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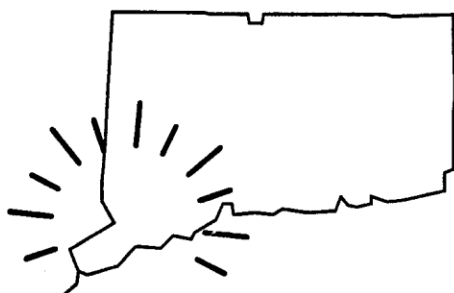
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• *Focus on Southwestern Connecticut* •

The Fate of the Black Loyalists of Fairfield County, Connecticut, Part 1

Teresa Vega

This two-part article seeks to shed light on the Black Loyalists of Fairfield County, Connecticut, who have been largely excluded from the historical record.¹ In it, I explore the circumstances that led them to become Loyalists during the Revolutionary War and provide a detailed account of their experiences upon arriving in Canada in 1783, at the war's end. Part 1 of this article series lays the groundwork to understanding the position that Black Loyalists found themselves in while serving the British Crown. Part 2 will tell the individual stories of what happened to some of the Black Loyalists from Fairfield County, Connecticut, after they arrived in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Canada, and in Sierra Leone. I approach this topic as a family historian-genealogist and a descendant of enslaved/formerly enslaved African and Indigenous peoples who served as Black Patriots and Black Loyalists in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. I believe that their remarkable contributions to both the United States and Britain have been overlooked. It is important to recognize that their acts of resistance and agency positioned them as the "Founding Fathers" in the US and Canada.²

While this article does not provide a comprehensive overview of Connecticut Loyalists' involvement in the War, it offers a snapshot of the significant events that Black Loyalists³ of Fairfield County faced. I do mention Black Patriots throughout because both groups served under similar conditions and faced similar outcomes. These events highlight how the promises made to them by the Loyalists ultimately turned out to be grand gestures that led to a false sense of freedom.

Extensive scholarship exists on the subject of Black Loyalists.⁴ In 2021, Graham Russell Hodges published a new expanded edition of *The Book of Negroes*,⁵ providing updated insights.

¹ The terms "Black Loyalists" and "Black Patriots" refer to people who were of African, Mixed Race or Indigenous descent. The issue of "paper genocide" is beyond the scope of this article. However, it must be noted that many Indigenous people were erased in historical documents because they were racially classified as "Colored," "Black," "Negro," "Mulatto," "Free Black," and/or "White" to dispossess them of their land. See, Andrew W Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast*, New Haven: Yale University, 2015; Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists and the Origins of American Slavery*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016; and Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

² See Richard S. Newman, "A Chosen Generation: Black Founders and Early America" in *Prophets of Protest: Reconsidering the History of American Abolitionism*, Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John Stoller, eds., New York: The New Press, 2006, pp. 59-79; David Hackett Fisher, *African Founders: How Enslaved People Expanded American Ideals*, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2022; and Christina Proenza-Coles, *American Founders: How People of African Descent Established Freedom in the New World*, Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2019.

³ For a concise history of Loyalism in Connecticut, see G.A. Gilbert, "The Connecticut Loyalists" in *The American Historical Review*, Jan, 1899, Vol 4, No. 2, pp. 273-291; and Richard Pougher, "Averse...to Remaining Idle Spectators: The Emergence of Loyalist Privateering During the American Revolution," PhD Diss., University of Maine, 2002.

⁴ See Graham Russell Gao Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., *The Book of Negroes*, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2021; Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Biographical Dictionary of Enslaved People in the Maritimes*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022; Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009; Stephen Davidson, *Black Loyalists in New Brunswick: The Lives of Eight African Americans in 1783-1834*, Halifax, Nova Scotia: Formac Publishing Company,

Also, Harvey Amani Whitfield's recent release, *Biographical Dictionary of Enslaved Black People in the Maritimes*, offers valuable contributions to the field. These works reflect the current state of Black Loyalist scholarship. With the ongoing decolonization of archives and the digitization of records, more narratives of individual Black Loyalists will undoubtedly be discovered and expand our understanding of how these individuals navigated their lives before and after the Revolutionary War. It is hoped that descendants of Fairfield County's Black Loyalists will find this genealogical evidence useful in their own search for their ancestors.⁶

