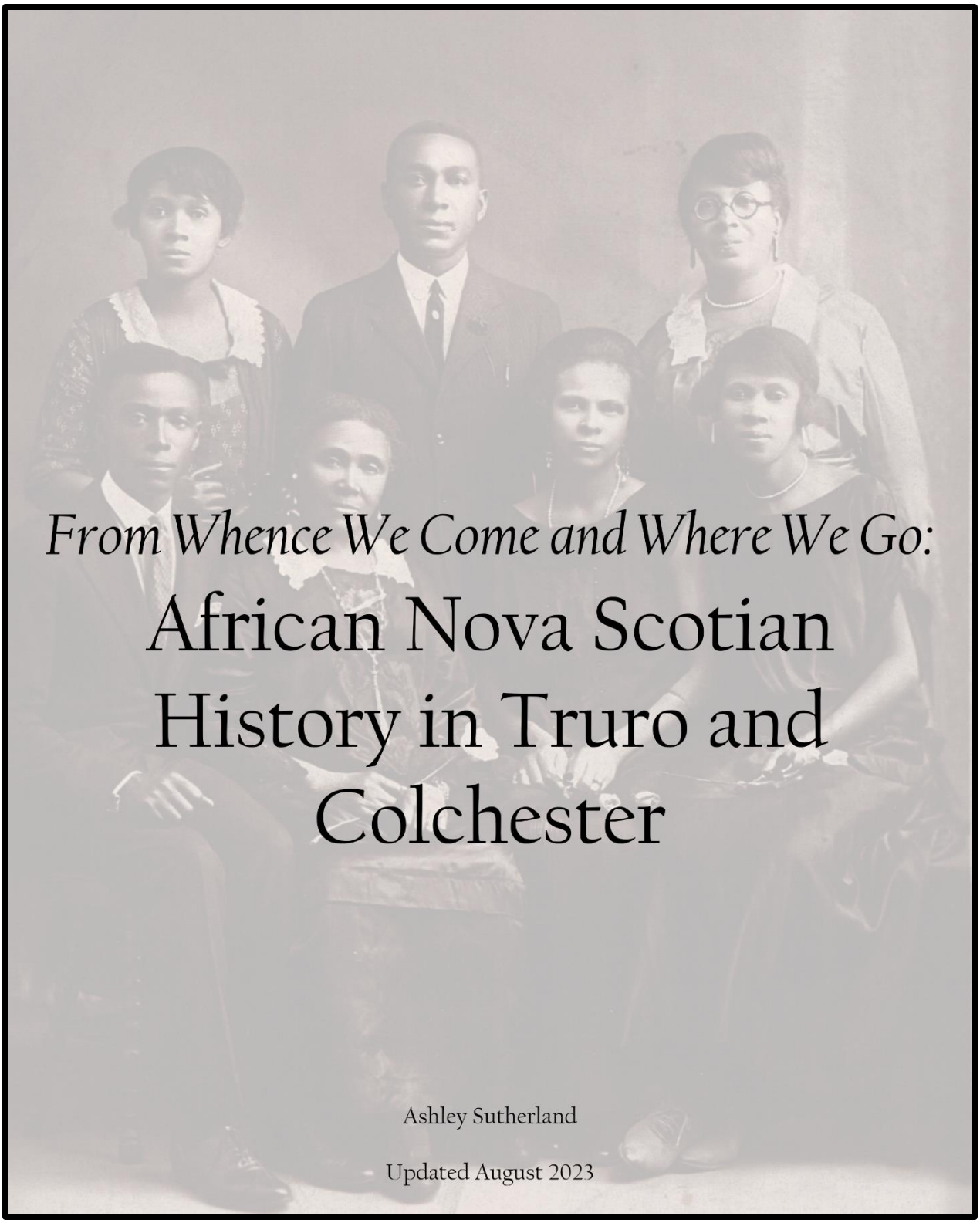

From Whence We Come and Where We Go:

African Nova Scotian History in Truro and Colchester

Ashley Sutherland

Updated August 2023

*Cover background image: photograph of the Paris family, a prominent African Nova Scotian family from Truro, Nova Scotia.*Back: Susan; Edward; Maud; Front: ---; Sara; Lottie; Florence; Truro, Nova Scotia, 1920. *Source: Colchester Historical Society Archives Ref #: 2002.69.1*

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Preface

A note on the document: This narrative is a combination of "From Whence We Come and Where We Go Part I: Tracing the Path of African Nova Scotians" which provides the contextual historical background of a more general history of African Nova Scotians and Part II, which focuses on African Nova Scotian history in Colchester, Nova Scotia.

It should be acknowledged that some of the content and language of this narrative may be offensive. In some cases, racist or derogatory language is contained in quotations from historical documents or publications. This is done with the intention of maintaining insight into the mindset and attitudes of society and individuals at the time the documents were written or recorded. The purpose of this document is to make information, including that with racist content, accessible to serve as evidence and to raise accountability and awareness. I have chosen not to censor this material as to do so would be to participate in the erasure of this history. I welcome any comments or suggestions on this position.

I would also like to preface this with an acknowledgement that I am not the first person to write about Truro's African Nova Scotian history. The earliest account I've encountered thus far is George Clyke's short book The Forgotten Road*, which was written in 1991. About ten years later, Donna Byard-Sealy published* Colored Zion.[1] *Unfortunately, neither of these are easily accessible anymore*--The Forgotten Road *did not get published and* Colored Zion *is no longer in print. At the time that George Clyke wrote* The Forgotten Road*, he tried to pursue funding to do his research and encountered the "same old red tape."[2] Clyke wrote his book "in hopes that it [would] form an overall picture and understanding of why Truro Blacks have a right to be recognized and counted."[3] But he also very poignantly said "if you believe there's [no racism], ask yourself why Truro's Black history is not important enough to be recorded or mentioned along with the white history in any book or place to date."[4] I want to acknowledge the effort and contributions of Clyke and Byard-Sealy who did something virtually unprecedented at the time. The historical narrative that follows is an effort to build on Clyke and Byard-Sealy's work and to make the information that I have learned, and documents I have accumulated during my time at the Colchester Historeum, available to the greater public.*

It is also worth mentioning that this is by no means a complete history of the African Nova Scotian communities in Truro and Colchester. Our understanding of the past is always evolving. But a record of what is known today will hopefully provide valuable information for future community members and researchers. I have written this in hopes of pointing researchers to information and resources that may lead to the discovery of additional historical information.

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[1] Donna Byard Sealy. *Colored Zion: The History of Zion United Baptist Church & the Black Community of Truro, Nova Scotia.* Gaspereau Press, 2000.

[2] George Clyke. *The Forgotten Road*. 1991. P.1.

[3] Ibid., 3.

[4] Ibid., 3.

My hope is to inspire people to dig deeper because there is still much more that remains to be uncovered.

This document was written with the assistance and guidance of Dr. Lynn Jones; I strongly encourage readers to explore the Lynn Jones African Canadian and Diaspora Collection, which is held in the Archives at St. Mary's University in Halifax and is a treasure trove of AFNS history that she collected over several decades. Lynn, thank you for challenging my perceptions of the past and encouraging me to think carefully about the importance of words and terminology.

This document is a living document which may be changed or added to as new information comes to light. If you have any concerns about the wording, or the content, please feel free to contact me (Ashley) with suggestions for changes at amsutherland17@gmail.com.

Tracing the Path of African Nova Scotians in Nova Scotia

People of African heritage have been present in what is known today as Nova Scotia for over 400 years. They come from vibrant cultural groundings from various countries, communities, and ethnic groups on the continent of Africa. The stories informing their arrivals in Nova Scotia are varied and complex and their immigration to this region occurred over the course of several influxes. These historic journeys are a result of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism and are directly and indirectly connected to the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. Their journeys and experiences that have led to present-day realities show they have struggled, and continue to struggle, against multiple systems of oppression. Despite the hardships experienced, the African Nova Scotian community has a long vibrant history and a strong and welcome presence in Nova Scotia today.

The long-standing presence of people of African descent can be traced back as far as 1605, when the first known person of African descent to arrive in this region was Mathieu Da Costa. Da Costa, a Free-African person from Portugal, was credited with speaking several languages including Mi'kmaw. He worked as an interpreter for the French and Dutch. Thus, his linguistic abilities were resourceful and instrumental in establishing important trade relationships. It is believed that Da Costa accompanied Samuel de Champlain on his expedition to the New World where he reportedly arrived of his own free will, whereas the majority of Africans were forcibly brought to North America.

Despite information to the contrary, slavery is the foundation upon which North America was built. The misconception that slavery did not exist in Canada is a false narrative. The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade occurred over the course of four centuries (from the 1500s to the early 1800s). During this time, people of African Heritage were captured, enslaved, and transferred from the continent of Africa to the Americas. It is estimated that 12.5 million Africans were kidnapped and brought to the Americas. 95% of the captives were sent to the West Indies and about 5% came to North America. The voyage across the Atlantic Ocean was perilous. An additional 12.5 million captives are estimated to have never made it to land due to mutiny, disease, inflicted violence, and sinking ships. What is

important to note is that, despite where enslaved people initially arrived in the Americas, slavery was present in all British colonies, including Canada. The Slave Trade was likewise active in other European colonies, including the French colonies. Approximately 90% of those who were enslaved in French colonies were African or of African heritage. The Fortress of Louisbourg, which was the capital of a French colony known as Ile Royale (present-day Cape Breton Island) is just one example of a colony in the Maritimes that enslaved people would have been highly visible in daily life. Records suggest that more than 260 people were enslaved at Louisbourg during the time of French occupation. It is likely that more were present but were not documented in records. Enslaved people would have likewise been part of the British forces that attacked the fortress during the Siege of Louisbourg (1745 and 1758).

The colonial struggle between the British and the French over Nova Scotia resulted in an event known today as the Acadian Expulsion (1755). Although the French remained in control of Ile Royale and Louisbourg, the British occupied mainland Nova Scotia. Despite this, many French-speaking settlers, known as Acadians, lived in the region, and refused to sign an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. Regardless of the Acadians' claim of neutrality, the British considered them a threat and forcibly removed the Acadians from the region. Following the Acadian Expulsion in Nova Scotia, many White Settlers, known as Planters, came by way of New England and Ireland and established English-speaking communities in Nova Scotia. They were the first English-speaking Settlers in the region. Records indicate that Planters brought enslaved African people with them to Nova Scotia. Additionally, enslaved people were brought on ships to Halifax circa 1749 with the arrival of Cornwallis and the establishment of a British presence in the region. They were brought to assist with the construction of fortifications and houses in Halifax, including Citadel Hill.

Although early British and English-speaking settlement brought the first influx of people of African Heritage, the largest influx to the region occurred following the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). During this war, the Americans were successful in gaining independence from Great Britain. As American territory expanded, British supporters, known as Loyalists, migrated to territories that remained occupied by the British. This included Nova Scotia.

Newcomers of African heritage that fought alongside the British in the Revolution are known as Black Loyalists.

The American Revolution saw a shift in sentiment, allowing people of African heritage to have a voice and have their opinions taken into consideration by some parties. The Dunmore Proclamation of 1775 enabled Africans to join the Revolutionary war alongside the British as their participation was critical to securing a win by the British. In exchange for their loyalty, they were offered a promise of freedom by the British. Additionally, they were guaranteed large parcels of land in Nova Scotia following their service. Most promises resulted in broken contracts. Slave owners from the south would journey north to re-capture enslaved people and the British did not protect the Black Loyalists unless they were on British soil. Many of the Black Loyalists evacuated from New York for British territories, including Nova Scotia. Several of the landing points in the British Colony included Shelburne, Port Mouton, Annapolis Royal, Halifax, Fort Cumberland, and St. John. An estimated 3500 Black Loyalists relocated to Nova Scotia during this wave of immigration.

Black military units who fought in the American Revolution were not paid for their service. Certificates of Freedom that were offered to them did not necessarily give them their “freedom” but, rather, gave them permission to leave for Nova Scotia. As a result, Black Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia under false pretenses as many remained enslaved and indentured. Promised land resulted in small plots without the necessary amenities and conditions to survive. Therefore, the institution of slavery and indentured servants in Nova Scotia continued to be perpetuated. Birchtown, which was located 5km from present-day Shelburne, became the largest Black Loyalist settlement in North America. Furthermore, it was considered the largest community of free Africans in the world outside of the continent of Africa. By 1787, 200 families lived in Birchtown while an additional 70 families resided in Shelburne. After having been taken from Africa and enslaved in the Southern States (Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina), the Black Loyalists faced many challenges with their new lives in Nova Scotia—the first and foremost being survival in a colder climate that they were unaccustomed to. The Mi’kmaw people played an essential role in assisting Black Loyalists—they taught them how to survive in the harsh conditions found in this country. How to fish. How to plant. What to plant. How to forage. And how to build structures in preparation for the

winter months. The relationship established between the Black Loyalists and the Mi'kmaw was integral to survival and compatibility.

Despite the fact that many of the Black Loyalists were considered "free," most did not have possessions, money, or resources to assist with settlement. Additionally, it is important to mention that people of African descent likewise came as enslaved people to Nova Scotia with White Loyalist families. Natural resources became essential for survival and "pithouses" were constructed to live in until families had enough resources to build larger structures. Black Loyalists sought labour jobs. They were paid a fraction of what other settlers were paid for the same work. Many assisted with clearing land while others worked in the fishery. Others were taken advantage of because they signed contracts and they did not know how to read or write. In fact, one could argue that the primary intention of the British was not about the freedom of those enslaved, but rather, to bring Black Loyalists to Nova Scotia as a means of labour at a time when the colony was experiencing a labour shortage during its development.

Tension between Black Loyalists and White Settlers developed, particularly in Shelburne. The attitudes towards people of African heritage did not change simply because they were no longer considered enslaved. The tension came to a head during the summer of 1784 when White Settlers were displeased at the fact that White employers were paying Black Settlers to do work of equal value as them at a lower cost. They took out their anger and frustration on the Black workers whom they deemed as undercutting their labour wages when, Black people were underpaid by employers due to their skin colour— the stark reality of racism. These attitudes evolved into a 10-day conflict, known today as the "Great Riot". It is considered the first known "race riot" in North America. Amongst the violence, Black Loyalists' houses were destroyed, and those living in Shelburne were driven from the town. Birchtown's population doubled following the event because Black Loyalists were forced out of town proper.

Living conditions were not ideal for the Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia and they had an intense desire to leave, evidenced in many petitions stating so. In 1792, 15 ships transporting over 1,100 Black Loyalists and led by their leader Thomas Peterson left Nova Scotia for Sierra Leone in West Africa where a settlement known as Freetown was established. This was the first and largest

group of African people globally to return their homeland. Many Jamaican Maroons that later arrived in Halifax in 1796 also subsequently moved to Sierra Leone. These immigrants had been deported from Trelawny Town, Jamaica, by British forces. Approximately 600 men, women, and children arrived in the port of Halifax on three ships: Dover, Mary, and Anne. According to records, their experience in Nova Scotia was not a positive one due to poor living conditions. Some were employed to work on fortifications at Citadel Hill. Most left, however, in 1800, for Sierra Leone. Maroons were known for their resistance, and they actively and successfully petitioned the Crown to relocate to Sierra Leone.

Another wave of migration of approximately 2000 people of African heritage from the US to Nova Scotia occurred between 1813-1815 (during the War of 1812). These people were known as Black Refugees and their primary reason for moving to Nova Scotia was to escape slavery. They formed Black communities in areas known as Hammonds Plains, Africville and Beechville. These Black settlers were segregated against their will and assigned land on the rural outskirts of Halifax. The physical geographic separation of communities due to racial discrimination is known as geographic marginalization. Likewise, the land assigned to the refugees was not considered valuable or cultivatable. Despite the unequal opportunities, Black Settlers were innovative and determined. They managed to farm the land and establish close-knit communities. Following the arrival of Black Refugees, many of the Black Loyalists and Black Refugees merged together in communities which would later become a new Black identity in Nova Scotia—African Nova Scotians.

Unlike the earlier waves of migration where Black settlers were welcomed as laborers during a time of economic expansion, the Black refugees were seen as a burden to society. This was because the region was experiencing economic decline, which resulted in high unemployment and competition for jobs. Due to the economic crash, Black labour began to be refused and a mentality developed amongst White settlers that there were too many people of African descent in Nova Scotia. It is likely that this mentality was in part due to Settlers feeling threatened by the increased presence of Black people.

In 1811, the Legislative Assembly created financial barriers to Black communities, who had been petitioning in an attempt to organize public

education for their communities. The Education Act offered subsidies to communities who could build a school and hire a teacher. This, however, became a barrier as Black communities could not afford to do so. This was only the beginning in a series of policies and legislation that created the groundwork for prejudice and inequity that would impact subsequent generations.

In 1815, an anti-Black resolution was passed by the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly stating that the Nova Scotia would no longer be willing to encourage the migration of people of African descent to the colony. This included withdrawing financial incentives to attract Black newcomers. One petition, currently in the holdings of the Nova Scotia Archives, reveals the level of discrimination that was pervasive: “We observe with concern and alarm the frequent arrival in this Province of bodies of negroes and mulattoes; of whom, many have already become bothersome to the public.” And that “the proportion of Africans already in this Country is productive of many inconveniences, and that, the introduction of more, [must] tend to the discouragement of white labourers and servants, as well as to the establishment of a separate and marked class of people.”

In fact, Lord Dalhousie, Governor of Nova Scotia from 1759 to 1830, and subsequently the Governor General of British North America, lobbied for many of his racist views to become policy. He also advocated to return recently freed Africans to their former owners in the United States and later attempted to encourage people of African heritage to leave Nova Scotia for Trinidad. In Dalhousie’s mind, people of African heritage did not belong in Nova Scotia despite their continued presence. In 1821, approximately 95 Black settlers were sent from Nova Scotia (Hammonds Plains and Beechville) to Trinidad.

Despite the racial discrimination and slave mentality in Nova Scotia, there were some individuals who spoke out about the injustice of slavery. Rev. James MacGregor (1759-1830) of Pictou is one of the earliest examples of someone to publish anti-slavery literature in Nova Scotia. MacGregor was very outspoken and condemned his church colleagues for being slave owners (since it was common for clergymen to “own” slaves) and he “bought” many slaves from others in order to grant them their freedom.

In 1807, the Slave Trade Act outlawed the slave trade in the British Empire. It wasn’t until 1833, however, when the Slavery Abolition Act was passed, that

slavery was outlawed all together. Following the abolition of slavery, subsequent generations began the painful and slow process of healing and establishing and rebuilding communities. Despite the abolition of slavery, policies continued to ensure inequality and the collective public perception did not necessarily change because laws did. Segregation, which is the physical separation of races, was systematically imposed through law and policy. Additionally, the indentured servitude system enabled the continued oppression following the abolition of slavery. With this system, landowners could essentially enslave people through contract law in which the worker would work not for money, but rather, to repay their "debt" for food and shelter, which was provided by the landowner or head of household. When indentured servants gave birth, their children were also automatically indentured. This continued to perpetuate slave mentality, and enslavement itself, long after slavery was outlawed.

Around the same time as the abolition of slavery, the first Black church was founded in Nova Scotia. Richard Preston, a visionary religious leader and abolitionist who escaped slavery the US and came to Nova Scotia, dedicated his time to travelling throughout Black communities in Nova Scotia and establishing churches. This eventually led to the creation of the African United Baptist Association (AUBA) network that brought all communities together. The church became the voice of the AFNS community where members advocated for change. The establishment of the African United Baptist Church network became a foundation for social activism that has since shaped the identity of African Nova Scotians.

Advocating for more equal educational opportunities was a primary focus for the AUBA. Educational opportunities had been made separate and unequal for African Nova Scotians by White institutions. Segregated education was made law in 1865 and existed in Nova Scotia for more than a century. In 1883, the AUBA formerly petitioned segregated education in the City of Halifax. Ultimately, the petition was denied and only resulted in a strengthening of the legislation in retaliation to the petition. Segregated education would not end in Nova Scotia until after the Canadian Human Rights Act was passed in 1977. In fact, the last segregated school in Nova Scotia closed in 1983.

During the twentieth century, additional migrations of people of African heritage can be noted. From 1899-1912, for example, many moved from the West Indies to Cape Breton to seek work in the steel and mining industries. One community near Sydney, Whitney Pier, was considered one of the most diverse communities in all of Canada at the time. This continued into the 1920s, when hundreds of Caribbean migrants arrived in Nova Scotia in search of labour.

