

Black Loyalists:  
Land Petitions and Loyalism

by

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## **Abstract**

The Black Loyalists played a significant role in the history of Nova Scotia. They faced many difficulties, including discrimination during the process of land granting. There has been a lively scholarly debate over the identity and culture of the Black Loyalists. This thesis contributes to that debate through a close study of land petitions. It offers an in-depth exploration of the land petitions and the related administrative and political processes. This thesis employs a close textual analysis of the language, identities, and terminologies used in the petitions, and it explores how the colonial government viewed issues such as loyalty and ethnicity. The term “Black Loyalist” did not appear within any of the official colonial documents, including the land petitions, covered by this research project. This thesis argues that the term Loyalist needs to be redefined, because different types of loyalism can be attributed to the individuals classified as Black Loyalists.

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## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Following the American Revolution in 1783, approximately 3,500 Black Loyalists migrated alongside fellow White Loyalists to British North America and in particular to Nova Scotia. The Black Loyalists are grouped together with White and First Nation Loyalists. This being said, scholars often neglect to realize that their motives to join the British troops in their fight against the Patriots may have been extremely different than that of their counterparts. Can we even classify the Black Loyalists as loyal, or were their motives solely based on their desire to gain freedom and independence in the late eighteenth-century? And if they were loyal in the sense that they were loyal to who ever would grant them their wish for freedom, can they be grouped together with White Loyalists, who were not loyal to the King of England because they were rooting for their freedom but they were fighting for the monarch and their desire to live in a monarchy? As such, can we call the refugee slaves of 1783, loyal in the same sense as the White Loyalists or do scholars need to redefine loyalism? If loyalism needs to be reevaluated, subcategories will be useful to encompass the different groups of people who are considered Loyalists, as they had different outlooks and reasons to be loyal. A new term may be required for some of the people, as their motives to support the British varied drastically from the twenty-first-century definition of the term Loyalist.

If we agree that loyalism, at least in the Black Loyalists case, needs to be re-evaluated, then we not only need to look at the term in a new light but also explore their loyalism as attributed to them by the colonial government with the help of land petitions. By this I mean the kind of loyalism within the community, and how certain



events, such as the granting of land to the free blacks can attribute to the understanding of society and their treatment of the black population. In short, if Black Loyalists were considered loyal in the same sense as White Loyalists were, they would have been granted the same acreage, but they were not. They would have been treated the same as their white counterparts, and the official documents would have used the term Black Loyalist, but they were referred to as free blacks. This results in a debate around their kind of loyalism and if the term needs to be reevaluated.

Individual free blacks may have had different motives for joining the British, which would result in different understandings of their loyalism found within their community. For instance, can we measure the kind of loyalism by the Black Loyalists based on the land granted to them, and how did this form of loyalism change because of said petitions. In other words, this thesis will not study the Black Loyalists as a history of a group but rather evaluate how their dynamics changed between 1783 and 1792 based on petitions. Land petitions can enlighten scholars on this topic because they give insight on the colonial governments treatment of the Black Loyalists and the official terms, which were used in the late eighteenth-century.

The question remains if the Black Loyalists were understood to be ‘loyal’ in the late eighteenth-century, or if scholars need to redefine the Black Loyalists identity. The term Loyalist is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “one who is loyal; one who adheres to his sovereign or to constituted authority, *esp.* in times of revolt; one who supports the existing form of government.”<sup>1</sup> The term loyal is defined as

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford University Press, “Loyalist,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed January 19, 2016 and February 16, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/Entry/110753?redirectedFrom=loyalist#eid>.

“faithful in allegiance to the sovereign or constituted government.”<sup>2</sup> This thesis aims to clarify that the government did not use the term Black Loyalist within land petitions in order to refer to the black refugees.

The significance of this topic is that the group of people who scholars have come to call, Black Loyalists, needs to be redefined. The identity of the Black Loyalists will need to be reshaped, as they were not loyal in the sense that academics of the twenty-first-century understand, and the Oxford English Dictionary defines the term. This thesis aims to redefine the identity of the Black Loyalists with the help of five land petitions. The first petition that will be studied included Colonel Stephen Blucke, who was a resident of Shelburne County, and was granted 200 acres.<sup>3</sup> This was the most acreage any known free black was granted in Nova Scotia in the late eighteenth-century. Blucke was the only black settler on the land petition, which was filed by Robert Morris and included thirty-nine individuals over all.<sup>4</sup> Thomas Brownspriggs, who requested 3,000 acres for himself and seventy-three other free blacks in Tracadie, filed the second land petition.<sup>5</sup> The third and fourth petitions include Thomas Peters, a black sergeant, who requested land alongside white settlers in 1784.<sup>6</sup> The last land grant was filed by Moses Pitcher and requested land on McNut’s Island in 1785.<sup>7</sup> This grant included four black pilots, (London Jackson, James Jackson, Richard Leach, and James Robinson), as noted on the petition, as well as one

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<sup>2</sup> Oxford University Press, “Loyal,” *Oxford English Dictionary* accessed February 16, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/Entry/110751?redirectedFrom=loyal#eid>.

<sup>3</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 17 doc. 157.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 19 doc. 19.

<sup>6</sup> NSA MFM 15685, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 2 doc. 43; NSA MFM 15688, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 9 doc. 289.

<sup>7</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 14 doc. 148, p.4.

black pilot, Joseph Restine, whose race was not recorded by the colonial government.<sup>8</sup> These five land petitions vary drastically as four out of the five include both white and black petitioners, while Thomas Brownspriggs' petition was made up of solely free black settlers. One grant included a Colonel, while another included a sergeant, and yet another included black pilots. It is also crucial to note that the difference of land granted to these free blacks varied as well. Stephen Blucke was granted two hundred acres, while Thomas Brownspriggs and his fellow petitioners received forty acres each.<sup>9</sup> The four black pilots were granted fifty acres over all, twelve and a half acres each.<sup>10</sup> This difference in size and make up of the petitioners within the land petitions is crucial as it may indicate the kind of loyalism attributed to the individuals in the said petitions.

This topic is significant because it will alter and redefine the history of the people who are known as Black Loyalists, and if the term Loyalist can be attributed to them. If the way we understand the term Black Loyalists today needs to be reevaluated we arrive at a crucial question. Do we need to redefine and rewrite the history of other groups and terms as well? Reevaluating the loyalism of the Black Loyalists may not only lead to a new understanding of their history but also lead to the reevaluation of other historic groups and terms, which have become imprinted in scholars minds in the twenty-first-century. The reevaluation of the Black Loyalists identity can be crucial not only for their historiography but the historiography of other terms and groups as well.

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<sup>8</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148, p.4.

<sup>9</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157. ; NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 19 doc. 19.

<sup>10</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148.

## Historiography

The historiography surrounding the Black Loyalists focuses on many aspects including their experience within Nova Scotia and globally, and the idea of loyalism. This section will focus on the historiography surrounding several crucial academics and their works. Neil MacKinnon, Bridglal Pachai, Mohamed Abucar, Ruth Holmes Whitehead, Harvey Armani Whitfield, Ken Donovan, and Catherine Cottreau-Robins will contribute to the understanding of the Black Loyalists experience within Nova Scotia. Further, scholars such as James Walker, Barry Cahill, Maya Jasanoff, and Cassandra Pybus will contribute to the ongoing debate whether or not Black Loyalists truly existed.

Many historians have written on the Black Loyalists on a local and international scale. Historians such as Walker and Cahill have argued for and against the Black Loyalists cause, Walker calling them Loyalists, while Cahill called it a myth, which was established by scholars in order to make the study of the refugee slaves of the 1780's more attractive.<sup>11</sup> Others, such as Ruth Homes Whitehead, who published *The Black Loyalists* in 2013, focused on the experience of the Black Loyalists, not only in

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<sup>11</sup> The scholarly works discussed in this historiography can be found here, Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: the Loyalist experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986). ; Bridglal Pachai, *Beneath The Clouds Of The Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia's Blacks*, Volume II (Halifax: The Black Educators Association Of Nova Scotia, 1991). ; Mohamed Abucar, *Struggle for Development: The Black Communities of North & East Preston and Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia 1784-1987* (Halifax: McCurdy Printing & Typesetting Limited, 1988). ; Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Black Loyalists: southern settlers of the first free black communities in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2013). ; Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2006). ; Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to bondage: loyalist slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016). ; Ken Donovan, "Slavery and Freedom in Atlantic Canada's African Diaspora: Introduction," *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* XLIII, no. 1 (2014): 110, accessed December 9, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/7136578/Ken\\_Donovan\\_Slavery\\_and\\_Freedom\\_in\\_Atlantic\\_Canada\\_s\\_African\\_Diaspora\\_Introduction\\_Acadiensis\\_XLIII\\_no\\_1\\_Winter\\_Spring\\_2014\\_109-115](https://www.academia.edu/7136578/Ken_Donovan_Slavery_and_Freedom_in_Atlantic_Canada_s_African_Diaspora_Introduction_Acadiensis_XLIII_no_1_Winter_Spring_2014_109-115). ; February 24, 2016, <https://journals-lib-unb-ca.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/index.php/acadiensis/article/view/22041/25576>.

Nova Scotia but also on their journey to and from the region, using individual accounts to make the history more approachable.<sup>12</sup> Focusing on individuals such as Boston King and David George to tell the story of the Black Loyalists on a humane level. Maya Jasanoff in her book *Liberty's Exiles* and Cassandra Pybus' *Epic journey of freedom* focus on the Loyalist cause in general, including White, First Nation, and Black Loyalists and studying the Loyalists history on an international scale.

Historian Neil MacKinnon focuses on the differences that were evident between the White and Black Loyalists, and the governmental struggle to accommodate the new settlers. MacKinnon, who wrote *This Unfriendly Soil* in 1986, focuses on the Loyalists experience within Nova Scotia between 1783 and 1791. Discussing the African-American population in Nova Scotia MacKinnon writes “some of them were free, to be rented out on five-year contracts, to be burned out when they became uppity and they sold their labour more cheaply than the white. They were all loyalists” but yet different in many aspects.<sup>13</sup> This alone created a division between the White Loyalists and Black Loyalists. MacKinnon argues that the split between the Loyalists was evident in Shelburne “with its large, mixed population

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<sup>12</sup> They can also be found here, Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, “Searching for Enslaved in Nova Scotia’s Loyalist Landscape,” *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* XLIII, no. 1 (2014): 130, accessed February 24, 2016, <https://journals-lib-unb-ca.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/index.php/acadiensis/article/view/22041/25576>. ; Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, “A Loyalist Plantation in Nova Scotia, 1784-1800” (PhD diss., Dalhousie University, 2012). ; Walker, James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1976). ; Barry Cahill, “The Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada,” *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* 24, no. 1 (1999): 86, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/acadiensis/article/view/10801/11587>. ; Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 2011). ; Cassandra Pybus, *Epic journey of freedom: runaway slaves of the American Revolution and their global quest for liberty*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: the Loyalist experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), 75.

in concentrated surroundings.”<sup>14</sup> The interactions between White Loyalists and Black Loyalists turned out to be problematic and “were magnified...[by] mob violence.”<sup>15</sup> One such example was the Shelburne Race Riot of 1784, which resulted in a “state of anarchy,” and included “an attack by the disbanded troops upon the negroes.”<sup>16</sup> The disbanded soldiers attacked the black settlers because they were willing to work for little to no money, and took away jobs from white settlers in an already scarce work environment.<sup>17</sup> Thus, MacKinnon argues that race and identity were a crucial factor in the development of a separate Black Loyalists identity. The White Loyalists and Black Loyalists could not get along because their cultural background was very different.

The Black Loyalists were basically left on their own with no authority behind them, since the government was struggling to accommodate the great number of new settlers. Sharing the same fate as their fellow Black Loyalists, the communities, which were home to these fugitive slaves, soon became the centre of religious congregations, according to MacKinnon.<sup>18</sup> He argues that all Loyalists were “motivated by different fears and different ambitions, their attitudes towards many facets of life in Nova Scotia...var[ied] widely.” Especially the “religious affiliations exemplified this diversity of attitudes.”<sup>19</sup> Both White and Black Loyalists were religious but their cultural background and stand in society did not allow for them to pray in union. In fact, religion was a major factor that drove them apart, as they were

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<sup>14</sup> MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

not able to attend the same sermons and thus the Black Loyalists separated from the White Loyalists and created their own churches and congregations.

Bridglal Pachai discusses how education and religion enabled the Black Loyalists to have a form of consistency and progress within their community, while facing harassment from white settlers. He published *Beneath the Clouds of the Promised Land* in 1990, and similar to MacKinnon he researches in his book the experience of the settlers in Nova Scotia. Pachai states that the Black Loyalists received support in order “to start schools in the black settlements” and “the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel...opened a school in Tracadie. The teachers in these schools were members of the communities as well as leaders and preachers in the local black churches.”<sup>20</sup> These individuals included people like Boston King, David George, and Thomas Brownspriggs.<sup>21</sup> Religion and education gave the Black Loyalists something to strive for and stability in their otherwise turbulent and unpredictable lives, especially since “the church produced the first educated African preachers, teachers and civil servants.”<sup>22</sup> These two pillars enabled them to have a form of independence while being treated unfairly by the white settlers in Nova Scotia. Their own religion and education allowed the Black Loyalists to create their own communities and traditions, and as such they were able to segregate from the White Loyalists and other Nova Scotian settlers not only in settlement regions but also in traditions and culture. They were truly an independent society when it came to their traditions and beliefs.

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<sup>20</sup> Bridglal Pachai, *Beneath The Clouds Of The Promised Land: The Survival of Nova Scotia's Blacks*, Volume II (Halifax: The Black Educators Association Of Nova Scotia, 1991), 48.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 47.

Mohamed Abucar studies the regional history of North & East Preston and Cherry Brook, in which he discusses both the cultural and economical aspects of Black Loyalists' lives. Abucar's *Struggle for Development*, argues that the government at the time was very chaotic and thus "lacked the ability to process large scale immigration" and any land grants that were promised took a very long time to pass.<sup>23</sup> Thus the Loyalists did not feel at home in Nova Scotia and "resettle[d] in Africa" when they had the option to do so.<sup>24</sup> He states that the Black Loyalists left a void behind, which later on, enabled the Black Refugees to create institutions such as the African Baptist Association, which was founded "in 1854" by no other than Reverend Richard Preston, an influential Black Refugee.<sup>25</sup> This institution "acted as an umbrella institution for all black communities throughout Nova Scotia."<sup>26</sup> In general Abucar discusses the development of the townships from the early days of the Black Loyalists up until the late twentieth-century and how the black communities have fared over time.

Ruth Holmes Whitehead is one of the more recent scholars to have written on the Black Loyalists, with *The Black Loyalists* she wrote a popular history of the settlers in Nova Scotia, which was published in 2013. She focuses on the time period leading up to the migration of the Black Loyalists, as well as personal stories, which enlighten the reader regarding the experiences and reasons behind Black Loyalists, and the impact they eventually had in Nova Scotia. In particular the personal accounts

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<sup>23</sup> Mohamed Abucar, *Struggle for Development: The Black Communities of North & East Preston and Cherry Brook, Nova Scotia 1784-1987* (Halifax: McCurdy Printing & Typesetting Limited, 1988), 10.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



enable readers to connect to the Black Loyalists and understand why religion was crucial for them. She states “three autobiographies-all by Black Loyalist ministers who lived in South Carolina before and during the American Revolution, and who then came to Nova Scotia...have survived into the present-day.”<sup>27</sup> Boston King’s autobiography was one of the most influential autobiographies to survive.

According to Whitehead, these autobiographies give great insight into the communal life of the Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia. Boston King, a Methodist minister from South Carolina, settled in Birchtown in the summer of 1783 and Whitehead argues, “that winter the work of religion began to revive among” them.<sup>28</sup> Religion enabled King to appreciate life again and to see the good in his difficult and worrisome situation as a Black Loyalist. Thus, Whitehead argues that religion was the factor, which divided Black Loyalists from others and enabled them to see the good in Nova Scotia. Their faith bonded them together and created a community of Black Loyalists who swayed in union. Especially since the first winter in their new home was rather harsh, religion gave them faith and enabled them to hope for better times.<sup>29</sup> The personal account of Boston King and how he carried a wooden chest through three feet of snow “being pinched with hunger and cold” in order to earn some money to provide for his family, and how religion kept his hopes up, enables readers to connect with the story Whitehead is depicting.<sup>30</sup> During all these hardships, Boston King never lost his faith and eventually “he moved to the new black settlement in

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<sup>27</sup> Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Black Loyalists: southern settlers of the first free black communities in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2013), 26.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 159.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

Preston... where he continued his work of preaching.”<sup>31</sup> Whitehead argues that no matter how harsh the conditions were, by not being granted land or provided with rations, the Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia always had their faith to hold on to.

Harvey Amani Whitfield is another historian who, while not necessarily focused on the Black Loyalists in *Blacks on the Border* as the main part of his historiography, acknowledges the importance of the group for the development of a black community within Nova Scotia in later years. He argues that the “influx dramatically increased Nova Scotia’s pre-Revolutionary population, and the addition of so many people of color shocked the host community.”<sup>32</sup> This massive influx of racial issues led to “poor whites and the Black Loyalists...[being] at the very bottom of the list of those to receive land.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, the Black Loyalists did not receive the support they were promised and were left on their own when it came to the building of a strong communal society. Thus they took to religion for support. But when the time and offer came in 1792, the majority of the Black Loyalists left for Sierra Leone, because Nova Scotia was no real home for them.

Whitfield’s book, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860*, discussed a second wave of fugitive slaves who migrated north after the War of 1812 under very similar circumstances as their forefathers, the Black Loyalists. In fact, when studying Whitfield’s book, it almost seems like the exact same story just thirty years later. Especially since Alexander Cochrane, a Vice Admiral in the British military during the War of 1812, “saw African Americans as an

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<sup>31</sup> Whitehead, *The Black Loyalists*, 165.

<sup>32</sup>Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2006), 19.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

important ally in the defeat of the United States” and offered them freedom and a place to settle in return.<sup>34</sup> As such, this offer from 1814 is very similar to Lord Dunmore’s proclamation of 1775 and Black Loyalists and Black Refugees were subjected to very similar policies.

*Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* also briefly discusses Black Loyalists and their tendency towards loyalism. Whitfield argues “that slaves during the American Revolution were loyal to the ideal of freedom rather than to either of the combatants.”<sup>35</sup> As such, Whitfield argues that Black Loyalists were loyal but a different kind than White Loyalists. The Black Loyalists were loyal towards their wish to gain independence, as such they were neither loyal to the British or Patriots but rather to the side that would offer them their freedom and rights. This clearly separates them from the White Loyalists who were opportunists, looking for a life they were used to before the American Revolution.

Dr. Whitfield also goes into detail about the issue of race in his book. He states that “the Atlantic world’s reliance on black slavery created conditions and attitudes that greatly influences the local government’s and the local population’s attitudes towards the Black Loyalists and the Black Refugees.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, both the Black Loyalists and Black Refugees were not seen as equals to the White Loyalists or settlers in Nova Scotia. In fact, they were treated unfairly and things such as land grants were either not processed at all or very slowly. He states that “all Loyalists should be given land in Nova Scotia” but unfortunately the massive influx in population “meant that poor whites and Black Loyalists were at the very bottom of

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<sup>34</sup> Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 31, 33.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

the list of those to receive land.”<sup>37</sup> He goes even further and compares the land grants promised to the Black Loyalists to those promised to the Black Refugees. Whitfield states that Black Loyalists’ “grants were much smaller than those afforded to the white settlers” and that this same issue would come up “with the Black Refugees after the War of 1812.”<sup>38</sup> He further argues that both groups received “some of the worst land in the colony.”<sup>39</sup> This correlates with the issue of race and the fact that the imperial government had implemented “that all Loyalists should be given land in Nova Scotia” but unfortunately this policy “favored those who had lost property or status as a result of the war,” which were mostly white settlers.<sup>40</sup> The Black Loyalists, who had not lost property but gained their freedom as a result of the war, were thus the last to receive land in Nova Scotia.

Whitfield published a book in 2016 entitled *North to Bondage: loyalist slavery in the Maritimes*, which is the most recent thorough discussion on slavery in the region in the late eighteenth-century. His book argues “most whites came to see black people as nothing better than cheap labour,” which correlates to the fact that most White Loyalists brought slaves with them and saw the free blacks as nothing better than their slaves and had a difficult time adjusting to them.<sup>41</sup> He further writes in his book that the terms Loyalists and loyalism “have multiple, contested, and contradictory meanings in various contexts, writing that the terms should be studied

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<sup>37</sup> Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to bondage: loyalist slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 6.

with a ‘microhistorical perspective.’”<sup>42</sup> Whitfield states that slavery, as well as the multiple meanings attributed to the term loyalism impacts the understanding of Black Loyalists and should be studied with care.

Ken Donovan wrote a recent article, which deals with racism in Atlantic Canada and as well with the issue of fugitive slaves in the region. For Donovan, Black Loyalists and Black Refugees are part of the same group, as he claims “fugitive slaves came to the country from the United States after the end of the War of Independence, [and] after the end of the War of 1812.”<sup>43</sup> As such, he argues that both the Black Loyalists and Black Refugees were fugitive slaves and do not have a distinct difference. Donovan thus argues that even if the Black Loyalists had a distinct culture and independence in Nova Scotia it barely mattered since slavery was still dominant in the region and overshadowed the Black Loyalists.

Donovan argues that Canada seems like a country of freedom and independence but this image is fading. He argues that Canada has a history of “providing asylum to slaves and other refugees.”<sup>44</sup> However, this is vanishing when studying slavery within Canada more closely. According to Donovan, “the study of slavery in Canada goes against the dominant image of Canada as a land of freedom.”<sup>45</sup> He argues that after the Loyalist migration to Nova Scotia a total of “1,232 black people, or 34 per cent of the total black emigrants, remained slaves in

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<sup>42</sup> Whitfield, *North to bondage*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Ken Donovan, “Slavery and Freedom in Atlantic Canada’s African Diaspora: Introduction,” *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* XLIII, no. 1 (2014): 110, accessed December 9, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/7136578/Ken\\_Donovan\\_Slavery\\_and\\_Freedom\\_in\\_Atlantic\\_Canada\\_s\\_African\\_Diaspora\\_Introduction\\_Acadiensis\\_XLIII\\_no\\_1\\_Winter\\_Spring\\_2014\\_109-115](https://www.academia.edu/7136578/Ken_Donovan_Slavery_and_Freedom_in_Atlantic_Canada_s_African_Diaspora_Introduction_Acadiensis_XLIII_no_1_Winter_Spring_2014_109-115).

