



230 Years

The Black Loyalist Exodus from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone
1792

Arrival

- Over 3,000 Black Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia following the end of the American Revolution. They escaped enslavement by American Rebels to enlist with the British Loyalists who had offered them freedom and land in exchange for their service during the war.
- Approximately half of the Black Loyalists to land in Nova Scotia came to Port Roseway (Shelburne).
- These Black Loyalists primarily settled in two areas: the Northern Division of the Town of Shelburne, and Birchtown.
- Birchtown was the largest free Black settlement in North America during this period.

Promises

- For their service during the war, Black Loyalists were promised free land and rations for three years.
- Each family was to receive 100 acres for the head of the household, as well as an additional 50 acres for every other person within the family. Military officers were entitled to 1000 acres, and privates 100 acres.



Broken Promises

- By 1790, most Black Loyalists were not any closer to receiving their land than when they had arrived.
- They had struggled to survive in Nova Scotia. Many experienced poverty and famine, with a lack of British provisions and supplies. They also experienced intense racism from the British Loyalists, such as the Shelburne Race Riots of 1784 – the first recorded race riots in North American history.

Thomas Peters

A statue of Thomas Peters, a Black Loyalist leader, is the central focus of the image. He is depicted in a three-quarter view, wearing a long, light-colored coat and breeches. He holds a large, rolled-up document or petition in his right hand, which is raised slightly. The background is a dark, slightly blurred image of a building with a brick wall and a window with a decorative pattern. The overall tone is historical and somber.

- Thomas Peters, a Black Loyalist leader in Annapolis Royal, fed up with the Nova Scotian governments delays in granting his community their promised land, sailed to London to present his land petition.
- Though he found little success with the British government, he was presented with an opportunity by a group called the Sierra Leone Company.
- The Sierra Leone Company offered free Blacks of Nova Scotia the opportunity to resettle in Sierra Leone.

Recruitment

- During 1791, Lieutenant John Clarkson travelled around Nova Scotia to recruit for the resettlement effort in Sierra Leone.
- Initially the Company expected no more than 500 to enlist. Clarkson was able to enlist more than double that number.
- Many more likely would have enlisted but were prevented due to indentured servitude contracts and debts they had taken in order to survive here in Nova Scotia.

Exodus

- On January 15, 1792 fifteen ships carrying 1,196 Black Loyalists left Halifax Harbour for Sierra Leone.
- This included David George and his congregation of Black Baptists from Shelburne, as well as Moses Wilkinson and his congregation of Black Methodists from Birchtown.



Freetown

- The Black Loyalists who left Nova Scotia arrived on the shores of Sierra Leone in March, 1792. Upon their arrival they founded the colony of Freetown.
- Sierra Leone was also not the promised land of freedom they expected.
- Located along the Sierra Leone River, residence of Freetown would watch as slave trading vessels sailed passed their community.
- Disagreements with the Sierra Leone Company led to a minor revolution in 1799. In response to this revolution the government brought 500 Jamaican Maroons from Nova Scotia to the settlement. Following the revolution, they would settle with Black Loyalists.

Freetown

- On January 1, 1808 the Sierra Leone Company ended its control of the colony following the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act.
- Freetown would continue to grow, with the British bringing liberated Africans from illegal slave trade vessels to the colony to settle.
- Additionally, Freetown became home to freed Black Americans, American Liberian refugees, and West Indians.
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- On August 30, 2019 the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre welcomed a 'homecoming' group from Freetown to Birchtown where they planted a tree to commemorate the ongoing relationship between our two communities.
- On March 11, 2022 the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre participated in History Comes Alive! #1792 Project, a special celebration event to recognize and mark the 230th anniversary of the Black Loyalist Exodus from Nova Scotia and the settlement of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Thank You

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