Many people making important decisions about the shaping of the province were slave owners or only one generation removed from slave owners. Therefore, the mindset of racial inequity and slave mentality was common and far-reaching. It was intertwined in the province's legal system. Systemic racism occurs when systems and structures have procedures and processes in place that create inequality or disadvantage marginalized groups. Slave mentality did not disappear with the abolition of slavery. Despite no longer being enslaved, African Nova Scotians faced many barriers to education and employment. The majority worked as "servants" or labourers and were underpaid. African Nova Scotians have experienced, and continue to experience, systemic racism in Nova Scotia for centuries.

Today, there are over 50 African Nova Scotian communities in Nova Scotia. Despite early attempts at ethnic cleansing in Nova Scotia and pervasive discrimination, African Nova Scotians have displayed admirable resilience. They have been victim to broken promises and continued inequities. From the beginning of their arrival, they were denied sufficient food and shelter. They were segregated and did not have equal access to education. But African Nova Scotians have fought for social justice and continue to actively fight systemic racism and inequity today. Another thing that plaques African Nova Scotian communities and their locations is environmental racism. This is the disproportionate placement of facilities with health hazards, such a landfill, near marginalized communities. These things are not always overt or obvious, but they can have major repercussions for community members and are still present in Nova Scotia today.

Many initiatives for reparations are ongoing today. But much like reconciliation, this is a continuing process and commitment to make amends for the wrongs that have been done to a group of people on the basis of skin colour and perceived difference. An important aspect of reparations includes education

and understanding of the past in order to unlearn the misconceptions that have been taught to us over the years.

One recent accomplishment has been the official recognition of Emancipation Day on August 1, 2021. This is a big feat but we, as Nova Scotians, still have a long way to go in understanding the region's history of Black settlement, oppression, and systemic racism.

Everyone can contribute to reparations and more inclusive historical narratives simply by studying, learning, being open to unlearning, and sharing what you've learned with others around you. Collectively, we can make a difference in how history is told.

Early Presence of African People in Colchester

The first English-speaking settlers to arrive following the settlement of the French Acadians in Colchester were known as the Planters. People of African heritage have been present in Colchester as long as the Planter Settlers (ca. 1760-1780), if not longer.[5] As mentioned in "From Whence We Come and Where We Go Part I," slavery was present in all British colonies and Nova Scotia was no exception. English-speaking settlers arrived in Nova Scotia prior to the abolition of slavery and, therefore, many brought enslaved people with them.

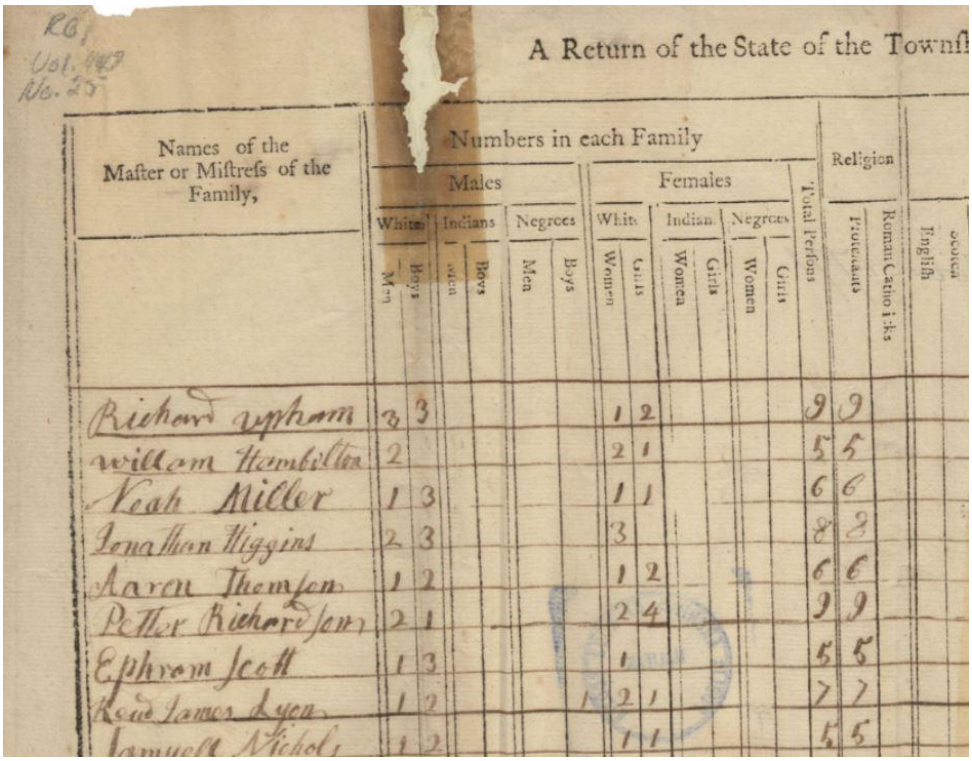
It is thought that the first Black person to arrive in the Cobequid[6] region following the Acadian Expulsion (1755) was an individual who accompanied a clergyman from New England. Records suggest that his name was London Atus (1759-1843).[7] The 1771 census documented that Rev. James Lyon, who resided in Cobequid at the time, had one boy listed as "Negro" living in his household. Rev. James Lyon was among the first Planter Settlers to arrive in the 1760s. He was granted several parcels of land throughout Nova Scotia, amounting to thousands of acres. This included plots in both Londonderry and Onslow townships. Lyon made several trips between Nova Scotia and New England before he permanently returned to Machias, Maine, during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Aside from the census record of a boy living in Rev. Lyon's household, very

[5] Other English-speaking groups subsequently came to Colchester such as the Loyalists and Scottish immigrants.

[6] Cobequid was the name of the region prior to Colchester. It was known as Cobequid to the French Acadians. When the Planters arrived, the region was divided into three townships (Truro, Londonderry, and Onslow) which were collectively known as the Cobequid townships. The region was established as Colchester in 1835 and incorporated into the Municipality of Colchester in 1879.

[7] London Atus is sometimes referred to as "London Lyon" as he was enslaved by Rev. James Lyon of New Jersey. While we do not have confirmation of the name of the enslaved boy who accompanied Lyon to Cobequid, records from when Lyon returned to New England in subsequent years confirm the name London Atus. It has also been speculated that London Atus was Lyon's son. Atus was a particularly interesting person. He eventually bought his freedom from Lyon and enlisted during the American Revolutionary War, serving for about five years. Following the war, Atus married Eunice Foss in 1791 and they had 11 children. They settled in an area of Machias, Maine that became known as Atusville. Although London Atus did not return to Colchester, some of Atus' children eventually made their way to Nova Scotia and settled in Halifax. For more information on London Atus, refer to *Lost Atusville: A Black Settlement from the American Revolution* by Marcus LiBrizzi. 2009. Publisher: Maine Folklife Center.

little documentation pertaining to Black presence in Colchester from the eighteenth century is known to exist.[8]



A Return of the State of the Townsh

Names of the Master or Mistress of the Family,	Numbers in each Family											Religion			
	Males					Females					Total Persons				
	Whites		Indians		Negroes	Whites		Indians		Negroes					
	Men	Boys	Men	Boys	Men	Boys	Women	Girls	Women	Girls	Women	Girls		Protestants	Roman Catholicks	English	Scotch
Richard Upham	3	3					1	2					9	9			
William Hambilton	2						2	1					5	5			
Noah Miller	1	3					1	1					6	6			
Jonathan Higgins	2	3					3						8	8			
Aaron Thomson	1	2					1	2					6	6			
Peter Richardson	2	1					2	4					9	9			
Ephrom Scott	1	3					1						5	5			
Revd James Lyon	1	2				1	2	1					7	7			
Samuell Nichols	1	2					1	1					5	5			

Figure 1: 1771 Census for the Township of Onslow showing one "Negro" listed in the household of Rev. James Lyon. Source: Nova Scotia Archives RG 1 Vol. 443 no.25.

Nineteenth Century

Following Planter immigration to Nova Scotia in the late eighteenth century, a wave of Loyalists, including Black Loyalists, arrived circa 1783-1785. Many Black Loyalists initially arrived in coastal towns, such as Guysborough and Shelburne. When they came to Colchester, however, is unclear. What we do know is that Black Loyalists did not initially arrive in Colchester.

A question that is often asked is who was the “first Black person” to come to the Colchester region after Black Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia? There is varied information and no definitive answer. Several names have appeared in sources over the years. In 1925, Ruth McCurdy Byers wrote *Historic Notes on Truro Township 1759-1925.* She recorded that she spoke with Joseph Roddick

[8] A note on terminology: The “eighteenth century” means the 1700s whereas the “nineteenth century” means the 1800s and so on. This can be confusing but, since calendar years began at year one, the “first century” was the first 100 years. Counting up to present-day, we are currently in the twenty-first century.

(Reddick) of Smith's Island, an African Nova Scotian community located on West Prince Street in Truro, whom she referred to as "one of the oldest inhabitants of Smith's Island" at the time.[9] Roddick relayed to Byers that the "first Black person to come to Truro" was someone by the name of "Old Jack" who drove a stagecoach between Truro and Pictou.[10] According to Roddick, Old Jack sold his stagecoach to the famous Hiram Hyde.[11] Based on Roddick's information, this was circa 1865.[12] Byers also noted that the first known Black person to come from Tracadie, Guysborough County and settle in Truro was Thomas Provoe.[13] Exact dates, however, remain unknown.

Another man credited as the "first Black person"[14] in Colchester is George Jones.[15] Jones lived in Truro during the 1850s-1860s and was employed as a barber. His barber shop was located "near the old temperance hall" in Truro.[16] This is significant because it is recognized that people of African heritage faced many barriers as business owners, especially beauty/barbershop owners. (Another example of this is the famous Viola Desmond who is credited with being one of the first African Nova Scotians to own a beauty shop in Nova Scotia.) According to early local historian, Israel Longworth, George Jones was a well-respected man. In fact, Longworth's diary provides an account in 1860 when Jones initiated the formation of a fire brigade. Jones organized a meeting at his barber shop in Truro where a committee was established and, thus, the Truro Fire Brigade was born. At the time, Jones was applauded for his initiative and asked to give a speech at the end of the meeting. This suggests that Jones was well-respected amongst Truro's citizens and instrumental in organizing the meeting.

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[9] Ruth McCurdy Byers, *Historic Notes on Truro Township 1759-1925,* 1925. Edited and revised 2001. Self-published *P. 15.* See Colchester Historeum Archives for a copy of this book.

[10] Ibid., 15.

[11] Hiram Hyde (1817-1907) was the son of Rosewell and Tissah Hyde. He was born at Staten Island, New York. Hyde "inaugurated a mail and passenger service between Halifax and Pictou" and introduced the first concord coach to Nova Scotia. He was "Widely regarded as one of the most enterprising Nova Scotians of the 19th century" (Colchester Historical Society's *Colchester Men.* Published in 1993 by the Tribune Press Limited, Sackville NB.)

[12] Much of the information McCurdy Byers recorded in her book was oral information that was passed down or relayed to her circa 1925.

[13] McCurdy Byers, P.15.

[14] It is known that enslaved people of African heritage accompanied Planters, therefore, the term would more properly be the first *free* Black person to come to Colchester.

[15] This information was relayed to me by two local Planter historians, Carol Campbell and James F. Smith, who have since passed away.

[16] McCurdy Byers, 15.

Jones eventually left Truro and, unfortunately, not much more is known about him.[17] Until recently, Jones had not been credited for his role in the formation of Truro's first fire brigade. The African Nova Scotian community raised concerns about this and, in 2022, the Truro Fire Department was in the process of installing a plaque to acknowledge George Jones.

Samuel Jones, Daniel Tynes, and Joseph Tynes also deserve mention in a discussion of the first African Nova Scotians to come to Colchester. They have never been acknowledged as some of the first, but deeds reveal their early presence in the area. These men purchased land in Jollytown, a small African Nova Scotian community located on present-day Upper Brookside Road, circa 1849-1860.[18] This is significant because early documentation of people of African heritage owning property in Nova Scotia is uncommon. It could be argued that this was a result of the White slaveholder mentality that enslaved people were not people, but rather, property. Therefore, they were not permitted to own property or, when they did, it was not recorded in the same detail as the rest of the settler population. Not only is it significant that the families at Jollytown owned large tracts of land, but they are also relatively early Black Settlers to move to Colchester and certainly the earliest known on record.

African Nova Scotian Communities in Truro and Colchester

Overview

The development and history of the three African Nova Scotian communities in Truro (the Island, the Marsh, and the Hill) has not been documented extensively in comparison to the history of the White communities in the area. The failure to document these communities is a result of *systemic racism.*[19] Today, we are faced with the challenge of trying to reconstruct these histories by piecing together fragments that are few and far between. What I

[17] Local historians Carol Campbell and James F. Smith believe George Jones moved to St. John, New Brunswick but were unable to confirm this.

[18] Nova Scotia Registry of Deeds records: Book 36 page 403, Book 40 page 100, Book 38 page 208, Book 44 page 580, Book 25 page 514. Source: Nova Scotia Archives.

[19] Systemic Racism: "a form of racism that is embedded in the laws and regulations of a society or organization."

have learned of the three communities and their histories follows. But, before specifics are discussed, it is important to mention that documentation for early African Nova Scotian history is scant--many original deeds no longer exist and only transcriptions of the originals remain. Others do not exist at all. This has inspired recent land claim initiatives in other African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia, including Guysborough and Preston. While we depend on documents for retelling "accurate histories," some documents are not always historically accurate and there are many missing pieces.

Over time, a large influx of people of African heritage settled in Colchester and formed distinct communities within the county (Jollytown, the Island, the Marsh, the Hill).[20] The initial group of settlers were Black Loyalists who moved to Truro from other areas of the province to obtain jobs in a town that was industrious and booming due to its location and the construction of the railroad.[21] Due to the development of the Intercolonial Railway[22] ca. 1850s-1890s, demand for unskilled labourers increased. There was not only a demand for railway projects but also for people to assist with the boom that Truro was experiencing—houses were being constructed in the East End for railway workers, lumbering increased, and so too did many industries in Truro such as a hat and cap factory, a woolen mill, a furniture plant, a foundry, a condensed milk factory, a carriage plant, and many more. People of African heritage were able to obtain employment as labourers, whether it be for the railway itself, or in other industries that were stimulated because of the railway. They were not, however, offered equal pay. Black newcomers gradually relocated to Truro and initially began to settle in the centre of Truro, not far from the railroad.[23] Interestingly, Mi'kmaq people, who had been displaced from the banks of the Salmon River,

[20] These community names are not official and do not appear on maps but they are widely accepted and acknowledged as the communities' names.

[21] Truro was, and still is, known as "the Hub" of the province due to its central location.

[22] The Nova Scotia Railway Co. was incorporated 31 March 1853. However, the "turning point" for the development of the railway in Truro was 1858, when the railway opened between Truro and Halifax. The Intercolonial Railway came to fruition circa 1867 with confederation.

[23] Don Christie notes that they initially lived "scattered through the center of town," including Brunswick, Esplanade, Havelock, Outram, Waddell, Prince, and Mill Streets. Don Christie's paper, titled "The Blacks of Truro," was written for a university history course instructed by Professor James Morrison some time before 1993. A copy of it can be found at the Colchester Historeum Archives (ref# 93.85.1).

had also established a community, known as Christmas Crossing, near the railroad at King Street crossing.[24]

As the Black community grew, it caught the attention of residents and anti-Black racism surfaced.[25] According to Don Christie,[26] an early researcher on the history of Truro's African Nova Scotian community, a citizen's meeting was held following public outcry and the decision was made by White community members to segregate African Nova Scotians to West Prince Street.[27] This ultimately resulted in the community being displaced to three distinct areas on the outskirts of Truro: the Island, the Marsh, and the Hill. (The nearby Mi'kmaw community at Christmas Crossing was likewise displaced to Millbrook with the creation of the reserve system.) By 1871, census records show that there were at least twenty-seven families of African heritage in Truro.[28] The community continued to grow, and by 1893 it had grown to approximately 250 residents according to Truro Daily News reports.[29] Census records from the late 1800s indicate that many of Truro's AFNS population occupied positions as labourers but there was also an engineer (James Borden), a holster (John Paris), a shoemaker (Joseph Ash), two tanners (Isaac Paris and Eli Paris), a teacher (Edmund Jordan), a clergyman (Rev. A.W. Jordan), a barber (William Dishman), a miller (George Borden), a cooper (Abraham Johnston), a potter (Theodoris Johnston), and three masons (Michael Jackson, Dempsey Borden, and James Borden) living in the community.[30]

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[24] Millbrook First Nation History: https://www.millbrookband.com/new-page-4. See also: The University Women's Club of Truro, *Cobequid Chronicles: A History of Truro and Vicinity*. 1975. Page 95. Christmas Crossing was located near the intersection of King Street and the railway tracks.

[25] It should be noted that anti-Black racism had always been present, however, with the influx of Black Settlers, White Settlers began to feel threatened. Often, this resulted in public outcry and the implementation of systems to address it. This includes relocation of Settlers and, in the case of Indigenous peoples, the creation of the Reserves.

[26] Christie in "Blacks of Truro." There is very little context to explain Christie's paper and no citations, but Christie includes personal accounts dating back to 1938 from living in Truro. He also indicates that he worked for the Town of Truro in the 1950s. Presumably, much of the early-to-mid twentieth century history he speaks of were lived experiences.

[27] Christie, 1. Note: this is secondary source documentation, and this fact has yet to be confirmed.

[28] See 1871 Colchester County census of Canada, district 199: https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1871/Pages/1871-Census-Schedules.aspx#ns.

[29] Truro Daily News, 23 May 1893.

[30] See 1881 Colchester County census of Canada: Edmund H. Jordan (teacher), Rev. A. W. Jordan (clergyman), William Dishman (barber), George Borden (miller), Abram Johnston (cooper), Theodoris Johnston (potter), Michael Jackson (mason), Dempsey Boiden/Borden (mason), James Borden (mason). Source: Library and Archives Canada https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1881/Pages/ns.aspx.

Many factories, such as Spencer Bros and Turner and the Peg factory, refused to task African Nova Scotians with operating machinery because there was a discriminatory belief that they were incapable of doing so. Instead, they were only allowed to work outside in the yard.[31] White employees refused to work alongside Black employees. Apparently, it wasn't until the 1960s that this began to change.[32]

Other forms of employment that African Nova Scotians were able to obtain included digging, landscaping, working with tar and coal, and some drove grocery delivery wagons (John Byard and Bernie Paris).[33] Community members could also obtain work as labourers to assist in the construction of the town reservoir and the town sewer.

In the early 1900s, another common occupation was as a porter. This was the lowest paid job on the railway and workers relied heavily on tips to supplement their income. Unfortunately, working as a porter was one of the only available opportunities and, when the Intercolonial Railway workers unionized, they "refused the [African Nova Scotians] any opportunity to hold other jobs, a fact that continued into the 1960s."[34]

The most common occupation for African Nova Scotian women in Truro was working as a maid or servant. In fact, Christie notes that this was the *only* job they could obtain until the 1960s.[35] Again, this paid very little and employers often supplemented the income of domestic workers with leftover dinners, and used furniture and clothing.[36] Needless to say, following the railway boom, the lack of profitable job opportunities due to inequality eventually caused many community members to move away in search of better employment. Several waves of outmigration to areas such as Halifax and Boston occurred. Following

[31] Christie, 2.
[32] Ibid., 4. According to Christie, Stanfield's quietly surveyed their employees to establish if their employees would be agreeable.
[33] Ibid., 4.
[34] Christie, 2.
[35] Ibid., 5.
[36] Ibid., 5.

the Second World War, many community members moved to other urban areas such as Toronto, Montreal, and Winnipeg.[37]

The inability to make a living wage inevitably had a socio-economic impact on African Nova Scotians. Houses within the communities were small and lacked both water and plumbing. This also meant that cleanliness was a concern which, in turn, affected the perception of the communities by the general public. In addition to low wages, two main systemic barriers explain why water and septic did not exist in the communities for many years. In order to have a sewer installed, homeowners were required to pay a frontage charge. They were also required to pay 6% of the cost to install water mains.[38] It wasn't until around 1954 that the communities received water because the town recognized the need for a fire hydrant in the area and the installation was offered for a significantly lower fee.[39]

It is crucial to understand that although these communities are within close proximity to Truro proper, they remained distinct and isolated. In the past 150+ years, Truro has grown around the communities, but they were initially located on the outskirts of town. Not only were the locations of these communities on the periphery of town, but the land was also considered poor for various reasons and is reflected in the communities' given names. In the case of the Island and the Marsh, the communities were built on flood plains in areas in which the White townsfolk did not have an interest (at the time). The Hill was undesirable because it was just that—a hill. It should be noted that dump sites were located near all three African Nova Scotian communities in Truro.[40] This segregation of the

[37] Ibid., 2.

