



The Creation of Sierra Leone and the Long Journey Back to Africa

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MAY 10, 2017
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Intro

A significant number of blacks believed they could use the American Revolution as an opportunity to escape from slavery to freedom, and had faith in the British Government's promise of freedom that was the proclamation of 1779. Those who chose to become black loyalists believed under the British government they would be provided with freedoms enshrined by democratic rights, likely influenced by the Revolution they had sided against. However, these black loyalists found that goal elusive and those promises generally unfulfilled.

Origins

The Sierra Leone colony was first created to solve the problem of the poor blacks residing in London. Facts about this group of people are somewhat vague. There were 600 to a thousand of them, most veterans of the American Revolution, some freed slaves as the result of the Mansfield decision, all desperately poor and without resources.^{1,2} Granville Sharp, a philanthropist and abolitionist, had long worked to provide the blacks of London with basic sustenance and been consistently involved with the Black Poor Committee to do this. The Black Poor Committee had been started in 1786 by Jonas Hanway, a wealthy merchant who had earned his fortune in the Russian trade. He was, what we would now call, a philanthropist and this was far from his first cause. The organization tapped into the general feelings of empathy and Christian kindness, but also the more specific feeling of owing loyal subjects for their service. This sense of fairness no longer necessarily excluded blacks, in this case it focused on them, and as such was of interest to powerful abolitionists, such as Granville Sharp. Not only

¹ A milestone abolitionist decision that prevented slave owners from taking slaves with them when they left England.

² Braidwood, *Black Poor and White Philanthropists*, pg 269

was the lot of these Black Loyalists unjust, but their poverty was a strong argument against the idea that blacks could take care of themselves outside of slavery in England.³ In the first year of the Black Poor Committee they fed and clothed two hundred fifty of London's poor blacks.⁴

However, they were overwhelmed by the numbers of the black poor and knew that something had to be done. By the end of 1786 it had gotten to the point where nearly 1,000 people were receiving sixpence a day from the Committee, more than half of the funds came from government, while the rest came from private philanthropists.⁵ The Committee turned to "the wisdom and humanity of [the] government" in order to find a more lasting solution to the poor blacks of London, with the general idea that the blacks could not be sustained if they stayed in London.⁶ While members of Parliament were willing to consider helping, out of sympathy for Black Loyalists who had fought for England and a desire to strengthen the abolitionist argument, the poor laws in England at the time suggested that the place of origin was responsible for the care of its poor. That logically led to the idea that the poor blacks should be returned to Africa, somewhat ignoring the fact that many of them had been born elsewhere. In 1783 Sharp had created a plan for buying up land in West Africa and the formation of a government settlement,⁷ so he was primed and ready when Henry Smeathman, a botanist who had recently visited Sierra Leone, told him that that area would be hospitable.^{8,9} Smeathman

³ Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, pg 129

⁴ Braidwood, pg 63-9

⁵ National Archives, "The Black Poor",
http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/work_community/poor.htm

⁶ Public Advertiser, 18.4.1786, 2a <https://www.newspapers.com/image/34420488/>

⁷ Sharp, "A short sketch of temporary regulations (until better shall be proposed) : for the intended settlement of the Grain Coast of Africa, near Sierra Leone" <http://recoveredhistories.org/pamphlet1.php?catid=14>

⁸ Smeathman had previously described the area as uninhabitable, but now, desperate and in debt he spoke its praises and planned to make a profit transporting blacks there.

convinced the committee it would only cost 12 pounds per person. The committee conveyed this information to the British government who agreed to sponsor them at that low cost. The blacks were told that they would be protected by the British Government and therefore all civil and religious liberties were to be guaranteed.^{10,11,12}

With this promise, and the travel paid for by the government, 411 persons successfully boarded three ships: mostly men, mostly black ex-slaves, but also 60 white women who were married to them. More than 700 had **earlier** accepted funds from the government in 1786, bound for the Sierra Leone Colony. Most were as part of the project, but some had backed out in the face of rumors that the blacks were actually being sent to Botany Bay to be re-sold.¹³ By the time of departure the British government had grown tired of giving an allowance to those preparing to depart and began accusing those who had taken the money and chosen not to depart of Vagrancy.¹⁴ None of my sources followed those who stayed, but as far as I can tell beyond this project the British Government and other organizations had no interest in helping them.