<sup>44</sup> Donovan, *Slavery and Freedom*, 110.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Nova Scotia.”<sup>46</sup> This estimate does not include the Shelburne migrants.<sup>47</sup> Considering that over 34 per cent of the black population in Nova Scotia was still enslaved in the 1780’s makes it evident that racism and discrimination was still present in the region. Donovan further states, “slavery was expanded in Nova Scotia after the American Revolution,” since White Loyalists brought their slaves to the region.<sup>48</sup> It is rather ironic, he argues, that “the increase of black freedom in Nova Scotia had gone hand-in-hand with the increase of slavery.”<sup>49</sup> It is evident that British officials and settlers in Nova Scotia must have had a hard time adjusting to having Black Loyalists in their midst and did not treat them as equals. However, Donovan notes, “the historiography of slavery in Canada is still sparse.”<sup>50</sup> As such, this hypothesis may change once more in-depth research has been done. But Donovan contends that if the settlers did treat Black Loyalists as equals, the huge number of slaves in the region that were not free overshadowed this impact. Black Loyalists were not treated in the same manner as their white counterparts, since they were different in their ideology, not looking for a monarch to rule them but freedom, and thus their goals behind loyalism was drastically dissimilar from the White Loyalists.

Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins uses an interdisciplinary approach to arrive at the conclusion that the slaves who came to Nova Scotia alongside the White Loyalists were Black Loyalists. She uses the interdisciplinary route in order to link slaves and free Black Loyalists with a hands-on approach. She wrote her PhD thesis

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<sup>46</sup> Donovan, *Slavery and Freedom*, 111.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 112.

“A Loyalist Planation In Nova Scotia, 1784-1800” in 2012.<sup>51</sup> Her contribution to the field is crucial since her approach to Black Loyalist history is interdisciplinary, linking archeology with history.<sup>52</sup> In a later article she discusses how the interdisciplinary approach is beneficial, considering the limited number of primary sources on Loyalist slaves and Black Loyalists.<sup>53</sup> She uses the plantation of a Timothy Ruggles as a case study.<sup>54</sup> Ruggles had owned a plantation in Massachusetts but relocated to North Mountain, Nova Scotia in 1784.<sup>55</sup> As an interdisciplinary scholar, Cottreau-Robins states, “historical archaeology offered a hands-on method to collect and record evidence of a Loyalist plantation,” which otherwise had “significant gaps” in the primary sources that were available, such as recordings of slaves.<sup>56</sup> The interdisciplinary approach allowed her to fill those gaps and get a better idea of what life in the late eighteenth-century looked like for all settlers.

Cottreau-Robins discusses the issue of interdisciplinary history further. Between the years 1993 and 2000, archeologists analyzed sites of former Black Loyalists habitations.<sup>57</sup> More than eighteen sites have been located and analyzed by the archeologists under the supervision of Laird Niven in those seven years.<sup>58</sup> In 1998

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<sup>51</sup> Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, “A Loyalist Plantation in Nova Scotia, 1784-1800” (PhD diss., Dalhousie University, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, “Searching for Enslaved in Nova Scotia’s Loyalist Landscape,” *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* XLIII, no. 1 (2014): 130, accessed February 24, 2016, <https://journals-lib-unb-ca.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/index.php/acadiensis/article/view/22041/25576>.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>57</sup> Cottreau-Robins, *A Loyalist Plantation*, 118.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

the Nova Scotia Museum started another project.<sup>59</sup> According to Cottreau-Robins two specific places were chosen, Birchtown and Tracadie.<sup>60</sup> The Birchtown location, which had been analyzed previously, and supposedly had belonged to Stephen Blucke, was to give insight into “Goulden and Acker properties.”<sup>61</sup> The Tracadie site had not been analyzed before; therefore, the hope was to find any traces of the 1787 Black Loyalist settlement.<sup>62</sup> Cottreau-Robins states that the research on the ground “resulted in over 16,000 recovered artifacts” and that “seventeen new Black Loyalist sites were...recorded.”<sup>63</sup> This evidence indicates that the interdisciplinary approach, historical archeology, is capable of filling many gaps, which never would have been clarified otherwise. However, archeology and history both rely on evidence and not always are locations such as Birchtown and Tracadie preserved, making the collecting of data difficult. Combining two disciplines allowed Cottreau-Robins to develop a better understanding of who the Black Loyalists were.

In 2014, she wrote an article on the enslaved population who came to Nova Scotia alongside White Loyalists. She argues that the slaves who came to Nova Scotia with the White Loyalists were Black Loyalists. Cottreau-Robins calls them “enslaved Black Loyalists.”<sup>64</sup> She states, “those who arrived still enslaved, while not forming a majority of Black Loyalists, shaped an important part of the African Nova Scotia experience.”<sup>65</sup> Cottreau-Robins believes that Black Loyalists were both free and

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<sup>59</sup> Cottreau-Robins, *A Loyalist Plantation*, 118.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>64</sup> Cottreau-Robins, *Searching for enslaved*, 133.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*



enslaved. If Black Loyalists constituted both, were they truly loyal? If loyalism is classified as an action, in the case of the Black Loyalists, as the action of fleeing the rebels and joining the British lines during the American Revolution, a slave that was brought to Nova Scotia by White Loyalists was not loyal. However, loyalism as an ideology would classify every individual that swore allegiance to the British, no matter if white or black, free or enslaved, in the United States or Nova Scotia, as loyal. The fact that some scholars consider both slaves and free blacks as Loyalists further complicates the debate around their loyalism. The lives of free and enslaved individuals varied drastically, as well as their ideologies and allegiance. Scholars need to identify different kinds of loyalism or sub-categories to make the term fit all the different groups of people who are classified as Loyalists. The debate around loyalism and who can be grouped under one single definition term leaves room to question whether Black Loyalists were a myth or reality.

James Walker is the most influential historian in the field of Black Loyalists. He wrote *The Black Loyalists* in 1976 and up to this date it remains the key source for information on the subject. The established historiography covered in his book focuses not only on the Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia, but half of the book studies the Black Loyalists after they moved to Sierra Leone in 1792. His thorough discussion of the Black Loyalists experience enables readers to gain a lot from his book. Walker discusses the religious affiliation of the Black Loyalists, and about them being “segregated into their own Anglican congregations” and how this affected their communities.<sup>66</sup> The fact that Walker looks at the Black Loyalists experience

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<sup>66</sup> Walker, James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1976), 68.

makes him a historian who looks at history from below, and not one of elite history. He focuses on the history of the minorities, the Black Loyalists, and thus provides an objective historiography that does not center around White Loyalists but rather the black settlers and their unique identity. His approach to discuss both religion and education in regard to the formation of a separate community and identity makes him a social historian, who emphasizes the differences that were present between the white and black settlers.

*The Black Loyalists* focuses on the ex-slaves of the American Revolution who became known as Black Loyalists because they joined the British troops and fought the Patriots in return for freedom. In November 1775, Lord Dunmore offered freedom to slaves who rebelled against their master in return for military service in the British army. The proclamation announced “all indented servants, negroes, or others (appertaining to Rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear arms.”<sup>67</sup> However, does this make every slave that rebelled against the Patriots a Loyalist? Walker argues that slaves who joined the British were Loyalists because they fought for the Crown’s cause. He argues, “the Black Loyalists evidently found in the British policy their only chance for a secure and permanent release from the bonds of colour.”<sup>68</sup> Were the slaves really fighting for the Crown or would they have chosen to fight for the Rebels had they offered freedom to every slave who was willing to bear arms against the British troops?

The question remains, were the people who are considered Black Loyalists in Walker’s historiography really loyal, and if yes, why was there a distinguishing factor

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<sup>67</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

between White and Black Loyalists. Race is clearly a factor in this matter, Walker defines race as something Europeans invented when they conquered the rest of the world because “dramatically different physical features led to a global stratification of conqueror and conquered, superior and subordinate...an observable coincidence between phenotype and social position.”<sup>69</sup> Walker’s definition makes it evident that he believes the New World was struck with racism. Social hierarchy was often dictated by one’s heritage and not by one’s potential. As such, people of the late eighteenth-century evidently defined White and Black Loyalists as different social groups, thus Black Loyalists did exist and were not a myth.

Black Loyalists were seen as a different group, separated from White Loyalists, as such historians should be careful to compare White Loyalists to Black Loyalists. Just because both groups were loyal does not mean that their loyalty was understood to be the same. Walker states “blacks were at the lowest end of the Loyalist scale.”<sup>70</sup> He further argues that “it is not surprising that an insignificant group of ex-slaves should be overlooked” and thus further divided from their white counterparts.<sup>71</sup> This is yet another example with which Walker demonstrates the fact that even though the Black Loyalists were loyal, Nova Scotian settlers treated them differently. Black Loyalists were loyal to the crown to the extent that they were willing to fight for its cause but nothing else. This may be so because of the treatment they received in Nova Scotia. Walker states, “the blacks were ‘entirely deprived of

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<sup>69</sup> James W. St. G. Walker, *“Race” Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies*, (Canada: The Osgoode Society for the Canadian Legal History and Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>70</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, X.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

the privileges of British subjects, particularly trial by jury.”<sup>72</sup> The Black Loyalists came to Nova Scotia with the hopes of freedom and independence but in some cases they did not receive either because “many Black Loyalists had to accept positions as indentured servants,” which “differed little from that of outright black slaves.”<sup>73</sup> The difference between the two was that indentured servitude was supposed to last a fixed amount of time.<sup>74</sup> In many cases this system resulted in slavery as parents had to indenture their children and when the term was up “the master might claim the child as his legitimate slave or demand of the parents payment...before turning him free.”<sup>75</sup> Black settlers who had to indenture themselves were far from the freedom and independence they were seeking when first coming to Nova Scotia. They, alongside poor whites, were at the bottom of the social hierarchy and economical conditions resulted in many black settlers slipping back into slavery or slave like conditions in Nova Scotia.<sup>76</sup> It is difficult to group together White Loyalists, who owned land and had money, with Black Loyalists who lived on the brink of slavery and poverty. Both were loyal but a different kind of loyal, which results in different groups of Loyalists. Some historians, such as Barry Cahill, go as far as to argue that these differences are too drastic and as such Black Loyalists were nothing but a myth.

Cahill posits in 1999, that the idea of Black Loyalists is simply a myth, which was created by the scholars of the current academic realm. Cahill argues “Black Loyalists’ was just another term for fugitive slaves” stating that the group of people

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<sup>72</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 55.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>76</sup> For more on indentured servitude and the treatment of both white and black indentured servants in Nova Scotia consult with Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 49-51.

that scholars classify as Black Loyalists were simply runaway slaves and not loyal to the Crown.<sup>77</sup> Loyalists are supposed to be loyal to the Crown and support the King and Queen and want a monarchy to rule them. Barry Cahill argues, “the fugitive slaves were a subcategory or ‘Blacks’ not ‘Loyalists,’” as they “were seeking refuge from slavery, not from rebellion.”<sup>78</sup> As such, the Black Loyalists were not loyal, in the eyes of Barry Cahill, but rather looking for refuge and freedom in the midst of the British.

Barry Cahill contends that the phrase “Black Loyalist” is evidently no more than a myth because it is difficult to clearly define the term. According to Cahill’s article, the “issue is whether fugitive slaves and Loyalists who happened to be Black can be merged to produce Black Loyalists.”<sup>79</sup> As mentioned above, slaves who were seeking refuge from the rebellion are not considered loyal in Cahill’s perspective. As such, he does not believe that Black Loyalist is a term, which can be attributed to the majority of the free blacks, and to the runaway slaves that came to Nova Scotia and other regions. Cahill argues that these fugitive slaves needed a label in order “to bring Black people into the mainstream of historical scholarship.”<sup>80</sup> He states that Black Loyalist is a term, which historians of the twentieth-century attributed to every fugitive slave and free black that came to Nova Scotia in the 1780’s.

Race is another factor, which Cahill attributes to the myth, arguing that it is a false accusation to claim that fugitive slaves were loyal because they did not come

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<sup>77</sup> Barry Cahill, “The Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada,” *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* 24, no. 1 (1999): 86, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/acadiensis/article/view/10801/11587>.

<sup>78</sup>Cahill, *The Black Loyalist Myth*, 76,79.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 80.

from a British Loyalist background. Cahill argues, “they could not be just Blacks, nor even free Blacks” a label that was recognizable was needed in order to make this unique group “a respectable ethnocultural minority identifiable more by their Loyalism than by their Blackness.”<sup>81</sup> He argues that the term loyalism was used in order to refine the historiography and make the study of the fugitive slaves more attractive.

Maya Jasanoff studies Loyalists over time and space, how their characteristics changed, and how officials considered them within the public eye, not only in Nova Scotia but also in Sierra Leone, England, and the Bahamas. In her book *Liberty's Exiles* (2011), she focuses on Loyalists as refugees, settlers, and subjects. Jasanoff not only focuses on Black Loyalists but White Loyalists as well. As such, she is deliberately putting the two groups into one agenda. She argues, “the experience of loyal whites, blacks, and Indians have generally been segregated into distinct historical narratives.”<sup>82</sup> However, she believes “loyalists of all backgrounds confronted a common dilemma with Britain’s defeat-to stay or go-and all numbered among the revolution’s refugees.”<sup>83</sup> According to her, both White and Black Loyalists were refugees that needed to leave the war region because they were loyal to the Crown, had fought the Rebels, and were now in great danger. Thus they had some things in common. Jasanoff states, “loyalists landed in every corner of the British Empire.”<sup>84</sup> This includes the Black Loyalist settlement in Sierra Leone after 1792. She even goes so far as to call every individual who had to leave the Rebel region for

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<sup>81</sup> Cahill, *The Black Loyalist Myth*, 80.

<sup>82</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 2011), 8.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 10.

British colonies as “refugee loyalist” and thus ensures that White, Black and First Nation Loyalists were seen as one overall loyal amalgam.<sup>85</sup> Clearly, for her, Black Loyalists were not a myth but an authentic entity. The fact that she calls all Loyalists refugees only pushes this point. As a matter of fact, studying Loyalists as one massive influx and their worldwide settlements after the American Revolution within the aspects of refugees, settlers, and subjects only pushes that point. However, scholars should be aware of the difficulty this geographic comparative approach may bring forward, possibly neglecting the importance of cultural groups and settlement, and missing key points and differences, which may be present.

In connection with racism Jasanoff argues that policies were passed in order to weigh against the United States influx. She argues “black loyalists got their freedom from authorities increasingly inclined toward abolition, in self-conscious contrast to the slaveowning United States.”<sup>86</sup> Thus she states that Black Loyalists received their independence because the British were following an anti-American policy. Jasanoff states, “loyalists of all kinds received land and supplies” and thus there was no difference between White, Black and First Nation Loyalists.<sup>87</sup> In conclusion, racism was not a crucial aspect according to Jasanoff, since British officials were passing laws in order to counter American policies and the Black Loyalists were not a myth.

Cassandra Pybus wrote *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, which was published in 2006, and discusses the American Revolution and its runaway slaves. She studies the runaway slaves and their settlements in London, Australia and Sierra Leone, and as such Pybus adds to the historiography of the Black Loyalists on an international

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<sup>85</sup> Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 13.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

scope. She argues that fugitive slaves were loyal to the British because “personal liberty was not something Patriots appreciated.”<sup>88</sup> Some even went so far as to believe that independence would alter the slaves mind and thus “devalued the property” and did not want them back.<sup>89</sup> Thus, Pybus is arguing that the fugitive slaves were loyal to the British because they offered freedom to the slaves. Slaves were looking for independence and free will and the Patriots did not believe in the freedom of their workforce. As such, the Black Loyalists had only one option when the chance arose. The British offered freedom to them in return for military service and the slaves who later became known as Black Loyalists jumped at the opportunity. As a result, Pybus argues that the Black Loyalists were not a myth, and loyal to the Crown because the British were the only ones that offered freedom to them.

Looking at racism, Pybus argues that slavery had an impact on the Black Loyalists, because they were craving freedom and the British offered it. In comparison to Jasnaoff, her book solely focuses on the African-American Loyalist population. Similar to Walker’s contentions, Pybus argues that the Black Loyalists were not a myth and that they need to be studied in detail. However, she argues that Black Loyalists were not loyal to the same degree as their white counterparts. Her entire book focuses on the runaway slaves of the American Revolution and the majority of these fugitive slaves ended up as Black Loyalists or at least under the British crown. She states it is rather ironic that the slaves fled the American Revolution based on the promise of freedom and independence and left behind the policies and beliefs of the Patriots but eventually “carried to the far corners of the

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<sup>88</sup> Cassandra Pybus, *Epic journey of freedom: runaway slaves of the American Revolution and their global quest for liberty*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 63.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.



globe the animating principles of the revolution that had so emphatically excluded them.”<sup>90</sup> As such, she is aware that Black Loyalists and White Loyalists cannot be defined under the same terms. White Loyalists were loyal to the British because they wanted to live in a monarchy, while Black Loyalists flocked to the monarch because the officials offered independence to them. The Black Loyalist motive was drastically different from their white counterparts and as such they need more study.

The historiography on the Black Loyalists is very diverse but can be used as a foundation for further debate on whether the free blacks were loyal and how to redefine the term ‘Loyalists’ in order to make it fit both White and Black Loyalists, who had very different perspectives. I intend on contributing to this debate by showing that the Black Loyalists were loyal to the British in their own unique sense and that one definition of the term is not enough to make it fit all Black Loyalists, as individuals had different reasons for joining the British. Some may have been loyal to King George III, or Lord Dunmore’s proclamation of freedom, or just the idea of independence and rights itself.<sup>91</sup> The term Loyalist will need to be redefined in order to fit both White and Black Loyalists because land petitions and the colonial government used different terms to define the Black Loyalists.

The colonial government used terms such as free black people within warrants and council minutes to record the race of individuals. In contrast to Jasanoff, who argues that all Loyalists had the same ideals, I will use five land petitions to support and argue that there are crucial differences and that the degree of loyalism varied, and that the eighteenth-century Nova Scotian government did not use the term Black

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<sup>90</sup> Pybus, *Epic journey of freedom*, 205.

<sup>91</sup> For more information on Lord Dunmore’s proclamation see Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*, 18.

Loyalist. Land petitions, as well as newspapers and council minutes from Halifax between 1783 and 1792 affected the societal understanding of loyalism and of the Black Loyalists. The land granting system and its differences in acreages granted to white and black settlers (White Loyalists were granted on average 200 acres, while Black Loyalists were granted 40 acres on average) indicates that the kinds of loyalism varied within society, and needs to be redefined in order to fit the many different facets that are Black Loyalists and Loyalists in general. Further, the question arises if a Black Loyalist's loyalty can be defined by how much land they were granted by the British colonial government?

### **Defining The Terms**

The term Black Loyalist is problematic in many ways. Particularly when considering that racism was a prevailing aspect of community life. Racism was very dominant in Nova Scotia's society at the time of the Black Loyalists, according to Whitfield. He states "the pervasiveness of white racism, discriminatory judicial proceedings, and the general attitudes of Nova Scotians...curtailed the Black Loyalists' hopes for a meaningful freedom."<sup>92</sup> Thus, it is evident that Black Loyalists were not seen as equals, White Loyalists and Black Loyalists were clearly two different groups. As such, it can be argued that Black Loyalists may not have been loyal to the same extent as White Loyalists, so cannot be defined by the same terms as White Loyalists.

The term Black Loyalist in itself can be problematic when it comes to defining who the Black Loyalists were and where their allegiances were, especially when considering the fact that the Black Refugees of the War of 1812 were offered a

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<sup>92</sup> Whitfield, *Blacks on the border*, 20.

similar contract by the British officials. Whitfield argues that Sir Alexander Cochrane “issued a proclamation offering support to Americans willing to switch sides” in April 1814, and as well, he “saw African Americans as an important ally in the defeat of the United States.”<sup>93</sup> Cochrane’s 1814 proclamation is very similar to Lord Dunmore’s proclamation of 1775 where he offered freedom to everyone, including slaves who were willing to take up arms and support the British.<sup>94</sup> As a result of Cochrane’s proclamation many refugees took up arms and eventually settled in Nova Scotia. This situation is very similar to the Black Loyalists. Scholars should consider why the Black Refugees are not called Black Loyalists, but yet the fugitive slaves of the 1780’s are called Black Loyalists. What is the major difference between these two groups, if there is any? Did the American Revolution have an impact on their allegiance of name sake, since the colonies became a country afterwards, thus the war that was fought was existential for the British, while the War of 1812, was more a border war, and not based on the establishment of independence. Is this fact enough to classify the Black Loyalists as loyal to the Crown?

Black Loyalists existed but their loyalties need to be defined differently. Black Loyalists were loyal to the Crown to the extent that they fought for the British, and settled in their colonies, in return for freedom. Freedom is the key, because the slaves would have aligned with the Patriots had they offered freedom and land to the Black Loyalists. The rebels did offer freedom to slaves eventually, and some became known as Black Patriots.<sup>95</sup> The Black Loyalists’ loyalties do not align with the White

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<sup>93</sup> Whitfield, *Blacks on the border*, 33.

<sup>94</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 1.

<sup>95</sup> Alan Gilbert, *Black patriots and loyalists: fighting for emancipation in the war of independence*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 57.

Loyalists' desire and allegiance, but rather they wanted to live in freedom. As such, Black Loyalists were loyal to whomever offered freedom and liberty to them, they followed a pragmatic approach when choosing their allegiance. This does not mean that White Loyalists solely followed an ideological approach, but some chose their allegiance based on where their material prospects were met, and such were pragmatic too. The difference is that Black Loyalists were looking for their independence while White Loyalists were looking to make a profit or maintain their status and standard of living in society.

