A BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX
TO
SIR GUY CARLETON'S BOOK OF NEGROES

A publication of

**KING'S NAMES BICENTENNIAL PROJECT
SIR GUY CARLETON BRANCH
UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS' ASSOCIATION
OF CANADA**

**OTTAWA, ONTARIO
1988**

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PREFACE

The Book of Negroes makes up only a small part of the British Headquarters Papers, which are currently being indexed in their entirety by the Sir Guy Carleton Branch of the United Empire Loyalists' Association with assistance from the National Archives of Canada. Nevertheless, it was deemed of sufficient historical interest to warrant special treatment, and so this publication has been issued by the Branch in advance of the completion of the Headquarters Papers project as a whole.

Originally it was intended merely to compile an alphabetical listing of the people, both black and white, whose names appear in the Book of Negroes, primarily as an aid to genealogists. The inspection roll contains such a wealth of information, however, that it seemed regrettable to do no more than publish a strictly nominal index. Upon the advice of National Archives staff, therefore, the decision was made to produce instead a computer database, which, while still satisfying the needs of genealogists, would also be useful to social historians and other academics interested in this black community as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Since the 1960s, there has been a change in the terminology used to designate people of African descent. Previously considered a term of respect, "Negro" has fallen into disfavour. In most publications today, "black" is preferred.[1] Nevertheless, "Negro" is used in this work for two reasons. As the term that appears most frequently in the original, historical accuracy seemed to dictate its retention. More important, though, was the need to eliminate ambiguity: the Book of Negroes contains not only blacks, but mulattoes and others of mixed race; the word "Negro" is used to designate this total ethnic group.

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[1]For a brief but useful discussion of this question, see Mable M. Smythe, ed., <u>The Black American Reference Book</u> (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), xi-xiv.

INTRODUCTION

The preliminary articles of peace signed by Great Britain and the United States on November 30, 1782, stipulated that the British were not to carry away Negroes or any other American property at the time of their final withdrawal from American soil.[2] When the terms of this agreement became known in North America, Commander-in-Chief Sir Guy Carleton, who was responsible for the orderly evacuation of New York, the last British port of any consequence, issued an order to the masters of all British vessels, calling the stipulation regarding the removal of Negroes to their attention and warning them not to commit any breach of it.[3] At the same time, in order that infractions of the treaty might be redressed quickly, he appointed three commissioners to superintend all embarkations from New York, and called on Congress to do the same.[4]

Even as Carleton acted, a fleet of transports was being readied to set sail for Nova Scotia. On board were many former slaves who had come within the British lines under proclamations of freedom issued by Carleton's predecessors. Feeling he had no right to deprive these people of their liberty, but at the same time anxious to forestall American complaints that he was disregarding the provisional agreement, Carleton allowed the fleet to sail, but took the precaution of directing the commissioners for superintending embarkations to keep an accurate account of each Negro embarked. This register, a complete record of each person's name, the master he formerly belonged to, and such other details as would help to denote his value, was to be used to compensate slave owners in the event that evacuating the Negroes was later found to contravene the treaty.[5]

Carleton's handling of the situation was thought just and proper by Lord North,[6] but neither the removal of the Negroes nor the proposal to compensate American slave owners sat well with George Washington, who had been empowered by Congress to make arrangements for the return of all American property, runaway slaves included. Washington met with Carleton on May 6 at Orangetown. When informed that the first group of evacuees had left ten days earlier, taking with them a great many Negroes,[7] he pointed out that the transporting of Negroes violated not

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[2]An extract of article 7 of the provisional agreement is given in the general orders issued by Carleton, 15 Apr. 1783. See Public Record Office, British Headquarters Papers (BHQP), doc. 7427, National Archives of Canada, microfilm.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid. Also BHQP, doc. 7417, Carleton to R. R. Livingston, 14 Apr. 1783. Carleton's appointees were Henry Chads, Thomas Gilfillan, and William Armstrong. Later, Chads was replaced by Wilbar Cooke and Nathaniel Phillips.

[5]BHQP, doc. 7666, Carleton to Washington, 12 May 1783.

[6]BHQP, doc. 8668, North to Carleton, 8 Aug. 1783.