By the time of departure, Smeathman had died, leaving Thomas Thompson, a Captain in the Royal Navy whose role had originally been just to lead the ships to their destination, in charge of settling the freedmen. Upon arrival in Sierra Leone, Thompson negotiated with ~~the~~ King Tom, the local leader for land. It is likely that King Tom did not fully understand how permanent the settlers intended the colony to be. Most settlements in the area were not colonies, but trading

⁹ Smeathman, "Plan of Settlement to Be Made Near Sierra Leone: intended more particularly for the service and happy establishment of blacks and people of colour, to be shipped as freemen under the direction of the Committee for Relieving the Black Poor, and under the protection of the British government", E-book

¹⁰ Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The search for a promised land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870*, pg 96

¹¹ Land and Schocket, "New Approaches to the Founding of the Sierra Leone Colony, 1786-1808"

¹² Smeathman, "plan of settlement", E-book

¹³ Public Advertiser, 18.12.1786, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/34421660/>

¹⁴ Braidwood, pg 139

posts. Nevertheless, for the time being the land was theirs. The settlers used a democratic system Sharp had drawn up that involved a “common council” made up on heads of households and named the settlement Granville Town, after him.¹⁵ Generally, after the original amount of money invested, the British government would be unwilling to invest further time or money in the fledgling colony.

In this venture the blacks were allowed a good amount of self-rule, however that was not enough to save the new colony. They had self-rule, but they had little else. The new community was immediately faced with serious weather and health problems, and was therefore prevented from even building real shelters. To get to this point, in addition to a regular allowance paid to the Black Poor before departure, 14,747 pounds had already been spent.¹⁶ This number was obviously far greater than Smeathman’s original estimate. Despite this generosity, the settlers still ran low and the British government was unwilling to invest more money in this failing and already incredibly expensive venture.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the reality was that they were out of food and other supplies before they were able to successfully grow or create much of anything to traders. The colony’s leadership fell apart, and their numbers dwindled as many died or sought refuge in jobs with nearby slavers, to Sharp’s great horror.¹⁸ However, Sharp refused to give up on the idea of the colony. He used the last of his funds attempting to assist them, and was then left to create some new scheme in order to support the colony.^{19,20}

¹⁵ Sharp, <https://archive.org/details/shortsketchoftem00shar>

¹⁶ Braidwood, pg 161

¹⁷ Reid to Sharp, 9/1788, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp* 322-3

¹⁸ Sharp, *Memoirs* 329

¹⁹ Walker, pg 100

He found a supporter in Henry Thornton, a successful and legitimate businessman who had already been a longtime philanthropist for the Poor Black Committee. Thornton was a ridged man, a strong supporter of abolitionism, and of missionary work to Africa. Together Sharp and he created the company that would become The Sierra Leone Company, empowered by the British Government to own and manage the land originally bought for the settlers. Most of his new supporters were members of the Committee for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade; although generally well-meaning for their time, they were specifically interested in creating the colony as an example for the world and were not truly concerned about the individuals. Some also intended to use the black settlers to spread Christianity to Africa, this was one of Thornton's goals. As such, in order to count as successful, in the short term the company would have to pay for itself and in the long term it would have to prove more successful than the slave trade.²¹

Meanwhile **those in** the colony continued to suffer. Even after the first year, the harsh physical environment continued to make settling difficult and that difficulty was exacerbated by continued absence of firm leadership, a lack of continued support from England, and remarkably bad relationships with neighboring powers. This came to a climax when King Tom's successor, King Jimmy, attacked and destroyed Granville Town after a series of negotiations went badly. This violent reaction was likely due to the original misunderstanding over long-term ownership. And so, after two and a half years of struggling to exist as its citizens died from