Black Loyalists were loyal to the people who were willing to grant them independence because their background was filled with slavery, racism, and hatred. Generations of slaves have succumbed to racism and slavery before the American Revolution. As such, the fugitive slaves were looking for freedom and a better life. The British offered freedom, independence, and a better chance at life to the slaves who would join them. Thus the slaves rebelled against their masters and joined the British, transforming them into Black Loyalists. However, racism was very common in the British Empire, resulting in the Black Loyalists being treated differently from the White Loyalists. The Black Loyalists had different backgrounds and ideologies than their White Loyalists' counterparts, which resulted in them assuming a different kind of loyalism as the white settlers. As such, Black Loyalists did exist but need to be studied further in order for a sound historiography to be established.

## **Conclusion**

The Black Loyalist historiography is very diverse and the debate whether they were just fugitive slaves or actually Loyalists is a hard one to answer, as scholars can

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argue many sides. Walker evidently supports the idea of Black Loyalists as he wrote the most influential book on the topic in the last 40 years, and clearly argues supportively of the Black Loyalist cause. Cahill argues that Black Loyalists are a myth and rather classifies them as fugitive slaves that needed a label in order to be more attractive towards the general public and scholars to be studied in greater detail. Pybus believes in the Black Loyalists, having written a book focusing in the runaway slaves of the American Revolution. And like Walker, she desires a further discussion and deliberate research on the topic.

Jasanoff clearly believes in the Black Loyalists as a viable historical group. She argues that White, Black, and First Nation Loyalists all experienced the same events and as such should be studied as one. Donovan, like Cahill, on the other hand believes that Black Loyalists were just fugitive slaves, since the Black Refugees of the War of 1812 experienced the exact same only 30 years later and were not classified as Loyalists. As such, he argues that both groups were just fugitive slaves and that the label Black Loyalist was used in order to grasp scholars' attention towards the topic and get them to research the group more fully. And finally, Whitfield shows the readers yet another option, arguing about the Black Refugees cause of the War of 1812, which is very similar to the Black Loyalists but yet different. The historiography regarding the Black Loyalists has clearly developed and contributed to the debate around loyalism that can be attributed to continuing study of the Black Loyalists.

The land petitions studied in this thesis will contribute to this ongoing debate by shedding light on governmental affairs and the terms commonly used by the colonial

officials to describe the free blacks. This angle will allow for a thorough understanding of the words used to identify the black population and will shed light on the fact that the colonial government did not use the term Black Loyalist, but rather used the term free blacks to describe the newcomers.

The free blacks that migrated to Nova Scotia were not referred to as Black Loyalists, by the colonial government, since not one of the land petitions, newspapers, or council minutes used the term but rather referred to them as free blacks. Some of the free blacks considered themselves as Loyalists but the kind of loyalism varied between each individual. It is problematic to use one single term for all Loyalists who migrated to Nova Scotia since their backgrounds and ideals varied drastically.

## Chapter 2 - Stephen Blucke: A Unique Settler

Colonel Stephen Blucke, a resident of Shelburne County, was a Black Loyalist who received 200 acres of land. This was the most acreage any Black Loyalist received in Nova Scotia in the 1780s. Stephen Blucke was granted two hundred acres, while other Black Loyalists, if they were lucky enough to get land, received on average of forty acres between 1783-1791. Only 40 percent of the free black population in Nova Scotia did receive some form of land.<sup>96</sup> This is substantially lower, acre wise, than their white counterparts. The majority of the free blacks received no land at all, even though they had been promised land in return for their support of the British during the American Revolution. Land petitions shed light on how much land was given to Black Loyalists in comparison to other settlers in terms of acreage and timing. This chapter focuses on one of these petitions, which includes Stephen Blucke as one of the petitioners requesting land in Port Roseway Harbour. It will discuss why he was granted a substantially larger estate than other free blacks.

The size of the land given to the free blacks in comparison to white settlers and their treatment within the community provides insights into a biased society, and suggests a correlation between class and race. Neil MacKinnon's *This Unfriendly Soil* discusses the experience of the newcomers. In the early stages of the migration a proposal was created in which the Loyalists asked for free passage to Nova Scotia, provision for a year, and land for them to settle on.<sup>97</sup> The land was to be in a well-sustained and suitable area, having been surveyed and with each lot containing between three hundred and five hundred acres, which compared to forty acres of a

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<sup>96</sup> Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (Toronto: Longman Canada Limited, 1976), 102.

<sup>97</sup> Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia 1783-1791* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), 4-5.

Black Loyalist estate.<sup>98</sup> James Walker notes that only 184 out of 649 free black men who lived in Birchtown, received land, with the average size being thirty-four acres.<sup>99</sup> Ruth Holmes Whitehead argued that many Black Loyalists lived in huts, tents, and even pit houses (holes in the ground) in their early settlements in Nova Scotia.<sup>100</sup> It is evident that White and Black Loyalists were treated differently when it came to the distribution of land.

Loyalists did not get along with each other and clashed on occasion because they had different attitudes on life and ideologies. MacKinnon argues that the Loyalists were a unique group of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds and outlooks.<sup>101</sup> The Loyalists consisted of desperate people, opportunists, white, and blacks.<sup>102</sup> This mixture of people and mindsets eventually clashed and an outburst of violence erupted. The race riot of Shelburne in 1784 is just one example, which indicates that Loyalists did not get along very well. Benjamin Marston, a settler in Shelburne, reported the riot in his journal. He noted that disbanded soldiers and free blacks clashed, as the latter were willing to work for less cash, and thus took job opportunities away from the white settlers.<sup>103</sup> The disbanded soldiers eventually pushed the free blacks out of town, destroying their homes while doing so.<sup>104</sup> The race riots of Shelburne are just one example of how the Loyalists fought over land and labor.

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<sup>98</sup> MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 5; Marion Gilroy, *Loyalists and Land Settlement in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1937), 77-122.

<sup>99</sup> James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1976), 23.

<sup>100</sup> Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Black Loyalists: southern settlers of Nova Scotia's first free black communities* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2013), 159.

<sup>101</sup> MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 66.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*



This chapter will focus on one land petition, which was filed by thirty-nine individuals in Port Roseway Harbour in 1786. Stephen Blucke was included in this land petition, which was in Robert Morris' name, a white settler, and primarily included White Loyalists.<sup>105</sup> Overall, Morris received 6,500 acres of land in Port Roseway in 1786, with Stephen Blucke having been granted two hundred acres.<sup>106</sup> Two hundred acres was the size of land the majority of the petitioners in the grant received, with twenty-nine of them having requested lots in that size. The list of the thirty-nine petitioners, which is attached to the first document of the petition, will be studied in detail. A table and two figures, which correlate to the list, will also be included and analyzed in this chapter. There is no clear hierarchy in the list and no reason as to why the petitioners appear on it in the order they do. The only form of hierarchy found on the background of the thirty-nine individuals was the fact that one section was composed solely of pilots.<sup>107</sup> Pilots were individuals who worked on ships. They were responsible for navigating and keeping the ship on track. It is curious that section B of the petition was made up solely of pilots, because no common denominator between the other groups and their individuals could be found. The census, assessment and poll tax records from 1767-1827 state the occupation of each individual within the document, including the six people who can be found in

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<sup>105</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol.17 doc.157, p. 6.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 8,6.

<sup>107</sup> Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne and outlying communities, 1786 and 1787," Census, Assessment and Poll Tax Records 1767-1827, Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1517 p. 22, 36, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=560>; Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne and outlying communities, 1786 and 1787," Census, Assessment and Poll Tax Records 1767-1827, Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1518 p. 11, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=1374>.

section B of the land petition.<sup>108</sup> Each individual was recorded to have been a pilot.<sup>109</sup> No clarification as to what a pilot was specifically was given in the census record.<sup>110</sup> This fact will be discussed in greater detail later on. It seems that Blucke was treated the same as the other settlers on the petition, with his race not being mentioned and receiving the same amount of land as the majority of individuals.

It is difficult to pinpoint which of the individuals on land petitions were actually fugitive slaves since not every warrant stated the race of petitioners. Some of the few reference that academics have are the *Book of Negroes* and the list of individuals who eventually migrated to Sierra Leone, in order to cross-reference the names of the petitions. Only a few land petitions stated the race of the individuals petitioning for land, as did Thomas Brownspriggs', which said "negromen" on the warrant.<sup>111</sup> This leads to the conclusion that only when every individual listed on the petition was of the same race, would it be noted on the document.

The government treated fugitive slaves unfairly. Ellen Gibson Wilson noted that Shelburne Township saw a warrant for 179 blacks to be granted farms of twenty to forty acres respectively, while their white counterparts on the same warrant received

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<sup>108</sup> Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne and outlying communities, 1786 and 1787," Census, Assessment and Poll Tax Records 1767-1827, Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1517 p. 22, 36, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=560>; Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne and outlying communities, 1786 and 1787," Census, Assessment and Poll Tax Records 1767-1827, Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1518 p. 11, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=1374>.

<sup>109</sup> Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne," MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1517 p. 22, 36, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=560>; Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne," MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1518 p. 11, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=1374>.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> NSA MFM 15109, Ethnic Groups, MG 15 vol. 20 doc. 19, p. 6.

over one hundred acres each.<sup>112</sup> She further notes that Marion Gilroy's study of Loyalist petitions indicated that 167 grants had been approved and land laid out onto the free blacks, while 327 warrants had been filed and were in the process of being approved between 1784 and 1789.<sup>113</sup> According to Gibson Wilson, Gilroy recorded 533 free blacks to have received land in the Maritimes after their 1783 departure from New York, that is a total of 40 %.<sup>114</sup> Less than half of the Black settlers received any form of land within the province and it clearly does not measure up to the size or amount of land granted to the white settlers.

Gilroy's study is useful when looking into the land granting system of the 1780's and how much land was actually granted to individuals. Marion Gilroy's *Loyalists and land settlement* is on genealogy. The book states the name, occupation, and acreage granted to individuals in Nova Scotia in the 1780s.<sup>115</sup> It also mentioned how many estates each individual owned and the year they were granted the property, as well as the county the lots belonged to. She mentioned the occupation of two of the thirty-nine petitioners. Gilroy did not mention Stephen Blucke's race, which was unusual since she mentioned the race of Thomas Brownspriggs and many other free blacks in her book.

The land granting system was chaotic for every Loyalist in the region in the 1780s. It did not matter what race the petitioners were, the system of land granting was inefficient, indicating that no matter what background one came from it was

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<sup>112</sup> Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 102.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Gilroy, *Loyalists*, 77-122.

difficult to receive land in Nova Scotia.<sup>116</sup> Individual officials tried to treat the free blacks with fairness; preconception and the main focus of the system prohibited the free blacks to receive equal treatment and the land they wanted.<sup>117</sup> Walker was aware that the majority of Black settlers received no land whatsoever and others only small lots.<sup>118</sup> He stated that one of the issues in the land granting system was that the individuals who had lost property and valuables were to receive land first, meaning the wealthier one had been, the more land they would receive.<sup>119</sup> This was a huge issue for the black settlers, who had mainly been slaves and as such had lost no property. Having gained their freedom just recently, the majority had no property claims; in fact they had just received one of the most crucial things in their lives, their freedom. This could explain why so few actually did receive land and why Stephen Blucke received 200 acres, which was the most any black settler received. The petitioners had to be literate (most slaves were not,) but Blucke's wife was educated. He was a colonel with the Black Pioneers, and his wife had some money. His wife Margaret, a New York native, was born to a family, which consisted of mostly free blacks.<sup>120</sup> At age 14 she bought her own freedom and eventually that of Isabella Gibbons.<sup>121</sup> It is unclear how much money she had, or where it came from. Once in Nova Scotia the Bluckes made a name for themselves and achieved status within the black settler community.

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<sup>116</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 18.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>120</sup> Nova Scotia Museum: The Family of Provincial Museums, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," Remembering Black Loyalists, Black Communities in Nova Scotia, Virtual Museums Canada, 2001, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

Ellen Gibson Wilson notes that military affiliation had an impact on land granted to Black Loyalists, and that the ratio between Black Loyalists who were in the military to civilians was drastic. In her book *The Loyal Blacks* she writes that sixty-seven fugitive slaves were members of the Black Pioneers upon arriving in Nova Scotia, including 18 children, 28 women and 21 men.<sup>122</sup> The Black Brigade saw a membership of 82 individuals in the early 1780s.<sup>123</sup> A total of 149 individuals claimed some sort of military status, or 1/23 of the total number of free black settlers who came to Nova Scotia, with the approximate total being 3,500.<sup>124</sup> Can we consider all 3,500 black settlers Loyalists or is the ratio 1/23 too small to do so? Stephen Blucke's land petition was unique in many ways. His wealth and military affiliation had an impact on Blucke's successful request for land, as well as the fact that Governor Parr considered him a mulatto.<sup>125</sup> Social hierarchy was not a white and black binary, as mulattos were present in Nova Scotia, indicating a gray area that is often times neglected. Race was not the only deciding factor when it came to social status. As well, the abolitionist movement was in high gear at the end of the eighteenth-century in the British Empire. These two factors had an impact on the treatment of the black settlers.

This chapter examines Robert Morris' land petition and three reasons as to why Stephen Blucke was successful in his request; his wealth, military status, and mixed race. The five documents, which make up the surviving evidence regarding the land petition, will be studied in detail. Then an analysis of the list of the thirty-nine

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<sup>122</sup> Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 34-35.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1.

individuals will follow, including a close study of a table and two figures that correlate to the thirty-nine petitioners. The table and figures shed light on the missing hierarchy. Marion Gilroy's genealogy will also be studied in connection with the occupation of a couple individuals, the fact that five of the thirty-nine petitioners had more than just one property, and finally the crucial point that Gilroy did not mention the race of Stephen Blucke, while many other free blacks were noted to be "negro" in her book. Then, I will return to the issue of hierarchy within the list of petitioners and the fact that one group was explicitly ship pilots.

Stephen Blucke's wealth, military status, and mixed race, may have contributed to his successful land petition and superior lot size as compared to other free blacks. His wife Margaret came from wealth. Margaret had money and as such her family was able to claim more land than other free Blacks.<sup>126</sup> Being an official in the British army may also have contributed to Colonel Stephen Blucke's successful petition. In 1784 Governor Parr made him lieutenant colonel of the black militia in Shelburne, and Blucke, a mulatto, as noted by Parr, was also responsible for the settlement in Birchtown.<sup>127</sup>

In the case of Stephen Blucke it appears that there were no documents within the land petition filed in Port Roseway Harbour that suggested he was black. While solely studying the petition, he seems to be equal to the other petitioners. Stephen Blucke

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<sup>126</sup> Nova Scotia Museum, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>.

<sup>127</sup> Nova Scotia Museum, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>; NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1.; Esther Clark Wright Archives, Acadia University, "Pen portrait of Stephen Blucke, in William Booth, 'Rough memorandums from 20th January to 24th March 1789,' *Nova Scotia Archives: African Nova Scotians in the age of slavery and abolition*. Acc. no. 1971.001, accessed February 21, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/Africans/archives.asp?ID=42&Language=>.

was a unique Black Loyalist, whose wealth and military status and mixed race mitigated against the extreme racial prejudice of the late eighteenth-century British Atlantic and enabled him to be granted 200 acres of land in Port Roseway Harbour, the most any black received in Nova Scotia in the 1780s.

### **Margaret Blucke: The Influential Wife**

Stephen Blucke's life was one of many changes and fluctuating wealth. In 1752 in Barbados, Stephen, a mulatto, was born "to a black mother and white father."<sup>128</sup> He eventually married Margaret, a free "New Yorker, who'd bought her freedom from her mistress, Mrs. Coventry" as a teenager.<sup>129</sup> Margaret also bought the freedom of young Isabella Gibbons.<sup>130</sup> It is not clear how affluent Margaret was in comparison to other free blacks or where the money came from. However, Stephen Kimber notes that Stephen "dresses well-complete with ruffled shirt, coked hat, wig, and hose."<sup>131</sup> Margaret Blucke was a religious and educated woman.<sup>132</sup> Stephen and Margaret, alongside Isabella, sailed to Nova Scotia on *L'Abondance* in 1783.<sup>133</sup> A few years after arriving in Nova Scotia, Blucke saw a drastic change in his life. Margaret went back to New York in 1789 and left him behind.<sup>134</sup> Stephen Blucke ended up

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<sup>128</sup> Wanda Lauren Taylor, *Birchtown and the Black Loyalists* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited, 2014), p. 51. ; NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1. ; Stephen Kimber, *Loyalists and layabouts: The rapid rise and faster fall of Shelburne, Nova Scotia: 1783-1792* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2008), p.140.

<sup>129</sup> Nova Scotia Museum, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>. ; Kimber, *Loyalists and Layabouts*, 140.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Kimber, *Loyalists and layabouts*, 140.

<sup>132</sup> Nova Scotia Museum, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

having a daughter with Isabella Gibbons, whom they called Frances.<sup>135</sup> According to archeologists, the Bluckes' had high-end furnishings for the 1780s.<sup>136</sup> His annual income decreased drastically when the majority of the students he taught in Nova Scotia went to Sierra Leone in 1792, which resulted in him losing the majority of his revenue.<sup>137</sup> It seems plausible that Margaret took the majority of her capital back to New York when she left Stephen in 1789, which would have made him dependent on his teacher's income.<sup>138</sup> However, because there is no evidence on how much capital she had, it is difficult to say how much of an impact it had on Stephen's life. He himself was an advocate of remaining in Nova Scotia and did not move to Sierra Leone.<sup>139</sup> His death is considered a mystery, because he disappeared one night and never returned, while others argue animals killed him because torn clothes were found on Pell Road.<sup>140</sup>

Margaret Blucke had an impact on Stephen and his settlement in Nova Scotia but it seems more likely that his status as a mulatto dictated the size of land, which he was granted in Port Roseway Harbour. Margaret's capital could have been the reason that enabled him to get two hundred acres of land and a comfortable life in Nova Scotia. However, because it is unclear where the money came from or how much she actually owned it is problematic to argue that her capital was the sole reason for the two hundred acres granted to the Bluckes. In general the British officials had

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<sup>135</sup> Nova Scotia Museum, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Taylor, *Birchtown*, 51.

<sup>140</sup> Nova Scotia Museum, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>.



promised Loyalists land if they could prove that they had lost property in the south due to the American Revolution.<sup>141</sup> The rule of thumb was that the people with the highest loss would get more land in Nova Scotia as a way of compensation.<sup>142</sup> Margaret Blucke's wealth could have played a factor in Stephen Blucke's successful land petition. It seems more likely that Stephen's status, as a mulatto, and his government appointed job as an overseer for the Birchtown settlement, were the reasons for the granting of two hundred acres.<sup>143</sup>

### **Military Affiliation**

Stephen Blucke's military affiliation could have played another crucial aspect in his success in receiving the highest amount of land amongst Black Loyalists. In 1780 he was the commander of a feared New Jersey military unit, which had been under Colonel Tye's command until he died that year.<sup>144</sup> Blucke then became the leader of the Black Militia, as its lieutenant-colonel; he controlled the Shelburne District as ordered by Governor Parr in September 1784.<sup>145</sup> Parr wrote in a letter to Lord Sidney, May 13, 1784, that Blucke was a "mulatto" and that he was overlooking the "Negro" immigrants.<sup>146</sup> Governor Parr explicitly wrote that Blucke was a mulatto not a free black. He noted that Blucke was not a regular fugitive slave. A Mulatto, an individual who had both a white and a black parent, was not equal to free blacks but rather a step above. Parr further wrote in his letter to Lord Sidney, "I had to make

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<sup>141</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 19.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1. ; Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 22.

<sup>144</sup> Nova Scotia Museum, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1.

magistrates in these settlements of men whom God Almighty never intended for the office.”<sup>147</sup> The Governor states that even though Blucke, the mulatto, was above fugitive slaves, he was not equal to white settlers. The language used by Parr clearly indicates that no mulatto or free black should hold office but the Governor had to make the best out of the situation and thus chose Blucke for the position. Race was not a simple black and white binary in the late eighteenth-century British Atlantic, as mulatto, Blucke was able get two hundred acres, while the free blacks received on average forty acres.<sup>148</sup> His status as a mulatto allowed him to be included in a grant that saw only white settlers, besides him, and that his race was not recorded. Had it not been for his mulatto status, Blucke would not have been granted 200 acres in Port Roseway Harbour, and he would not have been asked to oversee the Birchtown settlement as lieutenant-colonel.

### **The Promised Land: The Land Petition**

The process of petitioning for land was a crucial step for both White and Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia because real estate would enable them to make a home in the region and property was also central to eighteenth-century status. Rob Morris, a Loyalist settler, and thirty-eight others, petitioned for land in Port Roseway Harbour in 1786. Rob Morris was in charge of the petition and appeared at the top of the documents and list of thirty-nine individuals. Amongst the thirty-nine petitioners was one Stephen Blucke.<sup>149</sup> The petitioners received 6500 acres overall in Port

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<sup>147</sup> NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1.

<sup>148</sup> For more information on the distribution of land amongst the settlers see Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 100-114.

<sup>149</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 6.

Roseway Harbour.<sup>150</sup> This section will offer a close analysis of surviving documents that relate to this petition.

The earliest document, which can be found in regard to the petition of the thirty-nine individuals in Port Roseway Harbour, is a form that requested a warrant to survey land onto the petitioners. The first document was signed by James Clarke, the agent for Shelburne, in Halifax on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1786.<sup>151</sup> James Clarke wrote a report, which stated that the Shelburne Board of Agents was requesting a warrant to survey land unto the petitioners, which ought to be in their favor.<sup>152</sup> This document included a list of all individuals petitioning for land.

