



Episode 4, 2005: United Empire Loyalist, Northridge, California

Tukufu Zuberi: Our final story investigates a family who may have fought on the wrong side of the American Revolution.

Tukufu: Each Fourth of July, Americans celebrate their victory over the British in the Revolutionary War. Eight years of cataclysmic struggle gave birth to a nation, and heroes such as Paine, Adams, and Washington became household names. But what many of us don't realize when we celebrate is that tens of thousands of Americans actually fought for the British. A college dean from Northridge, California, curious about her family's past recently stumbled across a document that she thinks might reveal a startling secret history of loyalty to the English Crown.

Kristin Bruno: My great-aunt left me a family tree, and on this family tree there was a notation for some of my ancestors that said, "United Empire Loyalist." And that was really a mystery that sparked my imagination.

Tukufu: I'm Tukufu Zuberi, and I'm meeting Kristin Bruno to investigate her family's mysterious past.

Kristin: Hi.

Tukufu: Hi, how are you doing? I'm Tukufu. So what are we here to talk about?

Kristin: I have a great-aunt who left me this ... family tree. As I was looking at the people, several generations back were from England, Ireland, Scotland, and then I noticed this notation that says, "United Empire Loyalist." And I didn't know what that was.

Tukufu: That's fascinating. I mean, the -- the loyalists were those individuals who in -- on the U.S. side, we would normally consider as people who were not loyal, because they remained loyal to the British Crown. Kristin told me she is especially interested in her ancestor, Daniel Dunham. The chart suggests that he is the only relative who would have been of fighting age during the Revolutionary War. What is it you want me to find out for you?

Kristin: What I was really curious about is, who was Daniel Dunham, and why did he remain loyal to Britain? And then I was curious what his life was like.

Tukufu: This is going to give us an opportunity to look at the American Revolution from another side. So, I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Kristin: Okay, sounds great.

Tukufu: It's a fascinating prospect that Kristin's family fought for the British. The story of those Americans who battled for independence is celebrated in American history: no taxation without representation, the Boston Tea Party, and finally, after eight years of battle, the declaration of a newly independent nation. But the history of the Americans who fought for the Crown is much less well-known. I'm meeting Todd Braisted, who has been researching loyalists for 20 years and regularly reenacts Revolutionary War battles.

Todd Braisted: Who were the loyalists? They could be any of your neighbors next door.

Tukufu: Todd says Americans fought against independence for a variety of reasons, but that many were thinking of their wallets, not ideology.

Todd: A lot of these people had grown prosperous under the British rule, had lived peacefully for many years, established families, and to violently overthrow that government was a very radical concept. When you live in peace, growing wealthier than many other Europeans could be, and to say you're going to drag that all away for an untried system of government, that's very frightening.

Tukufu: How many were there?

Todd: A good estimate would be about 15 percent of the population of the colonies at the time. We're talking about hundreds of thousands of people here.

Tukufu: What happened to these loyalists after the war?

Todd: Well, the British had made promises to them of free land during the war. When the war was over, they looked elsewhere in what remained of British North America. And the bulk of that, of course, was Canada, so that's where many of these people -- tens of thousands of them -- settled afterwards.

Tukufu: Now, tell me, have you ever heard of the United Empire Loyalists?

Todd: It's a post-war phrase, from 1789. The British person in charge of Canada passed an order that commended those American loyalists for their perseverance to the unity of empire, hence the phrase, U.E.

Tukufu: This phrase is really one of honor and distinction from the British Crown bestowed upon the loyalists.

Todd: Correct.

Tukufu: Kristin's family tree lists Daniel Dunham's children as United Empire Loyalists, so it's a good bet that Daniel was a loyalist, too. But the only hard information I have is that he was born near Saratoga, New York. That's a potential clue, however, the Battle of Saratoga in 1777 was one of the most important showdowns of the Revolution. The rebels and the British had battled for two years. That September, the British General, John Burgoyne, attempted to stamp out the upstart Americans. But the Rebels led by General Horatio Gates, dealt Burgoyne and the king's men a crushing defeat. Did Daniel Dunham fight with the British at Saratoga? Was that why his family ended up in Canada after the war? I've come to the Revolutionary War library in Pennsylvania to see if I can track Kristin's family.

Librarian: Hi, you're in luck; we have some sources.

Tukufu: Loyalists who lost land in the conflict made compensation claims to the British Crown. Those claims are supported by archived testimonials about military service. Here we go! This is what we want. "February, 1786. The memorial of Daniel Dunham, formerly of the province of New York." This is our guy. He did take up arms for his majesty's service against the rebels and did serve faithfully." Okay, we suspected so, and now we know so. "In the year 1777, joined General Burgoyne's army and continued that campaign." So Daniel Dunham did fight at the Battle of Saratoga. His claim also says that he owned a farm and a mill, but that he lost everything because of the War. A rebel major stole his farm animals, and his wife had to be sent away. After the Battle of Saratoga, Dunham soldiered on, fighting a losing cause for three more years. "Then remained in the colonies till the year 1780, during which time I harbored scouts from Canada and supported them with provisions." So he was a pretty important guy in the scheme of things. I wonder: What happened in 1780, when he

finally gave up the fight? What I have here are the biographical sketches of loyalists of the American Revolution. This was published in 1864. Let's see what we get here. Okay, here he is. Daniel Dunham was among the loyalists who went to St. John, New Brunswick, in Canada, in 1783. And he received grants of city lots. So Dunham headed north to Canada. He was now unwelcome in the country of his birth and vulnerable to mob violence. With a wife and children, he must have decided his only future was outside the United States. But still, I don't know exactly where he finally settled. Maybe Kristin's family chart can point me in the right direction. I've learned about as much as I can about this story from the American side. Daniel Dunham has a strong Canadian connection. I mean, he's -- he has a grandson who was born in Brockville, Ontario, a great-grandson who was born in Brockville, Ontario. If Daniel took his family to Canada, he wasn't alone. Some 50,000 loyalist refugees fled over the border following their defeat. More than 200 years later, I'm retracing their footsteps and heading to Brockville, Ontario.