Promises of Freedom: Lord Dunmore's 1775 Proclamation, General William Howe's 1777 Order and Sir Henry Clinton's 1779 Phillipsburg Proclamation

On November 7, 1775, Lord Dunmore, the final Loyalist governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation calling on all men, including those enslaved by the rebels, to defend the colony. In a bold move, he offered freedom to any enslaved person who escaped from their Patriot masters and fought for The Crown.⁷ Thousands of self-emancipated individuals responded to Lord Dunmore's proclamation. In response, the Patriots employed various punitive measures against Black Loyalists. They faced execution, were transported to the West Indies to work in sugar plantations, were enslaved by the Patriots themselves, or sent to labor prison camps for the duration of the war.⁸ It is important to note that Lord Dunmore's proclamation did not include enslaved people in the South. The Loyalists still regarded them as their property, and any enslaved person seeking self-emancipation would be punished as before, without any change in their circumstances. The prospect of arming enslaved people was too alarming for many Loyalists, as slave rebellions were a significant concern for both Loyalists and Patriots.⁹ Lord Dunmore's primary

2020; Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *Black Loyalists: Southern Settlers of Nova Scotia's First Free Black Communities*, Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nimbus Publishing, 2013; and Mary Louise Clifford, *Slavery to Freetown: Black Loyalists After the American Revolution*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006.

⁵ The British government compiled *The Book of Negroes*, a set of naval ledgers, that lists the names, ages, and a brief description of more than 3,000 Black Loyalists who were evacuated from the United States at the end of the Revolutionary War along with British soldiers. The original document is held at The National Archives in London, UK. Copies can also be found at The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, DC and the Nova Scotia Museum in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

⁶ Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Black Slavery in the Maritimes: A History in Documents*, Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2018. While the history of slavery in Canada is most often associated with the abolition of slavery and the Underground Railroad, Maritime slavery existed as early as the 1629 when a young enslaved boy was brought to New France. Whitfield (2018:4) cautions that "It is a mistake, however, to see the [Maritime] region as monolithically dedicated to both slavery and racism. Though slavery remained strong, it was highly contested by anti-slavery legislators, judges, lawyers, and religious groups. The number of slaves remained legally insecure and somewhat unstable, though it was recognized under common law as a form of private property, this had no statutory basis (such as a slave code) in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick." Whitfield's book *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes*, Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press, 2016, elucidates this early forgotten history.

⁷ Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War of Independence*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, pp. 95-151; also, James W. St. G. Walker "Blacks as American Loyalists: The Slaves' War for Independence" in *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques, Summer/été 1975*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Summer/été 1975).

⁸ Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, Chapel Hill, NC: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996; and James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870*, New York, NY: Africana Publishing Company, 1976.

⁹ Here are three books that give good descriptions of slave rebellions: Jason T. Sharples, *The World Fear That Fear Made: Slave Revolts and Conspiracy Scares in Early America*, Philadelphia: UPenn Press, 2020; Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*, New York: Knopf, 2005;

objective was to disrupt the Patriots' advantage in the South by enticing thousands of enslaved laborers to leave their plantations, thus sabotaging the Patriots' economic livelihood.

On March 16, 1777, General Howe issued an order that discharged the Black Loyalists who made it to British New York City from their service to The Crown. It also offered them security behind British lines and from being re-enslaved by their former masters. In essence, it sought to reiterate Lord Dunmore's proclamation. This was important since many Black Brigade and Black Pioneers resided there.

On June 30, 1779, British Army General Sir Henry Clinton issued a proclamation from his temporary headquarters at Phillipsburg Manor in Westchester County, New York. This proclamation mirrored the Patriots' response by finally allowing Black men to join their cause. General Clinton, however, promised to sell any Black Patriot who fought or supported revolutionary ideals, with the proceeds going to whoever captured them. Loyalists later decided to return some of the enslaved people to their Patriot owners when the numbers of those fleeing became much higher than anticipated. Black Patriots were considered enemy combatants and targeted for execution in battles. However, Clinton made a pledge not to sell any enslaved person owned by a Patriot who joined the Loyalist cause. Furthermore, he explicitly stated that these self-emancipated Black individuals could serve in any occupation and that they would be eventually given land forfeited by the redcoats.