The list of petitioners stated the name and acreage requested. The thirty-nine individuals who make up the list of petitioners were divided into five groups, which are classified by numbers and letters.<sup>153</sup> The first seven individuals, including Robert Morris, each petitioned for two hundred acres.<sup>154</sup> The next group was labeled as 'B', with a number before the letter. The six individuals in this section each petitioned for fifty acres, besides the individual under N. 1B, Gideon Boice, who was asking for one hundred acres.<sup>155</sup> Group C consisted of 16 individuals, the largest group, and everyone besides 3 of them petitioned for two hundred acres respectively.<sup>156</sup> Number 2C William Hargraves was petitioning for one hundred acres, and 14C, Sarah Ellison and 15C, Mary Ellison petitioned for seventy-five acres each.<sup>157</sup> The last two individuals were most likely related to, 13C, Jane Ellison who was petitioning for two

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<sup>150</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

hundred acres.<sup>158</sup> In section D all of the seven individuals petitioned for two hundred acres, besides 4D, Gilroy Hunt who petitioned for one hundred acres.<sup>159</sup> The last group included four individuals, including, 4E, Stephen Blucke.<sup>160</sup> All four petitioned for two hundred acres respectively.<sup>161</sup> The thirty-nine petitioners were asking for 6,500 acres overall in Port Roseaway Harbour and surrounding area.<sup>162</sup>

Not once was a clarification made in this first document whether or not an individual was white or black, or what particular status the individuals held. The only evidence that could indicate a rank or status amongst the individuals is the size of land petitioned for by each one of them. For instance, 29 people or 74% petitioned for two hundred acres, such as Robert Morris, and Stephen Blucke, but some, including Mary Ellison and Gilroy Hunt petitioned for seventy-five or one hundred acres.<sup>163</sup> Most significantly, members of group B, except for Gideon Boice, requested only fifty acres respectively.<sup>164</sup> The only indicator that leads to an assumption of status is the size of land petitioned.

It is possible that it was not necessary to document the status or rank within society, as it was common knowledge amongst the settlers that less land meant a lower position in society. Stephen Blucke was petitioning alongside white individuals for land and received the same treatment and amount of land as individuals such as Robert Morris. Therefore it does not seem that race had an influence on the petition or Blucke's status within the group of the thirty-nine individuals petitioning for land.

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<sup>158</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 6.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 4 & 6.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 4.

Whether this had to do with his wealth before coming to Nova Scotia, his military services, or his mulatto status, remains open to debate.

### **The Governor's Request To Survey The Land**

The next document, written the same month, was a form that was generic for all land petitions in Nova Scotia in the 1780s and was a request for the land to be surveyed. It required the individuals to fill in their name and size of land requested. Governor John Parr signed this document on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1786.<sup>165</sup> This source indicates that John Parr was requesting the Surveyor of Land, Charles Morris, who was in charge of all land surveying in Nova Scotia to assign 6,500 acres to the thirty-nine individuals, including two hundred acres for a community area, resulting in 6,700 acres over all.<sup>166</sup> Parr further requested that Charles Morris should file a report, including a detailed description of where the allotted land was located, within six months and get back to the government before the deadline.<sup>167</sup>

It is crucial to note that there was no mention of race within the land petition. However, today, in the twenty-first-century, academics proved that the majority of the petitioners on the land grant were white, and one individual, Colonel Stephen Blucke, a mulatto. This land petition is significant since it did not note Blucke's race. Other land grants, such as Thomas Brownsprigg's, included the term "Negromen", indicating the race of the petitioners.<sup>168</sup> Marion Gilroy also noted the race of many petitioners in her genealogy, making this land petition and Stephen Blucke a unique

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<sup>165</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 2.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> NSA MFM 15109, Ethnic Groups, MG 15 vol. 20 doc. 19, p. 6.

case.<sup>169</sup> Parr requested, as was customary for all land petitions in Nova Scotia at the time, that Charles Morris should lay out the land and survey its quality and nature within six months of the warrant being issued.<sup>170</sup> It should be noted that several items were generic to all land petitions in Nova Scotia at the time. For instance, the exact title of the Governor and the territory he ruled over was printed on the document, with the name of the Governor left blank to be filled in. A spot to name the surveyor of land, and his responsibilities were also provided. This was then followed by the request to lay out land onto said petitioner and the exact size of land.<sup>171</sup> Lastly, every form stated that the Chief Surveyor had exactly six months to file the report including the nature of the land and its exact location and for doing so he should be granted the warrant.<sup>172</sup>

### **Chief Surveyor Of Land: Commission To Assess**

Charles Morris responded to the Governor's request in the third document. In Halifax, Morris wrote the letter on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1786.<sup>173</sup> The Chief Surveyor of Land, Morris, wrote that he delegated for the land to be surveyed and laid out onto the thirty-nine individuals.<sup>174</sup> He then noted that the land was located in Port Roseway Harbour west, which was located in Shelburne County.<sup>175</sup> Then Morris went into detail describing the exact location of the 6,500 acres in Port Roseway. He used chains of a fixed length and degrees, as well as using Willoughby Morgans' already

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<sup>169</sup> Gilroy, *Loyalists*, 77-122.

<sup>170</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

existing estate as measurement.<sup>176</sup> Charles Morris' letter was a great example for the use of chains and degrees, which will be studied in more detail in Chapter 3, which examines Thomas Brownsrpiggs and his land petition.

The Surveyor of Lands for the Shelburne region used chains and degrees, a measure of describing the location of land, which was typical for the time. Morris's words and language in this letter seem to be very common for Surveyors of Land and government officials alike. This third document did not mention the race or status of the individuals petitioning for land, which is a recurring theme in this particular land petition.

### **The Surveyor Of Woods: The Assessment Of The Land**

The fourth document regarding the land petition of the thirty-nine individuals in Port Roseway Harbour was the survey, which had been requested by Charles Morris. John Wentworth was the Surveyor of the King's Woods in Nova Scotia and all other North American territories.<sup>177</sup> His report was written just one day after Charles Morris' letter.<sup>178</sup> Wentworth briefly states his occupation and then goes on to discuss the issue at hand. He discussed the request to survey the land containing 6,500 acres, the fact that it was not reserved for the crown, and eventually the request to grant a certificate.<sup>179</sup> He then went into detail describing the exact location of the land, which followed the same lay out as Charles Morris' description.<sup>180</sup> Wentworth, like Morris, used Willoughby Morgans' land as a starting point and then used chains, of a fixed length, and degrees to explain exactly where the annexed land was

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<sup>176</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 7.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

located.<sup>181</sup> Wentworth even briefly mentioned Morris' report saying that his report would follow its blueprint.<sup>182</sup> This document used very similar language as Charles Morris' report, especially when it came to describing the location of the land, using chains and degrees. Wentworth made no explicit report of the race or status of the people petitioning for land. In general, this report seemed to be very generic and like others that were composed at the time.

The last document reported that the warrant was according to law and that it should be distributed to the petitioners. S.S. Blowers, the Attorney General, wrote the last document on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1786, which happened to be exactly one day before the six months deadline from Governor Parr.<sup>183</sup> Blowers noted that the warrant was processed lawfully and that nothing was hindering the individuals from receiving their land.<sup>184</sup> Blowers' wrote that according to Wentworth, the land was not reserved for the crown.<sup>185</sup> He then certified that the grant was according to the law and could be duly processed and the land given to the thirty-nine individuals. The Province of Nova Scotia's secretary was to receive a copy of the document, as was mentioned by Blowers in an afterthought.<sup>186</sup> This report was the last step that can be found at the archives in Nova Scotia. It is crucial to note that yet again Blowers did not mention that Stephen Blucke was a Black Pioneer, or the status of any of the individuals petitioning for land. The only crucial aspect found in the last few documents was that the land was not reserved for crown land, but no reference to race or status was made.

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<sup>181</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 10.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*



The fact that no mention of race was made in this petition can be linked to the fact that Blucke was a mulatto. Race was not a simple black and white binary in the British Atlantic in the late eighteenth-century and as a mulatto Blucke was asked by the governor to oversee the Birchtown settlement. He was a step above the average free black settler, which was manifested by the land petition and the two hundred acres granted to him.

### **Analysis Of The Table And Figures**

The table and figures at the end of this chapter enable readers to visualize who the thirty-nine petitioners were and to understand if a sort of hierarchy was present when the list was created. Table A is a replica of the list of petitioners, which was found in the primary source material at the archives.<sup>187</sup> No changes were made to the order of names or groups as they appear in the primary source. The document was divided into five groups, each having different numbers of people and sizes of acreage distributed. Both men and women were on the list. No mentioning of race or occupation was made. Only one individual had Capt. as part of his name on the list; this was Capt. Jacob van Buskirk, a military official.<sup>188</sup> No clear indication was given in regard to the occupation of the other thirty-eight petitioners.

A surprising factor in the list was that a total of eight women were petitioning for land. One Mary Fernandes, No.6, petitioned for two hundred acres.<sup>189</sup> In group C, Mary Haynes, Mary Brady, Jane Ellison and Catherine Watson, each petitioned for two hundred acres, while Sarah Ellison and Mary Ellison petitioned for seventy-five

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<sup>187</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 4-6.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

acres respectively.<sup>190</sup> Jane Ellison, Sarah Ellison and Mary Ellison were most likely related. In group D, Mary Pillel petitioned for two hundred acres.<sup>191</sup> Eight out of thirty-nine individuals were women, which is 20.5% of the overall petitioners on the list. The list did not indicate whether these women were widows, married or the head of their houses, but six were able to petition for two hundred acres respectively alongside men.

The list of petitioners was divided into five groups, which do not give any indication to a hierarchy amongst the individuals. Each group contained a different number of people and acreage distributed.<sup>192</sup> There seems to be no real system as to why individuals are grouped in this particular order on the list.

Figure 1 indicates the size of land and what percent out of the petitioners received said acreage. It indicates that the majority received two hundred acres, but a total of 13% petitioned for fifty acres. Twenty-nine individuals, or 74 % were petitioning for two hundred acres each.<sup>193</sup> Surprisingly the next highest percentage was 13%, or five individuals, who were petitioning for fifty acres respectively. These five individuals were all in group B.<sup>194</sup> Only three people were petitioning for one hundred acres each, which makes up 8% of the petitioners.<sup>195</sup> Finally, Sarah and Mary Ellison petitioned for seventy-five acres respectively.<sup>196</sup> They make up the last 5%. It is evident that the majority, 74%, petitioned for two hundred acres of land but it is

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<sup>190</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 5- 6.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

surprising that 13% petitioned for only fifty acres. There is no indication in the documents as to why individuals petitioned for different lot sizes.

The division of groups and acres granted within each group is showcased in Figure 2, and indicates that no hierarchy between Group A through E existed. Figure 2 is a chart, which shows each of the five groups and how many people within said groups petitioned for two hundred, one hundred, seventy-five, and fifty acres. Group A, has six people who petitioned for two hundred acres, while Group B sees one petitioner asking for one hundred acres while five others petitioned for fifty acres each.<sup>197</sup> Group C, being the biggest out of the five, sees the most variety. Thirteen petitioned for two hundred acres, while one person petitioned for one hundred acres, and two individuals asked for seventy-five acres.<sup>198</sup> Group D saw six petitioners looking for two hundred acres, and one individual petitioning for one hundred acres.<sup>199</sup> The last group had four people petitioning for two hundred acres respectively.<sup>200</sup> There is no clear hierarchy or order to the groups or the size of land they were petitioning for. Nor is there an obvious explanation as to why these individuals were grouped the way they are on the list or why one group saw people only petitioning for two hundred acres, and why another saw a great variety amongst its individuals. There was also no indication in any of the documents that would explain this order. No mentioning of rank, occupation, or race was made, which makes it harder to understand why the thirty-nine petitioners chose to list their names in the order they did. The size difference was also not explained in the primary

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<sup>197</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 4.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

sources and there is no obvious common denominator as to why some individuals petitioned for less than others.

### **Marion Gilroy's Genealogy**

Marion Gilroy's genealogy *Loyalists and land settlement* gives some insight on two of the thirty-nine individuals and who they were. Gilroy's book lists Loyalist settlers, their name, occupation, the location and size of land received within Nova Scotia and in which year. Regarding the thirty-nine individuals she only mentioned the occupation of two. Both Jacob van Buskirk and William Hargraves were noted to be captains.<sup>201</sup> This fact is rather surprising because in the majority of her book she mentions the occupation or status of the individuals. This may be an indicator that no information was available on the other thirty-seven petitioners.

Gilroy also mentions the race of many free blacks that were granted land in Nova Scotia in the 1780s. The common 'occupation' used for these people by Gilroy was "negro."<sup>202</sup> Thomas Brownspriggs was noted to be a "negro" in 1787, and many other petitioners in Tracadie were noted to be "negro."<sup>203</sup> Clements Township also saw many "negro" petitioners in the year 1789.<sup>204</sup> Stephen Blucke was not described as a free black.<sup>205</sup> This is curious because it seems that Gilroy noted the race for others, but not for him. The reason for why his race was not recorded is the fact that he was considered a mulatto.<sup>206</sup> As a mulatto, Governor Parr treated him differently,

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<sup>201</sup> Gilroy, *Loyalists*, 87& 103.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-122.

<sup>204</sup> Gilroy, *Loyalists*.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1.

which is the reason for him being granted two hundred acres of land, and why Gilroy did not mention his race.

Governor Parr had written in a letter that Blucke was a mulatto. This is the main reason for his different treatment in Nova Scotia.<sup>207</sup> Stephen Blucke cannot be grouped with individuals such as Thomas Brownspriggs because the government at the time did not consider Blucke a 'negro' but a mulatto. Stephen Blucke was not a Black Loyalist; Governor Parr did not consider him as one. Stephen Blucke was a step above the other individuals, which the governor himself noted. Governor Parr and society considered Blucke a mulatto, not a fugitive slave, which is the reason for his different treatment. He had money, and was not a Black Loyalist in the eyes of the government otherwise the land petition, warrants, the government, and Marion Gilroy's genealogy would have noted his race and stated his occupation as 'negro'.

Marion Gilroy mentions some of the thirty-nine individuals several times in her book, which brings to light the fact that some of them had several properties in Nova Scotia. Robert Morris, the very first person on the list in table: A, is mentioned five times by Gilroy. According to her, Morris had one town lot and two water lots in Shelburne in 1784.<sup>208</sup> Three years later, the petition discussed above is mentioned with him receiving two hundred acres in Port Roseway Harbour.<sup>209</sup> His final property was in Tuskent River, where he owned two hundred and twenty acres in 1788.<sup>210</sup> The next individual who was mentioned twice by Gilroy was Jacob van Buskirk, who owned two hundred acres in Port Roseway Harbour in 1787, and also owned three

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<sup>207</sup> NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1.

<sup>208</sup> Gilroy, *Loyalists*, 95

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

hundred acres in Tusket River, which he received in 1788.<sup>211</sup> William Hargraves, who petitioned for one hundred acres in 1787, is mentioned seven times by Gilroy, making him the most prominent individual out of the thirty-nine petitioners.<sup>212</sup> Hargraves owned fifty acres in Jordan River and two hundred and fifty acres in Jordan River east in 1784.<sup>213</sup> That same year he also owned a wharf lot, a water and town lot, another wharf lot, and a second town lot in Shelburne. His total was thus five properties in Nova Scotia.<sup>214</sup> In 1787 he was granted two other properties on top of his already existing five. He received one hundred acres in Port Roseway Harbour and five hundred acres in Shelburne, Liverpool Road.<sup>215</sup> William Hargraves owned a total of nine hundred acres in Nova Scotia, not including his wharf lots, town lots and water lot. Gilroy noted that both Hargraves and van Buskirk were captains. This makes it no surprise that these two individuals received large quantities of land.<sup>216</sup> Captains had a high social status and were valuable, wealthy members of society, or they would not have owned several properties.

John Spencer and James Rich were the last two individuals who were mentioned several times by Gilroy. Both were listed in group D. John Spencer was mentioned four times by her, with three properties in Shelburne in 1784, which consisted of one fifty acre lot, a town lot, and a warehouse lot.<sup>217</sup> In 1787 he was granted one more property, which was in Port Roseway Harbour and consisted of two

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<sup>211</sup> Gilroy, *Loyalists*, 103.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 87, 103.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

hundred acres.<sup>218</sup> Finally, James Rich had two properties, one being a town lot in Shelburne, which he received in 1784, and the other consisting of two hundred acres in Port Roseway Harbour in 1787.<sup>219</sup> Out of the thirty-nine petitioners under Robert Morris a total of five, or 12.8%, owned more than just the land they were granted in 1787 in Port Roseway Harbour.

### **Group B: A Hierarchy After All**

The list of petitioners does not shed any light on a reason for the groupings as they occur in the documents relating to the land petitions but the census, assessment and poll taxes records from 1767- 1827 give a possible reason for group B. An assessment of Round Bay, Shelburne County for the year 1786 brought to light the occupations of group B. Gideon Boice and the five other petitioners were all ship pilots.<sup>220</sup> They received fifty acres respectively, with Boice owning one hundred acres.<sup>221</sup> None of these six individuals were mentioned by Gilroy to have received more than just the lots in Port Roseway Harbour. This classification of group B is the only form of organized alignment evident for the division amongst the thirty-nine individuals on the list. The fact that group B consisted of solely pilots leads to the discussion of whether or not there was a hierarchy within the thirty-nine petitioners after all. A hierarchy that was not recorded in the documents, but still present. It is possible that no reason was given as to why the list and grouping existed the way it

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<sup>218</sup> Gilroy, *Loyalists*, 102.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>220</sup> Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne," MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1517 p. 22, 36, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015,

<http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=560>;

Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne," MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1518 p. 11, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015,

<http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=1374>.

<sup>221</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 4.

was because society was aware of the status and hierarchy. A recording was thus not necessary. It is open to debate whether or not the grouping of ship pilots in section B is a form of hierarchy. A hierarchy, which was present in 1780's Nova Scotia, but not evident within the land petition.

## **Conclusion**

The sources relating to the land petition do not shed any light on why Stephen Blucke was amongst the thirty-nine petitioners. His race was not once mentioned. A hierarchy and the reason behind the five groups, as they can be found in the petition, cannot be identified when solely studying those documents. The only reason as to why Blucke was amongst the petitioners and not recorded as a black was Governor Parr's letter to Lord Sidney where he wrote that Stephen Blucke was a mulatto.<sup>222</sup> His wife Margaret also had some money, this meant that the Blucke's had lost valuables during the American Revolution, which enabled them to claim more land in Nova Scotia than fugitive slaves could, who had lost no money but gained their freedom.<sup>223</sup> Carl Degler's notion on mulattos in Brazil and the United States in relation to race contributes to the notion that race was not binary.<sup>224</sup> He states, "in Brazil the free versus slave distinction was crosscut more significantly by skin tone," which seems applicable when it comes to Stephen Blucke and the reason behind his two hundred

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<sup>222</sup> NSA MFM 4843, Newspapers: Shelburne Coast Guard, Shelburne, June 26, 1952 vol. 56 no.1, p. 1.

<sup>223</sup> Nova Scotia Museum, "Margaret and Stephen Blucke," <http://novascotia.ca/museum/blackloyalists/17751800/people1775/blucke.htm>.

<sup>224</sup> More information on Degler's notion of a mulatto escape hatch can be found here "Mulatto Escape Hatch," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2008, *Encyclopedia.com*, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045301642.html>. ; Carl N Degler, *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971).



acres grant.<sup>225</sup> While the Black Loyalists, who received land, and Blucke, were free, there was a distinguished difference between free blacks and mulattos in Nova Scotia. The one-drop rule, “where any “noticeable” African ancestry means assignment to the black race category,” which was often used in the United States to distinguish race, cannot be implicated when studying the Black Loyalists.<sup>226</sup> Blucke, who was not considered black by the government and who had come from money, was a step above the regular fugitive slave who migrated to Nova Scotia after the American Revolution. The Nova Scotia government made it clear that people who had lost the most would receive the highest amount of support and land after the war.<sup>227</sup> He was not a common Black Loyalist; he was a mulatto and a Black Pioneer who had status amongst fellow settlers. Stephen Blucke’s case makes it evident that there was not a simple racial binary in Nova Scotia but that the construction of society and a hierarchy amongst the settlers was more complicated than that.

The close analysis of the five surviving documents, as well as the study of the table and figures did not detect a form of hierarchy or that any of the petitioners were being treated unequal. These sources did not once mention the race or occupation of the thirty-nine petitioners. The list, which was attached to the request for land, even though five groups were presented, did not shed any light on why the groups existed.

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<sup>225</sup> "Mulatto Escape Hatch," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2008, *Encyclopedia.com*, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045301642.html>.

<sup>226</sup> "Mulatto Escape Hatch," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2008, *Encyclopedia.com*, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045301642.html>. ; For a brief overview on the one-drop rule see "Mulatto Escape Hatch," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2008, *Encyclopedia.com*, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045301642.html>.

<sup>227</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 19.

The surviving sources did not indicate any form of hierarchy or unequal treatment of the petitioners.

Marion Gilroy's genealogy underlined several key points. She mentioned that two of the thirty-nine petitioners were captains. Gilroy further wrote that five had more than just one estate in Nova Scotia, making the land petition for lots in Port Roseway Harbour just one out of many. Her genealogy also mentioned the race of the Tracadie and Clements Township free Blacks, but did not mention Stephen Blucke's race. Gilroy's genealogy enabled scholars to find more information on the petitioners than was present in the land petition itself.

The only plausible hierarchy that could be found, outside of the land petition, were the pilots of group B. The assessment of Round Bay, Shelburne County for the year 1786 brought to light the occupations of these individuals.<sup>228</sup> All six petitioners were pilots; this connection was the only form of reasonable grouping, which could be found while researching the background of the petitioners.

It is open to debate whether or not this fact opens the door to a hierarchy that cannot be found within the petition itself but in 1780's society. If a hierarchy was present in Nova Scotia in the late eighteenth-century it would explain why some individuals received more land than others and why the colonial government recorded the race of certain individuals. It is very likely that a hierarchy was present because Nova Scotia was a slaveholding society when the White and Black Loyalists migrated

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<sup>228</sup> Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne," MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1517 p. 22, 36, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=560>; Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne," MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1518 p. 11, accessed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015, <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=1374>.

to the region. A hierarchy, which indicated the status of individuals, based on their profession and race.

