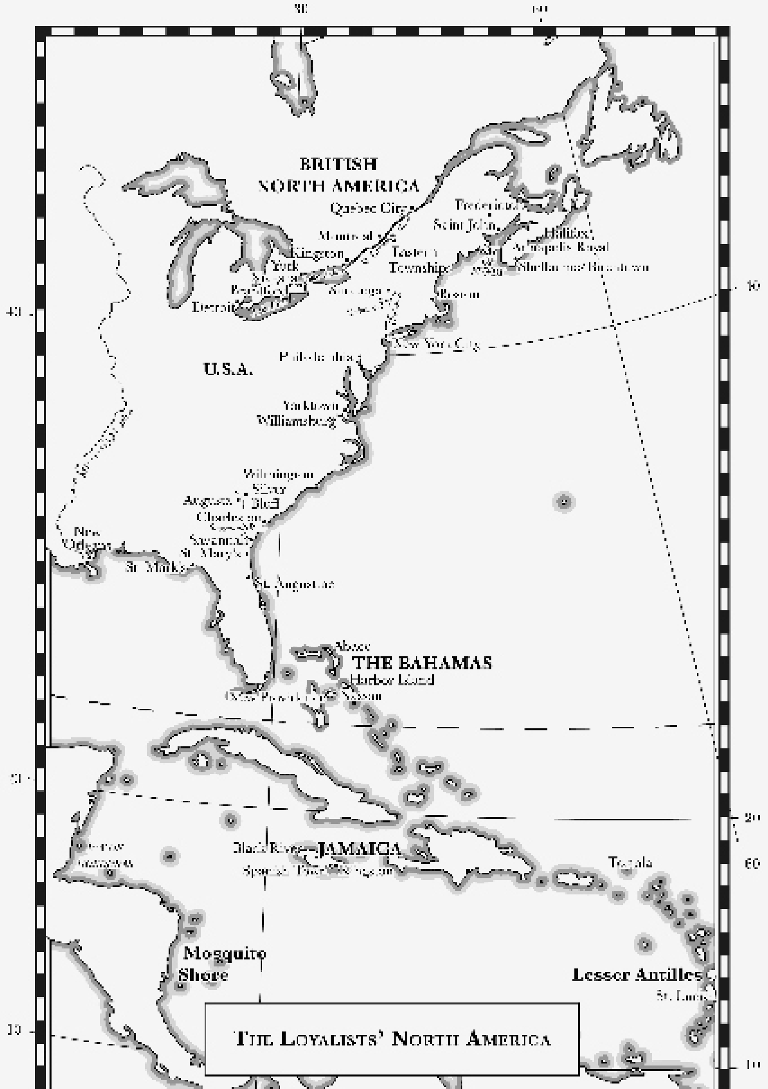
Zacharay Macaulay, governor of Sierra Leone, 1794–99.

India

David Ochterlony, East India Company general, conqueror of Nepal.

William Linnaeus Gardner, military adventurer.


BRITISH NORTH AMERICA
Fredericton
St. John
Halifax
Shelburne/Birchtown
New York City
U.S.A.
Charleston
Savannah
St. Augustine
THE BAHAMAS
JAMAICA
Lesser Antilles
Mosquito Shore
GREAT BRITAIN
Edinburgh
Cork
London
Gibraltar
Malta
Alexandria
SIERRA LEONE
Freetown
INDIA
Delhi
Kasganj
Calcutta
Surat
AUSTRALIA
The Loyalist Diaspora
Elizabeth Johnston
David George
The Robinson Family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60
BRITISH
NORTH AMERICA
Quebec City
Fredericton
Saint John
Halifax
Montreal
Annapolis Royal
Kingston
Eastern
Townships
York
Shelburne/Birchtown
Niagara
Brantford
Detroit
Saratoga
Boston
40
40
New York City
Philadelphia
U.S.A.
Yorktown
Williamsburg
Wilmington
Silver
Bluff
Augusta
Charleston
New
Orleans
Savannah
St. Mary's
St. Marks
St. Augustine
Abaco
THE BAHAMAS
Harbor Island
Nassau
20
20
Black River
JAMAICA
Spanish Town
Kingston
Tortola
60
Mosquito
Shore
Lesser Antilles
St. Lucia
10
10