This is significant because the Patriots often limited Black Patriot participation to Free Blacks, and even then, assigned them mostly non-combatant roles.¹⁰ Benjamin Quarles summarized the average American Patriot's view, quoting one who described the New England regiments as "the strangest mixture of Negroes, Indians, and whites, with old men and mere children, which together with a nasty lousy appearance make a most shocking spectacle. Such troops were 'sufficient to make one sick of the service.'"¹¹ While this was an observation that was common at the time, many descendants of the DAR's *Forgotten Patriots*¹² can attest that Black Patriots fought alongside their compatriots and served with distinction throughout the Revolutionary War as Free Blacks and enslaved people.¹³ For example, my own enslaved 5X great-grandfather, Samuel Freeman, served in the 2nd Regiment, Orangetown, New York, militia off and on for the duration of the War. He was also sent by his enslaver, Benjamin Moore, to build fortifications in New York City on March 17, 1776, as one of eleven Blacks in Captain Benjamin Egbert's 22nd

Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2022); and Ben Hughes, *When I Die I Shall Return to My Own Land: The New York Slave Revolt of 1712*, Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2021.

¹⁰ The First Rhode Island Regiment became known as "The Black Regiment" because it mostly comprised Black with some Native American soldiers who served for the entire duration of the Revolutionary War with distinction.

¹¹ Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, Chapel Hill, NC: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996, p. 72.

¹² Similar to *The Book of Negroes*, *Forgotten Patriots* is a compilation of names and service records of African Americans and Native Americans who fought as Free and enslaved Patriots. It was created by the Daughters of the American Revolution and is available at no cost from their website.

(https://www.dar.org/sites/default/files/media/library/DARpublications/Forgotten_Patriots_ISBN-978-1-892237-10-1.pdf)

¹³ Eric Grundset, Briana L. Diaz, Hollis L. Gentry, Jean D. Strahan, eds. *Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War: A Guide to Service, Sources and Studies*, Washington, DC: National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 2008.)

Beat.¹⁴ Although Free Black Patriots were allowed in military regiments and militias, enslaved Black Loyalists ultimately surpassed them by the sheer number of participants. As Walker states, “Numerous slaves and black freemen clearly distrusted the Patriot rhetoric yet grasped at the image of a free black America which was suggested by British statements and actions during the war. Theirs was indeed the “American dream: ” for freedom, for a small farm, for security as citizens of the realm. In fact, they were fighting for Black independence.”¹⁵

Black Loyalist Wartime Service: The Ethiopian Regiment, The Black Brigade and the Black Pioneers

During the Revolutionary War, people of African and Indigenous descent played significant roles as Black Patriots and Black Loyalists. In comparison to their population in Northern states, they demonstrated remarkable dedication, serving for longer periods and displaying much higher participation rates than White Patriots or Loyalists.¹⁶ While most Patriots and Loyalist Volunteers served for short terms of six months in state militias or joined both armies for three to twelve months, Black Patriots and Black Loyalists remained committed to both causes for the entire duration of the Revolutionary War, with some serving for as long as four to seven years. Approximately 5,000 Black Patriots are known to have served in the Revolutionary War, while an estimated 100,000 Black Loyalists fought, escaped, or sacrificed their lives in service to The Crown.¹⁷

The larger numbers of Black Loyalists can be attributed to the fact that many self-emancipated individuals joined their ranks. One prevailing myth about Black Loyalists is that self-emancipating individuals, often referred to as fugitives or refugees, did not actively participate in the war. However, Walker states that “among the blacks who were eventually to remove with the British in 1783, a significant portion, perhaps one-third or more, had been enrolled in the British armies. This far exceeded the war record of their fellow Loyalists of a fairer complexion.”¹⁸ Additionally, Hodges notes that “estimates of 25,000 to 55,000 fugitives in the southern states alone, added up to the largest black escape in the history of North American slavery. Such a massive exodus had not occurred before and would not be witnessed again until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.”¹⁹ Former enslaved people also found refuge in Eastern Florida where many became Maroons.²⁰ They aligned themselves with local Indigenous populations as Florida was a Spanish territory at the time.

Black Loyalists and Patriots fulfilled key roles during the American Revolution that have been overlooked such as: local militia duty, volunteering as substitutes for their enslaver’s ser-

¹⁴ Teresa Vega, “A Revolutionary Breakthrough: Discovering our Van Salee Lineage,” in *The Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society*, Vol. 40, Summer Edition, 2023.

¹⁵ Walker, “Blacks as American Loyalists,” p. 53.