All the facts mentioned above lead to the conclusion that Stephen Blucke was not necessarily considered equal by White Loyalists but more so accepted than other black settlers in the region. Stephen Blucke was a unique settler and not a typical free black.

Table A: List Of Petitioners Under Morris' Petition<sup>229</sup>

No. 1	Robert Morris	200 Acres
2	William Braunthwaite	200 a"
4	Terence Reilly	200
5	Capt. Jacob Van Buskirk	200
6	Mary Fernandes	200
7	Alexander Bertram	200
No. 1B.	Gideon Boice 18 Acres & 85 Acres	100
2B	William Rowland	50
3B	William Hargill	50
4B	Samuel Edwards	50
5B	Henry Killigrove	50
6B	James Neale	50
No. 1C	John Rowlett	200
2C	William Hargraves	100
3C	Thomas Braine	200
4C	Samuel Braine	200
5C	Lancelot Farrar	200
6C	Thomas Farrar	200
7C	William Stiles	200
8C	George Farish	200
9C	Greggs. Farish	200
10C	Mary Haynes	200
11C	Mary Brady	200
12C	Henry Grief	200
13C	Jane Ellison	200
14C	Sarah Ellison	75
15C	Mary Ellison	75
16C	Catharine Watson	200
No. 1D	John Spencer	200
2D	Caleb Morgan	200
3D	James Rich	200
4D	Gilroy Hunt	100
5D	Abraham Tompkins	200
6D	Arch'd McFarlane	200
7D	Mary Pillel	200
No. 1E	Thomas Lawrence	200
2E	Frederick Meyer	200
3E	John Mirron	200
4E	Stephen Blucke	200

<sup>229</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol.17 doc.157, p. 4-6.

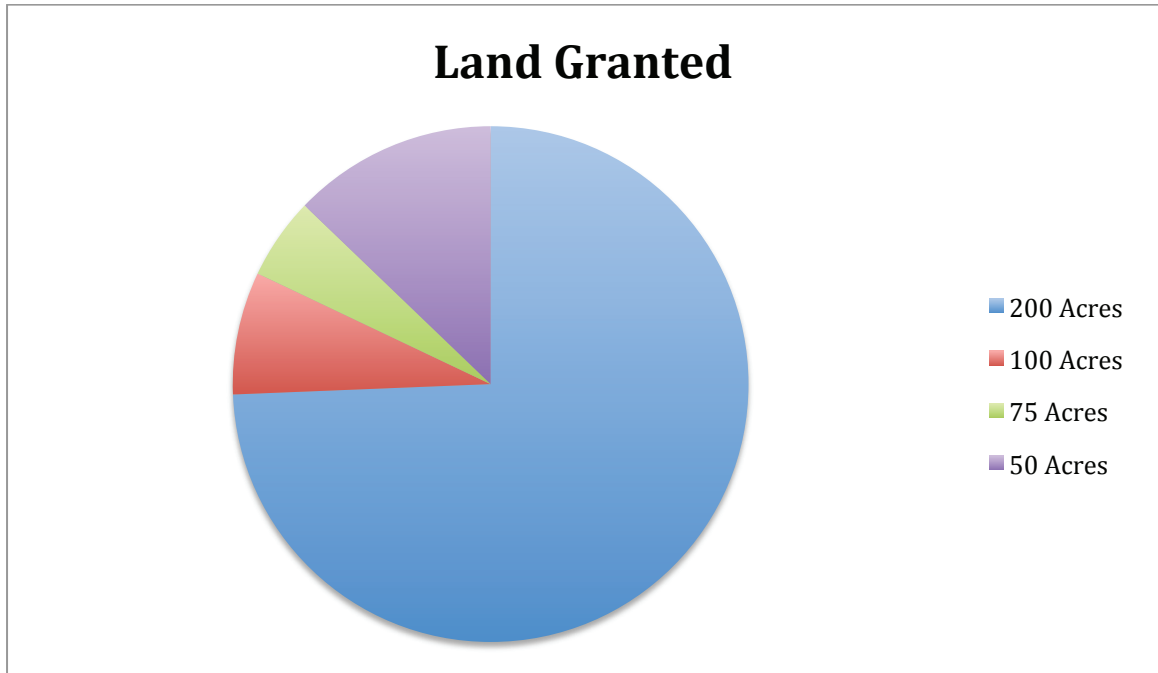


Figure 1: Chart Showing The Percentage Of Acres Granted <sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol.17 doc.157, p. 4-6.

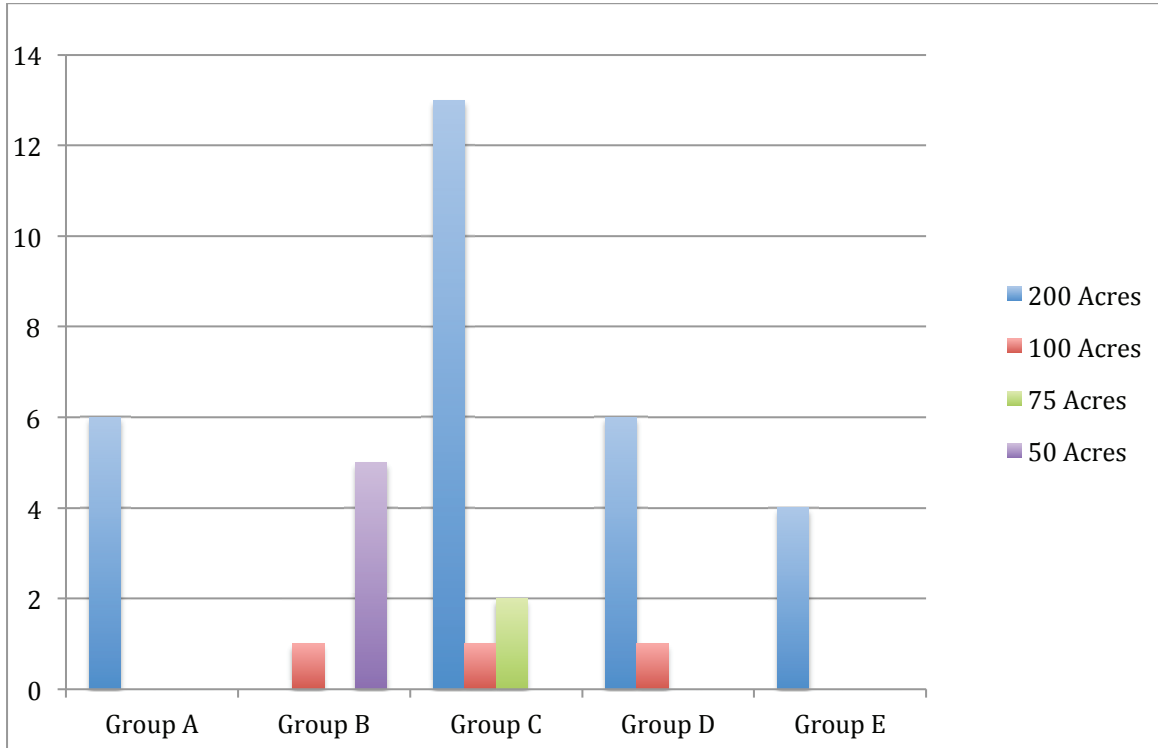


Figure 2: Division Of Groups And Acres Granted <sup>231</sup>

<sup>231</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol.17 doc.157, p. 4-6.

### **Chapter 3 - Thomas Brownspriggs' Land Petition**

In September of 1787, free blacks in Tracadie, including Thomas Brownspriggs, petitioned for 3,000 acres. The warrant noted the race of the seventy-four individuals, who were all free blacks. On average the seventy-four settlers received forty acres per person. There were cases where free blacks received more land. Stephen Blucke received two hundred acres in Port Roseway Harbour. This chapter will examine Thomas Brownspriggs' petition and discuss the impact the term "Negromen" had on the documents for the individuals petitioning for land. The term did not impact the status of the grant and the people surveying the land did not seem to treat the grant any differently from a grant from other, white, settlers. This chapter will not only look at Thomas Brownspriggs land petition but also the Black Loyalist myth, and the issues around the term Loyalist in general, including a discussion of newspapers and council minutes.

Thomas Brownspriggs' Tracadie land petition will bring light to how the government understood the free blacks in a Loyalist context. As well, the petition will indicate how the government treated these seventy-four individuals in regard to the land granting process. The four documents, which make up the 1787 land petition will be studied in detail, as well as reasons why it was noted that the seventy-four individuals were "Negromen" and not Black Loyalists. This chapter will argue that Thomas Brownspriggs land petition was a testimony to the fact that the government did not report the loyalism of petitioners and thus made it difficult to assess how loyalism impacted settlers in the 1780's. According to the Oxford English Dictionary a Loyalist is someone who supports an already existing government (see introduction

for the exact definition).<sup>232</sup> This would mean that the Black Loyalists were supporting the British government in the Americas, and as such their enslavers. The British colonized North America and used African slaves to work plantations, but yet during the American Revolution, the British government changed their policies in a way that granted slaves, who belonged to Patriots, freedom in return for their services.<sup>233</sup> This was a tactic of warfare, however it should not be neglected that the abolitionists movement would emerge in the late eighteenth-century. The individuals who were known as Black Loyalists supported their liberators. However, their liberators were in the past their enslavers. The irony is that a Loyalist is someone who supports an already existing government, and as such the Black Loyalists were supposedly supporting their enslavers in return for their freedom. The paradox seems to be that the free blacks who migrated to Nova Scotia are known as Black Loyalists, even though they were not really supporting an already existing government but rather a government that changed their allegiance in a way that suited the British army and allowed for more man power, in other words slaves to fight for them in return for freedom. The British would not have granted freedom to the slaves had they, the British, not gained anything in return. The term Loyalist may not be appropriate for the black refugees.

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<sup>232</sup> Oxford University Press, "Loyalism," *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed January 19, 2016 and February 16, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/Entry/110752?redirectedFrom=loyalism#eid>. ; Oxford University Press, "Loyalist," *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed January 19, 2016 and February 16, 2016, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/Entry/110753?redirectedFrom=loyalist#eid>.

<sup>233</sup> Patriots were originally from Britain and migrated or were born in the American colonies at some point or another and sought American independence.



## On The Black Loyalist Myth

Historians such as James Walker, Ellen Gibson Willson, Ruth Holmes Whitehead, Maya Jasanoff and others, have claimed that the fugitive slaves who came to Nova Scotia as a result of the American Revolution were Loyalists, just as the white settlers who migrated from New York and other regions were considered White Loyalists. A heated debate between scholars James Walker and Barry Cahill erupted as a result. They argued about whether or not it was acceptable to call these individuals Loyalists.

James Walker argues in *The Black Loyalists*, that fugitive slaves were only secure and could find freedom under British law during and after the American Revolution.<sup>234</sup> Walker argues that the free blacks were considered Loyalists but were at the lowest possible position of the social ladder amongst Loyalist society.<sup>235</sup> He states that the Black Loyalists were disregarded by society and did not receive any form of support from the government.<sup>236</sup> Walker indicates that Black Loyalists were loyal, but the settlers and government treated them differently from their white counterparts.

On the other hand, Barry Cahill claims in his article “The Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada,” that the Black Loyalists were a myth. Cahill argues that the term was just a different name for fugitive slaves, and thus only runaway slaves and not loyal.<sup>237</sup> He further states, “fugitive slaves were a subcategory or ‘Blacks’ not

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<sup>234</sup> James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* (London: Longman Group Ltd, 1976), 5.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, X.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>237</sup> Barry Cahill, “The Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada,” *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region* 24, no. 1 (1999), 86.

‘Loyalists,’” and thus looking for liberation from slavery.<sup>238</sup> Cahill does not consider the fugitive slaves as loyal but as refugees looking for freedom. He argues, the “issue is whether fugitive slaves and Loyalists who happened to be Black can be merged to produce Black Loyalists.”<sup>239</sup> Cahill further states that the fugitive slaves needed a label for them to be interesting enough to be studied in “the mainstream of historical scholarship.”<sup>240</sup> He claims that Black Loyalist is a term given to every free black that migrated to Nova Scotia in the 1780’s.

Many scholars have tried to answer the question surrounding the kind of loyalism found within the free black community in the 1780’s. Land petitions can be used to identify the loyalism of individuals, such as William Fisher, who happened to be black and requested the same treatment as other Loyalists. Ellen Gibson Wilson explains that a William Fisher of New Brunswick “applied to Governor Carleton for the land and provisions ‘the same as is granted to all other loyalists.’”<sup>241</sup> According to Wilson, William Fisher considered himself a Loyalist, and as such requested the same treatment as his white counterparts, which is crucial for this thesis as it indicates that some black refugees did consider themselves Loyalists. Land petitions reveal only a minority of the black settlers, who did receive land and, when they did, only a very small lot was granted to them in comparison to White Loyalists. Gibson Wilson notes, “that provincial officials failed to meet the blacks’ expectations and ...the community as a whole, failed to provide them, as the white settlers were provided, with the

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<sup>238</sup> Cahill, *The Black Loyalist Myth*, 76,79.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>241</sup> Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (Toronto: Longman Canada Limited, 1976), 100.

essential basis for self-support.”<sup>242</sup> Thus, the poor treatment of the free blacks indicated that the government and the society did not consider them as equal to White Loyalists.

Ellen Gibson Wilson argues that prominent members of the black settlers who came to Nova Scotia did not mention their reasons for migrating. Wilson wrote, “in their reminiscences, David George and Boston King shed little direct light on their reasons for joining the British.”<sup>243</sup> She further noted that George’s Baptist congregation “flourished at Yamacraw and Savannah during the British occupation of 1779 to 1782” and that they “lived as free blacks” in the region.<sup>244</sup> Thus the American Revolution enabled many slaves to gain their freedom and live freely and / or have an opportunity to choose their own path.

This sight of hope did not last long, as 5,000 Savannah Blacks ended up back in slavery in 1782. In 1779, Savannah had a population of around 2,000 whites and 5,000 blacks, as well as Indigenous peoples, who were all needed in a siege that year.<sup>245</sup> Wilson described how “Major General Augustine Prevost armed 250 blacks and ‘found them very usefull’” in defending Quamino Dolly’s surprise attack.<sup>246</sup> Not only did these 250 blacks help the British defeat the rebels but many other fugitive slaves came to their aid and made a great difference in the warfare in Savannah.<sup>247</sup> However, after the British defeated Dolly’s rebels, the white settlers demanded that

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<sup>242</sup> Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 100-101.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

the blacks be disarmed.<sup>248</sup> And once the decision was made to abandon all Southern holdings, based on rebel threats coming from Augusta, Savannah “was the first [region] to the evacuated.”<sup>249</sup> In the summer of 1782, a total of 7,000 individuals left Savannah for safety, including the majority “of the 5,000 blacks.”<sup>250</sup> Wilson notes, “the majority of [the blacks]...were sent to East Florida and Jamaica into continued slavery.”<sup>251</sup> Why were these individuals not considered Black Loyalists and ended up in Nova Scotia or other regions that would enable them to be free? These 5,000 blacks did fight for the British and successfully defeated rebel troops, but yet the majority of them were sent into slavery only a few years later.

Location was crucial when considering the reason why slaves, who had fought for the British, ended up free and other continued into slavery. Individuals, such as David George and his family, who had lived in Savannah, only made it to Nova Scotia as free individuals because they had made an “escape plan” and “sailed to Charleston,” where chances were better for them to remain free.<sup>252</sup> It seems that only those who had made it to the North to fight with the British had a true chance of gaining their freedom. This further enhances the debate around the Black Loyalist Myth because not every fugitive slave who fought for the British was considered a Black Loyalist.

Black settlers not only had difficulty getting land but also, once they owned property, it was very hard to maintain a farm. Most of them had been slaves and as such, “for virtually all the blacks, this was the first experience of landowning and

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<sup>248</sup> Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 30.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

management.”<sup>253</sup> On top of that, “they had no tools, no capital, no livestock and no credit” and their families tended to be smaller than that of white settlers, which meant that fewer people could help out around the farm.<sup>254</sup> Wilson notes that the black settlers were “blessed only with their freedom and the indomitable will which had brought them to Nova Scotia, the blacks scrambled to live.”<sup>255</sup> Even with these obstacles, which were greater than those of the White Loyalists, academics still consider the black settlers Loyalists. White Loyalists had their fair share of struggles upon arriving in Nova Scotia too, but it seems as if their support system, from the government and society in general, was better equipped to handle their struggles. Black settlers were basically on their own when it came to supporting their families, finding a place to live and work, and providing for their loved ones. Their situations seem similar but, when studying the two groups more closely, it is evident that there were many differences. The black settlers tended to live in segregated communities, which was to some degree a result of their religious affiliation.<sup>256</sup> They were “forced to grow separately by white prejudice and indifference.”<sup>257</sup> Some of the free blacks had to indenture themselves in order to survive because they were not able to make a living any other way, which further segregated them from White Loyalists.<sup>258</sup>

However, historians such as Walker, Jasanoff and Pybus consider both the white and

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<sup>253</sup> Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 103.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, p. 78.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> NSA MFM 4823, Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser, Shelburne, 26 October 1786, p.1, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africans/archives.asp?ID=37>.

black settlers as Loyalists, even though the documents in land petitions only spoke to that on rare occasion.

The question remains if loyalism is an ideological position or an action. In the case of the Black Loyalists it is an action, otherwise the term Black Loyalist would need to include the slaves who wanted freedom but could not flee their rebel masters. Their ideological position and desire to gain freedom and independence may have lined up with that of the Black Loyalists but because they did not flee to the British lines, they cannot be classified as loyal. Black Loyalists are defined by their action of fleeing their masters and joining the British in their fight against the patriots and eventually resettling in regions such as Nova Scotia.

The Black Loyalists kind of loyalism is unique as it varies for each individual. There is a difference between the degree and kind of action. A degree of action, for instance the action of joining the British lines, varies in degree. One individual may have joined the British in their fight against the rebels, taking up arms and fighting alongside British soldiers for the entire duration of the war. Another individual may have crossed over to the British side, and only fought alongside British soldiers for a few months.<sup>259</sup> The degree of their actions varied as both individuals joined the British but only one fought alongside the soldiers for the entire war. In comparison, a difference in kind of action would be one individual joining the British and fighting alongside them, while another action would be to join the British, not fight for them in the American Revolution, but just looking for protection. These are two different kinds of action. In the same manner, there is a difference between degree and kind of

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<sup>259</sup> The individuals mentioned in this paragraph are hypothetical and only used to describe the difference between degree and kind of action and degree and kind of loyalism.

loyalism. The two individuals who joined the British and fought alongside the soldiers had the same kind of loyalty but to a different degree. The soldier who fought for the entire duration of the war is 100% loyal to the British military, while the individual who only participated in the fight for a few months may be 30% loyal to the military. A different kind of loyalty would be displayed by the individual who fought alongside the British in comparison to the person who crossed over to the British line for protection. Their reasons behind joining the British varied as one decided to fight for their cause while the other individual was looking for safety. As such the kinds of loyalty displayed by the individuals varied. Black Loyalists displayed many different reasons and actions upon joining the British, which resulted in unique kinds of loyalty that need to be attributed to each free black settler separately.

### **Thomas Brownspriggs' Land Petition**

Thomas Brownspriggs and seventy-three other petitioners asked for 3,000 acres in Tracadie in 1787. The first document, which correlates to the land petition was a warrant issued to Charles Morris by the Governor. John Parr issued a warrant on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1787 to request that Charles Morris to lay out land, containing 3,000 acres, to Thomas Brownspriggs and the other individuals as stated in the petition.<sup>260</sup> The warrant noted that Morris had exactly six months to do so and was required to report back to the secretary of Nova Scotia once his work was done.<sup>261</sup> The form, which was used for this warrant, was a generic one, which was also used

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<sup>260</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 19 doc. 19, p.7.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

for Robert Morris' warrant.<sup>262</sup> The document stated the regions the Governor was responsible for, as well as the name of the Chief Surveyor of land, the name of the individual petitioning for land, and how much land said person was requesting.<sup>263</sup> The document closed with a request to survey the land within six months and return a report to the government in due time.<sup>264</sup>

The warrant included a list of individuals who were petitioning for land, as can be seen in Table B.<sup>265</sup> The table is divided into the name of the petitioners, W, and C. W stands for women and C for children. The list given in the warrant did not state the name of all seventy-four individuals, but instead mentioned forty-two names.<sup>266</sup> It seems as if the list only included heads of houses, and then mentioned the number of women and children in the family.<sup>267</sup> Each family member was counted as one of the seventy-four petitioners.<sup>268</sup> One woman was amongst the forty-two individuals mentioned on the list; her name was Grace Bolton.<sup>269</sup> No significant reason can be detected as to why only one woman was amongst the mentioned petitioners or if her gender or marital status had an impact on her status. The documents did not mention the fact that the petitioners were free blacks, or that their race would have an impact on the grant.

The next step in the land granting process was a report by the Chief Surveyor of land. On September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1787 Charles Morris submitted his report, as had been requested by Parr. In this report he wrote that he would survey and lay out 3,000 acres

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<sup>262</sup> NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157, p. 2.

<sup>263</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 19 doc. 19, p.7.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*



of land to Thomas Brownspriggs and the seventy-three other petitioners.<sup>270</sup> He then went into detail as to where the land was located. Morris began the survey by reporting that the land lined up with Peter Bennois estate. He then explained where the land was situated using chains as a way to measure the property.<sup>271</sup> Charles Morris used degrees and chains to describe the exact location.<sup>272</sup> Starting at the Bennois estate, he noted that the land ran eighty-seven degrees south for three chains.<sup>273</sup> It also ran east for one hundred and sixty chains.<sup>274</sup> Morris stated that the land to be granted was along a river and ran into a harbour and with that he closed the description of the location.<sup>275</sup> Charles Morris wrote the report and thus followed Governor Parr's orders to survey and lay out land onto Thomas Brownspriggs and his fellow petitioners.