THE LOYALISTS' NORTH AMERICA

Introduction

The Spirit of 1783

THERE WERE TWO SIDES in the American Revolution—but only one was on display early in the afternoon of November 25, 1783, when General George Washington rode on a grey horse into New York City. By his side trotted the governor of New York, flanked by an escort of mounted guards. Portly general Henry Knox followed close behind, leading officers of the Continental Army eight abreast down the Bowery. Long lines of civilians trailed after them, some on horseback, others on foot, wearing black-and-white cockades and sprigs of laurel in their hats.[1] Hundreds crammed into the streets to watch as the choreographed procession made its way down to the Battery, at Manhattan's southern tip. Since 1776, through seven long years of war and peace negotiations, New York had been occupied by the British army. Today, the British were going. A cannon shot at 1 p.m. sounded the departure of the last British troops from their posts. They marched to the docks, clambered into longboats, and rowed out to the transports waiting in the harbor. The British occupation of the United States was officially over.[2]

George Washington's triumphal entrance into New York City was the closest thing the winners of the American Revolution ever had to a victory parade. For a week, patriots celebrated the evacuation with feasts, bonfires, illuminations, and the biggest fireworks display ever staged in North America.[3] At Fraunces's Tavern, Washington and his friends drank rounds of toasts late into the night. To the United States of America! To America's European allies, France and Spain! To the American "Heroes, who have fallen for our Freedom"! "May America be an Assylum to the persecuted of the Earth!"[4] A few days later one newspaper printed an anecdote about a brief shore visit made by a British officer. Convinced that New York would be racked by unrest following the transfer of power, the officer was surprised to find "that every thing in the city was civil and tranquil, no mobs—no riots—no disorders." "These Americans," he marveled, "are a curious original people, *they know how to govern themselves, but nobody else can govern them.*"[5] Generations of New Yorkers commemorated November 25 as "Evacuation Day"—an anniversary that was later folded into the more enduring November celebration of American national togetherness, Thanksgiving Day.[6]

But what if you hadn't wanted the British to leave? Mixed in among the happy New York crowd that day were other, less cheerful faces.[7] For loyalists—colonists who had sided with Britain during the war—the departure of the British troops spelled worry, not jubilation. During the war, tens of thousands of loyalists had moved for safety into New York and other British-held cities. The British withdrawal raised urgent questions about their future. What kind of treatment could they expect in the new United States? Would they be jailed? Would they be attacked? Would they retain their property, or hold on to their jobs? Confronting real doubts about their lives, liberty, and potential happiness in the United States, sixty thousand loyalists decided to follow the British and take their chances elsewhere in the British Empire. They took fifteen thousand black slaves with them, bringing the total exodus to seventy-five thousand people—or about one in forty members of the American population.[8]

They traveled to Canada, they sailed for Britain, they journeyed to the Bahamas and the West Indies; some would venture still farther afield, to Africa and India. But wherever they went, this voyage into exile was a trip into the unknown. In America the refugees left behind friends and relatives, careers and land, houses and native streets—the entire milieu in which they had built their lives. For them, America seemed less "an Assylum to the persecuted" than a potential persecutor. It was the British Empire that would be their asylum, offering land, emergency relief, and financial incentives to help them start over. Evacuation Day did not mark an end for the loyalist refugees. It was a fresh beginning—and it carried them into a dynamic if uncertain new world.

JACOB BAILEY, for one, could give a vivid account of what led him to flee revolutionary America. Massachusetts born and bred, Bailey had since 1760 been an Anglican missionary in the frontier district of Pownalborough, Maine. While he ministered in what was then remote wilderness, in Boston his Harvard classmate John Adams voiced the colonies' grievances against Britain, and became a forceful advocate for independence. But Bailey had sworn what he regarded as a sacred oath to the king, the head of his church, and to renounce that allegiance appeared to him to be an act of both treason and sacrilege. Bailey struggled to maintain his loyalty in the face of mounting pressure to join the rebellion. When he refused to honor a special day of thanksgiving declared by the provincial congress, Pownalborough patriots threatened to put up a liberty pole in front of the church and to whip him there if he failed to bless it.[9] Another frightening omen came when he found seven of his sheep slaughtered, and a "fine heifer" shot dead in his pasture.[10] By 1778, the clergyman had been "twice assaulted by a furious Mob—four times haulled before an unfeeling committee. . . . Three times have I been driven from my family....Two attempts have been made to shoot me." He roved the countryside to elude arrest, while his young wife and their children tried to get by with "nothing to eat for several days together." To Bailey the patriots were persecutors, plain and simple, a "set of surly & savage beings who have power in their hands and murder in their hearts, who thirst, and pant, and roar for the blood of those who have any connection with, or affection for Great Britain."[11]