¹⁶ See Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, pp. 68-93 and Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, for detailed discussion of wartime participation.

¹⁷ DAR acknowledges that the approximate number of Patriots of Color is probably a lot higher and they will continue to add more Patriots of Color as they are found.

¹⁸ Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, p. 6.

¹⁹ Hodges, *The Book of Negroes*, p. xiv.

²⁰ The term “maroon” refers to Free Black and enslaved Africans, and their descendants, who formed Free Black settlements in the Americas and in the Indian Ocean. See Sylviane Diouf, *Slavery Exiles: The Story of American Maroons*, New York, NY: NYU Press, 2016, and Ruma Chopra, *Almost Home: Maroons Between Slavery and Freedom in Jamaica, Nova Scotia, and Sierra Leone*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018.

vice or being forced to serve, acting as shock troops, serving in artillery and brigade regiments, operating guns, working as guides/scouts/intelligence agents, as spies, musicians (e.g., trumpeters, drummers and fifers), sailors/seamen/pilots of vessels, and engaging in various military labor tasks such as carpentry, coopering, blacksmithing, salt, iron, and lead mining, along with as roles as provision foragers, cooks, waiters, servants, waggoners, ship cabin staff, rope makers, messengers, and many more.²¹ Due to the pervasive racism they faced, and the apprehension surrounding arming large numbers of people of color, most Black Patriots and Black Loyalists served in support roles rather than direct combat positions.

For those who did serve in active combat or worked closely with military Loyalist regiments, three categories emerged as the primary groups. These were the Ethiopian Regiment, the Black Brigade, and the Black Pioneers, with the Black Pioneers the largest paramilitary unit of the three.²² Following Lord Dunmore's 1775 Proclamation, hundreds of Free Blacks and enslaved Blacks from Patriot strongholds found their way to Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, joining Lord Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment as active combat members. Many enslaved men also joined this regiment by pretending to be Free Blacks. At its peak, the Ethiopian Regiment consisted of 800 men who actively participated in combat. Tragically, smallpox ravaged their ranks, leading the surviving members to relocate to New York City where they continued to serve with other units until the end of the War.

One notable member of the Ethiopian Regiment was Colonel Tye, also known as Titus Cornelius. Born a mixed-race enslaved man in Monmouth County, New Jersey, Colonel Tye's life took a dramatic turn upon hearing Lord Dunmore's proclamation. Fleeing his owner, John Corlies, a Quaker who had disregarded pleas from other Quakers to emancipate his enslaved people, Titus made his way to Virginia. Following the disbandment of the Ethiopian Regiment and now known as Colonel Tye, he formed the Black Brigade, an integrated brigade that left a lasting impact on the Revolutionary War.²³

Operating from Sandy Hook, New Jersey, the Black Brigade launched daring attacks that struck fear into the hearts of Monmouth County's residents. Some of these attacks were coordinated with the Queens Rangers.²⁴ The Black Brigade's activities included capturing livestock, looting houses for goods, seizing supplies, capturing and assassinating Patriots, and liberating enslaved people. Colonel Tye's remarkable leadership and military prowess earned him admiration from all who fought alongside him as well as from his enemies. He participated in raids during the Battle of Monmouth in 1778 and defended the British in New York City in 1779. However, in 1780, after five years of fighting for The Crown, Colonel Tye succumbed to gangrene resulting from a wound he had received. The Black Brigade continued to operate under new leadership until 1782, leaving a lasting legacy of resistance and resilience.²⁵

²¹ Quarles, Walker, Ederton, and Hodges have all discussed these roles throughout their books.

²² Graham Russell Gao Hodges describes the Black Brigade and Black Pioneer in detail in his book *Slavery, Freedom & Culture: Among Early American Workers*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1998, pp.65-86.

²³ See Ederton, pp. 65-67. See also Graham Russell Gao Hodges, *Roots and Branches: African-Americans in New York and New Jersey, 1613-1863*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

²⁴ The Queens Rangers were a Loyalist light infantry military unit that operated during the Revolutionary War. John Graves Simcoe, who became the First Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada West, was put in charge of this unit.

²⁵ See, Graham Russell Gao Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865*, Indianapolis, IN: Madison House Publishing, 1997.