John Flieger's report was the third step in the land granting process for Thomas Brownspriggs petition. This document was addressed to John Wentworth.<sup>276</sup> Flieger went into detail regarding the location of the 3,000 acres, which he did in a very similar fashion to Charles Morris. He stated that the land was not part of any crown reservations and as such was available to be surveyed for the petition.<sup>277</sup> Flieger stated that the land was located in Tracadie Harbor's east side and located next to Peter Bennois estate.<sup>278</sup> He then described the other boundaries using chains, which results in a clear understanding of where the 3,000 acres of land were

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<sup>270</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 19 doc. 19, p.8.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 3&8.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 2.

located.<sup>279</sup> Flieger stated that the land had been surveyed and assigned to Thomas Brownspriggs and his fellow petitioners.<sup>280</sup> This report used the same language as Morris' warrant. Flieger and Morris likely used a common method of surveying and describing the location of land, because both reports started off with Peter Bennois & Sons estate and how the land was situated within. Both reports ended by describing the river and harbor, as the boundary of the 3,000 acres, and used chains as a measure to lay out the land. Even though this document was addressed to Wentworth, no document was found to correspond to Flieger's report. This document, like the other before it, did not mention the race of the petitioners.

The fourth and final step in the land granting process was a statement by S.S. Blowers, noting the legality of the warrant. Blowers, wrote on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1787, that the Surveyor of the King's Woods clarified that the land was not situated on any reservations for the Crown and was able to be granted to the petitioners.<sup>281</sup> He wrote that the warrant had been fulfilled and surveyed according to Parr's orders and that the estate was not situated on land reserved for the Crown.<sup>282</sup> The land and warrant were approved and a grant was to be laid out onto Thomas Brownspriggs and the other petitioners.<sup>283</sup> This resulted in the seventy-four individuals receiving the 3,000 acres in Tracadie.

The report noted the race of the petitioners. It did so not within Blowers statement but on the sheet of the document, stating that "Thomas Brownsriggs &

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<sup>279</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 19 doc. 19, p.2.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

other Negromen” had petitioned for land.<sup>284</sup> This fact is crucial because Blowers did not say Black Loyalists, but “Negromen” and as such did not classify the individuals as Loyalists.<sup>285</sup> This simple note tells scholars that some individuals did not see the need to classify Brownspriggs and his fellow petitioners as Loyalists; if he did, Blowers would have written, Thomas Brownspriggs & other Black Loyalists. This does not mean they were not Loyalists. It may mean that society was aware that the free blacks were Loyalists and a clarification may not have been needed. Another possibility is that they had a different status within society, such as that of a black refugee, which was not recorded in official documents.

The warrant was processed quickly, which was typical for most warrants. Governor Parr requested a warrant to survey land on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1787, and on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1787, Charles Morris, John Flieger and S.S. Blowers surveyed the land and approved it.<sup>286</sup> There was no information given as to why the petition was granted so quickly, within a span of two days. Not once was it noted that there might have been a chance for the petition to be turned down. The only thing, which was mentioned, was that the land was not reserved as Crown land, which would have meant it was not available for a grant. The fact that the seventy-five petitioners were “Negromen” was reported but there was no mention of their race or how it would interfere with receiving a grant.<sup>287</sup> It is possible that it was common knowledge that it was more difficult for free blacks to get land, but the government documents did not speak of any such issues. In fact, Brownspriggs petition and its quick processing time

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<sup>284</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 19 doc. 19, p.6.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 19 doc. 19.

<sup>287</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 19 doc. 19, p. 6.

was not uncommon for land petitions. Other petitions, such as Moses Pitchers, were also processed within a few days.<sup>288</sup>

Free blacks most likely had a more difficult time petitioning for said land as the majority of them were fugitive slaves and as such not literate and could not write up a petition. In the case of Thomas Brownspriggs and the seventy-three individuals petitioning for land in Tracadie, it is crucial to note that Brownspriggs himself was a literate man. As the leader of the blacks who settled in all of Guysborough County, Brownspriggs was the obvious pick when it came to petitioning for land in Tracadie for the black community.<sup>289</sup> Both, white and black settlers in the County of Guysborough, respected him, he was also well educated.<sup>290</sup> He was well respected within the community and as such he was chosen to be the agent who was responsible for creating a settlement of black residents in Tracadie.<sup>291</sup> Governor Parr himself appointed Brownspriggs, hoping that he would encourage the majority of the black residents in the area to resettle in Tracadie.<sup>292</sup> As a well-educated Black Loyalist, he was the obvious choice for agent, who was responsible for overseeing the new settlement.<sup>293</sup> In the fall of 1787, when Brownspriggs drafted the land petition, he was the spokesperson of seventy-four families.<sup>294</sup> His case was so strong that the land petition was approved the day it was presented to authorities, which could have been

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<sup>288</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148

<sup>289</sup> "Thomas Brownspriggs," *Black Loyalists: Our History, Our People*, Canada's Digital Collection, accessed February 21, 2016, <http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/people/secular/brownspriggs.htm>.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, p. 27.

<sup>294</sup> "Thomas Brownspriggs," *Black Loyalists*, <http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/people/secular/brownspriggs.htm>.

a result of Governors Parr's support towards the Tracadie settlement.<sup>295</sup>

Brownspriggs was not only well respected by the Government but also by the Anglican Church. The leader of the Anglican church in Nova Scotia, Bishop Inglis, who happened to be worried about the black refugees and their Christian faith.<sup>296</sup> As a result of his concerns, he sent prayer books, one hundred testaments, as well as instructions on how to teach the Christian faith to the black refugees, to Brownspriggs.<sup>297</sup> Bishop Inglis wrote a note to the Bishop of London, which stated that the only religious preacher and person of character he could find was Thomas Brownspriggs.<sup>298</sup> As a literate man, who was both a teacher and preacher for his Tracadie community, Brownspriggs surprisingly gave up his position in Nova Scotia in 1792, which was likely the result of his relocation to Sierra Leone.<sup>299</sup> However, a Dempsey Jordan would soon replace him in Tracadie as a community teacher and religious leader.<sup>300</sup> Brownspriggs good character and influence within the Government and Church community enabled the Tracadie free blacks to petition for land and be granted 3,000 acres.

Over all it seemed that the Tracadie blacks had no issue petitioning for land and eventually being granted 3,000 acres. The Tracadie petitioners were each granted an estate of forty acres. Sixteen former Black Pioneers petitioned for eight hundred acres in the same location in Tracadie only a year later, but according to James

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<sup>295</sup> "Thomas Brownspriggs," *Black Loyalists*,  
<http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/people/secular/brownspriggs.htm>.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

Walker, the grant was not approved.<sup>301</sup> It is also curious that 2,720 acres of the total 3,000 acres, which had been granted to the Tracadie Black Loyalists, were redistributed in the spring of 1799 to twenty-eight ‘Acadians and Negroes’.<sup>302</sup> James Walker speculates that the petitioners under Thomas Brownspriggs came to realize that forty-acres were not enough to make a living and resettled somewhere else.<sup>303</sup> It can be argued that the Thomas Brownspriggs petition, which saw solely black settlers, started out as very encouraging and promising for the black community of Nova Scotia, but ended in a very similar, unsuccessful manner, as the situation of other free blacks in the region.<sup>304</sup>

The race of the petitioners was mentioned once, but no reason as to why this would impact the petition could be found within the documents. It is crucial to note that not once were they classified as Black Loyalists, but rather “Negromen,” which leads to a discussion on whether “Black Loyalists” were a myth.

### **The Loyalist Issue**

The colonial government in the 1780’s did not use the term Black Loyalist, as it does not appear in any of the above-mentioned sources. Yet the term Black Loyalist is used to study an entire wave of fugitive slaves who came to Nova Scotia. Is there a particular reason why the government did not refer to them as Black Loyalists? It is curious that the land petitions did not mention the term Black Loyalist, and why the black settlers were less successful in receiving land and if there is a correlation to

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<sup>301</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 28.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

their race. It may have been prejudice or simply the fact that the majority of them were illiterate and as such could not file petitions.

None of the primary sources researched here used the term Black Loyalist. They mentioned Loyalists and black people but not in connection to one another. The term *Black Loyalist* is not appropriate but in fact scholars should study the black settlers who came to Nova Scotia as individuals and not as one massive group. Some of the black refugees were Loyalists and considered themselves Black Loyalists, as the case of William Fisher indicates, but not everyone considered themselves and defined the term Loyalist the same way.<sup>305</sup> Black settlers who fought for the British during the American Revolution, may consider themselves loyal because they fought for their cause and freedom, but others, who happened to be family members of a Black Pioneer or a free black who was traveling with the British to Nova Scotia may not consider themselves loyal to the same degree as a person who fought in the war. Their motives for migrating to Nova Scotia may vary drastically and as such their loyalty to the British Crown likely fluctuated, depending on each individual's objective. As such it is crucial to look at every person individually and study the causes that led them to follow the British.

The issue of whether individuals were Loyalists is crucial and needs to be studied in detail, as it will give more insight into who the individuals were, and their motives for resettling. The historiography of the settlers and that of many other groups will be enriched by the detailed study of Loyalists and the development of historical grouping as assumed by historians of the twenty-first-century. According to

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<sup>305</sup> Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 100.

MacKinnon, Governor Parr said, “the generality of those who came here, were not much burthened with Loyalty, a spacious name which they made use of.”<sup>306</sup>

MacKinnon argues that Parr believed that the settlers were not loyal but rather abused the term in order to get support from the government. It may be difficult to identify which of the white and black settlers who claimed to be Loyalists did so because they were actually loyal, and which only did so in order to get support. If a Loyalist only claimed allegiance to the British in order to get support, they were more so egocentric than loyal. Egocentrism would strip the individuals of their loyalism because they were only looking out for themselves rather than supporting a government.

Governor Parr argued that it would be difficult to group all new settlers, both white and black, as Loyalists as their ideologies varied drastically. In a letter to Lord Shelburne, Parr noted that it would be hard to make the refugees from the North and the South, “to make them think they are one and the same People, and that their Interest is mutual.”<sup>307</sup> Parr also wrote that he believed each group would be interested in having its own government.<sup>308</sup> Governor Parr wrote this letter to Lord Shelburne, and it is evident that Nova Scotians believed that Loyalists were not all the same, but rather very different and that they had many different ideologies and motives for resettling. This makes it very clear that not even all White Loyalists can be grouped into one general Loyalist unit, as their understanding and demands were very different. Liam Riordon argues, “in order to understand the crucial place of

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<sup>306</sup> Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia 1783-1791* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986), 93.

<sup>307</sup> MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 95.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.



identities...precise local circumstances must be carefully examined.”<sup>309</sup> He discusses a white woman, Margaret Morris of New Castle, who he believed that “though she was loyal to the crown and opposed to the Revolution, it would be inaccurate to characterize [her]...primarily as a loyalist” based on her background and kind behavior towards Patriot soldiers.<sup>310</sup> White settlers, who were categorized as Loyalist, might not have fit the description of a Loyalist because their background and life told a different story, making the grouping of White Loyalists in one single group problematic. Thus, grouping fugitive slaves within the category of Loyalists is just as, if not more troublesome, since their backgrounds were even more diverse and challenging.

It is only plausible that there were a great variety of different characters that made up the Black Loyalists, not every one of them would define the term Black Loyalist the same way or even consider themselves a Loyalist at all. It is very hard to categorize around 3,500 people from different regions and backgrounds in one single group. Jasanoff uses the term Loyalist even more broadly, categorizing well over 50,000 individuals from different continents as Loyalists, which makes the term very broad.<sup>311</sup> Academics need to be careful when it comes to comparing individuals within this group as well as with other Loyalist groups, such as the White Loyalists. Black Loyalists, the term itself, may be a good starting point in order to study the fugitive slaves and free blacks who came to Nova Scotia, but when looking at

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<sup>309</sup> Liam Riordon, “Identity and Revolution: Everyday Life and Crisis in Three Delaware River Towns,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* vol 64, no. 1 Regional Perspectives on early American History (1997): 59, accessed January 19, 2016, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27773955>.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 72, 74.

<sup>311</sup> For more detailed information on Maya Jasanoff’s study on Loyalists consult Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 5-350.

individuals more closely we need to be careful not to categorize them too much, as that may do more damage than good. However, sometimes it is necessary to categorize people into groups in order to create their history and debate the event and people itself.

There is a fine line between creating the history of a group, such as the Black Loyalists, and staying objective to the individuals and their history. Academics need to stay objective enough in order to fully understand the history of individuals and how their life and opinions shaped their experience as a Black Loyalist, when studying the Black Loyalists as a whole. Grouping all free black settlers as Black Loyalists weakens the independence and freedom the individuals were looking for. They were striving for an independent life, which was not ruled by ideological positions that classified them all as the same. The underlying sociopolitical stance that historians take when classifying the free blacks, as Black Loyalists, is that the individuals were not unique and lacked the ability to form unique reasons for supporting the British. Thus, they had to borrow from the White Loyalists for a sociopolitical position.

Yet, the black refugees were capable of forming their own ideological reasons for joining the British, which were distinctly different from those of the White Loyalists and unique for each settler. This is not to say that all White Loyalists had the same reasons to migrate to Nova Scotia. Each settler, white or black, had unique reasons for being loyal. The term Black Loyalist can mean many different things to people, as they may have very different definitions for the term Black Loyalist than their fellow black refugees in the region, and that is crucial to understand. While it is

important to create groups and terms in history in order to have a debate it is necessary to consider the individual. As such, if the term Black Loyalist is to be used in the future, it will be necessary to differentiate between the kinds of loyalism, which can be attributed to each individual separately. Further, it will be required to classify some settlers as separate from Loyalists all together as their reasons behind migrating to Nova Scotia vary too drastically. This can lead to the majority of free black settlers not being considered Black Loyalists on an individual basis, but yet still being classified as Black Loyalists as a group of people, because a term will be necessary for an ongoing debate amongst scholars.

### **Council Minutes**

Council minutes from Nova Scotia can shed light on whether the government used the term Black Loyalist to identify fugitive slaves. Not once was the term Black Loyalist mentioned in the period 1782-1792, but yet they discussed several issues regarding the black settlers. The well-known race riot of 1784, which occurred in Shelburne, Nova Scotia, was mentioned in the council minutes from August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1784.<sup>312</sup> However, not once was the race of anyone involved mentioned; the council minutes only reported “disturbances having arisen at Shelburne respecting the allotments of lands in that township which having been had under consideration.”<sup>313</sup> Scholars often mention that there were issues between the white and black settlers in Shelburne leading up to the race riot but yet the government did not see it necessary to record the ethnicity of anyone involved in the disturbances, which occurred in the summer of 1784. This may be a result of the fact that everyone was aware that the

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<sup>312</sup> NSA MFM 15289, Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, RG 1 vol. 190, p. 32.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

disturbances had occurred between white and black settlers in Shelburne and the government did not see it necessary to record it, or there was no differentiation made between white and black settlers. The first seems more plausible, because disturbances around land distribution were often cause for conflict as one group of settlers felt like they were treated unfairly, having been promised the same as everyone else but yet not receiving as much.

Almost a decade later in 1791, when the majority of the black settlers decided to move to Sierra Leone, the council did record black settlers in their council minutes. Between November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1791 and December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1791, the council mentioned “black people” six times in connection with their relocation to Sierra Leone.<sup>314</sup> Within a span of three weeks the council went from not mentioning black settlers to repeatedly discussing the government’s actions in regard to the relocation of the black settlers to Sierra Leone. It is crucial to note that not once was the term Black Loyalist used by the council members.

The council in Halifax discussed their actions in regard to black settlers repeatedly in 1791. The first mention of such a deed occurred on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1791 when, “the Lieutenant Governor proposed to the consideration of the council the manner of paying the expenses ...for the line of shipping to convey to Sierra Leone such Black People as shall chose to remove...from this Province.”<sup>315</sup> This short paragraph tells us two important things: first, the government was considering paying for the voyage; and, second, the council did not refer to the black settlers as Loyalists. The government was willing to pay for the ships, which would eventually carry the

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<sup>314</sup> NSA MFM 15289, Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, RG 1 vol. 190, p. 201, 203, 206, 207.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 201.

black settlers to Sierra Leone. Did they consider paying for the voyage for altruistic reasons, or because of an economic reason, i.e., less settlers would require land and provisions, which would equal less agitation for the government. The second point is crucial for this thesis as it clearly states that the council did not refer to the black settlers as Loyalists, either because not everyone was considered loyal or because the society in general was aware of their status as Black Loyalists. The term Black Loyalist was not used by the council because it was not a common term used in the 1780's; if it had been a legal term, which was commonly used for the fugitive slaves in Nova Scotia then the government would have used that term in their council minutes. Considering that the term "Loyalist" was used over and over again in other recorded council minutes from Halifax at the time, but never in regard to black settlers, (who were only referred to as black people), this is significant.

The term Loyalist was mentioned several times between 1782 and 1792 in the council minutes. The records indicate that on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1784 the council discussed the "surveying and laying out [of] land at Shelburne, Annapolis and other places for the Loyal Refugees from 15<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1783."<sup>316</sup> Another record indicates "the Settlement of Loyalists & disbanded troops on the River St. John," which was dated October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1786.<sup>317</sup> These two quotations are only examples of many more to be found within the council minutes. Thus it is evident that the terms loyal and Loyalist were common and used regularly when referring to the settlers who came to Nova Scotia as a result of the American Revolution.

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<sup>316</sup> NSA MFM 15289, Minutes of His Majesty's Council, RG 1 vol. 190, p. 8.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

The Council minutes that relate to Sierra Leone include many examples of the term “black people” being used and not Black Loyalist. On January 26, 1792, for example, the council certified the authenticity of the voyage to Sierra Leone. Here they wrote about “the transportation of free Black People from Halifax to Sierra Leone.”<sup>318</sup> Yet again, the council did not refer to the black settlers as Black Loyalists but instead called them free black people. This likely reflected the fact that there were slaves present in Nova Scotia at the time, and that society was accustomed to the social position of black settlers being that of slaves. It is crucial to note that during the American Revolution, when Lord Dunmore offered freedom to any rebel slave in return for military services, the government took steps to ensure that slaves owned by Loyalists would not run away, and they, the Loyalist slaves’ were never offered freedom. James Walker argues that this measure was “a desperate attempt to bring the rebellious colonies to their knees” and can explain “the complete lack of any consideration...of the possible results of their policy.”<sup>319</sup> According to this, the British did not see the black refugees who fought for them, as Black Loyalists, as equals, but rather as a means to an end. They did not consider the rebel slaves who joined their cause as Loyalists, the way they considered the white settlers that migrated to Nova Scotia from the South as White Loyalists. This could explain why the government did not use the term Black Loyalist. They were referred to as free blacks, because the government acknowledged that there was a difference between the Loyalists slaves and the individuals who had fled the Rebel slave plantations and fought for the British. The Government kept the promise of freedom but did not consider the free

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<sup>318</sup> NSA MFM 15289, Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, RG 1 vol. 190, p. 211.

<sup>319</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 2.

blacks as Loyalists because in their eyes they were just a means to an end not loyal citizens.

The free blacks lived lives that were very separate from that of their fellow white settlers. James Walker argues that religious influence, in particular the Methodist and Baptist faith, led to a separate identity, which further segregated the white and black communities of Nova Scotia.<sup>320</sup> The detached forms of religion that the free blacks had been placed in upon arriving in Nova Scotia, by William Black (Methodist), Garrettson (Methodist), and Henry Aline (New Lights), resulted eventually in a very distinct and separate community.<sup>321</sup> Walker argues that their race and faith played a role in their alienation from the white settler society.<sup>322</sup> In their struggle to make Nova Scotia home, they realized that only the church could present them with an opportunity to embrace their true identity.<sup>323</sup> Their faith and the black churches in Nova Scotia subsequently were more than just a place to pray.<sup>324</sup> Churches became the center of community gatherings and vice versa the community itself was defined by the faith and church they followed.<sup>325</sup> Walker argues that religion had an even greater impact on their awareness of their race than their unsuccessful experience with the promised land had.<sup>326</sup> He states that even though the free blacks were “confident in their own spiritual superiority, ...[they] continued to feel uncomfortable inferior in the physical presence of whites.”<sup>327</sup> Even Boston King,

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<sup>320</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 78.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

a prominent member of the settler society, was fearful of the white settlers.<sup>328</sup> Their separate lives, with their own communities, churches, schools, and values, the free blacks were “not only different but exclusive.”<sup>329</sup> James Walker argues that the core incentive of the black refugees “had been the acquisition of land, a small farm which would afford them their independence and security.”<sup>330</sup> This statement evidently indicates that Walker believed that the fundamental motivation of the black refugees was their freedom, independence and security. They were looking for a secure lifestyle that was independent and far removed from their slave-roots. Thus, their motivation to join the British were not rooted in loyalism towards the King, but they were loyal to the body that would grant them freedom and a secure life. The free black community of Nova Scotia was evidently separate from the white settler society and as such had different beliefs, which can make a classification of both white and black settlers as Loyalist problematic.

### **Newspapers**

The public Newspapers, such as the Royal Gazette, in Nova Scotia in the decade between 1782 and 1792 not once reported on Black Loyalists, but they mentioned slaves and indentured servants. On July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1786, a ‘Negro wench’ was for sale in *The Nova Scotia Gazette*. She was described to be between the age of ten and eleven, and “has had the small pox and measles.”<sup>331</sup> Clearly this young girl was a slave, to be sold to another master as advertised in the newspaper. In the newspaper from June 3, 1788 an advertisement for “a decent cleanly Servant Maid” can be

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<sup>328</sup> Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 86.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>331</sup> NSA MFM 8160, Newspapers Halifax, July 31, 1786, Reel 5.



found.<sup>332</sup> It is unclear if the advertiser was looking for a particular race. However, Harvey Whitfield argues in *North to bondage*, people “probably listed slaves as ‘servants,’” which would result in the advertisement being most likely for a black slave.<sup>333</sup> These two advertisements make it evident that the selling and buying of labour was very common at the time.

