



KINGS LANDING

BLACK LOYALIST HISTORY

AT KINGS LANDING



LATE ELEMENTARY &
MIDDLE SCHOOL

OBJECTIVES

- Learn about Black Loyalists and early Black communities in New Brunswick
- Discover some of the stories from New Brunswick's Black history told at Kings Landing
- Use a world map to trace the movement of Black Loyalists
- Discuss what life was like for Black Loyalists

GRADE LEVEL(S)

- This lesson is intended for late Elementary and Middle School aged-children, but students of all ages can learn from this lesson.
- This is dependent on your student as some children may not be familiar with the use of maps while others have a natural interest in geography and history. Please fully read this lesson and adapt it to the child's level.

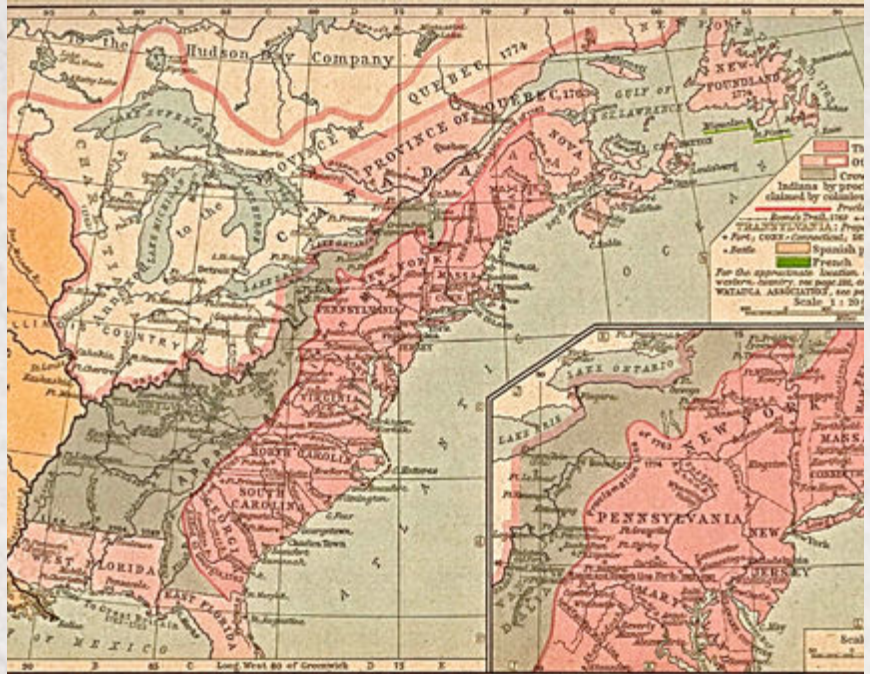
MATERIALS NEEDED

- A printed world map ([supplied here](#))
- Pens or markers
- A device with internet to access Google Maps, an online map creator and additional sources

LESSON

AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR

We will begin this lesson in 1775 at the start of the American Revolutionary War. In 1755, what is now known as New Brunswick was part of British North America, which included the Thirteen Colonies, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Québec, Florida, the Hudson Bay Company Lands and the West Indies. The Thirteen Colonies were unhappy with Britain regarding their lack of representation, their high taxes and their lack of economic freedom. As a result, the Thirteen Colonies rebelled against Britain and declared independence in 1776.



Map of the British colonies in North America, 1763 to 1775. First published by William Robert Shepherd in *Historical Atlas* by Henry Holt and Company in New York (1911). Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

There were two side in this war: the Rebels/Patriots who opposed Britain and the Loyalists/Tories who supported it. The Rebels viewed the Loyalists as traitors. Loyalists found themselves without civil rights, subject to mob violence, often imprisoned, and had their property confiscated. Both sides committed atrocities. The American Revolutionary War was violent, unforgiving and divisive.

During the revolution, more than 19,000 Loyalists fought on behalf of the Crown in the British Provincial Corps supported by Indigenous allies and escaped Black slaves.

GUIDES AND PIONEERS

During the American Revolutionary War, Britain offered freedom and land to Black slaves willing to flee their owners and join the British Provincial Corps. Thousands escaped and served with the Black Guides and Pioneers under Captain

No.	NAME	Rank	Age	Color of Hair	By what called	For what Services	Present	Illness	Dead	Discharged	Others
1	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
2	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
3	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
4	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
5	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
6	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
7	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
8	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
9	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					
10	John Aldington	Captain	35	Black	By what called	For what Services					