The Black Pioneers played a crucial role in the Revolutionary War as “military engineers.” Tasked with a range of vital responsibilities, they cleared roads, felled trees, constructed bridges and tunnels, built dams, demolished bridges, when necessary, secured provisions, built shelters, acted as transport guides, and even cleaned streets. They accompanied the Loyalist forces throughout the thirteen colonies, performing these essential tasks regardless of the dangers they faced, including operating under enemy fire.

By the end of the war, the Black Pioneers had become a common sight behind British lines in New York City, having worked tirelessly to support the military efforts of the Loyalists. Their contributions as skilled engineers played a significant role in enabling the movement and logistical operations of the British forces and showcased their indispensable value throughout the war. The Black Pioneers' dedication and resourcefulness exemplify their integral role in shaping the outcome of the Revolutionary War.

It is crucial to recognize the significant contributions of Free, enslaved, and indentured Black and Indigenous women as Black Patriots and Black Loyalists during the Revolutionary War.²⁶ These resilient women played vital roles as guides, messengers, spies, provision foragers, nurses, cooks, servants, seamstresses, weavers, knitters/spinners, laundresses, and more, providing invaluable support throughout the conflict.²⁷ Among the Black Loyalists, some women also served as members of the Black Brigade and the Black Pioneers.

One notable example is Mary Thomson, along with her daughter Margaret and Margaret's three young daughters, who were all Free Blacks hailing from Newark, New Jersey.²⁸ On November 30, 1783, they boarded the ship *L'Abondance* and were bound for Port Moutton, Nova Scotia as proud members of Colonel Tye's Black Brigade. Their connection to my Thompson-King lineage, which has roots in Newark dating back decades prior to the Revolutionary War, is very plausible as my family comprised the majority of known Thompsons in Newark at that time. Regarding my Thompson-King family, they were Free Blacks who were affiliated with some of New York and New Jersey Patriot merchant families like the Ogden, Gouverneur, Hill, Bibby, McEvers families among others. My Thompson-Kings ancestors were emancipated between the late 1790s and beginning of the 1800s. They went on to become early abolitionists who built the only Underground Railroad House in Newark, The Colored School, The AME Zion Church, and the Colored Presbyterian Church.²⁹ Like most colonial families, I also had ancestors who fought on both sides during the war. Note that several months earlier, Hagar Thomson, 22, also born free in Newark, boarded the Sloop *Lydia* on June 25, 1783, bound for Annapolis, Nova

²⁶ Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in The Revolutionary World*, New York: Knopf, 2011; Cook-Bell, Karen. *Running from Bondage: Enslaved Women and Their Remarkable Fight for Freedom in Revolutionary America*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011; and Thomas S. Wermuth, “The women in this place have risen in a mob”: Women Rioters and the American Revolution in the Hudson River Valley,” *America's First River: The History and Culture of the Hudson River Valley*, Thomas S. Wermuth, James M. Johnson, and Christopher Pryslopski, eds., Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009.

²⁷ Mary Madison, *Plantation Slave Weavers: An Oral History*, Sun Valley, VA: CreateSpace, 2015. This book describes the work of enslaved women weavers, knitters, and spinners and the harsh conditions under which they labored for free during their enslavement.

²⁸ See Hodges' Book of Negroes, p. xx.

²⁹ Teresa Vega, “Our Abolitionist Ancestors: Newark Born and Bred;” *Radiant Roots, Boricua Branches (blog)*; March 21, 2019; <https://radiantrootsboricuabranches.com/our-abolitionist-ancestors-newark-born-and-bred/>

Scotia. Could she have been Mary's other daughter? Had they all been living together as a family residing in the "Negro barracks" located in Lower Manhattan, then situated at 18 Broadway, 10 Church St., and other locations?³⁰

These brave and resourceful women defied the social barriers and hardships of the time to actively participate in shaping the course of the Revolutionary War, to leave a lasting legacy that deserves recognition and appreciation.