Bailey certainly had a flair for sensational language. His melodramatic prose, however, spoke to genuine fear for his family's safety. Still unwilling to renounce the king—yet equally unwilling to risk imprisonment for refusing to do so—he saw only one more option before him, unappealing though it was. Before dawn one June day in 1779, the Baileys grimly "began to prepare for our expulsion." They dressed in a motley assortment of salvaged clothes, gathered up their bedding and "the shattered remains of our fortune," and made their way to a boat that would carry them to Nova Scotia, the nearest British sanctuary. In spite of all they had suffered, Jacob and Sally Bailey could not hold back their "bitter emotions of grief " on leaving their native country. Neither could they contain their relief, two weeks later, when they sailed into Halifax harbor and saw "the Britanic colours flying."[12] Bailey gave thanks to God "for safely conducting me and my family to this retreat of freedom and security from the rage of tyranny and the cruelty of opposition." Now they were in the British Empire; now they were secure. But the Baileys had landed "in a strange country, destitute of money, clothing, dwelling or furniture," and their future was in the hands of chance.[13]

This book follows refugees like Jacob Bailey out of revolutionary America to provide the first global history of the loyalist diaspora. Though historians have probed the experiences of loyalists within the colonies (and especially the ideology of articulate figures like Bailey), the international displacement of loyalists during and after the war has never been described in full.[14] Who were these refugees and why did they leave? The answers came in as many forms as the people themselves. Loyalists are often stereotyped as members of a small conservative elite: rich, educated, Anglican, and with strong ties to Britain—qualities captured by the pejorative label "tory," the nickname for the British Conservative Party.[15] In fact, historians estimate that between a fifth and a third of American colonists remained loyal to the king.[16] Loyalism cut right across the social, geographical, racial, and ethnic spectrum of early America—making loyalists every bit as "American" as their patriot fellow subjects. Loyalists included recent immigrants and *Mayflower* descendants alike. They could be royal officials as well as bakers, carpenters, tailors, and printers. There were Anglican ministers as well as Methodists and Quakers; cosmopolitan Bostonians and backcountry farmers in the Carolinas.

Crucially, not all loyalists were white. For the half million black slaves in the thirteen colonies, the revolution presented a striking opportunity when British officers offered freedom to slaves who agreed to fight. Twenty thousand slaves seized this promise, making the revolution the occasion for the largest emancipation of North American slaves until the U.S. Civil War. For native American Indians, too, the revolution posed a pressing choice. Encroached on by generations of land-hungry colonists, several Indian nations—notably the Mohawks in the north and the Creeks in the south—opted to ally themselves with the British Empire. The experiences of loyal whites, blacks, and

Indians have generally been segregated into distinct historical narratives, and of course there were important differences among them.[17] But loyalists of all backgrounds confronted a common dilemma with Britain's defeat—to stay or go—and all numbered among the revolution's refugees. Their stories were analogous and entangled in significant ways, which is why they will be presented together here.

Perhaps the most surprising truth about loyalist refugees was how varied a role ideology might play in their decision-making. Though they shared an allegiance to the king and a commitment to empire, their precise beliefs otherwise ranged widely. Some, like Bailey, expressed sophisticated intellectual reasons for their position. For others, loyalism stemmed from a personal commitment to the existing order of things, a sense that it was better to stick with the devil you knew. Also widespread was a pragmatic opinion that the colonies were economically and strategically better off as part of the British Empire.[18] The extent and depth of loyalism points to a fundamental feature of this conflict that the term "revolution" belies. This was quite simply a civil war—and routinely described as such by contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic.[19] Polarizing communities, destroying friendships, dividing families—most famously Benjamin Franklin, the founding father, from his only son William, a loyalist—this was the longest war Americans fought before Vietnam, and the bloodiest until the Civil War of 1861–65. Recovering the contingency, coercion, and sheer violence of the American Revolution explains why so many loyalists chose to depart—driven, like Jacob Bailey, by fear of harassment as much as by commitment to principle. By the same token, self-interest could be as powerful a motivator as core beliefs, as the cases of runaway slaves and Britain's Indian allies perhaps make most clear.