²⁰ Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, Chapter 9

²¹ Walker, pg 102

disease, suffered through severe weather, and trickled away into African society or to jobs with slavers, Granville Town was officially destroyed and its few remaining settlers fled.²²

Alexander Falconbridge, a former surgeon for slave ships then turned abolitionist, was sent by the Sierra Leone Company to gather the scattered colonists and succeeded in gathering 64 settlers together into a new Granville Town. With so few left in the colony, it was obvious that more settlers would be needed. After the dramatic failure of the Granville Town colony, Sharp and the company he managed to create believed that the original colony had failed due to the work ethic of the Poor Blacks. Sharp was unwilling to give up on the idea of a free black civilization in West Africa, so he was unable to blame the land, the weather, or the proximity to possibly hostile slavers and natives. Instead, the settlers themselves were blamed for being disorganized, squabbling, and at times running from the dying colony. As a result the Sierra Leone Company sent a group of 119 whites, many with specialized skills, with the intention for them to run the colony. However, the dream was still to create a settlement of self-sufficient black Christian freedmen as a blow against slavery and as a civilizing force in Africa. This meant that the Sierra Leone Company was in need of an upstanding, hardworking, group of Christian Blacks willing to move to Africa and create a settlement there.²³

Nova Scotia

During this time period, other former slaves had been settled in Nova Scotia. They had been guaranteed liberty by the Proclamation of 1779, and although they hadn't been specifically protected by the Treaty of Paris, the man who was in charge of the evacuation of NYC, Sir Guy

²² Braidwood, pg 206-9

²³ Walker, pg 105

Carleton, was able to send 3,000 African Americans to Nova Scotia.^{24,25} Once there, they found their troubles were far from over.

In Nova Scotia, they hoped to find true freedom and equal citizenship under British Law, a goal which entailed the ownership of land. Without property, personal independence was not possible. Unfortunately, Nova Scotia was simply not prepared to grant land to everyone fleeing from the revolution. There were approximately 30,000 black and white refugees in total, all expecting to be settled on land. Delays plagued the process and by 1786, only 5,567 grants had been issued. In this process, a significant number of ex-slaves were overlooked; officials did believe the black veterans to be entitled to land, however that entitlement fell low on their list of priorities. When a small number of blacks were finally granted land, it was on average considerably smaller than lands issued to whites and many who finally achieved land ownership got there by purchasing plots from white landowners.²⁶

Additionally, while many white settlers were provided with free provisions while they built their new lives in Nova Scotia, black settlers were forced to work for inferior rations. Provisions from England were unreliable for everyone, but the difficulties blacks had in receiving them were greater, as was their need. One account of a famine from a former slave illustrates the desperation of the situation.

²⁴ "Treat of Paris" in which "The day the treaty was signed, November 29, 1782, a hastily written amendment was scribbled in the margin of Article Seven, to prohibit "carrying away any Negroes or other property of the American Inhabitants." <http://www.blackloyalist.info/sourcedetail/display/65>

²⁵ Carlton, *The Book of Negroes*, <http://www.blackloyalist.info/sourcedetail/display/15>

²⁶ Walker, ch 2

Many of the poor people were compelled to sell their best gowns for five pounds of flour, in order to support life. When they had parted with all their clothes even to their blankets, several of them fell down dead in the streets, thro' hunger.²⁷

Birchtown, where blacks were allowed to settle and obtain some land ownership over was a miserable place. According to Officer William Dyott:

The place is beyond description wretched, situation on the coast in the middle of barren rocks, and partly surrounded by a thick impenetrable wood – Their huts miserable to guard against the inclemency of a Nova Scotia winter, and their existence almost depending on what they could lay up in summer.²⁸

This desperation led to many blacks living as tenant farmers, day laborers, or domestic servants under wealthier whites; a situation that strongly reminded them of their past as slaves. Others accepted positions as indentured servitude, an unfortunate situation which in some cases led back to actual slavery.²⁹ Authorities attempted to prevent the re-enslavement of the black population, but often fell short with some indentured servants being sold, and others blacks simply kidnapped from their homes. Security in freedom was not to be found for a black settler in Nova Scotia.

