

**Patrick O'Brien**

**Tentative Title of Dissertation:**

“Unknown and Unlamented”: Loyalist Women in Exile and Repatriation, 1775-1800

**Abstract:**

Shortly before embarking from New York City destined for Halifax in August 1783, Joshua Upham wrote to a friend, “All the World moves on to Nova Scotia.” Although exaggerated, Upham’s sentiments reveal a society in the midst of dramatic realignment. All told, upwards of 30,000 refugees—more than half of all people dispersed throughout the British Empire during the Revolution—landed on the shores of Nova Scotia between 1775 and the early months of 1784. My dissertation examines the experience of loyalist women and emphasizes the critical role of wives and daughters within the new communities that hugged the rocky maritime shores and dotted the vast wilderness of Atlantic Canada. As exiles, loyalist women struggled to rebuild the social networks lost during the refugee experience. These women visited strangers, served as mourners at sparsely attended funerals, maintained kinship ties, hosted social events, attended a variety of religious services regardless of their denomination, and ultimately created the intangible social networks that held loyalist communities together. As they grappled with the hardships of exile, however, the realities of American independence signaled to many across the refugee community that exile would be more than a brief sojourn. Driven by an immense fear of losing a connection to their ancestral home in the American states, many loyalist women began a ritualized form of rebellion arguing with their husbands that repatriation was the only cure for their distress. Other women looked to restore their connections to home by marrying their daughters to American men. Collectively, loyalist women also played a central role in bringing families back to the United States.