A range of reasons, ideological and otherwise, led all the people in these pages to the same defining choice: to leave revolutionary America.[20] This book sets out to explore what happened to them next. Of the sixty thousand loyalists who fled, about eight thousand whites and five thousand free blacks traveled to Britain, often to find themselves strangers in a strange land. The majority of refugees headed straight for Britain's other colonies, taking up incentives of free land, provisions, and supplies. More than half relocated to the northern British provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Quebec, helping to transform regions once heavily French to the English-dominated Canada of today.[*] A further six thousand or so migrants, especially from the American south, traveled to Jamaica and the Bahamas—carrying the vast majority of the fifteen thousand exported slaves with them. Some ranged still farther afield. The East India Company army would soon be sprinkled with American-born officers, including two sons of the notorious turncoat Benedict Arnold. An unlucky few ended up among the first convicts sent to Botany Bay, in Australia. And in perhaps the most surprising migration, nearly twelve hundred black loyalists moved to Africa, under the sponsorship of British abolitionists, to found the utopian settlement of Freetown, in Sierra Leone. In short, loyalists landed in every corner of the British Empire. Within a decade of the peace, the map of the loyalist diaspora looked much like the map of the empire as a whole.

A handful of studies have looked at specific figures and sites within this migration. But the loyalists' worldwide dispersal has never been completely reconstructed.[21] A key reason for this lies in the fact that history is so often framed within national boundaries. In the United States, the history of the American Revolution was written by the victors, who were chiefly interested in exploring the revolution's many innovations and achievements. Loyalist refugees simply fell outside the bounds of American national narratives. They received scant attention from British historians in turn, as embarrassing reminders of defeat—especially given the great triumphs in the Seven Years' War and the Revolutionary-Napoleonic wars that Britons could focus on instead. Loyalists loom largest, instead, in Canadian history, where they were hailed by some nineteenth-century conservatives as the "founding fathers" of a proudly imperial Anglo-Canadian tradition, and honored as "United Empire Loyalists," a title conferred by the imperial government on refugees and their descendants. But such treatments reaffirmed the "tory" stereotype and may well have contributed to later scholarly neglect.

There is also a practical reason that nobody has written this global history before. In the 1840s, Lorenzo Sabine, the first American historian who delved into this subject, lamented that "Men who . . . separate themselves from their homes . . . who become outlaws, wanderers, and exiles,—such men leave few memorials behind them. Their papers are scattered and lost, and their very names pass from recollection."[22] In fact, it is remarkable how much *does* survive: personal letters, diaries, memoirs, petitions, muster rolls, diplomatic dispatches, legislative proceedings. The challenge is putting it all together. Fortunately for twenty-first-century scholars (privileged with funding and access), technology has made it possible to pursue international histories in new ways. One can search library catalogues and databases around the world at the touch of a button, and read digitized rare books and documents on a laptop in one's living room. One can also travel with increasing ease, to piece together paper trails scattered across continents, and to see what remains of the refugees' worlds: the houses loyalists built on out-islands of the Bahamas, the precipitous slopes they cultivated above Freetown, or their gravestones, weathered in the Canadian maritime wind.

To look at the American Revolution and the British Empire from these vantage points is to see the international consequences of the revolution in a completely new way. The worldwide resonance of the American Revolution has traditionally been understood in connection with the "spirit of 1776" that inspired other peoples, notably the French, to assert their own rights to equality and liberty.[23] Tracing loyalist journeys reveals a different stamp of the revolution on the world: not on burgeoning republics, but on the enduring British Empire. Loyalist refugees personally conveyed American things and ideas into the empire. The fortunate brought treasured material objects: a finely wrought sugar box, a recipe book, or, more weightily, the printing press used by one Charleston family to produce the first newspapers in St. Augustine and the Bahamas.[24] But they carried cultural and political influences too—not least the racial attitudes that accompanied the loyalists' mass transport of slaves. One transformative export was the Baptist faith taken by black loyalist preachers from a single congregation in the Carolina backcountry, who went on to establish the first Baptist churches in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Jamaica, and Sierra Leone. In the most striking "American" transmission of all, loyalist refugees brought with them a discourse of grievance against imperial authority. In British North America, the Bahamas, and Sierra Leone, loyalist refugees beset hapless British governors with demands for political representation that sounded uncannily like those of their patriot peers. "Loyalist" these days often connotes a die-hard supporter of a cause, but American loyalists were certainly not unblinking followers of British rule.