Additionally, even the legal equality that the black loyalists had expected under the British government was not provided. British political rights were not shared with blacks. They were not allowed trials by jury or the right to vote and could even be “ordered out of their home for

²⁷ King, “Memoirs of Boston King”, <http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/documents/diaries/king-memoirs.htm>

²⁸ Dyott, “Diary: Sunday, October 1788” http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/documents/diaries/dyott_excerpt.htm

²⁹ Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, pg 174

keeping a disorderly house.” Rather than having rights protected by law, they had their lack of rights enshrined in the legal codes of various Nova Scotian towns.³⁰ The black loyalists themselves still had hope that the faraway national government was on their side, that it was only the local governments that were responsible for this oppression.

Meanwhile, the black loyalists created their own version of Christianity and with it a separate identity. They had generally been excluded from white churches, so they usually met with their own traveling reverends in private houses until 1789 when the residents of Shelburne built their first church. This caused the blacks to create their own traditions. Although some were Anglican and some were Methodists, overall the blacks preached a message that they were a chosen people with direct individual connections to god. The white settlers had a more established and traditional hierarchy and were far more likely to involve Church authorities as intermediates between themselves and God. These cultural differences would become a serious divider between blacks and whites both in Nova Scotia and later in Sierra Leone.

Unsurprisingly, the Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia soon faced religious motivated aggression from the white settlers. One well liked preacher, David George, found that “the White people were against me” and was threatened twice and beaten with sticks until he returned to Birchtown.³¹ At one time he attempted to baptize some white members of the community and their relatives “raised a mob” and the sister “laid hold of her hair to keep her from going down into the water.”³² They had strongly disapproved of him preaching his version of Christianity to

³⁰ Walker, 55-6

³¹ Egerton, 209

³² Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, pg 104

both blacks and whites. The culture was different enough, and the racism strong enough that those who tried to cross racial lines were punished.

These struggles caused Thomas Peters to journey from Nova Scotia to London with a petition on behalf of the black Nova Scotians. Once in London he somehow got in contact with the Company's directors, and the Company found the group of Black Christian settlers they had been searching for. Peters returned to Nova Scotia. John Clarkson quickly followed, as a representative of the Sierra Leone Company. Clarkson was a former Naval Officer and younger brother to Thomas Clarkson, a figure central to the abolition of slaves in Britain. He was also a staunch abolitionist, and he and his brother were members of the Board of Direction to the Sierra Leone Company. He volunteered to travel to Nova Scotia in order to spread the word of the Sierra Leone colony.

Clarkson saw it as a mission in support of abolitionism, but had left London quickly, and had little in the way of a specific plan from the Company. He would not receive any communication from The Company until he landed in Sierra Leone.³³ Once in Nova Scotia, Clarkson spread the word of an independent democratic society that the Black Loyalists could run.³⁴ While there he confidently fought rumors that the "Free Settlement on the Coast of Africa" implied that settlers would be charged a quit rent, stipulating that the "term 'holding their lands subject to certain charges and obligations' was by no means to be considered as an annual rent which idea had been industriously disseminated amongst them but as a kind of tax for charitable

³³ Wilson, *John Clarkson and the African Adventure*, pg 57

³⁴ Sbacchi, "Governor John Clarkson's Diary and the Origins of Sierra Leone"

purposes such as for the maintenance their poor, the care of the sick, and the education of their children. “^{35, 36}

Clarkson’s message was inspiring to the group of blacks who felt their freedoms had been infringed on, and what freedom they had gained was still constantly threatened.