[38] Ibid., 5.

[39] Ibid., 5.

[40] Dump sites: at the top of Young Street, in the marsh behind Eastern Hat and Cap Co Ltd., next to Zion Baptist Church south of Prince Street, and West Prince Street in the vicinity of present-day Truro Golf Course and Kingston Aluminum.

communities on substandard land and location near dump sites is an example of both environmental racism[41] and geographic marginalization.[42]

Property Ownership

In 2006, a researcher for the Town of Truro, Bob Hilchey, combed through documents pertaining to the Island, the Marsh, and the Hill at the Registry of Deeds and reported that there were many missing and unregistered transactions. He also noted significant gaps between the purchase and the registration of properties.[43] Historically, land was financed in various ways, such as bartering (property in exchange for goods and services (labour) over an extended period of time) or proxy buying. Plots were both consolidated and partitioned over the years, making the chain of ownership difficult to follow. The language is often vague in the documents that do exist, leaving much room for interpretation. Property boundaries are described in relation to other property owners at the time. For example: "along the North line of land of George Clyke to the West line of land of John Byard." However, if original documentation does not exist for the other properties that are being referred to, the boundary description is uncertain and vague. Other properties were conveyed twice. Some can only be traced back to the mid-to-late twentieth century. For these reasons, it should be acknowledged that official land title *does not necessarily accurately represent land ownership or the occupation of land*.[44] In other words, some of the information that follows about the history of African Nova Scotian communities in Colchester is fragmented and is by no means the complete story.

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[41] Environmental racism is a term that was coined by Black civil rights leader Benjamin Chavis in the 1980s. Rather than individual racism, environmental racism is a form of systemic racism in which there is "racial discrimination in environmental policy-making, the enforcement of regulations and laws, [and] the deliberate targeting of communities for toxic waste facilities." (Source: ecojustice.ca.)

[42] Geographic marginalization is the exclusion and isolation of racially visible communities, often to the periphery of urban areas or distinct low-income areas in cities. Two major examples of geographic marginalization are the Queensbridge housing projects in New York City; and First Nations reserves, which were purposefully established on isolated, rural plots of land far from urban centres.

[43] G. Robert Hilchey, *The Island, The Marsh, and The Hill: Three Historic Truro Neighborhoods Property Records Source Material.* Report written for the Town of Truro, 2006.

[44] Poor documentation of land ownership has created problems, such as family disputes, within African Nova Scotian communities. The topic of land is complex and requires much more research. For example, many land grants given to Black Settlers were never fulfilled. The lack of land title has also resulted in the dwindling land base for African Nova Scotians across the province.

The Island or Smith's Island (West Prince Street)

The Island, earlier known as Birch Island and later renamed Smith's Island, was a section of physically separated land located at the west end of Prince Street.[45] It was prone to flooding and surrounded by low lying area (hence the nickname "the Island"). In fact, the Island was once connected to the rest of Prince Street with a footbridge. A rowboat was also kept at the corner of Prince and Juniper Street for access to the community.[46] The community was given the name "West Prince Street" to create a distinction that was associated with the African Nova Scotian community. People who lived on the Island were referred to as "Island Birds" by the African Nova Scotian community at large. Like other Black communities around the province, it was surrounded by several dumps and industrial operations. Very few historical maps of Truro include Smith's Island. However, the history of the Island is relatively well documented in comparison to the Hill and the Marsh.

Originally called Birch Island, "the Island" became known as Smith's Island after a Scottish blacksmith by the name of John Smith settled in the area in the 1770s. The general area that includes Smith's Island was known for many years as "the Babel." The Babel consisted of "sixty acres of flat swampy land."[47] Around 1886, an early local historian, Israel Longworth, described the area as very wet and marshy where several streams and run-off water gathered and accumulated in a low-lying spot. He writes that the early Planter Settlers, who travelled up the Cobequid Bay and arrived in Truro, disembarked from ships and began to traverse inland until they reached the Babel and "became so disheartened with the prospect before them" that they began to sing the 137th Psalm in the Bible, "By the Rivers of Babylon":

"By Babel's streams we sat and wept;
When Zion we thought on,
In midst thereof we hung our harps
The Willow trees upon."

[45] Both the names Birch Island and Smith's Island had been given to the area prior to the establishment of an African Nova Scotian community.

[46] Christie, 2.

[47] Israel Longworth. *Israel Longworth's History of Colchester County, Nova Scotia (circa 1888).* Ed: Sandra Creighton. The Book Nook Publishing: Truro, 1989. p.134.

This psalm refers to the despair of the Israelites, who were exiled from Jerusalem, and their desire and yearning to return home. The area was given this name to suggest how undesirable it was to newcomers because the land was so wet and marshy. When Longworth wrote about the Babel, he noted how unproductive the land was.[48] All that time and in later years, efforts were made to create better drainage and improve the land.

Many community members who initially resided on the Island only occupied the land rather than owned it. It is also likely that plots of land were purchased and not documented in the Registry of Deeds. In fact, two maps and a notebook in the Colchester Historeum Archives document the sales of land by Samuel Rettie to African Nova Scotian community members.[49] But the sales were never officially recorded with the Registry.

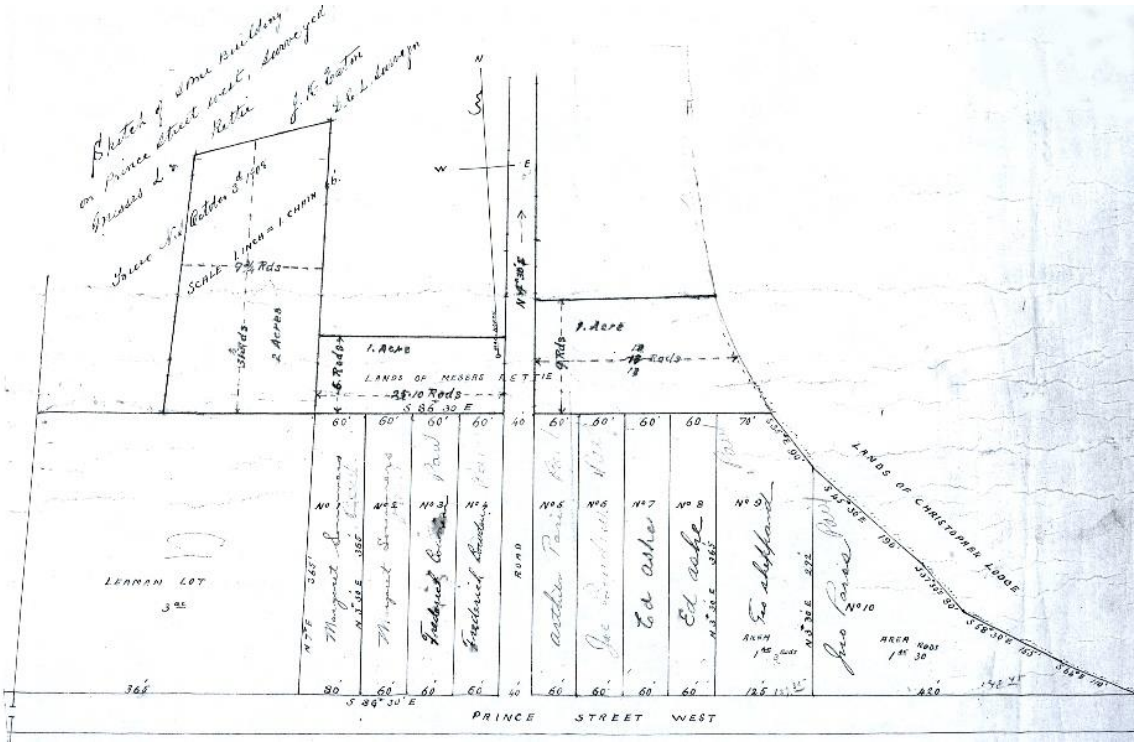


Figure 2: Map of Smith's Island showing lots with property owners' names, 1908.
Source: Sumner Collection, Colchester Historeum Archives. Ref # 88.69a-b.

[48] Longworth, 134.

[49] Sumner Collection. Colchester Historeum Archives. Ref # 88.69a-b.

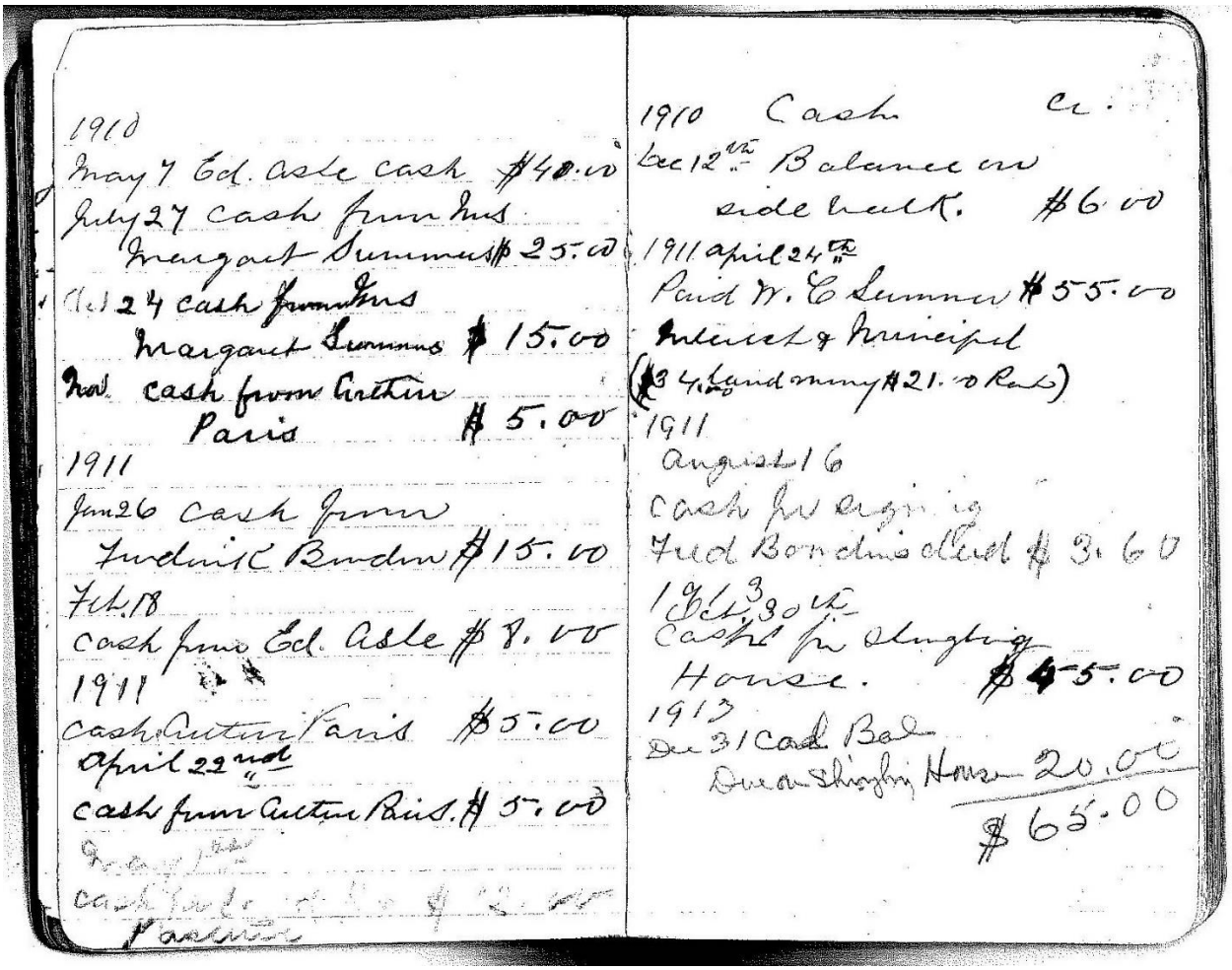


Figure 3: Notebook detailing the sale of property to community members living on the Island in 1910. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #: 88.69a-b

The community stretched east down Prince Street to the intersection of Golf Street. The land where Truro Toyota now sits was owned by Joseph Paris and Lottie Clyke-Paris in the 1960s. Clyke Street, a small street between the present-day Toyota dealership and the Chow Family restaurant, was likewise part of the community of Smith's Island. In 1912, the land was owned by George Clyke and, throughout the years, by other Clyke family members including Shirley Clyke, Ella Clyke, and James and Hazel Clyke (1940s). In the 1930s, the community included Golf Street and the property was subdivided. Families such as Reddick, Jordan, Dorrington, Byard, and Mentis lived there. Other families living on Smith's Island historically were Paris, Maxwell, Sheppard (Shepherd), Conley (Connolly), Borden, Williams, Jackson, Talbot, and Ashe (Ash). Many of the families were

interconnected, particularly the Clyke, Byard, and Paris families, which are said to be of African-Dutch descent.[50] In *The Forgotten Road,* the author writes that the Clyke and Paris families

> may be the largest black family connection of any two groups that arrived in Nova Scotia. The Clyke name was said to have derived from West Guiana who were skilled labourers and farmers. The Paris family were said to be from Virginia. They were very highly skilled for many of them could read and write with the good educated background most of them appeared to have. Both families were known to be very active fancy dressers and of many talents.[51]

Due to a lack of early property documentation is it difficult to discern the years in which these families, including the Clykes and Parises, moved to the Island. Much of the land in the area had previously been owned by Samuel Rettie and Israel Longworth. One street on Smith's Island, Brodie Avenue, is named after Isaac Brodie, an African Nova Scotian who had owned the land. He purchased it from James A. Leaman in 1888. Brodie subdivided the land and sold lots to other community members.[52]

[50] Clyke, 6.

[51] Ibid., 7.

[52] Charles Fillmore, *The Streets of Truro*. Colchester Historical Society: 1975. Page 9. "He sold lots to Wm. Byard, George Clyke and Crawford Conley in 1899; to Abraham Newcombe, 1890; Moses Paris, 1891; and William Parris 1893."

Figure 4: The Mentis Family. West Prince Street (Smith's Island), Truro, NS ca. 1920. Left to Right: James Mentis; Daisy Mentis; Henrietta (Paris) Mentis; Hilda (Martin) Mentis; Dora Jackson. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref # 2002.31.3

Although it may not be obvious, the Island has historically been affected by environmental racism. Several dumps were located near the community including a dump next to Zion Baptist Church.[53] Another dump is referenced in Truro Town Council minutes in 1905 as being located "on the McIntosh field West Prince Street."[54] Throughout the province, dumps were often located near or in racially visible communities. Older deeds also note that a slaughterhouse was located within close proximity to Smith's Island. Slaughterhouses often affected the surrounding environment due to poor sanitation and tainted water supplies. They have, historically, had social implications.[55] The Island, however, has also been subjected to other industrial activities over the years. The Eastern Hat and Cap Factory was located on the corner of Prince and Court Streets for over 60 years (1904-1966). This company was prolific in producing felt hats. Felt hat production involved harmful chemicals such as mercury nitrate, which seeped into the ground and water for years. The Island is located downstream of the old hat and cap factory location.[56] In fact, when the construction of Atlantic Superstore was approved in 1997, an appeal was filed against the Town of Truro by the Truro Residents' Association and the Truro Development Corporation Limited regarding

[53] Truro Town Council Minutes, 4 July 1924. p. 47.

[54] Truro Town Council Minutes, 3 October, 1905.

[55] For more information see Amy J. Fitzgerald "A Social History of the Slaughterhouse: From Inception to Contemporary Implications." *Human Ecology Review* 17, no. 1 (2010): 58–69. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24707515.

[56] The impact of this is unknown and has, to my knowledge, never been researched.

the decision to develop on the land and the potential risk of pollution in the area.[57]

The Island once had its own community hall. In some instances, such as a news article of Sarah Connolly's funeral in 1895, it was referred to as the Temperance Hall. It is unknown what happened to the community hall, but it eventually disappeared.[58] Many efforts have been made by community members over the years to procure funding to construct a new one. Only recently has the Town of Truro agreed to support the construction of a hall. This initiative is the result of the establishment by the Town of Truro of the Black Community Committee, who has advocated on the community's behalf. Today, the Island continues to grow as a community and many new homes have been built in recent years. It also has a park, community garden, and green spaces. But a community requires investment in public gathering spaces to ensure a sense of community continues for future generations.

Figure 5: John Byard (left) and Samuel Jones (right). Taken on Smith Avenue looking toward Willow Street, Truro. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #: 89.29.1

The Marsh (Ford Street and Cross Street)

Much like the Island, the Marsh was another section of land located on the outskirts of Truro. Ford Street was originally known as Marsh Road because it was an access road for White Settlers to their farmland on the marshes of the Salmon River. Cross Street was previously known as "Ford X." The present-day name

[57] The decision to develop the land was opposed due to the high chances of soil and groundwater contamination and concerns that runoff from the development would impact Kiwanis Pond. Chemicals such as mercury nitrate, sulphuric acid, ammonia, chlorine, sodium chloride, and formaldehyde were used to produce felt hats. For more information see Truro Residents' Association fonds, Colchester Historeum Archives; and Truro Daily News, 4 February 1997.

[58] It is currently unknown when the community hall disappeared, and I have not yet had the opportunity to dig deeper.

"Ford Street" is derivative of the fact that the road led to a "ford" (river crossing) over the Salmon River.[59] The river itself was once visible from the community.[60] The area was close to the town proper, yet still fairly isolated. Needless to say, this land was not desirable for erecting dwellings as it was prone to flooding. In fact, some residents reminisce about the fact that their house was constantly shifting when they were children due to the soft, wet land and poor foundations. Every year before winter, men in the community would gather to create flood barriers around the house in anticipation of flooding. In the spring, they would also raise their homes on blocks. Lynn Jones can recall that her house would shift in the winter. The floors were very slanted and, if you dropped a toy in the crack between the wall and the floor, it would fall straight to the ground below the house—never to be seen again. Although the land was subpar for the construction of dwellings, it was fertile due to the frequent flooding. The community was very much farm based. Members of the community grew gardens and owned cows, pigs, chickens, and horses. In fact, Jeremiah Jones (1867-1950), who lived down the Marsh, trained draft horses and was considered by many locals around town to be a "horse whisperer."[61]

Some family names from this community include Jones, Tynes, Clyke, Morton, Mentis, Borden, Maxwell, Paris, Desmond, Collins, Dorrington, Halfkenny, and Whalen. Families were largely of the Baptist faith. It should be noted that the Marsh was a mixed community that also included some Indigenous and White community members. A specific date when African Nova Scotians began living on the Marsh is unknown because, initially, deeds were not registered, or families occupied the land rather than owned it. Being on the outskirts of town, the community was not afforded the same conveniences as the town proper and, in 1932, members petitioned the town council for street lights to be installed in their community.[62] It is unclear if the petition was successful but one street light was eventually installed and was the only one to exist in the community for many years.[63] The land was eventually purchased by families in the

[59] Dr. Lynn Jones has relayed that the community once attributed the name "Ford Street" to the fact that the first automobile in the community (owned by Albert Clyke) was a Ford.

[60] The Salmon River drains into the Cobequid Bay. Significant dyke work has been done in recent years to prevent flooding. It has changed the nature of the river.

[61] This information has been relayed to me verbally by both George Clyke and Lynn Jones.

[62] Truro Daily News, 3 Dec 1932.

[63] This information has been relayed to me verbally by Lynn Jones.

community in the 1900s. In the 1970s and 1980s, “Friends of Zion” (Zion Cooperative Housing Limited) granted several plots to families too.