Considering these kinds of revolutionary legacies brings into focus a remarkable period of transition for the British Empire, and helps make sense of a seeming paradox. The American Revolution marked the empire's single greatest defeat until the era of World War II. Yet in the space of a mere ten years, it bounced back to an astonishing extent. Building on earlier precedents, British power regrouped, expanded, and reshaped itself across the world—in Ireland and India, Canada and the Caribbean, Africa and Australia.[25] All told, the 1780s stand out as the most eventful single decade in British imperial history up to the 1940s. What was more, the events of these years cemented an enduring framework for the principles and practice of British rule. This "spirit of 1783," so to speak, animated the British Empire well into the twentieth century—and provided a model of liberal constitutional empire that stood out as a vital alternative to the democratic republics taking shape in the United States, France, and Latin America.

What did this postwar restructuring involve, and what role did refugee loyalists play in the process? The "spirit of 1783" had three major elements.[26] First and most visibly, the British Empire significantly expanded around the world—and loyalists were both agents and advocates of imperial growth. Historians used to portray the American Revolution as a dividing line between a "first" British Empire, largely commercial, colonial, and Atlantic, and a "second" empire centered in Asia and involving direct rule over millions of manifestly foreign subjects. But loyalist refugees bridged the two. As pioneer settlers in British North America, the Bahamas, and Sierra Leone, they demonstrated the continued vitality of the Atlantic empire alongside what has been described as the empire's "swing to the east." They also promoted ambitious expansionist projects elsewhere in the world, championing schemes to extend British sovereignty into Spanish America, or around the western borders of the United States. Far-fetched though some of these ideas can seem in retrospect, they hardly seemed so at a time when the future shape of the United States was very unclear, and Britain (among other European empires) was successfully establishing footholds in some of the most remote quarters of the globe. The first serious proposal to colonize Australia was put forward by none other than an American loyalist.[27]

Loyalist refugees also illuminate a second feature of the "spirit of 1783": a clarified commitment to liberty and humanitarian ideals. Although the American Revolution demonstrated that British subjects abroad would not be treated exactly as British subjects were at home, at least when it came to political representation, the revolution also had the effect of deepening an imperial guarantee to include all subjects, no matter what their ethnicity or faith, in a fold of British rights. Loyalist refugees became conspicuous objects of paternalistic attention. Black loyalists got their freedom from authorities increasingly inclined toward abolition, in self-conscious contrast to the slaveowning United States. Needy loyalists of all kinds received land and supplies in an empire-wide program for refugee relief that anticipated the work of modern international aid organizations.

Loyalists even received financial compensation for their losses through a commission established by the British government—a landmark of state welfare schemes.

Yet liberal values had their limits, as loyalists discovered at close range. British officials after the revolution by and large concluded that the thirteen colonies had been given too much liberty, not too little, and tightened the reins of administration accordingly. This enhanced taste for centralized, hierarchical government marked the third component of the "spirit of 1783"—and one that loyalist refugees consistently found themselves resisting. Confronted with top-down rule, they repeatedly demanded more representation than imperial authorities proved willing to give them, a discrepancy that had of course undergirded the American Revolution in the first place. And for all that loyalists profited from humanitarian initiatives, they also ran up against numerous seeming contradictions in British policy. This was an empire that gave freedom to black loyalists, but facilitated the export of loyalist-owned slaves. It gave land to Mohawk Indian allies in the north, but largely abandoned the Creeks and other allies in the south. It promised to compensate loyalists for their losses but in practice often fell short; it joined liberal principles with hierarchical rule. Across the diaspora, the refugee loyalist experience would be marked by a mismatch between promises and expectations, between what subjects wanted and what rulers provided. Such discontents proved a lasting feature of the post-revolutionary

British Empire—and another line of continuity from the "first" into the "second" empire, from the first major war of colonial independence to later anti-colonial movements.