Boatman: All right, not too fast.

Tukufu: I'm on the St. Lawrence River in Ontario with Fred Hayward from the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. He says this is how many loyalists started their new lives. On one side of the St. Lawrence lay the United States and their past, and on the other bank, a still-unknown destiny. Why here? Why did they settle here?

Fred Hayward: The government had promised them land, and that's why they've come to this area. And at that time, this was the uninhabited part of the colony of Quebec.

Tukufu: What was their life like when they first arrived? I mean, what did they do?

Fred: The first things that they would have to be doing is to clear enough wood to build some kind of a shelter.

Tukufu: Okay.

Fred: Now, the first year it was -- generally it would be a tent. We can tell from their journals and their diaries that life was not easy at all. In fact, the first winter you've got many recorded deaths of people that didn't survive.

Tukufu: Fred told me the loyalists are held in such high esteem that anyone who is descended from them can use the letters "e-u" after their name, and that it's Canada's only hereditary title. I asked about Kristin's ancestors.

Fred: I think for personal information about them I'd rather you talk to the genealogist.

Tukufu: I am meeting Myrtle Johnston, a local historian who is the keeper of family records in Brockville. She tracks loyalists' descendants all the way back to the first settlement. I'm specifically looking for an individual named Daniel Dunham.

Myrtle Johnston: I'll see what I can find. This is... A good resource for old families.

Tukufu: Okay. Myrtle says this local history published in 1879 details the area's first families. All right, here we go: the Dunham family.

Myrtle: Right.

Tukufu: So Daniel Dunham did settle in Brockville.

Myrtle: And the Dunhams came to Canada in 1784 in the first brigade of boats. And James Dunham, his son, built a mill.

Tukufu: Now, is there anything else you can tell me about the Dunham family?

Myrtle: If you'd like to see what I have in my files, we could look at that. There we are.

Tukufu: oh, and here's James Dunham. This is the guy who opened a mill here.

Myrtle: Yes, right.

Tukufu: And he was a son of Daniel Dunham.

Myrtle: Right.

Tukufu: And look, that's Kristin. That's great. Kristin Bruno and her ancestors are in myrtle's records. I ask if there are any Dunhams left in Brockville.

Myrtle: There are no Dunhams left in the area.

Tukufu: But then we made a major discovery. This is great! And Myrtle took me to a special place just outside of town. I've asked Kristin Bruno to travel up to Canada to meet me. I need you to keep your eyes shut here.

Kristin: Okay, they're closed.

Tukufu: So she can experience her heritage firsthand. And then we're here. You keep your eyes closed.

Kristin: All right, they're closed.

Tukufu: We're here. All right, okay. Now, you can open your eyes. Where are we at?

Kristin: Dunham Bay!

Tukufu: Yes.

Kristin: Isn't that great?!

Tukufu: Your ancestors owned all of this land, 100 acres that way.

Kristin: Oh, my gosh!

Tukufu: And all the way down to the water. So why don't we go down here and look at the water.

Kristin: Sounds great!

Tukufu: Yes, yes. I tell Kristin what I learned about her ancestors. And Daniel Dunham distinguished himself in battle, and he distinguished himself as a leader of the loyalist forces, and he was rewarded with this great piece of land in that way. I told her about the impact of the loyalists on their adopted land. Myrtle Johnston told me that in clearing virgin forest, building homes, and raising families at places like Dunham's bay, loyalists such as Daniel Dunham helped forge a new nation.

Flashback to Myrtle

Myrtle: It was men like Daniel Dunham who made this country what it is, and it wouldn't be Canada without that.

Back to Kristin

Tukufu: So, how does this make you feel?

Kristin: Awed, I think. I mean, I don't know if I could have done something like that. But it's pretty incredible to feel that strongly about something that you'd be willing to put yourself in harm's way and come all this way.

Tukufu: Do you feel any less American?

Kristin: No, Americans have a heritage of all types of backgrounds, and this is just one more piece of that American story. It's wonderful.

Tukufu: So, we have one more thing for you.

Kristin: All right.

Tukufu: Kristin, we were able to identify one of your relatives here in Brockville.

Kristin: Really?!

Tukufu: Yes, let me introduce you to your cousin, your fifth cousin, once removed, William Hamblen.

William Hamblen: Hi!

Kristin: It's great to meet you.

William: It's wonderful to see you. Well, welcome to Canada.

Kristin: Well, thank you.

William: And it is great to meet a long-lost relative and to show you Dunham's Bay where our ancestors arrived in 1784.

Tukufu: And I'm sure you all have a lot to talk about, and so I'm going to leave you to do that.

Kristin: Thank you so much.

Tukufu: It's been my pleasure.

William: What a beautiful day we have here today.

Kristin: it's gorgeous.

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