

## THE BLACK LOYALISTS IN UPPER CANADA

As early as 1775, Lord John Dunsmore, Royal Governor of Virginia, offered freedom to rebel-owned slaves who would join His Majesty's Army. Over 300 Blacks responded to the call. In 1779, Sir Henry Clinton, commander-in-chief of All His Majesty's forces in America, issued a proclamation offering protection within British line to Blacks who deserted the rebel standard and their rebel owners. As a result, hundreds of Blacks fled to British lines and freedom.

Approximately ten percent of the Loyalists who came to British North America after the war were Blacks. Of these, the majority, including the all-black regiment under the leadership of Colonel Stephen Buck, settled in Nova Scotia. In total, about 3,000 Blacks migrated to Nova Scotia. These were declared free, while most Blacks who came to Upper and Lower Canada were defined as slaves. According to military and land records, only a few dozen Black Loyalists settled between the area east of Cornwall to Windsor, Ontario. Most of the Blacks who came to Upper Canada were owned by their military masters. Many of these Black servants fought alongside their masters in the battlefield, but were not granted land for their loyalty to the British Crown.

There were slaves in practically all of the Loyalist settlements in Upper Canada. According to Robin Winks, in his book The Blacks in Canada, political figures like Richard Cartwright at Cataraqui, Major Peter Van Alstine (who helped found Adolphustown), Captain Justus Sherwood (one of the founders of Johnstown), Peter Russell, William Jarvis and Peter Robinson all owned numerous slaves. By 1778, there were 127 Blacks in the Detroit-Windsor area, and by 1791, the veterans of Butler's Rangers in the Niagara area had 300 slaves, designated as servants of the household.

Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe of Upper Canada ruled that Black Loyalists who had served in the military were eligible for free land grants and provisions in Upper Canada. After an incident in which a Black settler was kidnapped and returned to slavery in the U.S. because Blacks had no legal rights in Upper Canada, the parliament of Upper Canada introduced a law in 1793 that would have freed all slaves. This law had to be modified owing to the objections of slave-owners. Eventually, a bill stating that no more slaves could be brought into Upper Canada and that children of slaves were to be freed when they reached the age of 25 became law. Thus Upper Canada became the first British territory to legislate against slavery, although the conditions of slavery continued for some time.

## SOME BLACK LOYALISTS OF UPPER CANADA

1. Jack Baker (Blackman) James. Residence: Home District. Served in Pioneer Black Rangers.
2. Adam Lewis, of Clinton Twp., Lincoln County. was a military grantee.
3. Peter and Richard Martin, Home District. Peter and Richard Martin were slaves of Colonel J. Butler, who were seized by the rebels and sold at auction but later regained their freedom. They joined Butler's Rangers and served until the end of the Revolution. Richard died in 1783 and Peter received a soldier's grant of land. In 1797, Peter asked for the land that would have been allotted to Richard in order that he would be able to buy the freedom of his son, who was a slave of Thomas Butler. The petition was granted.

4. Richard Parepoint (Pierpont), Residence: Home District. Pioneer, Butler's Rangers. After Dec. 1780, he joined Butler's Rangers and was granted freedom. He came to Canada in 1780, first settled in Grantham Twp., Niagara County, and after the war of 1812-1814 in West Garafaxa Twp., Wellington County with Black Loyalists of Butler's Rangers, including Robert Jupiter and John Vanpatten.
5. Cato Prime, James Fonda, Jack Powel, Jos. Goff, Wm. Thomas Londonderry and Sambo were likely military claimants of Lot 7, 2nd Concession, Lancaster Twp., Glengarry County.
6. James Robertson, Butler's Rangers, was granted land on Lot 81, in the New Settlement on the north shore of Lake Erie east of Detroit River in 1787.
7. Edward Smith, a former slave taken prisoner by the Cherokee Indians during the war, was the only Black Loyalist who received land in the Lower Valley of the Thames River.
8. Joseph Try, or Fry, of Butler's Rangers, was a land claimant in the New Settlement, Western District, in what is now Essex County.

In 1864, Dr. S.G. Howe, a member of the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, visited Canada West (Upper Canada) to study the conditions of the refugees who had entered the British province and made it their home. In an article in the Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records in 1922, Professor Fred Landon quoted part of Dr. Howe's report:

*Advances have been made by these people in their new homes... They earn a living, gather property; they marry and respect women; they build churches and send their children to school; they improve in manners and morals - not because they are picked men, but simply because they are free men...*

*In Canada, the Black man faces hardships compared with the South, sometimes there was difficulty in making a livelihood, and there was occasional prejudice. On the other hand, there was justice and opportunity and, above all, freedom from bondage.*