Few could have predicted just how quickly the "spirit of 1783"—committed to authority, liberty, and global reach—cemented in the aftermath of one revolution would be tested by another. In early 1793, less than a decade after Evacuation Day, Britain plunged into war with revolutionary France in an epic conflict that lasted virtually uninterrupted till 1815. Fortunately for Britain, already tested by republican dissent in America, the "spirit of 1783" provided a ready set of practices and policies to pose against French models. In contrast to French liberty, equality, and fraternity, Britain offered up its own more limited version of liberty under the crown and hierarchical stability. This wasn't so much a counter-revolutionary vision as it was a post-revolutionary one, forged in part from the lessons of the war in America. In the end, it prevailed. Britain's comprehensive victory over France in 1815, on the battlefield and at the negotiating table, served to validate the "spirit of 1783" over French republican and Napoleonic alternatives, and to make liberalism and constitutional monarchy a defining mode of government in and beyond Europe.[28]

To this day, legacies of the British Empire's liberal constitutionalism endure alongside American democratic republicanism—making the "spirit of 1783" arguably just as important an influence in twenty-first-century political culture as the spirit of 1776. And yet, from some angles, maybe the spirit of 1776 and the spirit of 1783 didn't look so different. The post-revolutionary United States tussled with ambitions and problems remarkably like those faced by the British Empire from which it broke away: a drive for geographic expansion, competition with European empires, management of indigenous peoples, contests over the limits of democracy and the morality of slavery.[29] While the United States drafted its constitution, British imperial authorities developed constitutions for their colonial domains, from Quebec to Bengal.[30] While the British Empire made up for the loss in America by expanding into new colonies, the United States quickly embarked on empire-building itself, pushing west in a thrust that more than doubled the nation's size in just a generation. Though their political systems revolved around a fundamental divergence—one a monarchy, the other a republic—the United Kingdom and the United States shared ideas about the central importance of "liberty" and the rule of law.[31]

In 1815, Britain and its allies won at Waterloo; the British Empire was on top of the world. Loyalist refugees by then had carved out new homes and societies in their sites of exodus. After all the deprivation, the upheaval, the disappointment, and the stress, many surviving refugees, and even more of their children, eventually discovered a kind of contentment. Their trajectories from loss to assimilation mirrored the ascent of the British Empire as a whole, from defeat to global success. Loyalists who had left the United States for the British Empire were subjects of the world power that enjoyed international preeminence for the next century or more. They were, in this sense, victors after all.

THIS BOOK RECOVERS the stories of ordinary people whose lives were overturned by extraordinary events. To chronicle their journeys is also to chart them. The first three chapters describe the American Revolution as loyalists experienced it; the factors that caused them to leave; and the process by which most of them departed, in mass evacuations from British-held cities—an important yet little-known piece of revolutionary history. Chapters 4–6 follow the refugees to Britain and British North America (the eastern provinces of present-day Canada), to look at three features of loyalist settlement: how the refugees were fed, clothed, and compensated; how they formed new communities; and how they influenced the restructuring of imperial government after the war. Chapters 7–9 turn farther south, to explore the fortunes of refugees in the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Sierra Leone. Loyalists in these settings struggled against adverse environmental and economic conditions at the best of times, and the onset of the French Revolutionary wars only made things worse, by heightening conflicts over political rights and tensions around issues of slavery and race. The final chapter moves through the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 to consider where loyalists stood a generation after their migrations began, from the place where they started—the United States—to the place that had overtaken America in imperial significance, India.