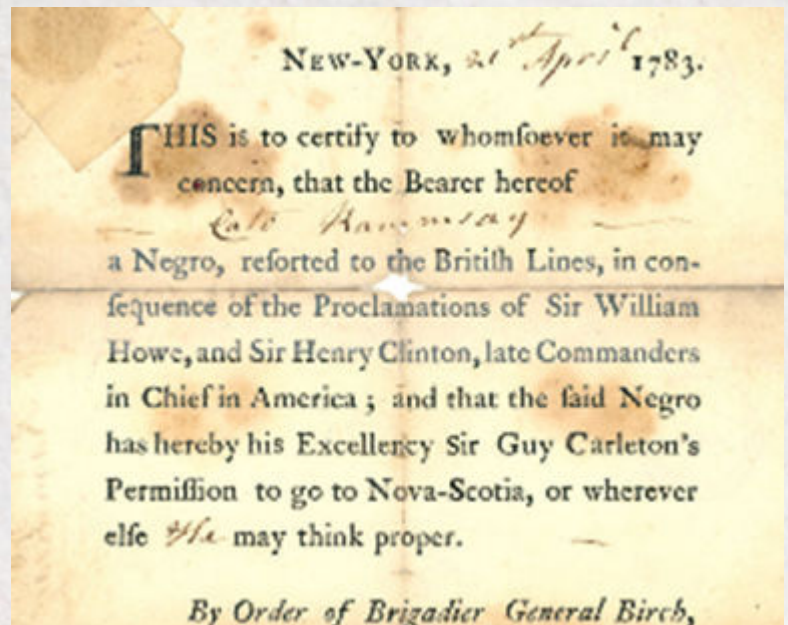
The muster roll of Captain John Aldington's company of Guides and Pioneers commanded by Colonel Beverly Robinson for 24th of October 1779. Image courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, F2125 (microfilm).

John Aldington. The term “pioneer” is a 1700s word for military labourer. A pioneer performed engineering duties in camp and combat. Duties included clearing ground for camps, removing obstructions and excavating. In the British army, this work was often assigned to Black members.

The Guides and Pioneers Corps was raised in 1776 at New York City. It had several commanders, including Colonel Beverly Robinson and Major John Aldington. The regiment served at many outposts and took part in several forays and campaigns. The corps sailed for the Saint John River in September 1783 with 100 officers and men, plus 103 dependents. They disbanded in October of that year.

THE BOOK OF NEGROES

When the American Revolutionary War ended in 1783, an initial peace treaty stipulated that the British were not to remove American property as they withdrew. Black people would have typically been considered American property at this time. Sir Guy Carleton, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, issued an order to British vessels to respect the initial peace treaty. At the same time, a fleet of ships carrying Loyalist refugees was ready to leave for Nova Scotia. Former enslaved people who had crossed British lines were on board and many had served in the Black Guides and Pioneers. Carleton felt that he did not have the right to deny them freedom. He let the fleet sail but kept a detailed record of each Black person on board.



This passport belonged to Cato Ramsay, allowing him to immigrate to Nova Scotia. He gained his freedom by escaping to British lines. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

This record was called the “Book of Negroes”. It included each person’s name, the name of their former master and other details. The National Archives in England preserved the book as part of the Carleton Papers. Library and Archives Canada holds a microfilm copy that volunteers and researchers indexed for the United Empire Loyalists’ Association of Canada. The index is available on the Library and Archives Canada website. There were almost 3,000 names recorded.

BLACK COMMUNITIES

The Loyalist evacuations to New Brunswick included Black Loyalists and people enslaved by White Loyalists. Most Black Loyalists did not receive the land grants promised. Those who did often received grants that were small and on poor and isolated lots. There was systematic discrimination and many Black Loyalists decided to move on. Several moved to Sierra Leone in Western Africa. Those who stayed worked hard to make a life for themselves and their families.

By 1824, Black people lived in every county in New Brunswick. When the Abolition of Slavery Act took effect in 1834, most lived in or near towns and were working as labourers and servants. Early Black communities were small and many of the families knew each other and were connected through marriages.

PIT HOUSE

When Black Loyalists were not given the land they were promised, many were forced to set up temporary shelters in order to protect themselves from the elements and survive. In 2017, Graham Nickerson, a member of the [New Brunswick Black History Society](#), the [Black Loyalist Heritage Society](#) and the [Tomlinson Lake Hike to Freedom](#), constructed a pit house at Kings Landing as an example of one of these temporary shelters. A pit house is a type of shelter built over a hole in the ground. Historians have not found physical proof of pit houses in New Brunswick, but their existence is mentioned near Saint John through oral history. The pit house structure is a part of the Black history told at Kings Landing today.

Read more about Graham Nickerson's construction project by [clicking here](#).



The pit house situated on the west side of Kings Landing near the Gordon House captured in 2019.

