

HISTORY

A step back in time

Presentation on man's Digby County family tree to be held next month

AMANDA DOUCETTE
DIGBYCOURIER.CA

CONWAY

Brian McConnell has spent the last several years researching the history of loyalists settling in Nova Scotia.

McConnell is the president of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada, Nova Scotia branch, and he's helping organize a presentation on Sept. 22 by a descendant of Black Loyalists in Digby County, Allister Barton, who traced back his family tree nearly 250 years.

Loyalists settled in Digby in 1783 and in 1785 a community was formed in the area now known as Conway that was called Brindley Town.

Brindley Town was an African American community where Black Loyalists settled after they came to North America following the American Revolution.

Most of the residents of Brind-



AMANDA DOUCETTE

Brian McConnell has researched each grave in a small cemetery located next to the Sunset Pub in Conway. He's the president of the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada, Nova Scotia branch, and is preparing for an upcoming presentation that will discuss details of Brindley Town, the former African American community formed in Conway.

ley Town were not able to get farmland, so they scattered throughout the province, but most of them travelled to Sierra Leone in West Africa.

McConnell is especially interested in a cemetery located on the border of the old Brindley Town.

In the field to the right of the Sunset Pub in Conway is a cemetery with broken grave stones, some unmarked and some are so worn out that the names are unreadable.

McConnell has studied each grave, hoping to find death records

of the deceased, so he can research more about the descendants of Brindley Town.

"I think it's really neat that we have this piece of historical property right in front of us," he says. "We pass by this cemetery every day going into Digby and I bet half

the people who drive by don't know this is here."

Most of the legible gravestones are from the 1920s to 1950s, but there are unmarked rocks scattered throughout the property that McConnell believes could have been from older burials.

In a land deed he found from the early 1920s, it indicates this property was a burial ground for African Americans.

"I hope that Allister's presentation raises awareness to those who don't know about this, encourages them to learn something, maybe they will find something out about their family," he said.

The Acaciaville Baptist Church takes care of the property now and they have for the last several years.

Allister Barton's presentation will be at the Acaciaville Baptist Church on Sept. 22 at 1:30.

The presentation is in memory of Barton's late grandfather, Sgt. William 'Buster' Barton. Allister Barton has traced his family tree through the Black Pioneers and through the Black Loyalists of Brindley Town for more than 250 years.

For more information about Brindley Town visit: <http://www.uelac.org/PDF/Brinley-Town-Black-Cemetery-at-Conway-Nova-Scotia-by-Brian-McConnell.pdf>