Connecticut and Fairfield County Loyalists Wartime Activities

Connecticut Loyalists came from diverse backgrounds and were primarily concentrated in coastal southwestern Connecticut.³¹ Most of these Loyalists belonged to the Anglican Episcopalian faith and were predominantly of English, Irish, and Scottish descent. This set them apart in terms of their ethnic composition compared to other Loyalists, like those in New York City who came from a multitude of ethnic backgrounds. However, they were significantly outnumbered by the Patriots in Connecticut.³² Even before the Continental Congress implemented new legislative acts in July of 1776, local officials had already targeted the Loyalists. By that time, many had experienced hardships such as imprisonment at New-Gate prison, loss of real estate, personal property, and livestock, and attacks by mobs of redcoats. Some unfortunate Loyalists were even sentenced to death for being considered enemies of the state. Faced with such circumstances, Connecticut Loyalists had no option but to seek refuge on Long Island, which served as a Loyalist stronghold, before eventually relocating to British-controlled New York City in August, 1776. Ultimately, numerous Loyalists ended up settling in Canada and England.

Concerning Fairfield County Loyalists, some hailed from affluent merchant-mariner families who conducted business in New York City. These Loyalists had been actively involved in commerce, serving as merchants and later even engaging in privateering, all centered around New York City in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War.³³ Their wealth was derived from investments in whaling, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the illicit global trade of smuggled goods.³⁴ Notable examples of these Fairfield County merchant-mariner families who fled Connecticut after pledging loyalty to Britain and identifying themselves as Tories include the Hyde, Hubbard, Rogers, Ketcham, Clark, Smith, and Hoyt families.³⁵ However, in the decades following the Revolutionary War, Loyalists reunited with their Patriot family members. Many of their descendants received land grants that facilitated their migration to states like New York, Ohio, Michigan, and even Canada. In essence, their generational wealth was successfully replicated.

³⁰ See Hodges, *Slavery, Freedom, and Culture*, p. 79 for a discussion regarding "Negro barracks."

³¹ G. A. Gilbert, "The Connecticut Loyalists." Also, Pougher, "Averse...to Remaining Idle Spectators."

³² Oscar Zeichner, "The Rehabilitation of Loyalists in Connecticut," *The New England Quarterly*, June 1938, Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 1938), p. 309. He recounts that there were 25,000 males in Connecticut between the ages of sixteen and fifty, in the Connecticut 1774 census and of these 2,000 were Tories.

³³ Cathy Matson, *Merchants and Empire: Trading in Colonial New York*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

³⁴ Kevin P. McDonald, *Pirates, Merchants, Settlers, and Slaves: Colonial America and The Indo-Atlantic Worlds*, Oakland, CA: University of California, 2015. He details all the merchant families who made a fortune in privateering, the slave trade, as well as the sale of American goods in violation of British Navigation Acts. Many of the merchants he mentions were based in New York, New Jersey, as well as Connecticut.

³⁵ All are listed as either slaveholders or Loyalist transporters in Hodges, *The Book of Negroes*.

During the war, it was common for British sympathizers to adopt a stance of "neutrality" in order to protect their assets. David Bush of Cos Cob was an example of such a Loyalist. Although accused of being a Tory during the conflict, he was briefly imprisoned before being acquitted of all charges. According to Zeranski, Bush's position as the fourth wealthiest taxpayer in 1775, extensive real estate holdings, involvement in merchant activities, milling, trading, and membership in the Church of England, made it risky for him to openly align himself with the Loyalists. He navigated a challenging path, balancing between the two sides. It appears that he did not overtly support the British cause following his imprisonment in 1779.³⁶

Another individual with Tory sympathies was Captain James Lyon, an enslaver who participated in the Transatlantic Slave Trade.³⁷ However, he chose not to flee and remained in Greenwich, Connecticut, during the war, likely adopting a "neutral" role to oversee and protect his business empire as well. As with many families, the Revolutionary War forced individual family members to take sides. In my own Lyon-Green-Merritt extended family, while James Lyon and Andrew Lyon were Loyalists whose enslaved people fled to safety behind British lines, other members of "the Lyon, Merritt, and Green families were some of the earliest and outspoken proponents and activists of the abolition of slavery. In fact, the Lyon, Green, and Merritt families were not only among the early first families in Greenwich to free their slaves as early as 1800, but many shared common ties of blood as well."³⁸

Captain James Hughston, a merchant and shopkeeper from Jamaica, Queens, Long Island, played a significant role as the Loyalist transporter for Black Loyalists Cuff Bush and Glasgow Griggs of Horseneck (Greenwich), Connecticut. His story serves as an example of a Loyalist who faced targeted persecution due to his refusal to support the revolutionary committee and join the local militia.³⁹ In his compensation claim, Hughston recounts a harrowing experience in which he, his pregnant wife, and their five children were compelled to flee their home and store during the night when a rebel mob set their residence and business ablaze. It is worth noting that he later admitted to supplying provisions to the Loyalists in his capacity as a merchant as they prepared to land on Long Island.⁴⁰ Ultimately, he joined the Loyalists upon their arrival in New York City.