[7]The actual number was 660. See BHQP, doc. 10427(47), Certificate of Inspection for 23-27 Apr. 1783.

only the letter but the spirit of the treaty. Furthermore, since there was no guarantee that a slave would not falsify either his own name or that of his master, and since it would be impossible to estimate his worth accurately from a register in any case, Carleton's idea of compensating slave owners was unworkable.[8]

These objections aside, Washington named three men to assist the British in superintending embarkations.[9] The joint Anglo-American board met regularly between May and August 1783. Only a handfull of disputed cases were heard,[10] but the registering of slaves continued, and by the time the British evacuated New York for good on November 30, almost three thousand names had been recorded.

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[8]Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the American Revolution (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p.168, citing Library of Congress, Washington Papers, CCXX, No.71, "The Substance of the Conference Between General Washington and Sir Guy Carleton at an Interview at Orangetown, May 6th 1783."

[9]New York Attorney-General Egbert Benson, army contractor Daniel Parker, and Lt. Col. William Smith. BHQP, doc. 7645, Instructions to Commissioners to Superintend Embarkations at New York, 8 May 1783.

[10]BHQP, doc. 10427(4-16), Minutes of the Commission for Superintending Embarkations.

EDITORIAL METHODS

Reducing to order the details about the five thousand people mentioned by name in the Book of Negroes required a certain amount of regimentation and compression. The complete transcription of the document seemed neither practical nor necessary. For genealogists, the database is intended to facilitate reference to the original, not eliminate the need for such consultation altogether. For researchers interested in statistical analyses of one sort or another, the coding or categorization of information recorded in the original manuscript seemed not only sufficient but preferable.

The database contains 2831 records, one for every Negro man, woman, or child named on the inspection role.[11] Each record contains all the information available for a particular individual (see Figure 1, below): his name, age, sex, and racial characteristics; his occupation; an indication of whether he had any family or had served in the military; his place of origin; his previous and current legal status; the names of former owners, claimants, and persons in whose possession he was at the time of embarkation; his destination; the ship of passage and the name of its master; the date; and the page number.

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NAME     AGE  SEX  RACE  MILITARY  OCCUPATION
     CITY       COUNTY          STATE
OLDSTATUS        OLDOWNER        DESTINATION
NEWSTATUS        CLAIMANT        SHIP
FREEHOW          POSSESSOR       SHIPMASTER
FREEWHEN         POSSREGT        DATE
CERTIFICAT
CERTIFIER                 PAGE
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       Figure 1: Data Entry Record

Each item of information in a record is called a field. There are twenty-four fields in total, but depending on the amount of information available for a given individual not all of them are used in every record. Each field is listed below and explained in detail. The specific field names, which must be entered correctly in order to use the database, are given in parentheses. To simplify use of the database, both field names and data entries are entirely in upper case letters.

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[11]Only 2826 Negroes are actually named in the Book of Negroes. The five additional records were needed so that ships found to have no Negroes or other American property on board could be included.

Name of Negro (NAME)
Every effort has been made to transcribe the names of the Negroes as accurately as possible, retaining the given spellings, however aberrant they may seem. This task was difficult because it was necessary to work from microfilm rather than from the original document, which is in the Public Record Office in London. A corresponding inspection roll obtained from the National Archives of the United States was used for verification in hard-to-read cases,[12] but where spellings between the two records differed, the version belonging to the National Archives of Canada took precedence. Occasionally there was no choice but to make an educated guess. Such guesses are indicated by the insertion of a question mark in square brackets after the name in question as follows: FORTUNE, URSULA [?].

Of the nearly three thousand Negroes listed in the Book of Negroes, approximately eight hundred have no recorded surname. A few of these, usually wives accompanying their husbands or children travelling with their parents, have been assigned the same surname as their spouse or parent so long as the family tie was stated explicitly. Such instances are denoted by an asterisk as follows: BROWNE*, DINAH. All other individuals with no surname, roughly one quarter of the total, are identified by given name alone.

Age of Negro (AGE)
Ages, whether recorded in years or months, are rounded off to the nearest full year, for example 7 1/2 years to 7 years, and 18 months to 1 year. Children less than twelve months old, or who are described simply as infants, are designated as 1 year old.

Sex of Negro (SEX)
The letters M and F are used to denote male and female. Determining the gender of adults and older children was relatively straightforward since a physical description--stout wench, feeble fellow, fine boy--was usually included in the original manuscript. Such descriptions often were not present for younger children and infants, however, so telling which sex they were was based solely on each child's given name.

Racial Characteristics of Negro (RACE)
The letters M, Q, and O are used to indicate whether a person was mulatto, quadroon, or octoroon. Those who were part Indian are denoted by the letter I. All others are assumed to have been black and are denoted by the letter B.