Arrival in Sierra Leone

The Nova Scotians departed on January 15th 1792. There were 1,110 people setting out to start a new civilization, at the cost of 15,592 pounds. About 1,078 survived the trip.³⁷ Upon arrival they were enormously hopeful and landed singing the hymn:

“The day of Jubilee is come!

Return ye, ransomed sinners, home.”³⁸

The settlers saw this as a land of freedom in religious terms. That they, a chosen people, could finally be free.

While convincing the Nova Scotians to journey to Sierra Leone with him, Clarkson did not have a detailed idea of how the Company was to be run. He had left London before the directors finalized anything beyond an original statement. Once arriving in Sierra

³⁵ Clarkson *Clarkson’s Mission to America 1791-1792*, 55

<http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/documents/diaries/mission/53-62.htm>

³⁶ “Free Settlement on the Coast of Africa”, printed terms shown to Nova Scotians.

http://blackloyalist.com/cdc/documents/official/free_settlement_coast_of_africa.htm

³⁷ Sbacchi, pg 64 (pulled from the Clarkson Diary which I don’t have access to), Falconbridge, “Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone during the Years 1791, 1792, 1793” pg 62-64.

³⁸ Clarkson’s Journal, 3/11/1792

Leone, he received word from the directors which included how the colony was to be run, and asked him to take a leadership position as superintendent of the Council. The Council was to include seven other white members who had traveled to the colony. None of the councilmembers were to be democratically elected or chosen based on input from the settlers. Even to Sharp, who had handed off a lot of power to the Company, found this lack of democratic representation to be a “humiliating change.” Of course that was just one of the struggles that the settlers faced. Clarkson did accept the position of superintendent, primarily because he had grown to care deeply for the black Nova Scotians and saw no other available leader who could support them while balancing the company’s goals.

The directors had made another decision, unknowing of what Clarkson had promised. They decided a quit rent would be the best way of recouping losses, which Clarkson had very specifically promised against.³⁹ At this time, Clarkson simply decided to ignore that very unpopular company decision. It would come up again after his departure. Additionally, the land that Clarkson had promised turned out to be significantly more difficult to survey and farm, and the Company had reserved the entire waterfront for themselves, so the promises of land ownership were also largely left unfilled, with only 40 farms being portioned out by fall.⁴⁰ Clarkson also ignored the waterfront order, and allowed the colonists to settle there. This decision would also come up as an issue later on.

³⁹ Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, 67

⁴⁰ Wilson, *John Clarkson and the African Adventure*, 113

Soon, Clarkson also ran into conflict with his fellow council members, from them he saw “nothing but extravagance, idleness, quarreling, waste, irregularity in accounts, insubordination.”⁴¹ He did not have the power to limit them, especially considering his extremely ill health during this time period. However, during this turmoil the directors back in London were still focusing on expansion and expanding trading opportunities before their original promises of a settlement could be fulfilled. Rather than new deliveries of basic supplies that the settlers needed, they would send tradable goods. In response, Clarkson sent a letter back to London to fully communicate his grievances and his belief that the colony needed a single executive governor.

Unfortunately for the superintendent, in addition to running into conflicts with his fellow white leaders, Peters, a well-known black leader who had been important in organizing the departure from Nova Scotia, felt that he deserved a leadership position within the colony. Overall, Peters’ efforts were a failure, but still a notable challenge to Clarkson’s authority. At one time, after their struggle had been going on for weeks, Peters appealed to a crowd to choose between them and to his dismay none of his fellow blacks supported him.⁴²

However, the fact that the settlers were willing to support Clarkson over Peters did not mean that they didn’t insist on a share in government. Two petitions were sent out regarding their desire for political rights, and in them reminded Clarkson of the deal they had made in Nova Scotia.⁴³ Soon afterwards Peters died, eliminating any real competition that Clarkson would

⁴¹ Clarkson’s Journal and letter to L. Hartshorne 8/4 and 9/23
http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=160398;r=19169

⁴² Clarkson’s Journal printed in Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pg 253