Figure 6: Aerial view of Truro, Nova Scotia. Victoria Square is pictured in the foreground. The AFNS community known as "the Marsh" can be seen in the top right corner of the image. Photographed by McCully R.T., early 1931. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #: 88.382.1

As previously mentioned, flooding was always a familiar aspect of life for community members “down the Marsh.”[64] Houses did not have basements because of the frequent flooding (and because they were too costly to build) and some citizens even stored boats in their backyard for such times.[65] Skating on the marsh was a popular activity amongst families. According to Donna Byard-Sealy, those who lived on the Marsh were referred to as “Marsh Hens” by other African

[64] This is how the community was referred to in speech.

[65] Dr. Lynn Jones: interview with CBC Information Morning with Portia Clark, 24 May 2022.

Nova Scotians.[66] The railway was not only a source of employment for community members; It also played a large role in the community. The tracks that led into Truro from the west were located just beyond the Salmon River, not far from the Marsh. Trains often stopped nearby to change tracks before entering Truro. Therefore, it provided accessible transportation and many people who had hitched free rides would jump the train there and enter Truro through the Marsh.[67] The community frequently interacted with, and hosted, hitchhikers from all walks of life.

Today, only a few households from the original community remain.[68] Much of the land has been purchased or lost and the area has undergone gentrification. Many community members moved away because they did not have the financial means to fix the houses or purchase new ones. A lack of opportunities for employment continued to provide financial barriers in the twentieth century. Employment, or lack thereof, was another reason for leaving, and the community was gradually displaced. Additionally, nearby development, such as the Truro Mall, Cobequid Educational Centre, and Atlantic Superstore, raised concerns amongst community members about water drainage in the late twentieth century. Ironically, the prevention of flooding has become an interest in recent years with new residential development. Even though African Nova Scotian community members requested assistance with flooding troubles for decades, very little (if anything) was afforded to them by the Town of Truro and the Province and, in many cases, insurance companies refused to insure homes for a reasonable cost.

There have been recent initiatives to preserve the history of the now dwindling community on the Marsh, including an attempt to save one of the only remaining original houses (the Clyke/Morton house) from being destroyed for the purpose of development. Despite the house being over 100 years old and meriting recognition as a historic home, it has been sold and its fate is yet to be determined. The Nova Scotia Women's Historical Society has recently been working on a project to create a small public space to commemorate several educators from the African Nova Scotian Community: Martha Jones, Willena

[66] Byard Sealy, 15.

[67] This information has been relayed to me verbally by Lynn Jones.

[68] Including the houses of Francis Collins and Lynn Jones.

Jones, Donna Byard-Sealy, and Ann (Shelley) MacLean. A plaque honouring Vera Clyke for her contributions to the community and Zion Baptist Church will also be erected. The Town of Truro has donated the space and will ensure permanent care of the property. Dr. Lynn Jones is currently in the process of donating her property to become a Community Land Trust, called "DownTheMarsh," so that ownership of the property will remain in the community in perpetuity. The framework is still being developed but the goal is to create affordable housing in funding partnership with the CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) and Nova Scotia Housing. Ensuring this land remains available for use by the community will likewise preserve the memory of the Marsh and the families that once lived there, and the African Nova Scotian community at large.

The Hill (Foundry Hill, Young Street)

This community is located *up the hill* near the old Truro Foundry from where it received its nicknames, "Foundry Hill" and "the Hill." This community had a closer proximity to the rest of Truro compared to the Island and the Marsh, bearing in mind that, with the development of the railway (ca. 1850s), the town centre shifted from the Court Street (Victoria Square) vicinity to the Esplanade (the railway station). That said, the geography of the Hill presented many challenges for community members—without transportation it was remote and too far to walk to church or school. For this reason, many community members did not attend Zion Baptist Church regularly but, rather, attended the Salvation Army (Outram Street) or the Gospel Hall (Young Street), which were much closer. Other members belonged to the Church of England. Many newcomers of African descent settled in this area and the community welcomed families from Bermuda, the Caribbean, the United States, and from other areas in the Maritimes such as Lucasville and Windsor. The Hill was noted for having people of diverse backgrounds and varied religious denominations. The community itself was sprawling and stretched up Young Street and included side streets such as Douglas Street, Slack Street, Doyle Street, and Melrose Terrace. It should also be noted that the town dump was located near the Hill in the late twentieth century. Today, the community consists of only a couple of families, as many have since relocated. A pathway, known as the "Gero Pathway" stretches from Young Street to Upham Drive in commemoration of the Gero family who were notable

members of the community. Other families who lived on the Hill included Byard, Jewell, Blackmore, Elms, Lucus, Maxwell, Moss, Morton, Paris, Reddick, Shepherd, Borden, Clyke, and Upshaw.

People who lived on the Hill were referred to as “Hillbillies” by the African Nova Scotian community at large. Much like the Marsh, the Hill was also a multi-racial community.

Figure 7: The Gero family was just one of many African Nova Scotian families who lived on "the Hill." Pictured here is Albert Kitchener Gero, 5th Division Cape Breton Highlanders, who served in World War II.; Gero was wounded twice in Italy; His Honorary War Medals include: 1939-1945 Star; Italy Star; Defense Medal; C.U.; SM and Clasp. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #2002.85.5

Communities in Greater Colchester

It is important to acknowledge that African Nova Scotians have historically lived in other communities in greater Colchester, not only in Truro. Indeed, there was once an African Nova Scotian community, which has since been largely forgotten from collective memory, named Jollytown. Jollytown was located in the North River/Brookside/East Mountain vicinity. Three main families lived there: Jones, Tynes, and Taylor. These families eventually moved to the Marsh but lived at Jollytown for some time and owned large plots of land there. Not far from Jollytown, several families lived in the Brookside/Bible Hill area: Jewell, Borden, and Shepherd. What is known of these communities, and what can be discerned from documentation, follows.

Jollytown

What many people may not know is that Upper Brookside Road was previously known as Jollytown Road.[69] Jollytown was an informal name given to the African Nova Scotian community in the vicinity. One historical map, drafted by A. F. Church circa 1871, clearly indicates that S. Jones (Samuel Jones) and D. Tyns (Daniel Tynes) were living there in the late 1800s. A third "African" family is listed on the 1871 census— "Taylor." Between the Jones, Tynes, and Taylor families, approximately 24 individuals were living in the area at the time the 1871 census was recorded. The community also built an African Methodist church[70] nearby, which many attended, and a waterway that bordered the Jones property which was known as "Jones Brook."[71] Samuel Jones was the father of Jeremiah Jones, who was a WWI veteran and hero, and Martha Jones, the first Black teacher to graduate from the Provincial Normal School in Truro.[72] What is unclear is when Jollytown came to be and how the ownership of the land evolved. It is also unclear exactly how much property was owned by community members.

[69] This has been confirmed with historical maps, such as a Geological Survey of Canada map by E.R. Faribault in 1902. E.R. Faribault, Sheet no. 58 Earltown, Sheet no. 57 Truro.

[70] This has been relayed to me by Lynn Jones. I have yet to encounter written confirmation that the Methodist church was explicitly African Nova Scotian. There are very few references regarding the Methodist church in North River. It was established in 1855, which was within a few years of the Jones and Tynes families moving to Jollytown. See Colchester Historeum Archives reference material for the Churches in Colchester County.

[71] This is the present-day South Branch North River.

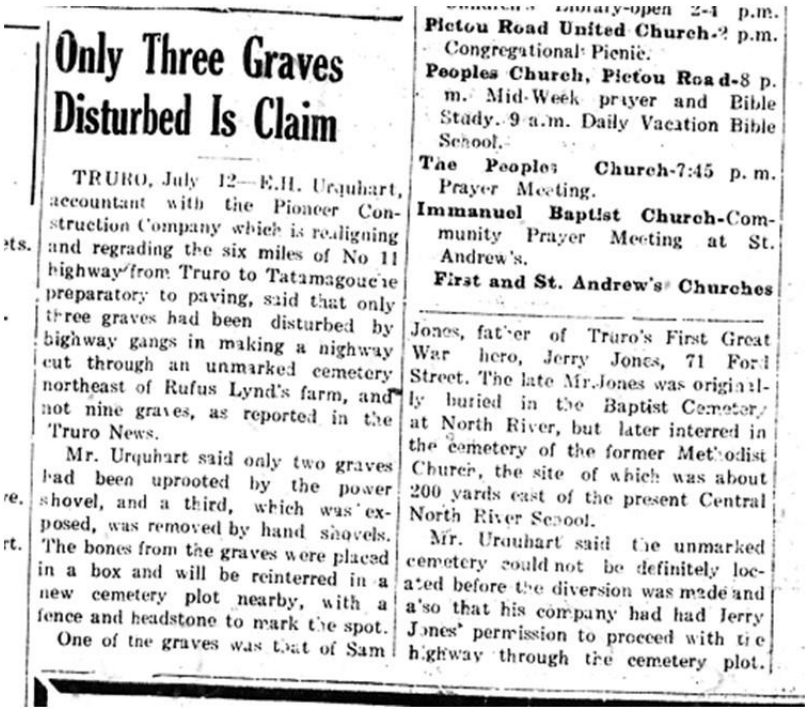
[72] Martha Eleanor Jones (1860-1918) was the sister of Jeremiah Jones. Martha was born in East Mountain (Jollytown) to Samuel and Martha Jones. She was one of the first African Nova Scotian graduates from the Provincial Normal School in Truro and served as a teacher in the African Nova Scotian community for more than 30 years. Jones was also a member of Zion Baptist Church and, in 1905, she gave a speech at Zion Baptist about slavery and Black rights in Nova Scotia.

Figure 8: A section of the A.F. Church Map circa 1871 showing "D. Tyns" and "S. Jones" in the vicinity of what was known as Jollytown

What records do tell us about the history of Jollytown is that Joseph Tines (Tynes) bought property in 1849 in Onslow from William Lynds[73] and appears to have sold it to Jotham M. Blair in 1866.[74] That said, the Tynes family continued to live in the vicinity so it is unclear how much land was sold, or if the Tynes family owned additional plots of land. The Tynes family also appears on later tax assessments, suggesting that they did indeed continue to own land in the area. As for the Jones family, a deed was registered in 1860 at the Registry of Deeds in which Samuel Jones purchased land in the vicinity.[75] But it also appears that Samuel Jones had land prior to this because he sold property to Samuel Archibald in 1858.[76] He likewise mortgaged some of his property to George Reading in 1861.[77] It is unclear exactly how much property Jones owned, but it is evident that they were significant portions of land. An assessment roll from 1892 records that Jones had $240 of taxable property.[78]

[73] Registry of Deeds, Book 25, pg. 514.
[74] Registry of Deeds, Book 44, Pg. 580.
[75] Registry of Deeds, Book 38, Pg. 208. Do. Thomas C. Halliburton.
[76] Registry of Deeds, Book 36, pg. 403.
[77] Registry of Deeds, Book 40, pg. 100.
[78] 1892 Assessment Roll, Colchester Historeum Archives.

Although these records show that the residents of Jollytown owned land, it does not indicate when they lived on these plots of land or moved away from them. As previously mentioned, sometimes there were significant gaps between when land was sold and when the land was officially registered as being sold. How, or why, they came to acquire the land, and subsequently (presumably) sell it, also remains a mystery. What is known is that Jollytown was largely a farming community. But, at some point around the turn of the century, community members moved to Truro. It has been suggested that a decline in farming may have been a contributing factor.



Only Three Graves Disturbed Is Claim

TRURO, July 12—E.H. Urquhart, accountant with the Pioneer Construction Company which is realigning and regrading the six miles of No 11 highway from Truro to Tatamagouche preparatory to paving, said that only three graves had been disturbed by highway gangs in making a highway cut through an unmarked cemetery northeast of Rufus Lynd's farm, and not nine graves, as reported in the Truro News.

Mr. Urquhart said only two graves had been uprooted by the power shovel, and a third, which was exposed, was removed by hand shovels. The bones from the graves were placed in a box and will be reinterred in a new cemetery plot nearby, with a fence and headstone to mark the spot.

One of the graves was that of Sam

Pictou Road United Church-2 p.m. Congregational Picnic.

Peoples Church, Pictou Road-8 p. m. Mid-Week prayer and Bible Study. 9 a.m. Daily Vacation Bible School.

The Peoples Church-7:45 p. m. Prayer Meeting.

Immanuel Baptist Church-Community Prayer Meeting at St. Andrew's.

First and St. Andrew's Churches

Jones, father of Truro's First Great War hero, Jerry Jones, 71 Ford Street. The late Mr. Jones was originally buried in the Baptist Cemetery at North River, but later interred in the cemetery of the former Methodist Church, the site of which was about 200 yards east of the present Central North River School.

Mr. Urquhart said the unmarked cemetery could not be definitely located before the diversion was made and also that his company had had Jerry Jones' permission to proceed with the highway through the cemetery plot.

Figure 9: Article from the Truro Daily News 12 July 1949

Since Jollytown residents attended the local Methodist church, many of them were buried in the cemetery nearby.[79] By the mid-twentieth century, the church no longer existed. In fact, when the new Route 311 was being constructed between Truro and Tatamagouche in 1949, the construction company exposed several graves from the old African Methodist cemetery. An article appeared in the Truro Daily News on July 8, 1949, stating that nine graves had been uprooted. It also reported that some bones were mixed in with the new pavement and others were buried in a mass grave in the nearby Aenon Baptist Cemetery. Suspiciously, another article appeared a few days later on July 12, 1949 claiming that in fact only three graves, rather than the nine that had previously been reported, had been

[79] The Methodist Church in North River is presumed to be an African Methodist Church however this has not been confirmed with documentation.

disturbed. One grave was that of Samuel Jones, Jeremiah Jones' father. Samuel Jones' funeral was well-recorded in the Colchester Sun in 1895 and speaks to how popular and respected he was amongst people in Colchester.[80] The article stated that permission had been obtained from Jeremiah Jones to uproot his father's grave, but this has never been confirmed by Jones or his family.

Figure 10: Recently erected headstone in the Aenon Baptist Cemetery, North River. A concrete headstone previously stood here simply marked with a date and nothing more. It was replaced with thanks to Kim McCallaum.

Bible Hill/Brookside

When George Clyke wrote his book (which, unfortunately, did not get published) on the history of Truro's Black community in 1991, he remarked that from the mid-1800s until the early 1900s, two Black families lived "on College Road." One was the family of Cam Jewell, and they owned 30 acres "west of Plumdale." The other was Charles Shepherd, whose house was still standing in 1991 at 225 [Pictou Road][81] across from Dunromin Avenue. The western

[80] Colchester Sun, 29 May 1895. "Deceased was a man very highly esteemed by all who knew him, as was evidenced by the attendance at his funeral – the processions being one of the largest ever seen in those parts."
[81] Clyke writes "225 College Road" in his book, however, College Road does not intersect with Dunromin Avenue but Pictou Road does. Likewise, the civic numbers align with "225." Charles Shepherd married Emma J. Jewel in

boundary of Shepherd's property was Johnson Avenue, the street next to Dunromin Avenue. Another record of African Nova Scotian property ownership can be found on A.F. Church's map of Colchester County (circa 1871) where "G Borden" appears in the Bible Hill/Brookside area. Records show that George Borden and Ann(a) Jewell were residing in Brookside at the time when their son, John Stewart Borden, married Rachel Jackson and their daughter, Susan Borden, married Isaac Brodie in 1888.[82] In 1900, Geneva Hunter Borden was born in Brookside to John and Rachael (Jackson) Borden.[83] John Borden passed away in 1929 and his obituary states that he had been a successful farmer in Colchester all his life.[84] His obituary likewise lists a son, Albert F. Borden, living at Manganese Mines. His sister is noted as being married to William Taylor, who likely had a connection to nearby Jollytown.

The Jewell family is more difficult to trace. Anna Jewell married into the Borden family.[85] In 1908, the Jewell name was still in the Bible Hill vicinity– Stewart Jewell appears in a directory,[86] where his residence is listed at "Old Post Road."[87] Earlier, in 1891, Emma Jewell married Charles H. Shepherd.[88] Eventually, these families moved to Foundry Hill and Shepherds married Clykes and Byards. The Jewell name seems to have diminished, likely because much of their kin were women who married into other families.

It is worth noting that both Jollytown and Bible Hill/Brookside were relatively close to one another, and both appeared to be farming communities. It is likely that the two were connected in various ways.

1891 and in 1908, Stewart Jewell is listed in the McApline's Directory on "Old Post Road"—the prior name of Pictou Road.

[82] Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics 1888. Book 1807 p.12 no.157 and Book 1807 p.11 no.151.

[83] Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics 1904 #71401067.

[84] Truro Daily News, 20 Nov 1929.

[85] Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics 1888. Book 1807 p.12 no.157 and Book 1807 p.11 no.151.

[86] McAlpine's Directory for the County of Colchester, 1908. McAlpine Publishing Co. Limited: Halifax, Nova Scotia.

[87] Present-day Pictou Road.

[88] Nova Scotia Historical Vital Statistics 1891. Book 1807 p.44 no.79.

Isaac Brodie

Isaac Brodie is an enigma because very little is known about him except that he appears in records from the 1800s as a landowner. Land ownership, especially large quantities of land, amongst African Nova Scotians was quite uncommon in the 1800s. Often, they were issued a "license of occupation" rather than a deed for property. Isaac Brodie, however, owned several large plots of land. This included land on the Island that he purchased from James A. Leeman in 1888.[89] Brodie also owned land in Truro (on Elm Street), Stewiacke, and Upper Stewiacke.

Brodie was born circa 1848. He married Amelia Talbot. They had three children: Charles (b. 1872 d. 1880), William (b. 1872 d. 1887), and Leander (b. 1876 d. unknown). At the time Leander was born, in 1876, the Brodies lived in Upper Stewiacke. Unfortunately, Amelia died in 1886. Amelia, Charles, William, and Isaac are all buried in the Old Baptist cemetery in Upper Stewiacke.[90]

Following Amelia's death, Isaac remarried Susan Borden, daughter of George and Ann Borden of Bible Hill/Brookside, in 1888. It is still unclear what Brodie's specific accomplishments and contributions to the community were, but it is evident that he was a well-respected, and comparatively affluent, individual. Brodie Avenue, which exists to this day on Smith's Island, is named after him. Isaac died in 1906 in Truro, and at the time, it was noted that he left behind a widow (Susan) and one son (Leander). Unfortunately, there is no additional information to indicate what happened to Susan or Leander. Brodie's funeral was reported to have happened at his home on Smith's Island and was "very impressive" and highly attended.[91] Brodie was said to have been a man of faith and a very well-known and respected individual in Truro. His obituary boldly proclaimed that "his place will be hard to fill."[92]

Brodie was witness to Susan's brother's (John Stewart Borden) marriage to Rachel Jackson in 1888. At the time of the marriage, John was living in Brookside.

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[89] Fillmore, 9.

[90] See CHS cemetery records –Old Baptist Cemetery #118. Cemetery Book 90.136.1 compiled by Mary Tyler Summer, 1990.

[91] Truro Daily News, 18 June 1906.

[92] Truro Daily News, 18 June 1906.

Rachel was from Truro. John and Rachel eventually relocated to the Hill where John passed away at the age of 63 in 1929. When John passed away, he had one son (John R. Borden) living on the Hill too, another (Albert F. Borden) in Manganese Mines, and two daughters (Mrs. Samuel Miller and Mrs. William Newport) in Toronto.[93] These marriages and movement between communities around Colchester exemplify just how connected the communities were.

Zion United Baptist Church

Figure 11: African United Baptist Church Association standing in front of Zion Baptist Church, Truro, NS., 1930. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #88.400.1

[93] Truro Daily News, 20 November 1929.

Central to the African Nova Scotian community, and perhaps the gel that brought all three Truro communities together, was the church. Zion Baptist Church (later Zion United Baptist Church) was established November 5, 1896. A lot was purchased on Prince Street in March 1897 for $350 and a church measuring 35'x58' was designed by architect J.D. Dumaresq. The foundation was laid by James Borden, who was a stonemason. The new church officially opened on February 27, 1898. The first deacons of the church were William Byard, William Taylor, and John J. Paris. Before the church was built, services were held in several locations including the Island Hall, the Masonic building on the corner of Queen and Revere Street, and the Dow building on Commercial Street. For its grand opening in January 1897, the Truro Daily News reported that a large audience attended, including "many white folks."[94] The first minister of Zion Baptist was Reverend Abraham Clements, who was born in Annapolis County. At the time of its opening, the Truro Daily News wrote that prior to the church, the community "lacked leadership and independence" and that the establishment of Zion Baptist would help the community "rise and show… their right to a perfect equality of citizenship."[95] A parsonage to house the minister and his family was added in 1914 when Reverend W. Andrew White purchased it and a barn for $84. A mortgage was taken out by Zion to transport the building to the site and conduct repairs.