GORDON HOUSE

Another element of Black history told at Kings Landing is the Gordon House. This house is a reconstruction of a house built by James Gordon who was born in New Brunswick in the early 1800s and who is believed to be a descendant of Black Loyalists or enslaved people. James built a home for his family around 1835 in the area that is now known as Dunn's Crossing Road under the Princess Margaret Bridge even though he did not own the land. However, in 1858, the owner of the land wrote a lease for James to live on the land without issue.

In 1968, Kings Landing was under construction and James Gordon's house was found in its original location. It was scheduled to be burned, but surveyors took note of its significance as an example of early building techniques used in New Brunswick. The condition of the house prevented it from being successfully moved to Kings Landing. Fortunately, detailed architectural drawings were created to use as a reference in its recreation. It was not until June 2009 that the Gordon House construction project would be complete and dedicated to telling New Brunswick's Black history.

Since 2009, the Gordon House has displayed artifacts and exhibits relating to New Brunswick's Black history in partnership with many historians and societies. Go to the next page to learn about two of these stories.

The Evolution of the Gordon House



Image of the Gordon House in its original location along the Saint John River in Fredericton. The picture is dated 1971.



The reconstructed Gordon House in 2009. Its grand opening in June 2009 was also a family reunion for the descendents of James Gordon.



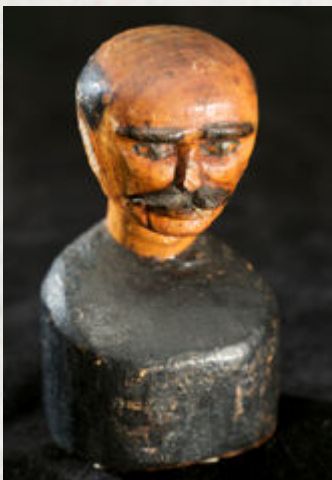
The Gordon House in 2019. Over the past several years, it has housed exhibits about various Black New Brunswick stories with the help of numerous societies.

Taylor-Leek Collection

This collection of books, artifacts and archival pieces acquired in 2007 is named after a family who lived in the area of Springhill in the Kingsclear Parish in New Brunswick. A notable member of this family is George Leek, the son of Loyalist Lt. Col. Isaac Allen. George and his sons played a key role in the construction and establishment of St. Peter's Anglican Church in Springhill in the mid-1800s. The Taylor-Leek Collection is considered the largest collection of Black New Brunswick artifacts.



A wooden side table owned, and potentially built, by George Leek.



This small, carved bust in this collection is believed to be a likeness of George Leek.



A cabinet believed to be built by George Leek found in St. Mark's Anglican Church at Kings Landing.

Edward Bannister

Born in 1828 in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Bannister would become one of the first prominent Black artists in the United States. He moved to Boston as an adult where his career as an artist began. Edward and his wife, Christiana Babcock Carteaux, also helped enslaved people along the Underground Railroad and participated in numerous anti-slavery activities. Today, the Bannister Gallery at the Rhode Island College is named in his honour.



Image of Edward Bannister courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



A river scene by Edward Bannister. This painting is part of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia collection.



Landscape painting by Edward Bannister. From Shannon's Fine Art Auctioneers courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

ACTIVITY & DISCUSSION

Using a printed world map ([supplied here](#)) and [Google Maps](#), trace the movements of Black Loyalists outlined in this lesson using a pen or marker. Here are the locations mentioned in this lesson to search and mark:

New York City
Saint John
Nova Scotia
Sierra Leone

If you prefer a completely digital option, visit MapCustomizer ([here](#)) and follow our instructions ([here](#)) if you need help.

Once you have marked the movements, here are some questions to consider:

- Do you and your family live near any of the places included in the Black Loyalist movements marked on your map?
- We are lucky to have modern transportation options today. Can you imagine what travelling these long distances was like before modern trains, planes and vehicles?
- What do you think it was like to live in a pit house?
- What do you think life was like for Black Loyalists when they arrived in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia?
- How do you think Black Loyalists felt when they did not receive the land they were promised by Britain?
- What other challenges do you think people faced when starting their lives over in a new place?

ADDITIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Learn about one of New Brunswick's first Black communities, Willow Grove, at the links below as part of Canada Post's latest stamp release honouring Black History Month in partnership with the New Brunswick Museum:

> [READ New Brunswick Museum's blog](#)

> [WATCH Canada Post's YouTube video](#)

SOURCES

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"George Leek's Table." Government of New Brunswick. 05 February 2021. <https://www1.gnb.ca/0007/culture/heritage/vmc/display-image.asp?id=142>.

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Note: Information about and images of the Taylor-Leek Collection and the Gordon House come from Kings Landing's own information library and image archives.