⁴³ Text from Clarkson’s Journal printed in Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pg 253-5

face from the black settlers because overall, the settlers liked Clarkson. He would talk and reason with them, especially when putting forth unfavorable commands. With some difficulty Clarkson managed the colony, with moderation and understanding, but also at times the threat of legal violence. Then, on July 13th 1792 a letter arrived. The directors had given him “full power to act according to his sole direction,” as he had requested.⁴⁴

The letter from the directors formed a new government which would have a singled governor who would consult with two councilors. In this case Clarkson would be governor, with William Dawes and Zachary Macaulay as his new councilors. This message certainly made Clarkson more able to lead the colony, but it was by no means the democracy that the black colonists had sought. Despite that, it was acceptable while Clarkson remained in power, because of his willingness to compromise and discuss problems with the black colonists. However, both councilors were being sent from London to Sierra Leone and both men would be less caring and less willing to compromise than Clarkson. Dawes was interested in helping the citizens of Sierra Leone, however only in his own stanchly traditional Christian way. He was also far less willing to argue with the directors than Clarkson. Macaulay was also an anti-slavery activist, but had the tendency to divide the world into civilization and not, with Britain being the absolute high of civilization. This metaphorically black-and-white view of the world would not serve him well in managing the colony.

In an example of Clarkson’s willingness to change and work with the colonists, during this time period Clarkson allowed the survivors of Granville Town to merge with the Sierra Leone settlers, despite Clarkson sharing Sharp’s belief that Granville had failed due to moral failings of the

⁴⁴ Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pg 104

original settlers. It was an action that most of the Nova Scotians agreed with, and had long been a disagreement between the white leadership and the black settlers.

When Dawes arrived he came with orders to implement commerce, a goal Clarkson had ignored in favor of attempting to fulfill his promises to the Nova Scotians. Of course, these trade goals were unrealistic; the company had no charter, no monopoly, no government funds, and would need significant infrastructure. Falconbridge, who was supposed to be the agent for the company's trade continued to drink himself to death, until he was recalled, and then with the news of that, died.⁴⁵ A new man, Wallace, was sent. He tried to trade, but was never able to make a profit. He had too few clerks and still faced the same obstacles Falconbridge had.

Throughout this, both the Nova Scotians and white settlers faced high mortality rates from disease. By Christmas two thirds of the white population, and more than 14% of the black population was dead.⁴⁶ Clarkson bluntly wrote to Thornton of his problems with the Company, and Thornton agreed to many changes, but warned that if problems continued, he would not always believe the Company to be at fault. Clarkson, believing his concerns to be satisfied, prepared to leave permanently, as he had already stayed far longer than he originally intended and had long suffered from bad health.

Clarkson's departure meant that one of his councilors would be left in charge. Peace between white leadership and black settlers had only lasted this long because of Clarkson's unique qualities. Dawes, who was given charge of the colony, did not have a personality that could act as a salve for lack of democracy or rights. Falconbridge's widow observed, "Mr. Dawes is almost

⁴⁵ Falconbridge, *Narrative*, pg 169

⁴⁶ Clarkson's Journal printed in Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pg 275 as well as Walker's *Black Loyalists* pg 158-9

universally disliked, and more than probable, anarchy and discord will again return, in full force among us, when the management of things are left to him alone.” Soon after, in a petition to the directors, the settlers proclaimed their love for Clarkson and their desire to see him return.⁴⁷ Clarkson did his best to mend the feelings between Dawes and the settlers before he departed, but he still felt forebodings. Nevertheless, he traveled back to London. Once there he was eager to marry and return to Sierra Leone, but found the directors were unwilling to publically acknowledge his contributions. He grew frustrated with the Company and after they heard favorable official reports sent by Dawes, they asked for his resignation which he refused to give.⁴⁸ He was dismissed and never got sent back to Sierra Leone, despite his wishes.