Zion Baptist church flourished over the years and was truly the focal point of the African Nova Scotian community in Truro. Not only was it significant as a religious organization, but it supported the community, including many non-religious community members, in many ways. The church was involved in early social activism. Members were prolific fundraisers, and they were known for "some of the best cuisine in town."[96] Likewise, members of Zion performed many concerts that were widely attended. Their first concert was in 1897 at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Truro. Other events and fundraisers hosted by Zion Baptist included church fairs, teas and suppers, themed pre-socials, a harvest festival, and sleighing parties. Through the church, many organizations and groups were established including the Women's Sewing Circle (1904),

[94] Truro Daily News, 7 January 1897.
[95] Truro Daily News, 7 January 1897.
[96] Byard Sealy, 39.

Women's Missionary Society (1913), Mission Band (ca. 1912), Ladies' Red Cross Auxiliary (ca. 1916), Victoria Club (ca. 1917), Helping Hand Society (1919), Junior Choir (1921), Boy Scouts (1919), Canadian Girls in Training (1928), Loyal Temperance Legion (1935), Men's Brotherhood (before 1945), and many more.

During the First World War, Zion's contributions were numerous. Not only did their minister, Reverend W. Andrew White, volunteer to serve as both Captain and Chaplain of the No. 2 Construction Battalion, but so did many of the church's members. It is clear from articles in the Truro Daily News during wartime that Black members of No. 2 attended services at Zion Baptist. On June 29, 1916, a report in the Truro Daily News records that members of Zion who had enlisted in the war were presented with watches and rings, including Sergeant C.S. Halfkenny, and Privates James Clyke, Sydney Jones, Thomas Jones, Ralph Stoutley, Gordon Johnson, Jerry Jones, and Frank Taylor.[97] Fundraisers were also held to assist the No. 2 and the war effort. The women of Zion formed a Ladies Red Cross Auxiliary. They also formed the "Victoria Club," with the goal of sending Christmas boxes to the men of No. 2 while they were overseas in France. Byard-Sealy notes that Zion Baptist struggled to keep its doors open during the war while their minister, and other members, were overseas. Despite this, they continued to play an active role in fundraising. Zion Baptist United Church is still an active church to this day.

[97] Truro Daily News, 29 June 1916.

Figure 12: Zion Baptist Church Choir, June 1919. This choir was the second Black choir in Canada to be so robed; Front: Pearl (Gibson) MacDonald; Ida Paris; Henrietta (Paris) Mentis; Rev. W.C. Perry; Ida (Thomas) Perry; Elsie (Jewell) Elms; Annie (Taylor) Reece; Louise Byard; Middle: Bessie (Mentis) Paris; Sue (Clyke) Paris; Suse (Paris) Clyke; Winnie Oliver; Flo (Paris) Crawford/Ross; Mrs. Fred Borden; Mrs. James Talbot; Back: Oscar Clyke; Deacon William Paris; Charlie Paris; Alex Clyke. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #: 2002.31.2

Members of Zion, and most of Truro's African Nova Scotian community members, were buried in the Robie Street Cemetery. Although the cemetery contained a section dedicated specifically to the Zion Baptist congregation, other African Nova Scotian burials are also interspersed throughout the cemetery. According to Don Christie, the original section assigned to African Nova Scotians in the Robie Street Cemetery was located in the northeast corner "in a swampy area which was designated for the Coloured or Black people of the town" and that caskets in this area would deteriorate quickly and, thus, many burials were made on top of each other because family plots were often in need of additional space.[98] Christie, who is writing about the African Nova Scotian community in Truro, writes about a dispute he can remember in 1943 when Robert Mentis' wife passed away and he wanted to bury her in the "White section" of the cemetery. When Robert tried to purchase a plot, he was denied and told that he would not take care of his lot. Christie threatened to go public with the debacle if the cemetery corporation did not approve Robert's request.[99] To avoid the matter being made public, the corporation approved Robert's request and Viola Mentis was buried in section 26. Her headstone is still there today. Christie writes that, following the controversy,

[98] Christie, 14.
[99] Ibid., 14.

the north section of the cemetery was assigned specifically to members of Zion Baptist.[100] It remains the Zion Baptist section today.

Prior to the establishment of Zion, many African Nova Scotians in Colchester identified as Methodist and attended the Pleasant Street Methodist Church.[101] For this reason, some African Nova Scotian graves can be found in the Valley Cemetery.

For more information on Zion Baptist Church, please refer to Donna Byard-Sealy's publication *Colored Zion: The History of Zion United Baptist Church and the Black Community in Truro, Nova Scotia.*

White Slaveholding in Colchester

It should not go without mention that, during early Planter settlement in the Cobequid townships (Truro, Onslow, and Londonderry), slavery existed. Although it was not as common in these townships as in others (such as Annapolis, Cornwallis, and Shelburne), enslavement was prevalent—and widely accepted—in Planter society. It can also be assumed that people of African heritage were present in the region prior to Planter settlement. Despite infrequent documentation of slaveholding by Acadians in the region, France was also a slaveholding colony. Indeed, in 1807, Acadians in Digby petitioned for their right to remain slaveholders following the introduction of the Slave Trade Act.[102] This suggests the presence of people of African heritage in the region during Acadian occupation as well.

Very few early historical records document White slaveholding[103] in the Cobequid region. The lack of early documentation regarding enslaved people in

[100] Ibid., 14.

[101] Don Christie also notes that William Jackson and his family were of Roman Catholic faith. Some attended the Anglican Church, such as Rachael Stoutley and her family. "Mrs. Green and Mrs. Oliver" attended St. Paul's Presbyterian Church. Christie also recalls Mrs. Wm. Dorrington and Mrs. Wm. Clyke attending First United Church. Eventually, subsequent generations became members of Zion Baptist Church (Christie, 8).

[102] Nova Scotia Archives, RG5 Series A, vol. 14, no. 49.

[103] Barry Cahill "Colchester Men: The Pro Slavery Presbyterian Witness of the Reverends Daniel Cock of Truro and David Smith of Londonderry" in *Planter Links*, ed. Margaret Conrad and Barry Moody. Acadiensis Press 2001. 133-144.. Cahill argues in "Colchester Men" that more focus should be placed on White slaveholding rather than Black enslavement as it places the accountability on the slaveholders rather than the victims. He says "greater insight

the Cobequid Townships suggests that very few people of African heritage initially came to Truro during Planter settlement (ca. 1761-1780). Because enslaved people were considered property, rather than humans, by their slaveholders, they often weren't noted in census records. Barry Cahill points out that "historians… do not speak of 'Black Planters' as they do of 'Black Loyalists' (freed Blacks) because the former were nearly all slaves. Just as in the Loyalist period the term 'servant' in relation to a Black person meant slave, so too in the Planter period the term 'Negro' meant enslaved Black."[104] As previously mentioned, the earliest documented enslaved person in the Cobequid region accompanied Rev. James Lyon with the first wave of Planter Settlers. Remarkably, he appears on a census, but his name does not. It is suspected that his name was London Atus.[105]

In a conversation once, a local historian[106] speculated that, since many of the settlers who came to Colchester (especially the Truro Township) were working-class people from Ireland and New England, it is not likely that they could have afforded to be slaveholders. This is not the case for other townships that were established throughout Nova Scotia where slavery is better documented. Regardless, settlers to this region would have been familiar with the practice of White slaveholding as it had been normalized in their society. There are also documented cases of some individuals having enslaved or indentured "African" people in their households in Colchester during the nineteenth century.

Another early example of evidence of White slaveholding in the region is captured in Captain William Owen's journal. Owen documents his expedition

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into the nature of slavery as a fundamental institution of colonial society is to be gained from focusing on the slaveholder rather than the slave" (144).

[104] Cahill, Barry, "Colchester Men" in *Planter Links*, 133.

[105] A census for the Onslow Township in 1771 records one "Negroe boy" in the household of Rev. James Lyon. Although it does not document the child as being London Atus, evidence suggests that it was. Shortly after the census was taken, the Lyon family returned to Boston to fight in the American Revolutionary War (as several Planters and Grantees did). Atus was reportedly involved in the capture of the British schooner *Margaretta* near Machias Harbour on June 12, 1775. Based on his account, he served in the war and used his wages (8 dollars per month) to buy his freedom. Atus married and had twelve children, settling in the African American community outside of Machias that was named "Atusville." Atus was known for being involved in assisting with the underground railroad. It is rumoured that Atus sought labour constructing roads in Machias and built a tunnel to assist runaway slaves in making their way to Canada. Atusville is now a historic archaeological site. For those of you interested in learning more about London Atus and Atusville, the book *Lost Atusvile: A Black Settlement from the American Revolution* by Marcus LiBrizzi can be purchased on Amazon.

[106] James F. Smith was a local historian who specialized in Planter settlement in Colchester. He and Carol Campbell co-authored several books, including *Necessaries and Sufficiencies: Planter Society in Londonderry, Onslow and Truro Townships, 1761-1780* (2011) and *Planters and Grantees of Cobequid Nova Scotia* (2011).

through central Nova Scotia in 1767 and references both a "servant" who accompanied him and another who accompanied him as Sir Thomas Rich's "servant." Captain Owen refers to his "servant" as "Black John" in an account of when John saved an Acadian Guide's son from drowning in the Cobequid Bay.[107]

Two people (one contemporary, one historical) have offered valuable insight into slaveholding in Colchester: Barry Cahill (previously mentioned) and Rev. James MacGregor. Cahill, a present-day historian and retired Provincial Archivist, has done extensive research about slaveholding in Colchester and provides historical and religious context for better understanding the circumstances at the time.

Although there were few known slaveholders in Colchester (partially due to the social status of many of the Planters who settled in this region), there were two specific clergymen who were well-known for their slaveholding involvement. Rev. Daniel Cock (Truro Township) and Rev. Daniel Smith (Londonderry Township) were not Scots-Irish[108] like the other settlers in the region, rather, they came to the region directly from Scotland. In Scotland, a rift had formed in the Church in the mid 1700s between Burghers (those who would accept the "Burghers' Oath") and Anti-Burghers (those who would not). Essentially, the two groups had differing opinions and religious views, which led to a division in Scottish Presbyterianism. Cock and Smith were distinguished Burghers. This is relevant because Burghers (who were generally from aristocratic families) were known for supporting Black enslavement and the Slave trade. Anti-Burghers were ethically opposed to slavery.

In the 1780s, the two ministers from the Cobequid townships were involved in a "slavery controversy" where Reverend James MacGregor (of Pictou, Nova Scotia) published an eleven-page letter condemning those who were

[107] Captain William Owen's journal, 24 Sept 1767 "The journal of Captain William Owen . . . ," ed. W. F. Ganong, N.B. Hist. Soc., *Coll*., I (1894–97), no.2, 193–220; II (1899–1905), no.4, 8–27; "Narrative of American voyages and travels of Captain William Owen, R.N., and the settlement of the island of Campobello in the Bay of Fundy, 1766–1771," ed. V. H. Paltsits, New York Public Library, *Bull*., 35 (1931), 71–98, 139–62, 263–300, 659–85, 705–58.

[108] Scots-Irish, often referred to as Ulster-Scots, were a group of Protestants who emigrated to North America from Ulster in northern Ireland during the 1700s and 1800s. Their ancestors were originally from Scotland. However, they had previously migrated to Ireland in the 1600s.

slaveholders.[109] Although MacGregor did not publish names, it was widely known that the publication was directed towards Rev. Daniel Cock of Truro Township, who was the slaveholder of one woman and one girl. MacGregor's publication is the earliest-known example of anti-slavery literature in Canada. MacGregor was seen as an "antislavery radical ideologue" and was known for using "his ministerial salary to ransom slaves from their masters."[110] His views, in contrast to Cock and Smith, aligned more with the Anti-Burghers. MacGregor was dauntless, publicly sharing his opinion of White slaveholders, particularly those who were associated with the Church.

Rev. Cock, who was apparently soft spoken, did not respond to MacGregor's letter publicly. However, Cock's colleague Rev. Smith rose to his defence.[111] Using typical pro-slavery arguments, Smith suggested that, since Cock treated those who he had enslaved kindly, it should, therefore, be considered acceptable. He also argued that Cock was setting a good example of being a "kind" slaveholder for those slaveholders who were not so kind.

Both MacGregor and Smith's publications provide insight into the mindset of Planter society in Colchester. Barry Cahill argues that although slaveholding ideologies were intricately woven with religion, many historians of Presbyterianism have failed to take interest in, or even acknowledge, White slaveholding and its relation to the Church. Cahill even points to a local historical publication about the Truro Presbytery[112] and critiques that the book examines "in considerable detail the circumstances of the disruption and near-destruction of the presbytery" in the late 1700s but fails to make "the slightest reference to the fundamental cause of it—the slavery controversy."[113] The United Church of Canada has never officially apologized to African Canadians "for their ministers who practiced and defended slaveholding."[114]

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[109] James MacGregor, 1788, "A letter to a Clergyman Urging him to set free a Black Girl he Held in Slavery." See also George Patterson, *Memoir of the Rev James MacGregor D.D. Missionary of the General Associate Synod of Scotland to Pictou, Nova Scotia.* Chapter VII: Second Year's Labors 1787-1788.

[110] Cahill, 137.

[111] Thomas Watson Smith, The Slave in Canada in *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society for the years 1896-1898.* Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Printing Company. 1899. p.56.

[112] Truro Presbytery. *Two Centuries of Christian Witness in Truro, Nova Scotia First United Church 1760-1960.* Toronto: Ryerson Press. 1960.

[113] Ibid., 143.

[114] Ibid., 144.

Other known and documented slaveholders in Colchester include the Archibald and Harris families.[115] Dinah Rhyno was enslaved by Matthew Harris of Pictou. Her freedom was bought in 1787. Rhyno married George Mingo.[116] In 1898, Abbie Mingo, the daughter of Dinah Rhyno and George Mingo, passed away in Truro at the age of 93.[117] Abbie was reportedly a servant in the home of Mrs. Church Smith.[118] She also appears in the 1881 census, living in the home of Henry Tupper as a servant. These are just a few documented examples and are undoubtedly not the only instances of slaveholding in Colchester in the late eighteenth century. Unfortunately, the lack of documentation around the subject is another instance of systemic racism.

In this context, Mary Louise Fulton of Upper Stewiacke is also worth mentioning. Mary Louise was a historian who attended Dalhousie University. She has been credited as "the first modern academic historian of slavery" in the Maritimes, as she published a dissertation in 1929 titled "Slavery and the History of the Negroes in Nova Scotia."[119] Unfortunately, no known copies of this manuscript have survived, leaving one to speculate why a copy was not archived.

It cannot be stressed enough that indentured servitude did not simply end with the abolition of the slave trade or slavery. This is exemplified in census records for at least a century following the abolition of slavery in 1834. Often, you will see the occupation of "servant" listed beside people of "African" origin, many of whom were recorded as part of their "employer's" household. For example, in 1871, several "servants" are listed in the Upper Onslow census—Joseph Dea (possibly Desmond?) and Ruth Gero were both living in McCurdy households. Census records and other vital statistics also provide insight regarding occupations of African Nova Scotians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Most African Nova Scotian women, if employed, held servant and housekeeper

[115] Matthew Harris of Pictou sold an enslaved 12-year-old boy named Abram, who was "born of Harris's Negro slave" to Matthew Archibald (Watson Smith in *the Slave in Canada*, 16). Dr. John Harris, of Truro, purchased "One Negro man named Sambo, also one brown mare and her colt" (Watson Smith in *the Slave in Canada*, 54).
[116] Watson Smith in *the Slave in Canada*, 57.
[117] Truro Daily News, 20 November 1898.
[118] Margaret Jane Hart, *Janet Fisher Archibald*. The Colonist Printing and Publishing Co., Ltd. Lty. Victoria BC: 1934. P.80.
[119] Cahill in *Planter Links*, 133.

positions and were grotesquely underpaid. This was because slavery mentality remained ingrained in society.

Racism and Discrimination in Colchester/Truro

It may sometimes be an uncomfortable discussion to have, but racism and discrimination have existed in Colchester/Truro for centuries (examples to follow). It was widespread and considered acceptable by many. But just because slavery was abolished in the early 1800s does not mean that society's perception of the Black race changed. Slaveholder mentalities were inherited by subsequent generations, both consciously and subconsciously. Regardless of the "who, what, where, when, and why" of racial discrimination, the fact is that African Nova Scotians have been subjected to racism for generations—centuries, even. This is a challenge that community members have historically faced on a regular basis and continue to endure today. It has created a need for resilience to something that the majority of the population has not experienced.[120] The hardships imposed on the African Nova Scotian community due to racism must be acknowledged. It has been largely omitted from historical narratives, or merely acknowledged in passing, even though it plays a considerable role in the African Nova Scotian experience. Historical documentation offers many details and insights into the issue.

The Truro Daily News has been a valuable historical resource that speaks to the racial discrimination and local mentality toward the African Nova Scotian community. In 1891, an article appeared in the Truro Daily News reporting that an African Nova Scotian man, Reverend Jordan, was refused service at a restaurant in Amherst due to the colour of his skin.[121] Another noteworthy article appeared in the Truro Daily News in 1897 about a concert that was being held at Victoria Square.[122] According to the report, a fight broke out as a result of a prior quarrel and it escalated into a large fight where "certain Whites [were] assaulting nearly every colored man within reach."[123] One of these men being assaulted had a razor

[120] This is the epitome of white privilege. White privilege is defined as "inherent advantages possessed by a White person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice."
[121] Truro Daily News, 15 April 1891. Jordan filed a lawsuit against the owner of the business for $5000.00.
[122] Truro Daily News, 9 September 1897.
[123] Truro Daily News, 9 September 1897.

and “slashed whoever came in his path” in an attempt to get away from the fight. The individual clearly had no other choice but to defend himself because the article reported that the man was “pursued by over 100 men and boys.” Ironically, he was “captured in the swamp, opposite the new Zion Baptist Church” by white civilians and taken to authorities to be arrested. It was determined there were no grounds to arrest the man and he was released. The newspaper highlighted that he had been “so roughly used by his captors that he had to be carried home.” An article appeared a few days later stating that “the colored people who were assaulted” filed a lawsuit in protest.[124] Further documentation, except that the case was taken to the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, has not been found.[125] Regardless of the outcome, it speaks to the racial tensions in Truro during the late 1800s.

In 1899, a letter was written to the editor of the Truro Daily News by an African Nova Scotian, William C. Taylor, about the fact that he had been refused admission to the skating rink in Truro during a fair. Taylor proclaimed this as an act of discrimination and “a stain upon the Town of Truro.”[126] In 1901, a letter was written to the editor, this time by pastor W.M.A. Burch of Zion Baptist Church. The letter was titled “Disorderly Proceedings at Zion Baptist Church.”[127] It described a wedding at Zion Baptist in which White people attended and “acted in a most disgraceful manner.” Burch highlighted the lack of respect for his community when he said: “Some people seem ‘to think’ that negroes have no rights which they are bound to respect, and the remarks made of them, in the hearing of some of our members, are unfit for publication. We are not all low and vile, as all the white people are not all low and vile.”[128] Not only does Burch’s letter speak to the disparaging attitude of White community members toward African Nova Scotians but it also exemplifies that African Nova Scotians in Truro have been fighting for their respect, and rights, for *at least* 120 years.

Over 50 years later, in 1957, a report appeared in the Truro Daily News on the “Study of Truro’s Negro Population” by Sid Blum, Director of the Human

[124] Truro Daily News, 13 September 1897.
[125] Truro Daily News, 16 September 1897.
[126] Truro Daily News, 4 November 1899.
[127] Truro Daily News, 3 April 1901.
[128] Truro Daily News, 3 April 1901.