Indication of Military Service (MILITARY)

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[12]National Archives of the United States, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy No. 332, Miscellaneous Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, Roll 7, Papers Relating to Specific States and Deeds of Cession of Western Lands with Related Documents, 1779-1789, 1791-1802, Inspection Roll of Negroes, New York City, Book No. 1, Apr. 23 - Sept. 13, 1783 and Book No. 2, Sept. 22 - Nov. 19, 1783.

Many Negroes joined and fought for the British forces. Those who did, including any said to have "joined Lord Dunmore" are denoted by the letter Y; all others are indicated by the letter N.

Occupation or Trade of Negro (OCCUPATION)
Most Negroes were simply slaves or servants, but a few had specific trades, which are entered under the heading OCCUPATION.

Place of Origin (CITY)
Usually the Book of Negroes specifies not the place of origin of the Negroes themselves, but the residence of the master. For the purposes of this project, however, these are taken to be one and the same. No attempt has been made to substitute modern-day equivalents for eighteenth-century place names. Port Roseway, for example, is used consistently rather than Shelburne. In order to facilitate the sorting of data, however, variant spellings have been standardized using the atlases, gazetteers, geographical dictionaries, and maps listed in the bibliography. Thus, Charlestown and Charles Town appear throughout as Charleston; Nancymond and Nancy Munn as Nansemond; Aquamack as Accomac; and so on.
Entries for place of origin consist of three parts--each in a separate field. The first, CITY, is reserved for city, town, and parish names.

Place of Origin (COUNTY)
Intended mainly for county names, this field also includes regions such as New England and the Eastern and Western shores of Chesapeake Bay, as well as the names of islands, rivers, creeks, and various other geographical features.

Place of Origin (STATE)
Wherever the state was given or could be safely inferred, it was noted in a separate field by a two-letter abbreviation: NY for New York, VA for Virginia, MD for Maryland, and so on. The names of British provinces, usually islands in the West Indies, and one or two countries are included here as well.

Former Legal Status (OLDSTATUS)
Categorizing the Negroes' legal status posed a problem because their circumstances were so varied. The majority were former slaves who had run away from their masters and come within the British lines some years past. Of these, many possessed certificates from Samuel Birch or his successor as Commandant of New York, Thomas Musgrave, guaranteeing their freedom and right of passage to Nova Scotia or some other British possession. Some claimed to have obtained their freedom by purchase or upon the death of their owners; others maintained they had been set free. Besides these former slaves now claiming freedom, there were others who had been born free; some who had served their time as indentured servants; and many more who, according to bills of sale presented by their owners at the time of inspection, were still slaves.

To accommodate as many combinations as possible, legal status is broken down into six fields, of which the first is for former legal status.

In the OLDSTATUS field, most Negroes are identified by one of five key words:

APPRENTICE...denotes former apprentices;
FREE...denotes Negroes who were free from birth, including any born of free mothers or manumitted at birth, as well as children born within the British lines;
INDENTURED...denotes indentured servants, including anyone said to have "served time" with a particular master;
SERVANT...denotes former servants not specifically described as indentured;
SLAVE...denotes former slaves.

If it is specified that an apprentice, servant, or indentured servant was technically free, however, then one of the following expressions is used instead: FREE/APPRENTICE; FREE/SERVANT; FREE/INDENTURED.

Current Legal Status (NEWSTATUS)
The same key words and key-word expressions used for former legal status are used for current legal status also. Note that Negroes who were born free, including children born within the British lines, are considered to be still free unless the original manuscript states that they have since been enslaved. Also deemed free are all those who possessed certificates of freedom.

How Freedom was Obtained (FREEHOW)
The ways in which Negroes obtained their freedom are categorized as follows:

ABANDONED...denotes Negroes whose masters left them to fend for themselves;
BORN FREE...denotes Negroes who were freeborn, except children born within the British lines;
BORN FREE (L)...denotes children born within the British lines;
BROUGHT OFF...denotes Negroes taken from their masters by a third party, whether an individual or regiment;
MANUMITTED...denotes Negroes who were manumitted, including those manumitted at birth or at the death of their master;
MASTER DIED...denotes Negroes who were not necessarily manumitted, but nonetheless found themselves free following the death of their master;
PURCHASED...denotes Negroes who purchased their own freedom or had it purchased for them by someone else;
RAN OFF...denotes Negroes who ran away and made good their escape. This group, by far the majority, includes all those who said they "left" their master;
RAN OFF (P)...same as above, but with the proviso that the Negro claimed the authority of British proclamation;
RETURNED...denotes Negroes who were forcibly removed from the ship at the time of inspection, returned to their owner, and hence did not emigrate;

SENT AWAY...denotes Negroes who were ordered away from their master by a third party; SERVED TIME...denotes Negroes who apparently earned their freedom through indentured service. Note that not all Negroes who "served their time" are included here since many of them were already free. If freeborn, for example, they are entered under BORN FREE.