Since no one volume can contain sixty thousand stories, I have chosen to focus on a cluster of figures who capture different varieties of the refugee experience. Together they provide an intimate sense of what this exodus actually meant and felt like to its participants. The refugees belonged at once to a very big world—an expanding global empire—and to a surprisingly small one, in which scattered individuals retained personal connections over enormous distances of space and time. Remarkably many of these figures also moved more than once. Moving was part of the job for the imperial officials who recur in these pages, notably Sir Guy Carleton, commander in chief in New York and governor in Canada; and Lord Dunmore, governor of pre-revolutionary Virginia and the post-revolutionary Bahamas. For displaced civilians, however, repeated migrations underscored the dislocating effects of war, as well as the capacity of empires to channel human populations along certain routes.[32]

Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston, a middle-class loyalist from Georgia, was acutely aware of living in a world in motion. In her late teens when the war ended, Johnston led her growing family through the emptying British outposts of the south: Savannah, Charleston, and St. Augustine in turn. These journeys prefigured a longer postwar odyssey, when the Johnstons established homes in Scotland, Jamaica, and at last Nova Scotia, fully twenty years after their peregrinations began. The family of New York landed magnate Beverley Robinson provides an instructive parallel to the Johnstons, from a position of greater privilege. War reduced Robinson from sprawling acres in America to a modest dwelling in Gloucestershire. But he invested his remaining resources in placing his children in the military, one of the best mechanisms for upward mobility the British Empire had to offer. Robinsons went on to thrive in imperial service everywhere from New Brunswick to Jamaica, Gibraltar, Egypt, and India. Some of Robinson's grandchildren even found fortune where their forebears had lost it, back in New York. Between them, the Johnston and Robinson families bring to life preoccupations shared by the majority of white loyalist refugees: to maintain social rank and respectability; to rebuild family fortunes; and to position their children for success. Their papers also give poignant insight into the emotional consequences of war on refugees coping with loss, dislocation, and separation.

Many refugees saw their journeys as devastating personal setbacks. But some realized that these turbulent times might offer great opportunities as well. Perhaps the most visionary of these dreamers was North Carolina merchant John Cruden, who watched both his fortune and British supremacy collapse around him, yet tirelessly promoted schemes to restore both. Cruden's projects to rebuild a British-American empire showed just how dynamic British ambitions remained after the war. In similar vein, Maryland loyalist William Augustus Bowles "went native" among the Creek Indians, and used his position between cultures to promote the creation of a loyal Indian state on the southwestern U.S. border. A more substantial effort to assert Indian sovereignty was led by Mohawk sachem Joseph Brant, the most prominent North American Indian to portray himself as a loyalist. From his postwar refuge near Lake Ontario, Brant aimed to build a western Indian confederacy that could protect native autonomy in the face of relentless white settler advance.

For black loyalists, of course, the losses inflicted by revolution were offset by an important gain: their freedom. This was the first step toward futures few could have imagined. David George, born into slavery in Virginia, found both freedom and faith as a Baptist convert in revolutionary South Carolina. After the war he emigrated to Nova Scotia, where he began to preach, quickly forming whole Baptist congregations around him. When he decided a few years later to seek a new Jerusalem in Sierra Leone, many of his followers made the journey with him. Networks of faith connected black loyalists around the Atlantic. George's spiritual mentor George Liele traced another line from the backcountry into the British Empire when he evacuated with the British to Jamaica, where he founded the island's first Baptist church.

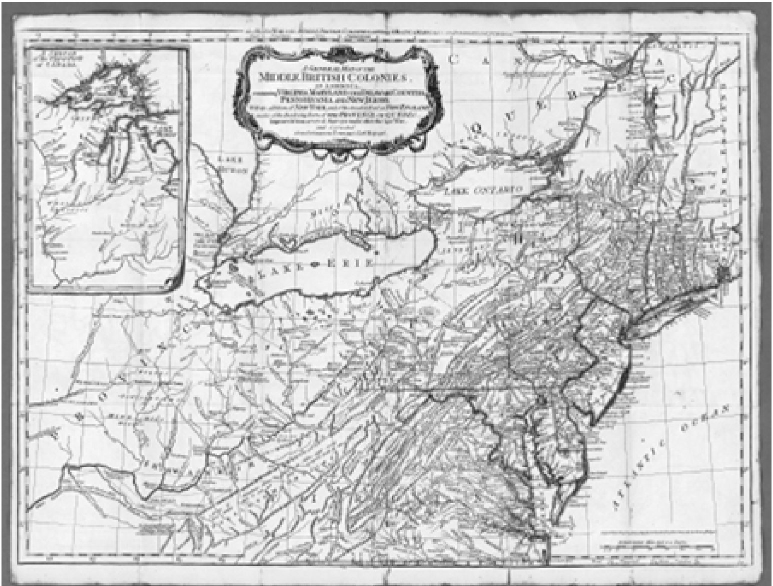
To reconstruct these individual journeys, I have visited archives in every major loyalist destination to find refugees' own accounts of what happened to them. The interpretations people give of their behavior are usually refined in retrospect, and many of the writings loyalists produced about themselves had some agenda. This was manifestly the case for the single biggest trove of documents, the records of the Loyalist Claims Commission, set up to compensate loyalists for their losses. Every claimant had a vested interest in proving the strength of his or her loyalty, the intensity of suffering, and the magnitude of material loss. The best sources relating to black loyalists display another bias, having been shaped by British missionaries keen to advance an evangelical purpose. The most accessible sources concerning Indian nations were produced for and by white officials, placing an imperial filter over their contents. And then there were the usual distortions wrought by memory. Personal narratives written many decades after the war, like Elizabeth Johnston's, often emphasized tragedies, injustices, and resentments that lingered in the mind long after more benign recollections had faded. Early-nineteenth-century accounts produced in British North America, especially, could be skewed as heavily toward portraying loyalists as victims as competing accounts in the United States were toward presenting them as villains.