Rights Committee of the Canadian Labour Congress, a national labour organization that had been formed in 1956.[129] The lengthy report provides valuable insight into racial discrimination in the mid twentieth century. It emphasized that the Truro community, and all African Nova Scotian communities in general, faced discrimination. Blum suggested this was due, in part, to the high proportion of people of African heritage in Nova Scotia, noting the province has the highest percentage of long-established communities in Canada. Blum spoke to many of the challenges, including the purchase of land and establishment of businesses by African Nova Scotians stating that "real estate agents either discouraged Negro business or rejected it."[130] He reported that if community members in the Truro region wished to "branch outside the usual Negro occupations" (such as laborers, steel mill workers, railway labourers, dockyard workers, and farmers), their choices were so limited that they tended to emigrate from the Truro region. Indeed, many left for New England, and waves of emigration occurred to places such as Bangor, Portland, and Boston. Blum spoke of African Nova Scotians in Truro being banned from dance halls and "sharply-drawn discrimination" in barber shops—many had no choice but to get their hair cut at home.[131]

As previously mentioned, the African Nova Scotian communities in Truro have been subject to environmental racism throughout the years. This injustice often occurs when marginalized communities are afforded unequal access to land or are subjected to harmful substances due to living in close proximity to industrial development or toxic waste. It can be both intentional and unintentional. It is also worth mentioning that there are no historical records of any African Nova Scotian community being compensated for environmental racism, despite the many cases across the province. In Truro, town dumps were situated near all three African Nova Scotian communities (the Island, the Marsh, and the Hill). Additionally, they were located away from the town centre and on poor land, such as floodplains.

These communities have historically been overlooked in consultation processes regarding nearby development. For example, in 1996, the Town of

[129] Truro Daily News, 8 November 1957.
[130] Truro Daily News, 8 November 1957.
[131] Truro Daily News, 8 November 1957.

Truro amended a by-law to allow paving and expansion of the Truro Mall parking lot, which was located on a floodplain not far from both the Black communities on the Marsh and the Island. This decision went before the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board and was ultimately approved despite many objections. During the review, the Department of Environment submitted a letter stating, "the Province will not consider any claims for compensation for losses or damage that may arise due to the development of the parking lot on the floodplain."[132] This was bound to have a negative impact upon the Marsh and the Island yet the impact on these communities was not addressed.

In 1997, The issue of development affecting Truro's floodplain arose when the Town of Truro approved the development of Atlantic Superstore on Elm Street. In the Truro Residents' Association's closing arguments at a Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board Appeal Hearing, they alleged "that the large amount of excavation and infill proposed for this development will adversely affect the dynamics of the existing floodway and that it was also not discussed before Council."[133] Once again, consideration had not been given to the impact of such development on surrounding communities, including the African Nova Scotian community on the Marsh. Despite the fact that the Truro Residents' Association built an entire case voicing the concerns of the proposed development, they, too, overlooked the African Nova Scotian community in the process. The Truro Residents' Association's concerns about the risk of contaminating the groundwater by excavating the area, however, suggest the risk also applied to the AFNS community. The proposed development site was once the Eastern Hat and Cap Co. Ltd., which produced felt hats for decades and released its tailings (waste) into the ground nearby. This would have included high concentrations of mercury[134] and is yet another example of environmental racism.

Hate Groups and the Ku Klux Klan

Another injustice documented in the Truro Daily News is that of hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Despite a common misconception, the Ku Klux Klan existed not only in the United States but in Canada, and Nova Scotia,

[132] Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board, Document 26409 Decision NSUARN-PL-96-08.

[133] Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board Planning Appeal Hearing PL-97-06-07 May 23, 1997. Page 24 (CHS 1997.119.28).

[134] For more information see Colchester Historeum Archives, Truro Residents' Association fonds. Acc# 1997.119.

too. The Ku Klux Klan was a White supremacist group that first formed in the United States in 1865 following the American Civil War. Members of the Klan terrorized Black individuals and communities in the Southern States. In some cases, people were tortured and even murdered. By the 1870s, the organization formally disbanded, aided in part by public opinion, the response of the Black community, and law enforcement.

In the early 1900s, the KKK saw a resurgence in the States and became more prevalent in Canada. Canada became more cognizant of the KKK around 1915 with the screening of a silent film titled *The Birth of a Nation*. The film depicted the aftermath of the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the formation of the Ku Klux Klan. The film depicted "defeated Confederates who terrorized newly freed Black people throughout the southern United States, riding into their communities at night dressed in white robes and hoods. They sought, so the myth went, 'revenge' for the defeated Confederacy."[135] The film portrayed the KKK as vigilantes and heroes. It was considered a masterpiece and coined "the 8th wonder of the world."[136] At a time when people were looking for an escape from the realities of the First World War, the film became enormously popular—it showed in theatres for weeks on end, and in some cases, several times per day. In many places, it was brought back to theatres on an annual basis during the 1910s and 1920s. *The Birth of a Nation* is a prime example of propaganda being used to incite hate not only against the Black race, but also other religious and racial minorities, such as Catholics, Jews, and people of Asian heritage.

Needless to say, the widespread screening of the film in Canada was very influential. In 1925, the Strand Theatre in Truro advertised its screening of the film, proclaiming that it "stands out foremost among the greatest achievements of the American picture world" and that "its recent revival at the Capitol Theatre… broke all records again [demonstrating] its powerful appeal to the public."[137] This film was still screening, and highly attended, in Truro over ten years after its initial release and would have had a direct influence on the mindset of locals. It was an insidious propaganda tool.

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[135] Allan Bartley, *The Ku Klux Klan in Canada: A Century of Promoting Racism and Hate in the Peaceable Kingdom*. James Lormier & Co. 2020. p. 12.
[136] Bartley, 12.
[137] Truro Daily News, 15 May 1925.

Many Klan members travelled from the States to Canada to recruit members and garner support in the early twentieth century. The peak time for Klan activity in Canada was around 1926. Although some Klan leaders were outspoken and in the public eye, much Klan activity remained underground, particularly in Nova Scotia's case. That said, articles did occasionally appear in the Truro Daily News, reporting Klan activity in other regions. In 1931, the Truro Daily News reported in a headline that there were over 40,000 Ku Klux Klan members in Saskatchewan.[138] In fact, several years earlier, in 1925, newspaper articles appeared in the Truro Daily News stating that the KKK was recruiting in Nova Scotia.[139] Klan recruitment ads in newspapers were typical as the majority of the organization's outreach was through advertising of meeting places in newspapers. Public advertisement was less common in Nova Scotia.[140]

Scholars have made connections among the Klan, the Orange Lodge, and the Beaver Society. This requires more research as, often, such connections were hidden under a veil of secrecy and are hard to find in archives today. The Orange Lodge was pro-Protestantism and was built on the foundation of anti-Catholicism. It stands to reason that Orange Lodge members who were opposed to certain religious groups would likewise feel the same about racial groups.[141] Organizers and leaders of the Klan were often Orange Lodge members and meetings were often held at Orange Lodge halls.[142] Invitations to meetings were sometimes coded or subliminal, making it difficult to find in the historical record.

There is very little official documentation regarding Klan activity in Nova Scotia.[143] One scholar, Allan Bartley, who published a book on the Ku Klux Klan in

[138] Truro Daily News, 26 March 1931

[139] Truro Daily News, 18 March 1925.

[140] Other provinces, such as New Brunswick, for example, display more instances of public Klan activity. It is possible that, due to the large Acadian (Catholic) presence in New Brunswick, the Klan felt the need to assert their ideologies. The Klan was also linked to many conservative politicians in New Brunswick, particularly in the early 1930s. However, Angus L. MacDonald had been elected Premier in Nova Scotia in the 1933 general election and held nearly 75% of seats in the House of Assembly. The Liberal party remained in power in Nova Scotia from 1933-1956. It is possible that Klan activity was less publicized in Nova Scotia due to these political factors.

[141] The Orange Lodge, for example, used to hold similar cross-burning hate rallies in Catholic communities. The ideologies of the Orange Lodge were like those of the Ku Klux Klan.

[142] Tyler Cline. "'A Clarion Call to Patriots the World Over': The Curious Case of The Ku Klux Klan of Kanada in New Brunswick During the 1920s and 1930s" in *Acadiensis,* Vol. 38 No. 1, 2019. Page 88-110.

[143] Bartley, 99. I stress the word *known* documentation because I am sure that it exists and remains to be "discovered."

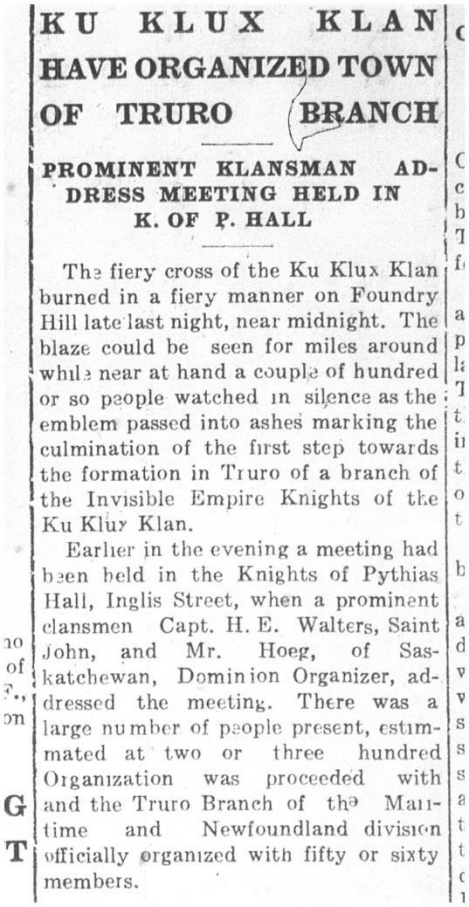
2020, states that "in Nova Scotia in particular, the secrecy required by the Klan protected its activities from surviving the historical record."[144] He speculates that the reason for its secrecy was in part due to the First World War and the formation of a segregated Black No. 2 Construction Battalion, which was located in Nova Scotia. In fact, the Battalion's headquarters were in Pictou and Truro. There would have been political reasons for remaining underground to minimize the racial tensions that had already been brought on with the war and the controversy of whether Black men should be allowed to enlist. Later, in the early 1930s, when Klan activity was at its peak in the region (particularly in New Brunswick), Nova Scotia was operating under a Liberal government. This may explain the organization not being publicized as much. That said, both seats from Colchester County were held by Conservative members.

One local record has survived from the 1930s and it appears in the Truro Daily News the day after a Klan meeting was held in Truro. In August 1932, the community was subjected to a hate crime in which the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross on the Black community of the Hill and "a couple hundred people" attended the spectacle.[145] In fact, the article "Fiery Cross Burns on Foundry Hill," also reported that a meeting had been held in which 200 or 300 people attended and it was "the first step towards the formation [of the KKK] in Truro."[146] It should be stressed that, even though the article suggests there was no previous formal Klan organization in Truro, it does not mean that there was no Klan activity. Whether or not a local branch of this racist organization was ever formed in Truro remains

[144] Ibid., 99.

[145] Cross-burning became an iconic symbol of hate that was associated with the KKK during its resurgence in the 1900s.

[146] Truro Daily News, 10 August 1932.



KU KLUX KLAN HAVE ORGANIZED TOWN OF TRURO BRANCH

PROMINENT KLANSMAN ADDRESS MEETING HELD IN K. OF P. HALL

The fiery cross of the Ku Klux Klan burned in a fiery manner on Foundry Hill late last night, near midnight. The blaze could be seen for miles around while near at hand a couple of hundred or so people watched in silence as the emblem passed into ashes marking the culmination of the first step towards the formation in Truro of a branch of the Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

Earlier in the evening a meeting had been held in the Knights of Pythias Hall, Inglis Street, when a prominent clansmen Capt. H. E. Walters, Saint John, and Mr. Hoeg, of Saskatchewan, Dominion Organizer, addressed the meeting. There was a large number of people present, estimated at two or three hundred Organization was proceeded with and the Truro Branch of the Maritime and Newfoundland division officially organized with fifty or sixty members.

Figure 13: Truro Daily News, 10 August 1932.

unknown, but the Truro Daily News attests to the fact that there were indeed Klan supporters/members in Truro during the early twentieth century.

One major hate crime took place in Truro and a detailed record of it appears in the Truro Daily News. There is a lot to unpack from the incident, and a lot that can be discerned from reading between the lines of several news articles. The event happened in 1919,[147] not long after the conclusion of the First World War. This is significant because the African Nova Scotians involved were veterans and served in the Black Battalion. Veterans were highly respected immediately following the war and leniencies were often afforded to them. The minor incident that escalated would have assuredly played out differently if the men involved were White veterans. As the news article indicates, on Sunday, September 28 around 10:30 pm, a police officer, Amos Ogden, attempted to arrest a Black man, Harry Tynes, for "creating a disturbance" (subsequent articles indicate it was for "profane language") at the CNR railway station.[148] The article states that "others took a hand" when Tynes resisted arrest, illustrating that White civilian bystanders took it upon themselves to get involved. Another Black man (later identified as Samuel Reese, also a veteran of the Black Battalion) stepped in and hit one of the White men with his cane. What happened next was horrifying:

> a few whites then started a drive for some colored fellows at the so called 'Acre.'[149] In a short time the crowd gathered until probably one hundred arrived at the Acre and smashed some windows. From there they started for Smith's Island. By

[147] Truro Daily News, 29 Sept 1919.

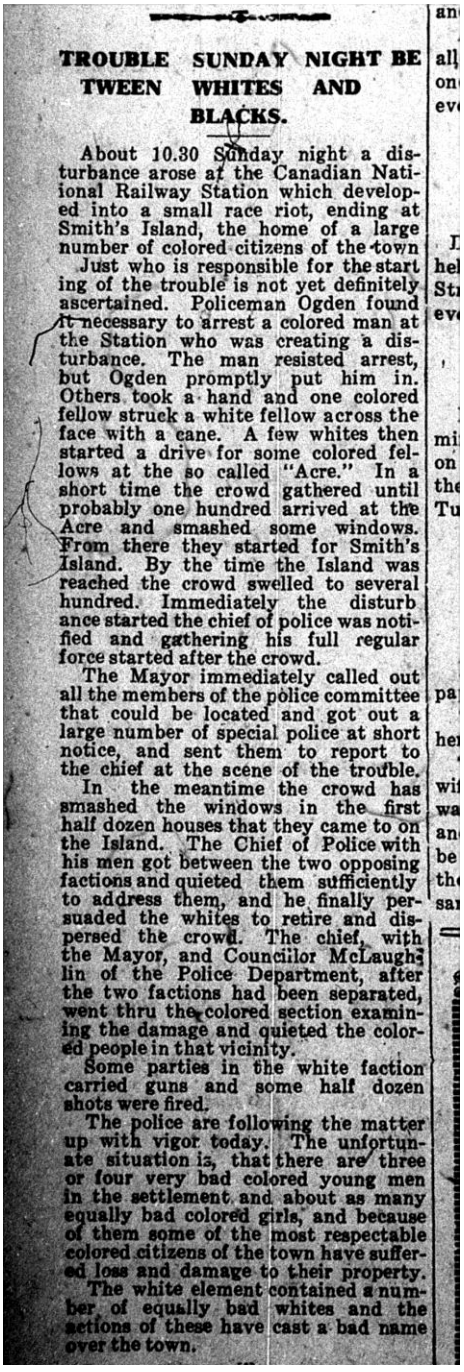
[148] To get a complete picture of the incident and names of individuals involved, please see subsequent Truro Daily News articles: 30 September 1919; 1 October 1919; 2 October 1919; 3 October 1919; 6 October 1919.

[149] It is unclear exactly what "the Acre" refers to but it is believed that this is present-day Victoria Square.

> the time the Island was reached the crowd swelled to several hundred. … Some parties in the white faction carried guns and some half dozen shots were fired.[150]

My interpretation of this account is that a police officer attempted to arrest Harry Tynes over a minor issue and, when the man resisted, White bystanders got involved. This caused Tynes' friends, Samuel Reese and Leonard Paris to step in and defend their friend. This somehow escalated into white civilians taking the law into their own hands and committing a massive act of violence against the African Nova Scotian community at large that resulted in both damage and injuries.[151] Harry Tynes was fined $5.00 "for using profane language and resisting arrest,"[152] Samuel Reese was charged with assault, and Leonard Paris was charged with interfering with the police officer.[153] There is no indication that any of the White vigilantes were charged, even though hundreds of people stormed an entire community simply because a Black man resisted arrest. It has an uncanny resemblance to issues that led to the Black Lives Matter movement (police brutality and racially motivated violence).

Another "race riot" took place the following year, in 1920, where White townspeople "took their belts and drove the Blacks down to the



TROUBLE SUNDAY NIGHT BE TWEEN WHITES AND BLACKS.

About 10.30 Sunday night a disturbance arose at the Canadian National Railway Station which developed into a small race riot, ending at Smith's Island, the home of a large number of colored citizens of the town

Just who is responsible for the starting of the trouble is not yet definitely ascertained. Policeman Ogden found it necessary to arrest a colored man at the Station who was creating a disturbance. The man resisted arrest, but Ogden promptly put him in. Others took a hand and one colored fellow struck a white fellow across the face with a cane. A few whites then started a drive for some colored fellows at the so called "Acre." In a short time the crowd gathered until probably one hundred arrived at the Acre and smashed some windows. From there they started for Smith's Island. By the time the Island was reached the crowd swelled to several hundred. Immediately the disturbance started the chief of police was notified and gathering his full regular force started after the crowd.

The Mayor immediately called out all the members of the police committee that could be located and got out a large number of special police at short notice, and sent them to report to the chief at the scene of the trouble.

In the meantime the crowd has smashed the windows in the first half dozen houses that they came to on the Island. The Chief of Police with his men got between the two opposing factions and quieted them sufficiently to address them, and he finally persuaded the whites to retire and dispersed the crowd. The chief, with the Mayor, and Councillor McLaughlin of the Police Department, after the two factions had been separated, went thru the colored section examining the damage and quieted the colored people in that vicinity.

Some parties in the white faction carried guns and some half dozen shots were fired.

The police are following the matter up with vigor today. The unfortunate situation is, that there are three or four very bad colored young men in the settlement and about as many equally bad colored girls, and because of them some of the most respectable colored citizens of the town have suffered loss and damage to their property.

The white element contained a number of equally bad whites and the actions of these have cast a bad name over the town.

Figure 14: Truro Daily News, 29 September 1919. A detailed account of the "race riot" at Smith's Island.

[150] Truro Daily News, 29 September 1919.
[151] Truro Daily News, 3 October 1919.
[152] Truro Daily News, 30 September 1919.
[153] Truro Daily News, 2 October 1919.

'Island.'"[154] Apparently, this escalated from an incident in which an African Nova Scotian citizen bumped into a woman on the sidewalk.

Although *The Birth of a Nation* and the Ku Klux Klan did not create racism out of thin air, they did fuel the racist mentality that was pervasive in the early-twentieth century.

During the 1930s, the KKK began to decline, due in part to factors such as the economic depression and the Nazi party coming into power in 1933—the optics of a Canadian organization having similar ideologies as the Nazi party, which was considered an enemy of the Country, fueled public disapproval.[155] Very little historical record shows outward activity of the Klan from the 1930s to the 1970s.

Despite the decline of the Klan, anti-Black racism and discrimination persisted throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For example, the gallery in the local theatre was given the derogatory name of "N_____ Heaven." In fact, both the Princess and Capitol theatres had segregated galleries.[156] This continued until at least the 1950s before the Fair Accommodations Act of 1959 prohibited segregation. The First Baptist Church also had a segregated gallery and baptisms of African Nova Scotians were only permitted after White baptisms or on an entirely different day.[157] Smith's Island was also referred to as "N_____ Island" by many locals.

Don Christie recalls that, after the Second World War, a local club, the Kiwanis Club, entertained the idea of building a community pool in Truro with their victory bond funds. But it was proposed by members that the pool could only be used by the African Nova Scotian community on Thursdays.[158] Christie, who was a member of the club at the time, vehemently opposed this decision and managed to get support from just over half of the members. Suspiciously, the entire pool project was terminated shortly after.[159] Up until the 1950s, many public spaces in

[154] Christie, 12.

[155] It should be noted that the rise of Nazism is not the only reason for Klan activity and membership declining in the 1930s. Historic advocacy from the Black community is underrepresented and/or undocumented and it is often the case that community members advocated for their rights.

[156] Christie, 7.