Not only were advertisements for servants made public, newspapers also saw advertisement for runaway slaves. A Benjamin Douglas advertised on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1783 that his slave with the name of Dick had ran away two days earlier.<sup>334</sup> In the advertisement Dick was described as being twenty-seven years old, and 5’8” tall.<sup>335</sup> He was further described to have worn a red coat that had some blue in it and a white waistcoat.<sup>336</sup> Douglas promised a reward for whoever would find and return his slave.<sup>337</sup> This newspaper excerpt signifies that Loyalists were keen on keeping their slaves and that Nova Scotia was still very much a slave-oriented region. The fact that slaves lived amongst White Loyalists and free blacks indicates that it must have been difficult for all parties involved to move from a society where one race was above the other to one of equal opportunity and treatment. Individuals who owned black slaves may have had a hard time treating free blacks as equal, since they still owned slaves and knew that the majority of the free blacks in Nova Scotia had been slaves. This is

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<sup>332</sup> NSA MFM 8160, Newspapers Halifax, June 3, 1788, Reel 5.

<sup>333</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to bondage: loyalist slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 10.

<sup>334</sup> NSA MFM 8159, Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle, Halifax, 1770-1789, 9 December 1783 p. 4, accessed Feb 1, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=28>.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

not to say that none tried to treat them as equals or that they did not consider the free blacks as Loyalists, just that it may have been difficult for some of the settlers.

In the fall of 1786 another similar case of a runaway can be encountered, but this time the person was an indentured servant. James Cox advertised in the *Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser* that his indentured servant Henry Jones had ran away.<sup>338</sup> Jones was described as a man who had an obvious speech impediment but was skilled enough to make himself seem like a free man.<sup>339</sup> Jones was not a slave but rather an indentured servant, who was likely a free black settler upon arriving in Nova Scotia but then was not able to make a living and indentured himself to Cox.

Government Proclamations were also published in the Newspapers on a regular basis. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1787, Governor Parr published a proclamation, which regulated the trade with the United States of America. In this proclamation it is noted that importation of certain goods, such as horses, sheep, and poultry be extended for six weeks and only be allowed to be imported “by British Subjects only, and in none other than British built ships.”<sup>340</sup> This is just one of many examples of proclamations being published in the newspaper, which regulated day-to-day life of the settlers in Nova Scotia.

## **Conclusion**

Thomas Brownspriggs’ land petition is a good example of how the term Black Loyalist was not attributed to all fugitive slaves, at least by the colonial government.

The documents, which comprised the land petition did not once mentioned the fact

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<sup>338</sup> NSA MFM 4823, *Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser*, Shelburne, 26 October 1786, p.1, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africans/archives.asp?ID=37>.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> NSA MFM 8160, *Newspapers Halifax*, April 5, 1787, Reel 5.

that Brownspriggs and the other free blacks were Black Loyalists; the only mention of race was noted on the document that S.S. Blowers signed. The document stated that the seventy-four petitioners were “Negromen” but not Loyalists. The word “negro” was used by Ellen Gibson Wilson to describe 1770 “Negro slavery.”<sup>341</sup> Phillip D. Morgan cites similar usage from late eighteenth-century documents, such as “many idle Negro Wenches, selling dry goods, cakes, rice, etc.” which was part of a 1768 complaint by the “Charleston grand jury.”<sup>342</sup> The word ‘free negro’ was used in a similar manner as the term ‘free black’, both indicating that the individual who happened to have been a slave in previous years was now a free and independent individual.<sup>343</sup> The British government would generate passports and certificates for free blacks indicating their status by claiming that they were free individuals and they had the option to travel wherever they pleased. It is crucial to note that the government was not commonly referring to the passport and certificate holders as Black Loyalists. The topic of passports and certificates issued to free blacks will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Further, the government did not record whether or not their race or kind of loyalism would have an impact on the processing of the land petition.

The colonial government used words that had several meanings, which differed from the twenty-first-century understanding of the term, for instance slaves

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<sup>341</sup> Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, 2.

<sup>342</sup> Philip D. Morgan, *Slave counterpoint: Black culture in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 250.

<sup>343</sup> NSA MFM 15282, Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 p. 332-3, accessed February 1, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=19>; NSA MFM 15282, Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 p. 333, accessed February 1, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=20>; NSA MFM 15282, Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 p. 336, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=21>.

were often referred to as servants, which is problematic as it complicates the study of Black Loyalists. Whitfield argues, “an 1802 pro-slavery pamphlet referred to “Negro Servitude” (not “Slaves”),” however, the leaflet included a “discussion of the legality of slavery in the British Empire generally and Nova Scotia.”<sup>344</sup> Whitfield further states, “the term “slave” and “servant” were often used interchangeably.”<sup>345</sup> This indicates that terminology used at the time mean different things and need to be taken under consideration. Late eighteenth-century society has attributed different meanings to words than twenty-first-century academics do today. The difference in culture and linguistics needs to be taken in consideration when studying Black Loyalists, land petitions, and loyalism. Evidently, the colonial government did not use the term Black Loyalist on the documents that comprise of Thomas Brownspriggs land petition.

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<sup>344</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to bondage: loyalist slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 11.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

Table B: List Of Tracadie Petitioners<sup>346</sup>

Name of petitioner	W	C
Thomas Brownspriggs	"	1
Peter French	1	/
Samuel Minton	1	"
James Lenox	1	"
Binj Gero	1	2
Tho Ruhardion	/	"
Alex Elmes	1	1
Rick Jordan	/	2
Sam Dismal	1	2
Prince Hederic	1	"
Rob Bachus	1	/
John Shelby	1	"
James Emma	1	3
Anthony Morris	1	2
Ruark Shephard	/	/
Grace Bolton	1	/
Ino Devas	1	2
Ino Slaughter	1	1
Charles Ringwood	/	1
James Thomas	1	"
William Gordon	/	"
Sam Guisson	n/a	n/a
Charles Lamb	n/a	2
Ino Green	/	2
John Green Ount	1	"
John Bratton	/	"
Pompey Colt	/	"
Samuel Willis	/	2
Adam Minton	1	2
Garret Hart	1	"
Anthy Barton	1	2
Charl Sweeney	/	1
Charles Ash	"	2
Pompey Clark	/	/
Prince Tudenc	1	1
Baccus Eroin	/	"
Joseph Ringwood	/	"
Christ King	1	"
Moses Reduck	1	"
John Van Bright	1	2
John Farmer	1	"
Samuel Smith	1	1

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<sup>346</sup> NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 19 doc. 19, p.9.

## Chapter 4 - Early Land Petitions: A Black Sergeant And Four Black Pilots

Three of the earliest land petitions in Nova Scotia that included free black settlers date back to 1784 and 1785. These will be studied in detail in this chapter. Thomas Peters, a black sergeant with the Black Pioneers, was part of the first two petitions, one under Lawrence Buskirk and another under William Tying in 1784.<sup>347</sup> Four black pilots were mentioned in Moses Pitchers land petition on McNut's Island in 1785.<sup>348</sup> The three petitions comprised free blacks within land petitions that also saw white settlers requesting land. It is crucial to note that only Moses Pitcher's petition mentioned the race of the four black pilots: London Jackson, Richard Leach, James Robinson, and James Jackson.<sup>349</sup> The petition failed to note that another black pilot, Joseph Restine, was included in the list (see appendix C.) According to Marion Gilroy's book, Joseph Restine happened to be a black pilot as well.<sup>350</sup> This fact indicates that researchers need to be very careful when examining land petitions in regard to the race and status of the individuals because important information may be missing on the documents. These early land petitions will be studied in detail in this chapter and shed light on the difficult task of petitioning for land, and who those five free black settlers were. These three early land petitions reveal that the struggle to receive land as a new settler was very real from the early onset of migration to Nova Scotia.

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<sup>347</sup> NSA MFM 15685, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 2 doc.43; NSA MFM 15688, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 9 doc. 289.

<sup>348</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 4.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Marion Gilroy, *Loyalists And Land Settlement in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Board of Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1937), 99.

## Thomas Peters: A Black Sergeant

Thomas Peters was a free black settler who was recorded on two land petitions in 1784. He was included in a draft grant for land in Gage and one in Kingston.<sup>351</sup>

Thomas Peters, a West African born Black Pioneer, was first reported to have been a 38-year-old slave in North Carolina belonging to a William Campbell of Wilmington in 1776.<sup>352</sup> In that year, he ran away from his master and joined the Black Pioneers in New York, because he had heard about Lord Dunmore's 1775 proclamation, granting freedom to every slave who ran away from a rebel master and joined British forces in their fight.<sup>353</sup> In 1779, Peters, who had been promoted to Sergeant, met Sally, a 26-year-old woman from Charleston who had joined the Black Pioneers.<sup>354</sup> They were married that year.<sup>355</sup> Thomas Peters and Sally landed in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, in May 1784.<sup>356</sup> He was put in charge of two hundred Pioneers who settled in Brindley Town near Digby.<sup>357</sup> Loyalist troops had been promised provisions for three years from the government but the Annapolis Royal blacks only received provisions that lasted eighty days.<sup>358</sup> A total of 186 free black settlers were to receive "12,096 pounds of flour and 9,352 pounds of pork", but Thomas Peters who was supposed to receive the rations from Digby Commissioner Thomas Williams never received the

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<sup>351</sup> NSA MFM 15685, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 2 doc.43, p. 1; NSA MFM 15688, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 9 doc. 289, p. 6.

<sup>352</sup> James W. St G. Walker, "PETERS, THOMAS," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 4, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, accessed December 15, 2015, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters\\_thomas\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters_thomas_4E.html).

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>358</sup> Walker, *PETERS, THOMAS*, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters\\_thomas\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters_thomas_4E.html) ; Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 44.

provisions.<sup>359</sup> Instead Reverend Edward Brudenell was sent the rations, which he stored, and only sporadically distributed to free blacks, that worked on the roads.<sup>360</sup> Eventually agent John Donnally managed to provide the free black settlers with the majority of the provisions, “11,980 pounds of the flour and 9,209 pounds of the pork.”<sup>361</sup> These were the only provisions the Digby settlers under Thomas Peters ever received. The Annapolis Royal blacks received little to no land and had a hard time sustaining any form of farms the next years as a result.<sup>362</sup> A struggle to gain what Peters had been promised ensued and for several years he petitioned unsuccessfully over and over again to the colonial Government.

In 1790, six years after him initially having stepped foot on Nova Scotian soil, after having petitioned to the Governor five times, Thomas Peters decided to go to Britain and appeal to the Crown.<sup>363</sup> He was the attorney for several hundred blacks both in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and in November of 1790, Peters was in London appealing for their cause.<sup>364</sup> The result of Peters’ appeal was that Governor Parr had to establish an inquiry to look into the problems with the Annapolis area land granting system.<sup>365</sup> If Thomas Peter’s accusations proved right, the Annapolis Royal blacks were to be given ‘good’ land.<sup>366</sup> The free blacks who declined that offer were to be offered to enlist in the army and relocate to the West Indies, or move to Sierra

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<sup>359</sup> Walker, *PETERS, THOMAS*, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters\\_thomas\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters_thomas_4E.html). ; Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 44.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>362</sup> Walker, “PETERS, THOMAS,” [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters\\_thomas\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters_thomas_4E.html).

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*



Leone.<sup>367</sup> The majority of the free blacks considered the offer to move to Sierra Leone as a great opportunity and hoped that the promises made to them would prove right this time around.<sup>368</sup> The idea of free land, equal rights, and racial equality seemed very tempting.<sup>369</sup> On January 1792, fifteen ships left Halifax for Sierra Leone, and with them 1,200 free blacks emigrated to West Africa.<sup>370</sup> Out of those 1,200 free blacks, 500 had been in Thomas Peter's jurisdiction.<sup>371</sup> The yearlong struggle to gain what Peters had been promised by the British had resulted in yet another resettlement.

#### **Lawrence Buskirk Land Petition: 1784**

The earliest land petition studied in this thesis is from 1784 in Gage. In 1784, a Lawrence Buskirk filed a draft grant for 10,866 Acres in Gage for himself and sixty-six other individuals.<sup>372</sup> The draft included a list of the sixty-seven individuals and the exact location of the land, this being Gage, in the county of Sunbury, Nova Scotia (later New Brunswick).<sup>373</sup> It proposed that the land should be "bounded in the following manner, beginning on the Westerly bank of the River Saint John about three chains, in a right line below the mouth of little river thence running South eighty seven degrees West, One hundred and ninety two chains."<sup>374</sup> This form of a detailed description eventually concluded with the document listing the names of the individuals and what lot they would be granted. Thomas Peters was to get lot seventeen.<sup>375</sup> The end of the handwritten section of the draft grant noted, "forever in

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<sup>367</sup> Walker, *PETERS, THOMAS*, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters\\_thomas\\_4E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/peters_thomas_4E.html).

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>372</sup> NSA MFM 15685, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 2 doc.43, p. 1.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*

free and common Soccage the said several respective Grantees and their several and respective Heirs.”<sup>376</sup> This indicated that the land was to be passed down to future generations and not be available for redistribution upon the grantees’ death.

The Surveyor’s report can be linked to Buskirk’s draft grant. In this report Charles Morris referred to a general warrant that had been made out to him on April 22, 1783. He stated that he was requested to lay out farmland onto the sixty-seven individuals within Lawrence Buskirk’s petition. Morris wrote that he was to lay out “not less than fifty acres each, for the Reception of Loyalist[s].”<sup>377</sup> This short but clear identification of Loyalists, who were to receive land, and the connection with the sixty-seven petitioners, labels Thomas Peters as a Loyalist, alongside the other sixty-six petitioners. Whether Peters considered himself a “Loyalist” is not made clear within this report. Yet Morris was considering the petitioners Loyalists’, otherwise, he would have not referred to the general warrant and the Buskirk petitioners as Loyalists.

After the Surveyor’s report a surveyor’s certificate was created. This document was composed by John Wentworth and certified that the land upon which the petition was made was not part of any crown reservations.<sup>378</sup> He noted that the 10,800 acres were available and that they were located in a town that used to be called Gage.<sup>379</sup> Wentworth noted that the said land was surveyed and laid out onto the sixty-seven petitioners accordingly.<sup>380</sup> The document concluded by stating that the land was

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<sup>376</sup> NSA MFM 15685, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 2 doc.43, p. 11.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*

not part of any crown land. No reference to whether the petitioners were Loyalists or their race was made.

The last document was a grant, which was a printed form that lay out the exact conditions of ownership. This document was to be sent to the Secretary of Nova Scotia and was dated June 25, 1784.<sup>381</sup> Some of the conditions in the grant were that the owners were allowed to keep three cattle on their land for every 50 acres they owned.<sup>382</sup> The owner was also responsible for clearing and improving three acres for every 50 acres that they received.<sup>383</sup> It was also noted that once the land was granted to the individual it was to stay within the family, or given to any other heir that was recorded and not to be give back to the government unless so desired.<sup>384</sup> The document also noted in a handwritten sketch that it appeared that the warrant was according to the law and that a grant should be prepared.<sup>385</sup>

None of the above documents mentioned the race of the individuals who were petitioning for land, but they were referred to as Loyalists. Charles Morris, who wrote the Surveyor's report, referred to Lawrence Buskirk and the other petitioners as Loyalists. Morris' exact words were, "for the Reception of Loyal Refugees in the Township of Gage."<sup>386</sup> It is evident that Morris and the government was preparing for the reception of Loyalists, which included Tying and his fellow petitioners, which included Peters. This report identified Thomas Peters, one of the sixty-seven petitioners as a Loyalist, but did not mention his race.

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<sup>381</sup> NSA MFM 15685, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 2 doc.43, p. 12-14.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>386</sup> NSA MFM 15688, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 9 doc. 289, p. 5.

## **William Tying Land Petition: 1784**

The 1784 draft grant included Thomas Peters and other individuals, who petitioned for 21,892 acres in the Township of Kingston. This petition included a draft grant, a surveyor's report, and a surveyor's certificate. The grant included several pages of detailed descriptions of who the grantees were and where the requested land was located. Evidently even literate people had difficulty applying for land. Tying's draft grant makes it clear that it was almost impossible for illiterate individuals to petition for land. Petitioners had to file documents that were very detailed and long and required close attention while filling them out, which would have been impossible for an illiterate person.

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1784 Charles Morris wrote a report regarding the request to survey land onto the grantees in William Tying's petition. Morris discussed the general warrant that had been distributed to him on April 22, 1783 in regard to land and "Loyal Refugees" in the area of Gage near the St John River.<sup>387</sup> Morris also noted that the land was "not [to be] less than 50 acres each."<sup>388</sup> He further notes that Tying and one hundred and thirty-one other individuals were petitioning for land, and that the lots were to "contain...two hundred acres each more or less" coming to a total of 21,892 acres.<sup>389</sup> Morris also noted that the land was to be in Kingston, along the River St. John.<sup>390</sup> The report further stated that a budget was set aside for the establishment of any needed roads. This rather short report was thus concluded.

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<sup>387</sup> NSA MFM 15688, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 9 doc. 289, p. 5.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> NSA MFM 15688, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 9 doc. 289, p. 5.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

The surveyor's certificate was a third document, which was composed and linked to William Tying's draft grant. This certificate was comprised of several pages of handwritten notes that included the names of the grantees, lot numbers, and size.<sup>391</sup>

### **Moses Pitcher's Land Petition**

The 1785 petition included thirty-six individuals, including five free blacks. Appendix C includes the name and size of land granted to these individuals. This petition requested land on McNutt's Island in the district of Shelburne. Over all the petitioners were asking for 2,000 acres, which were to be distributed amongst the thirty-six persons. A total of six documents can be linked to said petition.

The first document was a warrant to survey land, which was signed by Governor John Parr. The warrant, which was dated June 17<sup>th</sup>, 1785 requested that Charles Morris was to lay out land onto the thirty-six petitioners, as defined in a list (See Appendix C).<sup>392</sup>This warrant was generic as it followed a version, which was used to give warrants to the Surveyor of Land.<sup>393</sup> Stated were the names of the Governor, the Surveyor, as well as the name of the petitioner.<sup>394</sup> The size of the land and its location were also noted.<sup>395</sup> This generic document did not indicate the race of any of the petitioners or that their race would impact their desire to receive land.

The second document was a report that acknowledged the above warrant.<sup>396</sup> Charles Morris recorded that he had received the warrant and made arrangements for

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<sup>391</sup> NSA MFM 15688, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 9 doc. 289, p. 8-15.

<sup>392</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 1.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1785 was the date of the document.

the land to be surveyed and distributed to Moses Pitcher and his fellow petitioners.<sup>397</sup> He also noted that the said land was on McNutt Island was to contain 2,000 acres in total.<sup>398</sup> Morris' report did not report the race of the individuals or that there would be any issues with laying out the land onto the petitioners.

Morris' next report was a note given to John Wentworth, dated June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1785. This report was composed the same day as the second document. Charles Morris acknowledged that John Wentworth was to be given a certificate that stated that the allotted land was not part of any crown reservations.<sup>399</sup> This document signifies that the government was only processing land that was not part of crown land, but because the land on McNutt Island was not part of any crown reservations their warrant could proceed.

The documents that followed certify that the location of the 2,000 acres was not part of any crown land. The first document appears to have been written by J. Clarke.<sup>400</sup> This note states that the warrant was certified on June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1785.<sup>401</sup> Wentworth received the certificate that identified the fact that the allotted land was not crown land and available for redistribution. Charles Morris' request was concluded. Clarke's note was followed by a two-page report that was written by Sam Paine, certifying in detail that the land was not part of any crown land. Sam Paine was identified as the Deputy Surveyor General of the King's Woods.<sup>402</sup> The document stated that the location of the 2,000 acres on McNutt's Island was not part of any

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<sup>397</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 2.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 10.

reservations for the crown and that said land had been surveyed and laid out onto the thirty-six petitioners.<sup>403</sup> Symbolizing, again, that only land that was not part of any crown reservations was to be distributed. It is also important to note that none of the above documents mentioned race or the impact status would have on receiving land in Nova Scotia.

The last document was the grant itself. Attorney General S.S. Blowers signed this, which was dated June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1785.<sup>404</sup> The grant consisted of a list of all the individuals receiving land and acknowledging the validity of the document by stating that it should be upheld by future generations.<sup>405</sup> The commodities upon the land were also noted to belong to the thirty-six individuals, including the timber, lakes, fish, and any profits made off the land.<sup>406</sup> They were also given the right to hunt.<sup>407</sup> Next was the distribution of lots, which included again a list of the individuals and their lot number.<sup>408</sup> Below it were a few regulations. One such guideline was that the petitioners had to pay a fee, “at the Rate of Two Shillings for every Hundred Acres,” every year.<sup>409</sup> The grant stated that the owners of the land had three years to clear and work three acres of land for every fifty acres.<sup>410</sup> Other conditions followed. At the end of the general conditions for land owners John Parr signed the document, stating its authenticity.<sup>411</sup> Below Parr’s signature is a short note from Attorney General Blowers, stating that a warrant had been made and the land was laid out onto the petitioners

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<sup>403</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 9.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

according to the attached plans.<sup>412</sup> The grant was finally completed and Moses Pitcher and his fellow petitioners owned the land.

### **Black Pilots**

Black pilots were individuals who guided ships in and out of ports. In some cases pilots could also be guides that navigated British troops through unknown territory such as Southern landscapes that were only known to fugitive slaves who had lived in the region and as such made good guides.<sup>413</sup> The high demand for labour allowed the fugitive slaves job opportunities that had been denied to them before. The black pilots were paid for their services, and even “paid well” since pilots were high in demand at the end of the American Revolution.<sup>414</sup> Another plus was that these black pilots were not required to pay taxes and were provisioned.<sup>415</sup> The high influx in paid black labor resulted in a great wave of fugitive slaves fleeing to New York for freedom and work.<sup>416</sup>

### **Four Black Pilots: A Close Analysis Of Who They Were**

Moses Pitcher’s land petition included a list of the thirty-six grantees and within said list four free black pilots were recorded. Appendix C, reproduces the list and indicates No. 23 as the section where the above-mentioned individuals can be found. These four men were, “London Jackson, Richard Leach, James Robinson, James Jackson” and they were identified as, “four Black Pilots.”<sup>417</sup> This was the only

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<sup>412</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 12.