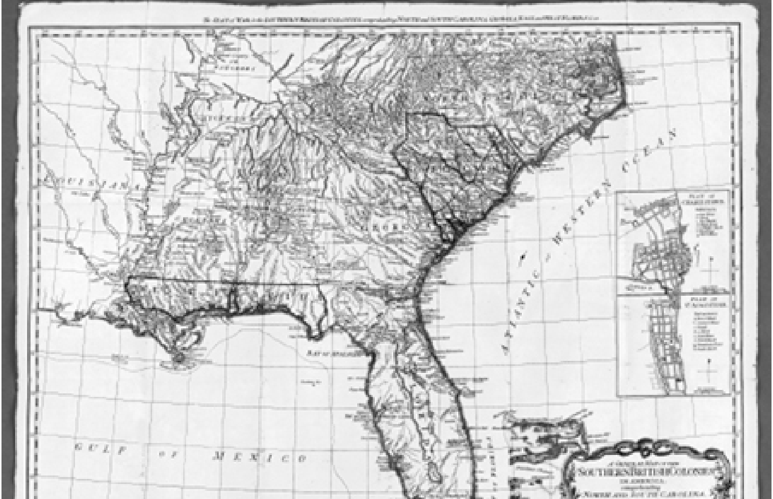
No sources of this kind are ever purely objective. But the way people tell their stories—what they emphasize, what they leave out—can tell the historian as much about their times as the concrete details they provide. The refugees' tragic discourse deserves to be listened to not least because it is so rarely heard. It captures aspects of human experience that are often left out of traditional political, economic, or diplomatic histories of this era, yet that are vital for understanding how revolutions affect their participants, how empires interact with their subjects, and how refugees cope with displacement. It inverts more familiar accounts to give a contrasting picture of alternatives, contingencies, and surprises. Nobody could predict at the outset how the American Revolution would turn out, whether the United States would survive, or what would become of the British Empire. For American colonists standing on the threshold of civil war in 1775, there would be a tumultuous, harrowing, and unpredictable journey ahead.

[*] From the American Revolution up to Canadian Confederation in 1867, these provinces were collectively known as British North America. “Canada” was synonymous with the province of Quebec until 1791, when it was divided into the provinces of Upper Canada (present-day Ontario) and Lower Canada (present-day Quebec).

PART I

Refugees


A General Map of the
MIDDLE BRITISH COLONIES,
in America
Virginia, Maryland and the Delaware Counties,
Pennsylvania and New Jersey
C A N A D A
Q U E B E C
LAKE ONTARIO
LAKE ERIE
LAKE HURON
ATLANTIC OCEAN


LOUISIANA
GEORGIA
ATLANTIC or WESTERN OCEAN
PLAN of CHARLES TOWN
PLAN of St. AUGUSTINE
BAY of APALACHE
GULF OF MEXICO
SOUTHERN BRITISH COLONIES
in AMERICA
NORTH and SOUTH CAROLINA

After Thomas Pownall, *A General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America,* 1776. Opposite bottom: Bernard Romans, *A General Map of the Southern British Colonies in America,* 1776.

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