A City in Chaos: The Predicament of Black Loyalists

On the brink of the signing of The Treaty of Paris in September 1782, Black Loyalists from various backgrounds had legitimate concerns about whether the Loyalists would honor their commitments and uphold the proclamations made regarding their service to the British Crown during the war. While Patriots would be compensated for their losses sustained during the War

³⁶ Joe Zeranski, *Greenwich Revolutionary War Participants: A Compilation of Greenwich Military and Civilian Activities in Conflict*, Horseneck, CT: Dumpling Pond Press, 2014.

³⁷ When Ali African, alias Ally Mink, died in 1879, an obituary in *Port Chester Journal* (April 4, 1879) noted that he was brought to Horseneck in Capt. James Lyon's vessel when he was around 8-years old.

³⁸ Melillo, Andrew. "The Merritt and Lyon Families, and a Smidgen of the History of the Greenwich Western Frontier" in *The Greenwich Free Press* (May 16, 2019). See also Jeffrey Bingham Mead's *Chains Unbound: Slave Emancipations in the Town of Greenwich, Connecticut* (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, 1995) to view the emancipation records of my 4X great-grandmother Peg (p. 38) and 4X great-grandfather Tone (p.51). His discussion of the "Awakenings and Abolitionism (pp. 16-20)" is also worthy to read.

³⁹ Sophie Heather Jones, "From Anglicization to Loyalism? New York 1691-1783, PhD diss. University of Liverpool, 2018, p.115.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 119.

for Independence and the establishment of the United States would be acknowledged, there were significant disagreements regarding the fate of Black Loyalists who had fought under the British banner. The Americans viewed these now-free, protected British subjects through the same lens they always had: as fugitives who needed to be returned to their former enslavers as property.

Unsurprisingly, the disagreements over the destiny of Black Loyalists plunged the city into chaos.⁴¹ Many Black Loyalists chose to flee New York, either to other states or by blending into the free Black population of the city.⁴² Some even sought refuge at sea, serving as sailors and seamen. For Black Loyalists, the fear of being re-enslaved, sold to the West Indies or the South as further punishment for their wartime acts of rebellion, and being separated from their families weighed heavily on their minds. While Loyalists in general faced retaliation, without question, as always, Black Loyalists endured the harshest consequences.

A compromise was eventually reached. Sir Guy Carlton, the Governor General of British North America, informed his American counterpart, Commander in Chief of the Continental Army George Washington, that all Black Loyalists who were free when the Treaty of Paris was signed would be evacuated along with other Loyalists. However, Carlton agreed to establish a joint commission to address claims pertaining to Black Loyalists who arrived after the treaty's signing, and to maintain a logbook called *The Book of Negroes*, documenting the relevant information of all departing Black Loyalists in case future reparations to former enslavers were required. This compromise incited a dispute among Carleton, Washington and other Patriots that would last for three decades.⁴³ Furthermore, Brigadier General Samuel Birch was instructed to issue certificates of freedom, commonly known as General Birch Certificates, and honor all other freedom certificates issued during that period. It is important to note that by 1780, approximately 10,000 individuals of African descent resided in New York City. When the British finally evacuated the city in 1783, roughly 3,000 Black Loyalists departed with them, embarking on new lives in Nova Scotia, England, Germany, and Florida. The commission established by Sir Carlton ultimately considered 14 cases, of which 9 favored former enslavers, 2 favored Black Loyalists, and 3 cases were rejected. What, then, became of the nearly 7,000 remaining Black Loyalists? This is a question that still lingers.

To be continued

⁴¹ Van Buskirk, Judith. "Crossing the Lines: African Americans in the New York City Region During the British Occupation, 1776-1783" in *Pennsylvania History, A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, 1998, Vol. 65, Explorations in Early American Culture (1998), pp. 74-100.

⁴² See Bell-Cook 's *Running from Bondage* as well as Graham Russell Gao Hodges and Allan Edward Brown, eds. *"Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2021.

⁴³ Hodges, *The Book of Negroes*, Introduction, p. xii.