[157] Ibid., 7.

[158] Ibid., 15.

[159] Ibid., 15.

Truro were segregated—restaurants, barber shops, the bowling alley, and even the communities African Nova Scotians were permitted to live in. Although schools in Truro were not segregated, bathrooms and fountains in the schools were, such as those at Willow Street School.[160]

By the late twentieth century, many advancements had been made for equality. But racist mentalities persisted and permeated the social and economic environment. Hate and discrimination reared its ugly head (often in response to Black rights advocates and movements). In the 1980s, with the adoption of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,* there was backlash by those opposed to furthering equality.[161] Adaptations and contemporary versions of the Klan surfaced and hate symbols, such as the confederate flag, began to be used by supporters. Canada "saw the rise of regional [hate] groups and leaders, some talented and organized, others bizarre, crude, or simply inept. Almost all had criminal tendencies."[162]

By the late 1990s, Canadian racists began to show a presence on the internet and use it as a means of recruiting and rallying. An even more current example is the "Proud Boys," a far-right white nationalist group formed in 2016. The Proud Boys was designated a terrorist group in Canada and were formally disbanded in 2021. However, it continues to be an active hate group in the United States today. In response to these types of groups, the Anti-Racist Coalition, the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, and other groups were formed. In the 2010s, an attempt was made to amend section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act so that online hate groups could be shut down, but the Conservative Government accepted a bill in 2012 that countered the efforts.[163] In 2019, a standing committee on justice and human rights recommended the reinstating section 13 of the Act and the Liberal Government proposed Bill C-36, which passed its first reading in 2021.[164]

In 2015, controversy erupted in Truro when a confederate flag was spotted on the back of a truck in the Dairy Queen parking lot. Advocates spoke publicly about

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[160] Christie., 9.

[161] Bartley, 189.

[162] Ibid., 215.

[163] Bill C-304: *An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (protecting freedom)*. This bill would repealed section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

[164] Bill C-36: An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act and to make related amendments to another Act (hate propaganda, hate crimes and hate speech)

the confederate flag's association with white supremacy, and it made national news.[165] This sparked a movement and online petition to have the symbol banned in Canada.

In recent years, far-right neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups have become more visible. As Bartley states, "by the end of [2020] there was no formal organization extant with the name of Ku Klux Klan in Canada" but "for Canadians, [KKK] symbols have meant something sinister for over a century—instantly recognizable sources of hate, generators of fear."[166] White nationalism continues, and even though the hate groups may take on other names their premise and ideologies are similar to the Ku Klux Klan.

First person accounts, such as those of Don Christie and Lynn Jones, and reports that appear in the Truro Daily News, demonstrate that Truro and Colchester were by no means an exception to anti-Black sentiment. Although it is unfortunate, and difficult for some locals to admit or accept, it is a reality that cannot be ignored. It is no surprise that anti-Black sentiment still lingers given the history of slavery and racism. Perceptions are passed down, consciously and subconsciously to subsequent generations. Stories have been recounted to me by many community members. These are lived experiences that are still in the memories of many people (AFNS or otherwise) in Truro and Colchester today. It is a sobering thought to realize it wasn't that long ago—this isn't just a part of our past. It is also a part of our present.

Systemic Racism in the Education System

Truro is known for its long history of education and contributions to the advancement of education. The Provincial Normal School[167] (1854-1961) was located in Truro, where people travelled from afar to receive an education to pursue careers as teachers. This was the only place to obtain a teaching certification in the province. The Provincial Normal School eventually became the Nova Scotia Teachers' College (1962-1997). It was also the first college in the

[165] https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/nova-scotia-group-wants-confederate-flag-banned-across-canada.
[166] Bartley, 278.
[167] Subsequent names include the Provincial Normal College and the Nova Scotia Normal College before it became the Nova Scotia Teachers' College.

province to offer early childhood education (Headstart) through the founding of the Jane Norman College (1976).

African Nova Scotians faced countless barriers regarding access to education in Truro. The Education Act of 1884 established segregation in the education system and there were twenty-three segregated schools in Nova Scotia, some of which remained open until the 1990s.[168] Unlike many other communities in Nova Scotia, there were no segregated schools in the Colchester region. But segregation persisted in classrooms. At Willow Street School, where children from the Island and the Marsh attended, for example, the girls' bathroom was segregated. There was also class distinction within the school system and race-based hierarchy that both teachers and students alike participated in upholding. African Nova Scotians attending school weren't encouraged to the same extent as White students. Teachers made Black students feel unwelcome and discouraged them from pursuing post-secondary education. AFNS students received more punishment and were not permitted the same access to programs.

Not only were there no schools located in the African Nova Scotian communities in Truro, but attending school sometimes involved a long commute. Before Douglas Street School opened in 1967, commuting was especially difficult for those living on the Hill.[169] Students were also required to go home for lunch and making two trips up and down the Hill in one day was not feasible. An additional barrier was faced when the purchase of textbooks and supplies became mandatory. The supplies were sometimes unaffordable for many African Nova Scotian community members. African Nova Scotian needs were not reflected in the curriculum, often making subject matter unrelatable. Other stories in textbooks displayed blatant prejudice and racialized characters—such as Little Black Sambo, Bunga, and Simba.[170] There were no Black teachers, and African Nova Scotian students lacked support. These are examples of systemic racism in

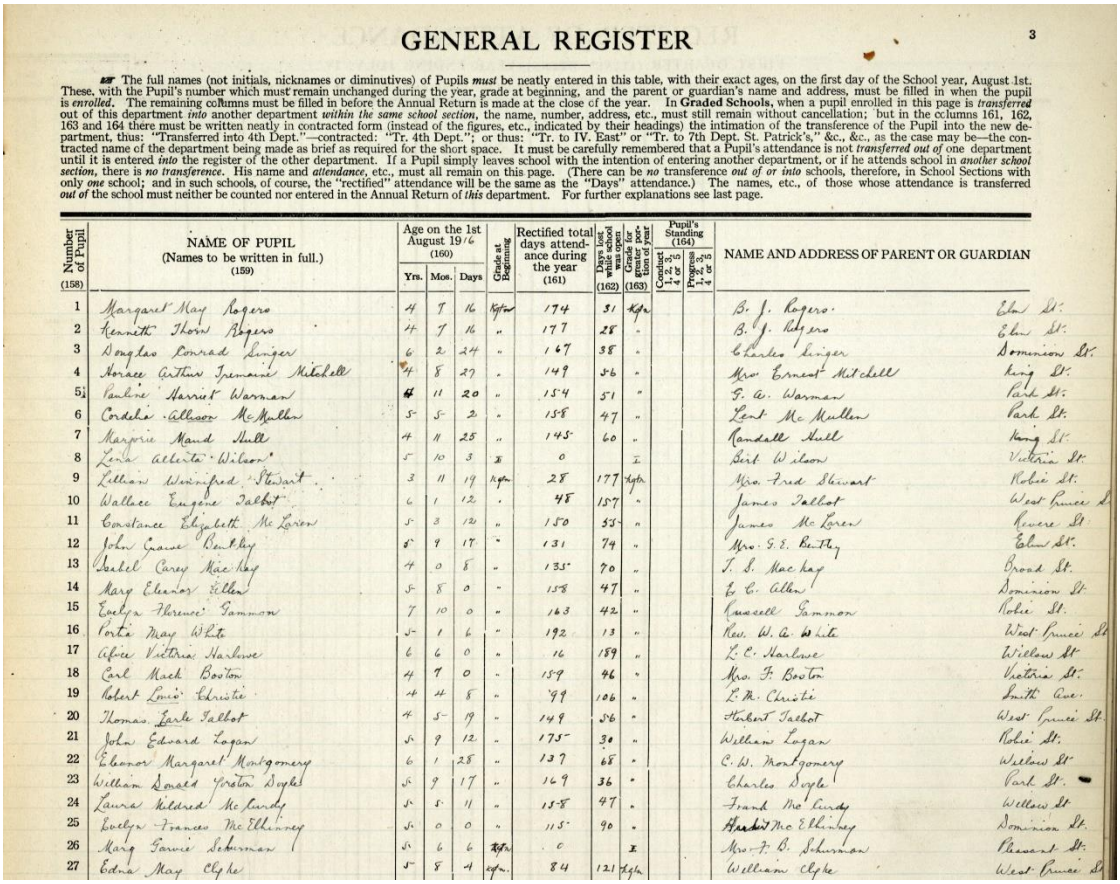
[168] Doris Evans and Gertrude Tynes, *Telling the Truth. Reflections: Segregated Schools in Nova Scotia* (Hantsport: Lancelot Press Limited, 1995).

[169] Relayed verbally to me by Dr. Lynn Jones in 2022.

[170] Helen Bannerman's *Little Black Sambo* (1899) was part of the education curriculum in Nova Scotia for many years. Additionally, the Geography textbook *Visits in Other Lands* by Wallace Walter and Helen Goss Thomas (1943) featured racialized characters "Bunga and Simba." These characters, which were portrayed as negative stereotypes, were the only Black representation to be found in the school curriculum.

the education system that made it difficult for African Nova Scotian students to succeed.

Some African Nova Scotian children attended Willow Street School and Central School, but they were sometimes required to sit together at the back of the room.[171] It wasn't until the 1950s that Black community members began to attend junior high and high schools. The first African Nova Scotian to graduate high school in Truro was Leslie Clyke in the 1950s.[172] Finally, in the 1960s, the implementation of family allowance enabled many more AFNS youth to have access to education.[173]



GENERAL REGISTER

3

☞ The full names (not initials, nicknames or diminutives) of Pupils *must* be neatly entered in this table, with their exact ages, on the first day of the School year, August 1st. These, with the Pupil's number which must remain unchanged during the year, grade at beginning, and the parent or guardian's name and address, must be filled in when the pupil is *enrolled*. The remaining columns must be filled in before the Annual Return is made at the close of the year. In **Graded Schools**, when a pupil enrolled in this page is *transferred* out of this department *into* another department *within the same school section*, the name, number, address, etc., must still remain without cancellation; but in the columns 161, 162, 163 and 164 there must be written neatly in contracted form (instead of the figures, etc., indicated by their headings) the intimation of the transference of the Pupil into the new department, thus: "Transferred into 4th Dept."—contracted: "Tr. 4th Dept."; or thus: "Tr. to IV. East" or "Tr. to 7th Dept. St. Patrick's," &c., &c., as the case may be—the contracted name of the department being made as brief as required for the short space. It must be carefully remembered that a Pupil's attendance is not *transferred out of* one department until it is entered *into* the register of the other department. If a Pupil simply leaves school with the intention of entering another department, or if he attends school in *another school section*, there is *no transference*. His name and *attendance*, etc., must all remain on this page. (There can be *no* transference *out of or into* schools, therefore, in School Sections with only *one* school; and in such schools, of course, the "rectified" attendance will be the same as the "Days" attendance.) The names, etc., of those whose attendance is transferred *out of* the school must neither be counted nor entered in the Annual Return of *this* department. For further explanations see last page.

Number of Pupil (158)	NAME OF PUPIL (Names to be written in full.) (159)	Age on the 1st August 1916 (160) Yrs.	Mon.	Days	Grade at Beginning	Rectified total days attendance during the year (161)	Days lost while School was open (162)	Grade for Promotion at close of year (163)	Pupil's Standing (164) Conduct 1 to 5	Progress 1 to 5	NAME AND ADDRESS OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN
1	Margaret May Rogers	4	7	16	Kgtn	174	51	Kgtn			B. J. Rogers Elm St.
2	Kenneth Thom Rogers	4	7	16	"	177	28	"			B. J. Rogers Elm St.
3	Douglas Conrad Singer	6	2	24	"	147	38	"			Charles Singer Dominion St.
4	Horace Arthur Fremont Mitchell	4	8	27	"	149	56	"			Mrs. Ernest Mitchell King St.
5	Pauline Harriet Warman	4	11	20	"	154	51	"			F. A. Warman Park St.
6	Cordelia Allison McMullen	5	5	2	"	158	47	"			Lent McMullen Park St.
7	Marjorie Maud Hall	4	11	25	"	145	60	"			Randall Hall King St.
8	Lena Alberta Wilson	5	10	3	I	0		I			Bert Wilson Victoria St.
9	Lillian Winnifred Stewart	3	11	19	Kgtn	28	177	Kgtn			Mrs. Fred Stewart Robie St.
10	Wallace Eugene Talbot	6	1	12	"	48	157	"			James Talbot West Prince St.
11	Constance Elizabeth McLaren	5	3	12	"	150	55	"			James McLaren Revere St.
12	John Crane Bentley	5	9	17	"	131	74	"			Mrs. S. E. Bentley Elm St.
13	Isabel Carey MacKay	4	0	8	"	135	70	"			T. S. MacKay Broad St.
14	Mary Eleanor Allen	5	8	0	"	158	47	"			E. C. Allen Dominion St.
15	Evelyn Florence Gammon	7	10	0	"	163	42	"			Russell Gammon Robie St.
16	Portia May White	5	1	6	"	192	13	"			Rev. W. A. White West Prince St.
17	Alvie Victria Harlowe	6	6	0	"	16	189	"			L. C. Harlowe Willow St.
18	Carl Mack Boston	4	7	0	"	159	46	"			Mrs. F. Boston Victoria St.
19	Robert Louis Christie	4	4	8	"	99	106	"			L. M. Christie Smith Ave.
20	Thomas Earle Talbot	4	5	19	"	149	56	"			Hubert Talbot West Prince St.
21	John Edward Logan	5	9	12	"	175	30	"			William Logan Robie St.
22	Eleanor Margaret Montgomery	6	1	28	"	137	68	"			C. W. Montgomery Willow St.
23	William Donald Preston Doyle	5	9	17	"	149	36	"			Charles Doyle Park St.
24	Laura Mildred McCurdy	5	5	11	"	158	47	"			Frank McCurdy Willow St.
25	Evelyn Frances McElhinney	5	0	0	"	115	90	"			Hardy McElhinney Dominion St.
26	Mary Fannie Schurman	5	6	6	Kgtn	0		I			Mrs. F. B. Schurman Pleasant St.
27	Edna May Clyke	5	8	4	Kgtn	84	121	Kgtn			William Clyke West Prince St.

Figure 15: Willow Street School register from 1916 displaying African Nova Scotian students' names, including Portia May White. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives

In 1990, the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) conducted research and produced a report about inequity and systemic racism in the education

[171] Christie, 9.

[172] Ibid., 14.

[173] Ibid., 14.

system, titled the BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners. The report offered recommendations and strategies to address the identified problems. The provincial government, however, failed to institute many of the recommendations and received criticism from some community members.[174]

It is important to note that, despite the barriers faced by the African Nova Scotian community, there have been many significant contributions regarding education from community members in Truro and Colchester. One could argue that it is one of the better researched topics relating to the AFNS community. For more information, please see other resources including the Lynn Jones African Canadian Heritage collection, which is available online or in-person through the St. Mary's University Archives.

No. 2 Construction Battalion

Truro was the headquarters for the No. 2 Construction Battalion, CEF during the First World War. Also known as the Black Battalion, the No. 2 was a segregated battalion that arose from anti-Black sentiment. When the war broke out in 1914, Black men did not hesitate to volunteer to fight in the war. This sparked controversary because, while some military officials were in favour or impartial to Black Canadians participating in the war, others vehemently opposed it. Initially, Black men could enlist but only if the regiment would agree to accept them, leaving the decision up to the commanding officers. Many were turned away at recruiting stations and told that it was a "White man's war" and "we do not want a chequer board army." Some were permitted to enlist, however when they reported to camp for training, they were denied entry. Others were admitted at first but later discharged due to the outcry. Many White men refused to serve in the same ranks as Black men. Despite this, Black men were steadfast in their desire to contribute to the war effort—even if it meant fighting amongst men who had blatant prejudices against them.

It took two years of fighting for their right to join the war effort before an official directive was given as to whether Black men were permitted entry in the forces. Major-General W. G. Gwatkin issued a memorandum in April 1916 reaffirming that the decision of whether they could enlist was to be at the

[174] CBC News: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/blac-report-turns-10-1.465128.

discretion of the commanding officers. Gwatkin suggested the creation of a segregated battalion—but that the battalion should be a labour battalion because, in his opinion, Black men "would not make good fighting men," an assertion based on no evidence, and refuted by countless examples.

The No. 2 Construction Battalion was authorized on July 5, 1916, under Lieutenant-Colonel Daniel Hugh Sutherland of River John, Nova Scotia, who had volunteered to form the battalion. Many Black men joined the Battalion, even though it was segregated. Their commitment to the war effort was unwavering. Others were less keen after having been rejected in prior attempts to contribute to the war effort. Some were critical about the fact that the unit was segregated and non-combative.

Initially, the headquarters for the No. 2 Construction Battalion was in Pictou, Nova Scotia. However, Sutherland proposed to move the headquarters to Truro, Nova Scotia as there was a strong representation, and community, of African Nova Scotians in Truro. Records indicate that 180 recruits had joined in Pictou by August 19, 1916, before the headquarters was relocated to Truro in September. By December, the Battalion had grown to 575 members. Rev. William Andrew White, of Zion Baptist Church, was the Captain and Chaplain of the No. 2.

Figure 16: H/Capt. William Andrew White, BA, DD, Baptist minister and army chaplain (1874 - 1936) was a leading member of the African Nova Scotian community. White was chaplain for the No. 2 Construction Battalion, making him the only Black officer in the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War. Photograph ca. 1914-1918. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref # 88.397.1

In early 1917, the Battalion frequently performed concerts at locations such as the Tipperary Rink in Truro. There is no doubt that members of the Battalion would have been welcomed by the African Nova Scotian community, which is evidenced by news articles mentioning their attendance at Zion Baptist Church. There are no records to indicate specifically where Battalion members trained and lived, although photographic evidence and artifacts found on-site suggest that they trained at the TAAC grounds on Prince

Street, not far from the Island, which is on West Prince.

After more than seven months in Truro, the Battalion mobilized on March 17, 1917. 605 men and 19 officers left from Pier 2 in Halifax on March 28, 1917 on the *SS Southland*. Following the ceasefire in November 1918, most of the members returned to Halifax in January 1919 on the *RMS Aquitania, RMS Empress of Britain,* and *RMS Olympic.* They were discharged upon their arrival, and many returned to the provinces they were from. Other members chose to remain in Nova Scotia and several settled in Truro, including Samuel Reece (Reese) who was originally from British Guiana. The No. 2 Construction Battalion was disbanded and dissolved on September 20, 1920, less than two years after the First World War ended. Their story was largely forgotten as there was less celebration and honouring of non-combative units, let alone an all-Black non-combative unit.

Figure 17 No. 2 Construction Battalion, also known as the Black Battalion. Truro, NS. 1916. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives. Ref # 2017.22.1

The No. 2 Construction Battalion, and other Black veterans of the First World War, went unacknowledged for many years. Their dedication to joining the war effort, the vital services they provided, and their resilience in the face of rejection is worthy of recognition. Finally, 102 years after the Battalion was disbanded, the Government of Canada recognized their service and unfair

treatment with an official National apology by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on July 9, 2022, at the TAAC grounds in Truro, Nova Scotia.

The following members of the No. 2 Construction Battalion had next of kin addresses in Truro:

- Herbert Johnson
- James Ivan Talbot
- John Arthur Byard
- Charles Frederick Williams
- Clarence Ash
- Thomas Borden
- Percy Lewis Byard
- William Howard Byard
- Joseph Palmer Clyke
- Frederick Gordon Elms
- Walter Howard Elms
- Reuben Johnson
- Frank Leslie Paris
- William Lawrence Paris
- Lieut. George Henry Parker
- Corp. Samuel Reece
- Harry Henry Tynes
- Hon. Capt. William Andrew White

As mentioned, the ability for Black men to enlist was left to the discretion of Commanding Officers. Therefore, some Black men joined other Battalions, such as the 106th Battalion. This battalion included James Clyke, C.S. Halfkenny, Gordon Johnson, Jeremiah Jones, Sydney Jones, Thomas Jones, Ralph Stoutley, and Frank Taylor.

For a more detailed history of the Black Battalion, see Calvin Ruck's book, *The Black Battalion 1916-1920: Canada's Best Kept Military Secret.*

Activism and Advocacy

A history of African Nova Scotians in Truro and Colchester cannot be written without mention of the active role community members played in social activism throughout the years. African Nova Scotians did not passively accept inequality and discrimination–they fought for their rights and were instrumental in acting against social injustices.