When Freedom was Obtained (FREEWHEN)
This field is used to indicate when a slave obtained his freedom, or, if freeborn, when he left his place of origin. Where expressly given in the original, entries take the form of a specific year. If, as was often the case, the record states that a Negro obtained his freedom or left his place of origin a given number of months or years in the past, then the entry is an approximation worked out either by subtracting the number of months from the date of inspection or by subtracting the number of years from 1783. Approximations are in the form "C. 1780". Not infrequently, Negroes claimed to have gained their freedom during the evacuation or siege of a particular city or state. In such cases, an attempt has been made to pinpoint the correct year. Such entries consist of the year followed in parentheses by the first letter of the city or state in question:

1776 (B)...at the evacuation of Boston;
1776 (N)...at the fall of New York; at the landing of the army in New York;
1778 (P)...at the evacuation of Philadelphia;
1778 (S)...at the siege of Savannah;
1779 (R)...at the evacuation of Rhode Island;
1780 (C)...at the siege of Charleston; on the march near Charleston;
1782 (C)...at the evacuation of Charleston;
1782 (S)...at the evacuation of Savannah.

Certificate of Freedom (CERTIFICAT)
Negroes who possessed certificates of freedom such as were issued by General Birch and General Musgrave, or else had bills of sale proving that they had purchased their freedom, are denoted by the letter Y; all others are denoted by the letter N.

Issuer of Certificate (CERTIFIER)
Named here is the issuing authority, be it General Birch, General Musgrave, some other official such as David Mathews, Mayor of New York, an agency such as the Office of Police, or simply a former slave owner.

Name of Former Owner (OLDOWNER)
Anyone who formerly held the contract of an indentured servant, had a Negro "live with" him, or had a Negro born into his family, born in his house, or born on his estate is named here along with those who actually owned slaves. Reference must be made to the original document for details.

Name of Claimant (CLAIMANT)
As in the original Book of Negroes, the names of people, whether American or Loyalist, who laid claim to particular Negroes are found under the heading CLAIMANT.

Name of Possessor (POSSESSOR)
Individuals, government departments, and regiments in whose possession many Negroes were at the time of embarkation are listed under the heading POSSESSOR. Any Negro said to be "on his own bottom" or "on her own bottom" is so designated in this field as well.

Regiment, Department, or Ship of Possessor (POSSREGT)
Whenever the regiment, government department, or ship of an individual in possession of a Negro is given on the original, it is included in this field.

Destination (DESTINAT)
For the handling of place names, see Place of Origin, above.

Ship of Passage (SHIP)
As with place names, uneven spelling of the names of ships is standardized for ease of sorting. In cases where variants occurred, the one closest to Lloyd's Register of Ships or to Colledge's Ships of the Royal Navy is used. Thus, for example, the ship BLACKETT appears throughout by that spelling, not as the BLACKITT, a variant that occurs in the original manuscript. In order to help distinguish between ships of the same name, the designations brig, sloop, schooner, ship, etc. are retained where given in the original, and are found in parentheses following the name of the ship, as in KINGSTON (BRIG).

Shipmaster or Commander (SHIPMASTER)
The spelling of shipmasters' names conforms to the original except where variant spellings of the same name occurred. In such cases only one form is used, generally that which appears most often on the original or else most closely approximates that found in Lloyd's Register.

Date of Inspection (DATE)
All dates are inspection dates, not departure dates. They are in the form mm/dd/yy. Note that since the original document does not distinguish between entries made on April 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27, and since the software used in the preparation of this database does not permit the use of incomplete dates such as 04/--/83, all entries for April 1783 read 04/27/83.

Page Number (PAGE)
All page references are to the Book of Negroes, Public Record Office, 30/55, doc. 10427, National Archives of Canada, microfilm reel M-369.

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