Meanwhile, in Sierra Leone the situation was far graver than the aforementioned official reports had led the Company to believe. Dawes had imminently halted the surveying of lands, and instead ordered everyone to work on building forts. He also argued that the lots in town were still technically property of the company, as was the rest of the land. He issued that all waterfront land was company land and cut the size of any future farms by 4/5th. In addition to that, Dawes was strongly opposed to the loud non-traditional way the blacks practiced Christianity. He ordered them to attend his Methodist Church and practice the religion his way. Unsurprisingly, given the image the black settlers already had of themselves, as a god-chosen people arriving in a promised land, some invoked the story of Moses in their resistance to Dawes, even calling him “Pharaoh”.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Falconbridge, pg 186-187

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pg 133-5

⁴⁹ Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, pg 203

After much conflict Dawes attempted Clarkson's strategy of threatening to leave. Previously, when Clarkson had come into conflict with the colonists, he would threaten to leave and they would beg him to stay. However, Dawes was met with "Go! go! go! we do not want you here, we cannot get a worse after you."⁵⁰ After this he departed for a time, leaving Macaulay in charge.

To his credit Dawes had implemented a system in which the Nova Scotians could hold some power. He created a system of tythingmen and hundredors, based on Sharp's earlier system, who originally were supposed to "keep the peace and decide causes of less importance", and instead ended up being more general representatives and worked as juror magistrates. Despite this limited, but still existent involvement, Dawes was seen as the enemy because his personality was so abrasive and many of his other actions were so top-down in their nature.⁵¹

Throughout this whole period, the colonists continued to struggle with their neighbors, both Africans and slave traders. Dawes' abrasive personality aggravated tensions, previously soothed by Clarkson, to once again grow between the settlers and the natives. King Jimmy unsuccessfully attempted to gather allies in order to attack the colony, but the threat remained. The root of this problem lay in the fact that Africans saw the colony as a threat, and not true owners of the land. Meanwhile, slave traders posed a different, more symbolic, but still very real threat. They were everything the freed blacks had been running from, the embodiment of re-enslavement. Clarkson had walked a narrow path, at time needing slave trips to transport messages, but generally avoiding them, while proclaiming that "the moment a man set his foot

⁵⁰ Falconbridge, 202-3

⁵¹ Walker, 168-9

on the company's territory, he became from that moment free."⁵² Dawes and Macaulay did not have such strong principles; Dawes was happy to trade with the slavers and Macaulay was willing to return escaped slaves. The issue of Macaulay returning slaves was eventually settled according to native law, but there was still tension over settlers' tendency to incite slaves to escape, and Macaulay's betrayal to the blacks was remembered.⁵³ The settlers and their leadership were no longer a united front, having split over the basic idea of freedom for blacks. Tensions were also continually raised over the issue of the position of the Company as being in charge of portioning out land, but also being the only employer in town. The Company held a monopoly over the Nova Scotians, and if they tried to escape that monopoly they would likely be re-enslaved. This was not the freedom that they had traveled across the Atlantic for. The Nova Scotians sent a petition to London stating "Mr. Dawes seems to wish to rule us as if we were all Slaves which we cannot bear...we are not treated as Freemen."⁵⁴ Upon arrival in London, the two black settlers that had been sent were unable to directly contact the directors and ended up writing to Clarkson. He of course, immediately tried to help them, but was totally ignored.⁵⁵ After another ignored petition, with the settlers sent "back like Fools" all trust was lost between the settlers and the Company.^{56,57} In their annual report, the directors did respond to the petitions, but with indignation rather than understanding, first calling the freedman's requests "false and absurd" and then people who did not understand the

⁵² Clarkson Papers, I Thornton to Clarkson, 12/30/1791

⁵³ Walker, 173-4

⁵⁴ Walker, 176

⁵⁵ Clarkson Papers, III, Anderson and Perkins to Clarkson, 11/9/1793

⁵⁶ Isaac Anderson and Cato Perkins, 11/9/1793 from *Our Children Free and Happy*

⁵⁷ Falconbridge, *Two Voyages*, 260-65

obligations of “respect and obedience.”⁵⁸ The white leadership had lost most of the legitimacy it had, which was already limited because of their refusal to involve blacks in the leadership process.

