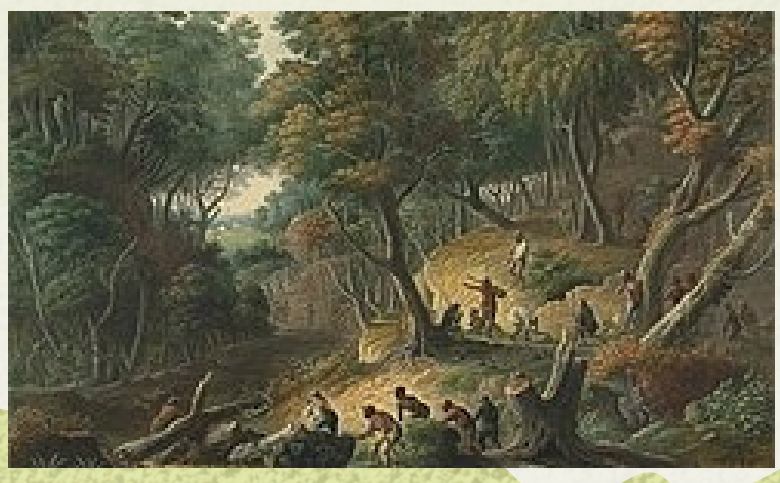
WAR CAPTAIN, LEONARD PARKINSON OF THE TRELAWNY TOWN MAROONS

Leonard Parkinson was one of the Trelawny Town Maroon war captains who was exiled from Jamaica and transported to Nova Scotia in July 1796 in the aftermath of the Second Maroon War. This war occurred between the Trelawny Town Maroons and the Jamaican colonial government, a body dominated by members of the white planter class, who were bent on defeating the Maroons and stealing their land. From July 1795 to December 1795, the war raged. The British eventually sued for peace and signed a treaty with the Maroons. By the beginning of 1796, the war was over. But true to form, the colonial government, led by Governor Balcarres, a leader with strong antipathy toward the Maroons, betrayed the treaty and rounded up members of the Trelawny Town Maroons. Balcarres deported them to Nova Scotia.

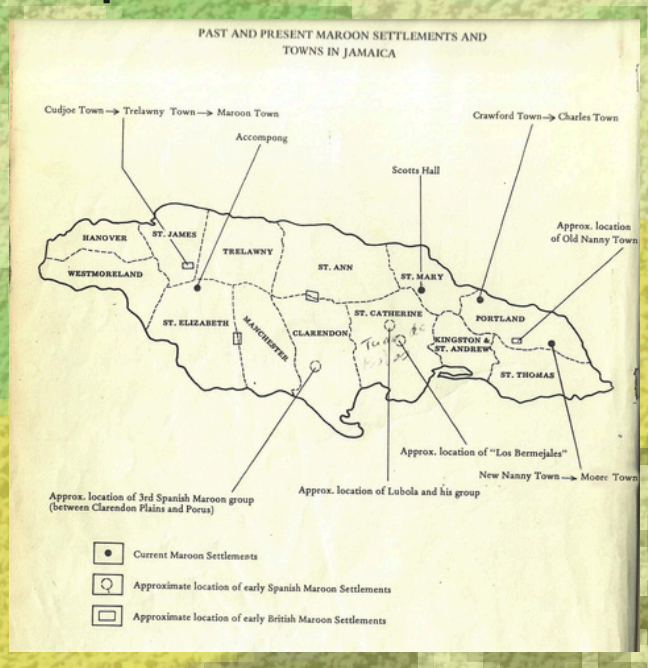
CAPTAIN LEONARD PARKINSON



MAROONS PREPARING TO AMBUSH A CONVOY

In July 1796, three British transport ships—the Ann, Dover, and Mary—arrived in Halifax Harbour with close to 600 Maroon women, men, and children. The Trelawny Town community settled in the North-West Arm area, Preston, and other areas in Dartmouth and Sackville. Knowing that the Maroons were excellent fighters, and fearing a French invasion, the Halifax authorities quickly formed some Maroon men into a militia. Furthermore, these men worked on the 3rd iteration of the Citadel Fortress. They also helped build the foundation of Government House, the official residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, and built roads and highways in Halifax and Dartmouth. Maroon women engaged in fruit, vegetable, and poultry farming and made brooms. They sold all these items at Halifax's markets. Children of school age were given consent by their parents to attend school.

IN A MAROON TOWN, EASTERN JAMAICA



MAP OF PAST AND PRESENT MAROON SETTLEMENTS IN TOWNS IN JAMAICA

The Maroons were a free and independent people and refused to be assimilated into Nova Scotia's Eurocentric culture. They repudiated Christianity, preferring to maintain their African-Jamaican religious culture. They relented only on the point of sending their children to school because they knew that literacy in English would be pivotal to the advancement of their community. Leaders like Parkinson rallied the community together and helped them to affirm their Maroon identity.

TRELAWNY TOWN THE CHIEF RESIDENCE OF THE MAROONS

Finally, in 1800, the Maroon hiatus in Nova Scotia came to an end. After four years of protesting the way they were treated by the Jamaican colonial government and their discontent at being exiled in Canada, they finally succeeded in convincing the imperial government to send them to a place where they could maintain their independence and exercise agency over their own lives. As important, that place had to be warm. Thus, in August of the same year, over 500 Maroons sailed from Halifax on board the ship Asia, bound for Freetown, Sierra Leone. Captain Leonard Parkinson was among them.

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