<sup>413</sup> For more information on black ship pilots and their importance consult Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 28.

<sup>414</sup> Pybus, *Epic Journey of freedom*, 29.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 4.



mentioning of black individuals being on said list. Together these individuals were granted a total of fifty acres, which equaled twelve and a half acres each.<sup>418</sup> This happened to be the smallest allotment on the petition.

London Jackson was one of the four black pilots on the petition. He was the son of James Jackson, who happened to be one of the four black pilots as well.

London Jackson was 32 years old when he traveled with an infant child, his wife, and James Jackson, from New York.<sup>419</sup> They traveled on a ship under Capt. Mowat. In November 1780 he ran away from Hampton and joined General Leslie's fleet and became a pilot.<sup>420</sup> There he claimed that his owner was from Hampton and had been a William Ballard.<sup>421</sup> William Ballard's will was dated 1775 and included a slave named London, which he left to Edward, his son.<sup>422</sup> Edward died in 1781, but by that time London was long gone.<sup>423</sup> The land London was granted on McNutt's Island was sold in 1789, only 5 years after he had received it.<sup>424</sup> James Jackson, his father, died that year. London Jackson's location after the death of his father is unknown.<sup>425</sup> As such it is unknown if he stayed in Nova Scotia or relocated to Sierra Leone.

James Jackson happened to be a 50-year-old pilot who was enlisted and fought for the British in late 1775. He served under Capt. Henry Mowat of the Royal

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<sup>418</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 4.

<sup>419</sup> The University of Sydney, "London Jackson," *Black Loyalist*, University of Sydney, 2015, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.blackloyalist.info/person/display/1047>.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*

Navy and was traveling with him from New York.<sup>426</sup> James' extended family, which was traveling with him, included Judith, his wife, and son Harry.<sup>427</sup> London, a son from a previous marriage, was also part of the group. London Jackson brought along his wife Sebra and their infant daughter Zelpher.<sup>428</sup> A 33-year-old Nelly Jackson was also on the ship, she was believed to be his sister-in-law.<sup>429</sup> James Jackson was a slave upon birth and, presumably, a free black in his years before joining Capt. Mowat. He belonged to Colonel Robert Tucker, a merchant from Norfolk.<sup>430</sup> He was a skipper, who was recorded as Jemmy in the Tucker's estate in 1767.<sup>431</sup> James' mother was a Jane Jackson/ Thompson.<sup>432</sup> His father's identity was unknown.<sup>433</sup> Since Tucker owned Jane, James was a slave who belonged to Tucker.<sup>434</sup> James Jackson reported that his owner was the late Colonel Tucker, however his actual status upon joining Capt. Mowat is ambiguous since Tucker's death occurred in 1767.<sup>435</sup> James may have been a free black after Tucker's death and worked in Hampton, where his family, including London belonged to William Ballard.<sup>436</sup> Both London and Jackson were pilots who were granted land on McNutt's Island. In 1789, James passed away.<sup>437</sup> James Jackson and his family were lucky to have an extended family that could support each other.

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<sup>426</sup> The University of Sydney, "James Jackson," *Black Loyalist*, University of Sydney, 2015, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.blackloyalist.info/person/display/1042>.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

Richard Leach was a 28-year-old black pilot. Leach was a black pilot on Capt. Mowat's ship the *Ann* alongside London and James Jackson.<sup>438</sup> The ex-slave used to belong to a Godwin family, who were Quaker's from Nansemond County.<sup>439</sup> However, it is probable that the name Leach came from James and David Leach in Norfolk.<sup>440</sup> Alongside Richard were traveling Grace, 17, and Ruth, 20, who belonged to a William Curle.<sup>441</sup>

James Robinson is the fourth black pilot. In the Nova Scotia census records from 1786 a James Robinson is recorded to have lived on 777 King Street, in Shelburne, as a laborer.<sup>442</sup> A year later, in 1787 the same individual was recorded to have worked as a laborer in the North Division, while another person with the last name Robinson was noted to have been a sailor.<sup>443</sup> It is unclear if this James Robinson is the same person as the black pilot, James Robinson, who was one of the four black pilots recorded on Moses Pitcher's land petition.

Joseph Restine, was an individual who happened to be one of the petitioners alongside the four black pilots. Restine was identified as a black pilot by Marion

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<sup>438</sup> The University of Sydney, "Dick Leich," *Black Loyalist*, University of Sydney, 2015, accessed December 15, 2015, <http://www.blackloyalist.info/person/display/1137>.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

<sup>442</sup> Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne and outlying communities, 1786 and 1787," Census, Assessment and Poll Tax Records 1767-1827, Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives, MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1517 p. 32, accessed February 22, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/census/returnsMG1v957.asp?ID=807>.

<sup>443</sup> Nova Scotia Archives, "Assessments for Shelburne and outlying communities, 1786 and 1787," Census, Assessment and Poll Tax Records 1767-1827, Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives MG 1 vol. 957 no. 1518 p. 18, accessed February 22, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/census/returnsmg1v957.asp?ID=1689>.

Gilroy in her book, but was not reported as a black pilot in the land petition.<sup>444</sup> There is no obvious reason as to why he was not included with the other four pilots or why he received fifty acres while the others only got twelve and a half acres each.<sup>445</sup> The fact that Restine was not recorded as a black pilot indicates that researchers need to be very careful when studying land petitions as a way to identify peoples race.

Land petitions did not always record race or status, which leads to the debate around whether there was a purpose behind the recording of race within official documents. If there was a reason behind why the four black pilots were noted to be black and why Restine's race was not recorded, which would lead to the conclusion that race was not binary and thus the government had a system to document the race of certain individuals but not all free blacks. The four black pilots had to share fifty acres, while Restine was granted fifty acres on his own. This leads to the conclusion that he was above the black pilots in society. It could have been that he was the overseer of the black pilots, or that he had a higher military status, which enabled him to be more advanced in society and thus the government did not see a need to record his race. This would also explain why Stephen Blucke's race was not mentioned in his petition. He was a mulatto and above free blacks in society. It seems evident that the colonial government had a system when it came to recording the race of individuals, however, this system complicates the research on Black Loyalists as it is not always clear if an individual was white or black when studying land petitions.

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<sup>444</sup> Gilroy, *Loyalists*, 99.

<sup>445</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 4-5.

## Free Blacks: Passports And Certificates

The government did use passports and certificates that were issued to black settlers in order to identify if they were free or enslaved. These documents were issued to the black refugees shortly before they embarked on their journey to Nova Scotia and ensured that their freedom was secured and would not be questioned by officials.

David George, the prominent Baptist preacher was one of the individuals to receive a passport. David George, who traveled with his family from Savannah to Nova Scotia, had been issued the document in the southern state.<sup>446</sup> This document stated that David George was “a Free Negro Man” and that he had a “wife named Phillis and three children (who are also free).”<sup>447</sup> The passport did not call him a Black Loyalist but rather referred to him as a ‘free negro’; he was not considered loyal to the British crown.

Another document was a certificate, which indicated that Thomas Williams and his wife Hannah were free blacks. This certificate stated, “that the Bearer by Name Thomas Williams and his Wife Hannah are both freeborn Blacks,” and that they had “lost every thing they had” when they left Savannah.<sup>448</sup> This certificate made it evident that Thomas and Hannah were free blacks, but they were not noted to be Black Loyalists.

Another family who was granted a certificate of their freedom and a passport to travel freely was given to Ned and his family. On November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1779 a certificate

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<sup>446</sup> NSA MFM 15282, Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 pp. 332-3, accessed February 1, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=19>.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> NSA MFM 15282, Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 pp. 333, accessed February 1, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=20>.

was written in Savannah, which states that “Ned a free Negro, with his wife and family” were not slaves.”<sup>449</sup> The document then goes on saying, “not to trouble or molest said Ned wife and family, as they are free Negroes and friends to his Majesty.”<sup>450</sup> The certificate states several times that Ned and his family were free blacks and should not be harmed in any way. It is also noted that they were friends of the King, which most likely means that Ned used to be enslaved by the Rebels and that he joined the British during the American Revolution and was granted his freedom by the monarch. The term Black Loyalist was not used to describe Ned’s status, he was only referred to as a free black and a friend of the British, not a Loyalist.

The same piece of paper included a passport for Ned and his family. The passport was dated October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1782, and it included again the fact that Ned was a free black.<sup>451</sup> His wife and three children, Castle, Ned and Dublin were also recorded on the document.<sup>452</sup> The passport stated that the family was free “to go from hence to York, Halifax, or elsewhere at their option.”<sup>453</sup> Similar to the certificate, the passport noted that Ned was a free black man but it did not refer to him or his family as Black Loyalists’. The passport allowed them to make their own, free and independent decision to travel wherever they pleased. This may have seemed like a great opportunity but in retrospect most free blacks who had been liberated by the British had little to no money and could not afford voyages to any place and faced

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<sup>449</sup> NSA MFM 15282, Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 p. 336, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=21>.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid.

harassment by plantation owners on the Streets of New York and elsewhere. If they wanted to remain free they were stuck with the options the British gave them, which meant, for the majority, Nova Scotia.

The three families that were given a certificate or passport allow a glimpse into the bureaucracy that was involved in the freeing of rebel slaves and the terms that were used. David George and his family, Thomas and Hannah, and Ned and his family, were all referred to as free blacks, or 'free negro', with Thomas and Hannah being freeborn blacks.<sup>454</sup> Not once were they called loyal to the monarch or distinctively called Black Loyalists.<sup>455</sup> Ned and his family were noted to be friends of the monarch, but again not loyal to him.<sup>456</sup> It is evident that British officials did not use the term Black Loyalist in the late eighteenth-century; otherwise the term would have been used to describe Ned and his family. The only terms, which were commonly used, were free blacks, freeborn blacks, or 'free negro'.

## **Conclusion**

The three early land petitions discussed in this chapter indicate the difficulty of identifying who was a Loyalist, as well as the race of the petitioners. The first two petitions did not once mention that Thomas Peters was a black sergeant. Charles Morris noted that the individuals within Lawrence Buskirk's petition were Loyalists but did not call a single one of them a Black Loyalist. The Moses Pitcher petition is

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<sup>454</sup> NSA MFM 15282, Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 pp. 332-3, accessed February 1, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=19>. ; NSA MFM 15282, Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 pp. 333, accessed February 1, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=20>. ; NSA MFM 15282 Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 p. 336, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=21>.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

<sup>456</sup> NSA MFM 15282 Commissioner of Public Records, RG 1 vol. 170 p. 336, accessed February 2, 2016, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/africanns/archives.asp?ID=21>.

unique in its own way, because it identified four individuals as black pilots, but did not state the ethnicity of Joseph Restine, who happened to be a black pilot as well. These three petitions make it clear that researchers need to be very careful when identifying individuals based on land petitions. Many petitions did not mention the race of individuals or only mentioned a few but not all. Over all, these three petitions were enlightening because Charles Morris identified petitioners, including one black sergeant as Loyalists, while another reported four individuals as black pilots. It is evident that the study of land petitions is helpful when researching free black settlers in Nova Scotia but one has to be very careful when using primary sources. Further, the study of certificates and passports, which were granted to the free blacks who eventually migrated to Nova Scotia indicate that the term Black Loyalist was not used. Common terms were free black, freeborn black, and 'free negro'. Some individuals were even called the friend of the monarch, which would suggest that they were loyal but they were never called Black Loyalist, which would have made sense if the term was commonly used. In conclusion, land petitions are useful when studying eighteenth-century Nova Scotia settlements and to grasp social hierarchy but academics need to be careful when analyzing the sources as they may lack information about individuals, such as Joseph Restine. Land petitions can tell researchers a lot but they must always be aware of the fact that errors occur and that some sources may lack important information. This lack of information reveals a lot about the bureaucracy of the late eighteenth-century government in Nova Scotia and about society in general when used carefully.



Table C: List Of Petitioners And Acres Granted Under Moses Pitcher's Petition <sup>457</sup>

Number	Name	Acres
No 1	Moses Pitcher	50 Acres
2	Andrew Barclay	50
3	John Mincie	50
4	William Devereaux	50
5	William Carson	50
6	Samuel Alann	50
7	Charles Lowe	50
8	William Hughes	50
9	Joseph Birge	50
10	John McKinlay	50
11	James Grant	50
12	Robert Aberret	50
13	Peter Lynch	50
14	Weart Banta	50
15	Christopher Lear	50
16	Robert Fox	50
17	John Edmonds	50
18	John Elherington	50
19	Samuel Goddard jun	50
20	Samuel Goddard sen.	50
21	Reserved for the Light House	100
22	“	Combined with No 21 acres
23	London Jackson, Richard Leach, James Robinson, James Jackson, Four black Pilots	50
24	William Black	50
25	Joseph Black	50
26	John Orr	50
27	Joseph Restine	50
28	William Clarke	50
29	James Prior	50
30	Nathaniel Rand	50
31	William Hale	50
32	Justice Aiken	50
33	Bartholomen Abergrave	50
34	Roger Dickinson	50
35	Alpherer Palmer	50
N/A	Benjamin McNut	250
	Total Acres granted	2,500

<sup>457</sup> NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 4-5.

## **Chapter 5 - Conclusion**

The black refugees who came to Nova Scotia as a result of the American Revolution were not considered Black Loyalists by the colonial government. None of the official documents studied in this thesis used the term Black Loyalist. Land petitions give scholars an opportunity to study the reasons behind the different sizes in land granted to white and black settlers, why some petitions mentioned the race of petitioners and some did not, and how this can be linked to the loyalism of the individuals and the terminology used by the colonial government to differentiate between petitioners.

There are many reasons why some (Black) Loyalists were granted smaller lots than others. It was common to give more land to individuals who had lost property during the American Revolution. This helps to explain why the majority of the free blacks were not granted any land or only a small lot. In many cases, they had not lost any property; rather, they had gained their freedom during the American Revolution by aligning themselves with the British. As well, Stephen Blucke was granted two hundred acres because he was a mulatto, and had been appointed lieutenant-colonel by the governor. Free blacks who had no government-appointed jobs were not as fortunate when it came to the land granting process. They had not gained status amongst the settlers and as such were considered lucky if they received any land or provisions at all. Race was not a simple binary in the British Atlantic world. The fact that free black settlers received smaller lots than white settlers can be attributed to many factors, including their loyalism.

The land petitions, and other official documents of the colonial government, used several terms to classify the free black population, such as “free black,” “negromen,” and, in the case of Stephen Blucke, “Mulatto.” Not once was the term “Black Loyalist” used within land petitions or any other official government documents examined for this study. It seems unlikely that the colonial government considered the free blacks who migrated to the region as Loyalists; otherwise, they would have used the term in connection to the black settlers. The term Loyalist was used regularly to describe white settlers by the government, as can be seen in Thomas Peters land petition, and in the Council minutes. The term Black Loyalist would have been used had it been a common term in the late eighteenth-century, but it was not. The term Black Loyalist was not used most likely because the government did not see the black refugees as loyal to their cause. Lord Dunmore and the British government offered freedom to the Patriot slaves because of military imperatives. They did not declare all slaves as free, as the white Loyalists still held slaves. Had the British freed all slaves, and had the slaves, in return, fought for them and been treated with respect during and after the American Revolution, then the colonial government may have considered the free blacks as Loyalists. The issue was that Nova Scotia was still a slave-holding society, which did not enable society and the government to consider the free blacks the same as white Loyalists. This leads to the conclusion that the colonial government did not consider the free black settlers as Loyalists and thus Black Loyalists is a term that should be used with considerable care.

Land petitions are a good primary source for studying the distribution of land and reveal a significant amount of information in regards to the amount of land granted to

individuals. Colonel Stephen Blucke was granted two hundred acres in Shelburne County.<sup>458</sup> Thomas Brownspriggs, a free black, who was not affiliated with the British army, was able to petition for 3,000 acres in Tracadie.<sup>459</sup> The total land granted to each of the seventy-four petitioners in Brownspriggs' petition was a meager forty and a half acres. However, it remains significant that he was granted land for a petition that solely included free black settlers.<sup>460</sup> It is crucial to note that the petition stated the race of the petitioners. This fact is important because it indicates that free black settlers were able to petition for and be granted land on their own, without needing a white settler to represent them. Further, it indicates that the government was aware of the alleged race of the petitioners, and they did not use the term Black Loyalists but rather "Negromen."<sup>461</sup> Thomas Peters was a black sergeant who was included in two draft grants that saw mostly white petitioners. Lastly, four black pilots were included in Moses Pitchers' land petition. Here it is important to note that the four pilots together received fifty acres, or twelve and a half acres each, which is significantly lower than the other petitioners, including a fellow black pilot, Joseph Restine, who was not recorded to be black within the petition, but was identified as black by Marion Gilroy. This last petition exemplifies that it is very difficult to say whether or not the government purposefully recorded the race of some petitioners or if they casually recorded it. If the government purposefully recorded the race of individuals it may indicate that Joseph Restine was higher up on the social scale than the other four black pilots. This would strengthen the argument that race

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<sup>458</sup>NSA MFM 15692, Land papers, RG Series "A" vol. 17 doc. 157.

<sup>459</sup>NSA MFM 15779, Nova Scotia Land papers, RG 20 Series "A" vol. 19 doc. 19.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

<sup>461</sup>Ibid., 6.

was not binary in the British Atlantic world. If they purposefully reported the race of some individuals it could also mean that the colonial government had a system for classifying individuals. If this was the case, it would strengthen the argument of a complex hierarchy within settler society based on race, profession, and status. If they casually recorded the race of petitioners, there was no system to the classifications made by the government. There would be no telling why the colonial government did not refer to the black settlers as Loyalists and why they sporadically recorded the race of petitioners. Even though it seems difficult to classify whether the government purposefully or casually recorded the race of petitioners in Moses Pitcher's petition, it is evident, after having studied several land petitions and council minutes, that the government purposefully recorded the race of petitioners.

A hierarchical system was evidently present in late eighteenth-century Nova Scotia. Blucke was not recorded as black on his land petition because Governor Parr had classified him as a mulatto. His status as a lieutenant-colonel, his material prosperity, and his mulatto status all impacted his successful petition for two hundred acres of land. Thomas Brownspriggs' and his fellow petitioners' race was recorded because they were all black settlers. However, they were able to successfully acquire 3,000 acres in Tracadie because Governor Parr supported the settlement. Brownspriggs had been endorsed by the Governor to settle and oversee the Tracadie blacks. On the Moses Pitcher petition, five black pilots were granted land, but only the race of four was recorded. These four individuals (James Jackson, London Jackson, Richard Leach, and James Robinson) were together granted fifty acres,

while the fifth black pilot, Joseph Restine, was granted fifty acres. This could indicate that Restine had a higher military status than the other four black pilots.<sup>462</sup>

The colonial government not only recorded the free black population in land petitions but also in the Council minutes. It is crucial to recall that before November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1791, the Council did not once mention black settlers, but then, within a span of three weeks, mentioned “black people” six times.<sup>463</sup> The government was discussing its actions in regard to the relocation of the black settlers to Sierra Leone. Not once did the Council use the term Black Loyalist. The term Black Loyalist was not used by the Council because it was not a common term used in the 1780’s; had it been a legal term, the government would likely have used it in their council minutes. The term “Loyalist” was used in other council minutes from Halifax at the time, but never in regard to black settlers, who were only referred to as black people. The term Black Loyalist was not used within the council minutes because the colonial government did not consider the black settlers as Loyalists. They had freed the patriot slaves during the American Revolution in order to defeat the rebels, not because they believed that the fugitive slaves would make good, loyal subjects. The free black settlers were capable of political choice, as they chose to trust the British and fight for their cause. The fugitive slaves did not have a lot of options when it came to finding a government willing to grant them freedom. In return, the colonial government faced the issue of ruling over a slave holding society while having free black settlers.

The issue of granting the free blacks their independence and supporting them, while living in a society that saw racial discrimination, did not allow for fair and

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<sup>462</sup>NSA MFM 15776, Land Papers, RG 20 Series “A” vol. 14 doc. 148, p. 4-5.

<sup>463</sup>NSA MFM 15289, Minutes of His Majesty’s Council, RG 1 vol. 190, p. 201, 203, 206, 207.

equal treatment between the white and black settlers. The white settlers struggled with accepting the free blacks as independent free settlers while owning slaves at the same time. Having lived with the idea that blacks were incapable of their own choices and allegiances, this made it difficult for them to accept free black settlers as independent individuals and to treat them as such. It is unlikely that the white Loyalists attributed the same loyalism to the free black settlers as their own, because they lived in a society that saw racial discrimination. Black Loyalists were loyal to the British to the extent that they fought for the British and settled in their colonies, in return for freedom. Black Loyalists' allegiances do not align with those of white Loyalists, because the latter were already free.

Black Loyalists were loyal to the people willing to grant them independence, or to the people they believed could give them such an opportunity, because their background was filled with slavery, racism, and hatred. Generations of blacks had suffered from racism and slavery before the American Revolution. The free blacks were looking for independence and a better life. The British offered freedom and a better chance at life to the slaves who agreed to fight for them against the Patriots. The slaves rebelled against their masters and joined the British, transforming themselves into the group known as the Black Loyalists. Black Loyalists were treated differently from the white Loyalists by the government and society because they were accustomed to having slaves in the colony. Black Loyalists were different from the white Loyalists not necessarily because of their race, but because of their background and because they assumed a different kind of loyalism compared to their white counterparts.

The free blacks who migrated to Nova Scotia were not referred to as Black Loyalists by the colonial government. Not one of the land petitions, newspapers, or council minutes examined for this thesis used the term but rather referred to them as free blacks, or ‘negromen’. Some of the free blacks considered themselves as Loyalists but the kind of loyalism varied between each individual. It is problematic to use one single term for all Loyalists who migrated to Nova Scotia because their backgrounds, ideals, and circumstances varied drastically.



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