By June 1794, tensions between the settlers and Macaulay were such that riots lasting two days broke out. Afterwards Macaulay gave the settlers the option of returning to Nova Scotia, which none did. Protests lost their energy, but these disputes were never resolved, and instead interrupted by a French attack. The French destroyed much of the colony but generally left blacks alone.

The conflicts between Macaulay and the settlers would continue. Soon the company would reduce its investment in the colony, allowing the settlers to do those jobs, but also leaving services in worse condition. Additionally, with French attacks on the town, many settlers were finally allowed to settle on farms and by 1796 discovered wild coffee beans and began to cultivate it. Soon, they found that the land was still bad, and most drifted into various trades. In many ways the settlers were finally allowed some of the economic freedoms they had longed for.

However in 1796, the company once again brought up the issue of quit rents. This was unsurprisingly still seen as a transgression against the promise Clarkson had made all those years ago in Nova Scotia. There was considerable disagreement over the rents and it was generally faded out through non-enforcement. From here, the settlers would continue to face issues of political and economic control by the company, as well as unfriendly neighbors and a

⁵⁸ An account of the colony of Sierra Leone, from its first establishment in 1793, being the substance of a report delivered to the proprietors (1795) pg 22

somewhat unproductive land.⁵⁹ In 1799, settlers revolted once again, and this time The Crown brought in forces to subdue the settlers. Then in 1808, the Sierra Leone Company surrendered its charter and the British Crown reorganized the colony. At the same time they received an influx of settlers as the British outlawed slavery and begun to send many of the freed slaves to the colony. This situation was far from perfect, but that is a topic for another paper.

Conclusion

Throughout all this conflict, the company was not truly focused on a profit, they had only attempted to re-coup losses. Unfortunately, that was too much to expect from a small unorganized colony being built in a harsh land. Additionally their own motivations, such as bringing traditional Christianity to Africa, along with a paternalistic attitude led to the continual conflict with the settlers.⁶⁰

Throughout this tale, black settlers struggled to obtain their natural rights as free British citizens, and occasionally experienced moderate success. However, far more often they faced the dangers of being re-enslaved or oppressed in a share-cropper system both in Canada and Africa. When the Nova Scotians traveled back to Africa with promises of the ability to create a new free black society, they were generally thwarted by a combination of factors, chief among them was the Company's poor choices in leadership and their unwillingness to compromise based on a belief of their own superiority. The director's intentions were not bad, but their goals were different from that of the settlers and they suffered from that classic British sense of superiority.

⁵⁹ Walker, chapter 10-11

⁶⁰ Pybus, "A less Favourable Specimen': The Abolitionist Response to Self-Emancipated Slaves in Sierra Leone, 1793-1808"

Despite that, the colony did succeed in limited ways, and in some of their goals. The settlers did, in a sense, bring western civilization to Africa, schools were built in Sierra Leone and the settlers did preach their own, Company unapproved, brand of Christianity to nearby tribes. However, their primary goal of a thriving trade colony that would act as an economic argument against slavery, was not particularly successful. The colony was important in its existence, but as an economic argument it was not strong. It was not profitable enough to truly be an argument against slavery, and in fact during this time period traded frequently with slave ships.

Prof's comments

I really like your paper. You have done a great job of researching a complex topic – esp. about the white leadership & its inadequacies - & you have also found good comments on the part of the Bs.

One challenge wd be how can one comment on the failure of a civil project. At some pt, you wd think that the govt wd step in earlier. I get the sense that they were only willing to do more after they eradicated slavery & now faced the problem of more “free” Bs in Eng. I know that this is farther in the problem than you were able to go, but how were they able to make the SL experience more attractive to Br Bs (& perhaps more from Canada).

Anyway – well done!