One of the early organizations to advocate for equal rights was the African United Baptist Association (AUBA), which was established in 1854 by Rev. Richard Preston. This organization created a network of AFNS churches throughout the province, enabling the communities to work toward common goals such as social justice.[175] Although the AUBA was a religious organization, it advocated for education opportunities for African Nova Scotians. It created a platform where African Nova Scotians could have their voices heard and aspire to take leadership roles in the community. The Church was invaluable in providing a safe environment and training grounds for people to do things outside of their community, especially women. It also laid the foundation for members to learn the basics of leadership, such as public speaking.

Figure 18: Colored Improvement League float during a parade on Prince Street in Truro, 1964. Linda Jackson is on the back of the float and Murray Dorrington is driving. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #: 88.546.1

[175] Some churches from New Brunswick were also involved. African Canadian communities in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have many kinship ties to the African Nova Scotian community.

With the rise of anti-Black sentiments and hate groups, there were also people who joined together to fight inequality and anti-Black racism. The civil rights movement in the United States[176] extended to Canada. In 1945, the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NSAACP) was established in Halifax under the leadership of Rev. William Pearly Oliver.[177] NSCAPP mirrored the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), which was a prominent American organization whose purpose was to "build Black political power and end structural racism."[178] The NSAACP fought for equal rights for people of African heritage in all areas (education, employment, sports, etc.). They fought for AFNS women to have the ability to train and work as nurses, and for changes to the Department of Education's curriculum, which excluded African Nova Scotians and perpetuated racial stereotypes.

The Black United Front (BUF) was founded in Nova Scotia in 1968 during the civil rights movement.[179] The founding members of the BUF were William Pearly Oliver and Burnley "Rocky" Jones. This organization came to fruition after a Black family meeting was held in Halifax to address concerns in the community. The meeting was explicitly for people of African heritage and White people were not permitted to attend. This was considered extremely radical at the time and was feared by the establishment. The BUF broke down many barriers that community members faced. Its goals were like that of the Black Panther Party—to improve employment, housing, and educational opportunities for African Nova Scotians and African Canadians. It also offered free legal services to those who needed it.

The Black United Front operated for many years, but it gradually became less relevant to the African Nova Scotian community due to the lack of

[176] Predominantly in the 1950s and 1960s.
[177] Rev. Oliver was a well-known Acadia university graduate, pastor, educator, and real estate agent. He, and his wife Althea Pearleen (Borden) Oliver, were heavily involved in civil rights activism. They were also both active members of the AUBA.
[178] https://naacp.org/.
[179] For more information, see the Black United Front fonds at the Nova Scotia Archives. Accession number 2002-066/001-029.

accountability regarding government funding. As an organization that was initially formed in opposition to the establishment, government funding defeated its purpose. Finally, during a Black youth conference in Halifax, attendees staged a sit-in. The organization was finally disbanded in 1996.

One of the founding members of BUF, Rocky Jones (also known as "Rocky the Revolutionary") has been called one of the greatest champions of civil rights, both locally and nationally. Rocky was born to Elmer and Willena Jones in Truro on August 26, 1941. He grew up in Truro and spent the early days of his working career in Toronto. He returned to Nova Scotia with his wife and daughter in 1965 because the civil rights movement was growing elsewhere but had not gained as much traction in Nova Scotia—even though it had the largest population of African Canadians. Rocky came home with the intention of getting Nova Scotia more involved in the civil rights movement. Rocky actively participated in numerous organizations that fought for social justice. In addition to the Black United Front, Rocky founded the Kwacha House. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the Transition Year Program (TYP) and the Indigenous, Black, and Mi'kmaq Law program at Dalhousie University.

Figure 19: Burnley "Rocky" Jones. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #: 2015.114.1

Rocky received his law degree as a mature student (from the same program he founded) in 1992 and practiced law in the North End of Halifax for over 20 years. He began working for Legal Aid before establishing his own practice. He was a huge advocate for prison reform for people of African heritage and served as Executive Director for Real Opportunities for Prison Employment (ROPE).

One of Rocky's biggest cases was R. v. S. (R.D.). Rocky represented an underage youth, who had been arrested in Halifax for obstructing justice by interfering with the arrest of another African Nova Scotian youth. The judge in the Provincial Court, Corrine Sparks, was the first Black Canadian judge in Canada, and ruled in favour of Sparks, acknowledging that police had been known to treat

non-White civilians unfairly. The Crown argued that Sparks' decision was biased, and the case went to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1997. Even though Rocky was defending the youth in question, he was also fighting on behalf of the judge and whether she had the right to use personal experience for deciding cases. The case was highly publicized, and people travelled from across the country to attend the proceedings. Rocky won his case in the Supreme Court, setting a precedent that had a lasting impact on Canada's legal system.

Rocky was one of the first proponents in the area to seek justice for environmental racism. He worked closely with the Mi'kmaw community on land claims and social justice issues. Rocky represented the Frederick Street residents of Sydney, NS who were the victims of one of the worst cases of industrial hazardous waste pollution in Canada—the Sydney Tar Ponds. He was also directly involved in the relocation of Africville and one of the few who felt the community should not be demolished.[180] Throughout the years, Rocky was the recipient of numerous awards. Although the roster is too numerous to list, they include the National Black Coalition of Canada's Community Involvement Award and the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers Distinguished Service Award and the Order of Nova Scotia. He also organized the first African Liberation Day (Emancipation Day—now an officially recognized day—in Nova Scotia). Jones, who was from Truro, paved the way for the civil rights movement in Nova Scotia and is known internationally for his political and social activism.[181]

Other African Nova Scotian community members from Truro have played important roles in human rights movements. In fact, Dr. Lynn Jones, sister to Rocky Jones, was the founder and past chair of the National Human Rights/Race Relations Committee of the Canada Employment and Immigration Union. Lynn's political activism began when she was in high school and she was the first elected Black president of the Cobequid Educational Centre Student Council (1971-1972).[182] During her time as Student Council President, she staged a school-wide

[180] Many community members felt that Africville should be demolished because they believed it would be the catalyst for receiving compensation for new housing.

[181] For more information on Burnley "Rocky" Jones see the autobiography *Burnley "Rocky" Jones Revolutionary* by Burnley "Rocky" Jones and James W. St.G Walker (Fernwood Publishing, 2016) or the Lynn Jones African Canadian and Diaspora Collection at St. Mary's University.

[182] At the time of writing this, only one other African Nova Scotian has held the position of Student Council President since Lynn's term, which was over 50 years ago.

walkout to raise awareness about lack of government funding for a gym and music room at the school. She also organized "Soul Day"—a day-long event celebrating Black History—which was a precursor to Black History Month.[183]

Lynn became the first Black General Vice President of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). She sat on the CLC's Human Rights Committee and was the first Black woman to be on the board of the Labour College. She was a member of the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. Lynn Jones was a member of the NDP and ran in the 1993 federal election.

The Jones family has a long legacy of social activism. Lynn and Rocky's sister, Janice Jones, was the founder of the Black Education Program, which continues to operate in Halifax today. Their mother, Willena Jones, was President of the Multicultural Association of Colchester County. She was also President of the Truro Coloured Improvement League and sat on the Advisory Board of the Education Fund for Black Students.

Figure 20: Willena Jones. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref #: 94.141.114

In 1967, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission was formed.[184] By October of 1978, the province's Human Rights Commission had received over 10,000 complaints, and Truro's Black community had taken an active role in the promotion of human rights. Many African Nova Scotians from Truro and Colchester started their careers in leadership roles involving activism and advocacy, including Wayne Talbot, Darryl Maxwell, and Lorne "Buddy" Marsman. Wayne Talbot, who was also working for the BUF, was the Chair of the Truro Human Rights Affirmative Action Committee, which was working on establishing agreements with local employers to take a more active role in hiring racially

[183] Now known as African Heritage Month.

[184] Notably, this was one of the first Human Rights Commissions to be formed in the country. It became controversial when the government appointed a White director and the African Nova Scotian community had largely been excluded from the process. For more information, see Lynn Jones African Canadian and Diaspora Collection in the St. Mary's University Archives (Patrick Power Library).

visible people. Polymer International Ltd. was the first local employer to sign an agreement.[185]

African Nova Scotians from Truro and Colchester have historically been in leadership roles regarding activism and advocacy. For example, Bonnie Jordan was the Vice President of the Truro Coloured Improvement League for six years and Vera Clyke was a member of the Black United Front and the Human Rights Commission. Ronald "Bussie" Tynes ran for Town council and was involved in procuring housing for the AFNS community. There have been many other community members involved in activism and advocacy from Truro and Colchester and, while their names have not been mentioned, it does not mean their contributions have been no less meaningful.

Equality and Allies

Despite the discriminatory practices against the African Nova Scotian community, historical documentation also suggests that some White Truroians believed in, and fought for, equality for their AFNS community members. Documentation shows that there were African Nova Scotian community members that were highly regarded in Truro and Colchester. In 1900, a lengthy article appeared in the Truro Daily News titled "A Good Word for the Well-Behaved Colored People."[186] This article recollects a large picnic/gathering in Kentville of which 200 African Nova Scotians attended. It reads: "We cannot speak too highly of the good order which prevailed throughout… If the same number of white men and women came here from any locality… would they have conducted themselves as well? They might, but we have never seen it so far."[187] Despite the fact that this article perpetuates racial stereotypes of "civilized versus uncivilized" it is also evident that the intention of the writer was to change public perception.

Another article, in 1902, highlights Edward Borden's accomplishments as a scholar and the "only colored graduate of Acadia in the class of '02" and declares that Borden "takes a very active part in the industrial advancement of his race."[188]

[185] Truro Daily News, 28 October 1978.
[186] Truro Daily News, 14 August 1900.
[187] Truro Daily News, 14 August 1900.
[188] Truro Daily News, 14 April 1902. "A Truro Colored Boy Away Up the Ladder."

One year prior, a devastating fire had burned down the house of John Paris and the article reporting the disaster spoke highly of Paris, noting that he was "one of the most industrious men among our colored population in Truro."[189] Again, the language used in this article simultaneously perpetuates stereotypes while trying to dismantle them. But it is my opinion that, in these cases, the writer's intentions were good.

Often, after publicized disputes based on race, articles would appear in the paper in defence of the African Nova Scotian community. For example, following the Smith's Island riot in 1919, an article titled "A Worthy Appeal" appears in the paper and reads:

> Many respectable colored citizens in the uncalled for attack on the colored population on Smith's Island, on the night of the 28th ult., had their houses much injured and some furniture destroyed.
>
> There is no law, apparently, by which the Town is responsible for such destruction, but the law of decency and order makes it incumbent upon law-abiding people of the town, that these citizens should not be called upon to bear this loss. It has been suggested to Rev. Mr Perry that he take in hand an Appeal to the people generally to assist in making good this injury to property; and he has kindly consented to do so.
>
> Give him a generous reception and subscribe liberally too reimburse these citizens for their loss by that most unfortunate affair on Sunday night a week ago.[190]

Although several hundred people of Truro participated in the riot,[191] this article indicates that there were also people in Truro who were disgusted with the vigilantism and wanted to help the African Nova Scotian community recover.

Another example of varied sentiment toward the African Nova Scotian community can be found following a controversial event where a Truro sports team refused to play Acadia University due to racial discrimination. In October of 1902, the Truro Football team refused to play against Acadia University when they learned there was a Black member on their team. An article in the Halifax Herald detailed an interview with Truro's Captain H.V. Bigelow (who was White), who defended his team's decision and stated that it was "backed up by the citizens of Wolfville unanimously." The following day, however, several people

[189] Truro Daily News, 4 February 1901.

[190] Truro Daily News, 6 October 1919.

[191] For more information on the riot see previous section about Racism and Discrimination.

submitted letters to the editor in disagreement, making some of the following statements:

> As a citizen [of Truro] I regret that such a state of mind should exist.
>
> That Mr. Bigelow's letter was 'the language of half a century ago, and must have been given to the press by some Rip Van-Winkle.
>
> As a resident of Truro… I would be negligent in my duty if I permitted this opinion to voice the majority of the sporting people of this town.
>
> "I would suggest to the Acadia team that they challenge [other] college teams to matches at an early date, so as to give the Nova Scotia public the chance of knowing exactly how many snobs there are in the Nova Scotia field of sports. Some people 'forget whence they sprung' but I know tolerably well the pedigree of the members of the Truro football team."[192]

Despite the offensive, blatant racism that permeated society in the early twentieth century, some citizens were willing to support, and defend, the African Nova Scotian community.[193]

Several years prior, during the grand opening of Zion Baptist Church in 1897, the Truro Daily News reported that there was a large audience "including many white folks." My initial interpretation of this report was that it demonstrated that the relationship between the two racially different communities was not always necessarily fraught. However, Lynn Jones brought to my attention that it could be interpreted on the contrary. The fact that reporters were making a point to note attendance of "white folks" could suggest that the atmosphere in Truro was racially charged and articles such as this attempted to bridge the gap between the communities. Notwithstanding, it is crucial to acknowledge that while the AFNS community in Colchester had some allies and advocates, it was also subjected to many prejudices and stereotypes.

[192] Halifax Herald, 15 October 1902.

[193] It is worth noting that, over 120 years later, racially charged controversies in sports in the Maritimes are still ongoing and prevalent today. For example, in February 2022, a Nova Scotian hockey goalie was the target of racial slurs at a hockey tournament in Prince Edward Island. For more see: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-connors-racist-incident-decision-1.6347931.

Early Noteworthy Allies

There appear to be two non-African Nova Scotian individuals from Truro in the late 1800s who were particularly supportive of the AFNS community.

Israel Longworth (1835-1902) was a lawyer and author who was born in Prince Edward Island and moved to Truro in 1861 to set up his law practice. He served as Truro's second mayor from 1878-1879. Longworth wrote several historical books, including *The History of Colchester County* circa 1886. He also kept a detailed diary during his time in Truro which offers many insights into daily life in the mid-to-late 1800s. I have referenced Longworth as a source several times already.

Longworth was a very affluent person, and he owned a large portion of property between West Prince Street and Robie Street (in the vicinity of present-day Longworth Avenue) upon which he had a farm, known as Lorndale.

As mentioned, Longworth kept a detailed diary. Two entries in particular stand out. On February 13, 1860, Longworth wrote about the meeting at George Jones' barber shop "to take steps relative to the formation of a fire engine company."[194] Longworth recounts that Jones made several suggestions that were accepted and "so that point was settled," implying he was well-respected and had the final say. The entry also recalls that attendees voted for Jones to give a speech at the end of the meeting. Again, this suggests the level of reverence that Jones held amongst other esteemed Truro citizens. On the other hand, Longworth's entry recalls that, during the meeting, a man came into the barber shop and demanded to have his hair cut. He used a derogatory slur. Although Longworth's entry does not stipulate how he personally felt about this incident, the fact that he recorded it at all invites speculation that he thought it was inappropriate and disrespectful–something that would have been an unpopular opinion at the time.

The other entry that is noteworthy in Longworth's diary is a eulogy that he wrote for an African Nova Scotian woman, Sarah Connolly, when she passed away on February 10, 1895. Longworth called her a "worthy woman" and wrote that members of the IOGT erected a large monument in her memory at Robie Street Cemetery. Sarah Connolly's role in the community and her connection to

[194] Israel Longworth's Diary, pp. 87-90. Available at the Colchester Historeum Archives.

Longworth remains a mystery but it is evident that Longworth felt highly enough of her to ensure she had the grandest monument/headstone in the Zion Baptist section of the Robie Street cemetery. It still stands today.

When Longworth passed away in 1902, he left $150 to Isaac Brodie, who was his "farm hand" and $50 to William Byard in his Last Will and Testament, both of whom were African Nova Scotian.[195] Although these were small sums of money compared to other individuals who he left money to in his will, it suggests that Longworth not only had much respect for these individuals, but that he cared for them. What's more, the Estate of Longworth conveyed a plot of land to William Byard after Longworth had passed away. This appears to have been an arrangement in which Byard had paid Longworth over an extended period for the purchase of the land.

In his *History of Colchester County*, Longworth also made a point of writing about individuals who were White slaveholders in Colchester, including Matthew Archibald. He wrote "it may be important to notice, in order to throw light on the times, that on the 29th of July 1779, Mr. Archibald purchased from Matthew Harris of Pictou, a negro boy named Abraham, for fifty pounds."[196] Longworth also made note that an elected member for Truro, Doctor John Harris, had a captive known as "Black Jeff." Again, the fact that Longworth makes a point to bring up White slaveholding at a time when it was not often publicly acknowledged suggests that Longworth was "ahead of his time" with regards to how he viewed racial inequality.

In addition to Longworth being supportive of the AFNS community, his business partner, Norman I. Layton, is also noted for being the lawyer who assisted members of Zion in acquiring land and procuring mortgages and loans for building Zion Baptist Church. Longworth and Layton also assisted in securing an insurance policy. While Longworth and Layton were certainly not the only two people to support the African Nova Scotian community in various ways in the late

[195] A copy of this is available at the Colchester Historeum Archives. At the time of writing, it is a recent acquisition and has not yet been accessioned.

[196] Longworth, Israel, *Israel Longworth's History of Colchester County Nova Scotia Circa 1886.* First printed in 1989. Page 40.

nineteenth century, they stand out, appearing to have had good intentions for, and strong relationships with, the African Nova Scotian community.

Conclusion

The African Nova Scotian community holds a distinct status as descendants of the first people of African Heritage to plant roots in Canada. The three communities within Truro, although situated in different areas, have familial connections and, together, form a single community. They are one and have continued to survive and thrive by supporting one another. The larger community has failed to adequately recognize the contributions they have made to Truro.

Figure 21: Truro Sheiks Baseball Team circa 1930. Left to Right: Back Row: Sank Paris; Percy "Doo" Byard; Parmer Jordan; Willy Jackson; Akey Byard; Wilfred Jordan Front Row: Mac Halfkenny; Al Paris; Gordon Maxwell; Ben Clyke; Lloyd Jackson. Circa 1930.

The AFNS community in Truro and Colchester endured economic hardship and has been subjected to racial discrimination for as long as it has existed. Fortunately, these debilitating and unfair circumstances have not prevented the community from succeeding and thriving. African Nova Scotians have contributed to all aspects of society in the region. These contributions are visible across the board—from the Halfkenny family who were stone masons and assisted with the

development of Victoria Park to the Geros and Clykes, who were responsible for establishing Truro's first garbage disposal companies. The role of AFNS women in Truro should also be highlighted—from childcare and women who were known as "aunt" (such as Aunt Hazel) by practically the whole town, to the fact that, at one time, almost every cook in Truro was from the AFNS community. Education, healthcare, nursing—you name it—AFNS community members have been, and continue to be, important contributors.

One topic that has not been extensively covered in this narrative is the contributions of the African Nova Scotian community to sports. This is due, in part, to the fact that much information is readily available on the topic. Often, hockey achievements are highlighted in Truro's AFNS community, however, there have been many great achievements in other sports: boxing, track, golf, swimming, baseball, basketball, etc. The Head of the African American Sports & Creative Institute has noted that Truro has one of the most impressive records of small-town sports achievement. Nova Scotia's Coloured Hockey League, and Truro's "Sheiks" is featured in the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History

Figure 22: Truro Sheiks Hockey Team, 1930. Back: Edward Clyke; Buster Clyke; Joe Paris Centre: St. Claire Byard; Tude Talbot; Wilfred Jordan; Ansel Clyke Front: Fred "Ted" Dorrington; Simmonds Clyke. Source: Colchester Historeum Archives Ref # 1999.36.3

Many community members are also noted for their "firsts," such as Edward Howard Borden, the first Black graduate of Acadia University; Martha Jones, the first Black graduate of the Provincial Normal College; and Portia White, the first Black Canadian opera singer to earn international recognition. Others are known

for their success in areas such as music and sports, or contributions to the war effort, such as Jeremiah Jones and Reverend W.A. White. The fact that they are considered “the first” is not as significant as the fact that they set precedents for their community and opened doors by paving the way for others to follow.

Today, African Nova Scotians in Truro have assumed notable positions in the town and afar, including town councillors, school principals, health care providers, educators, business entrepreneurs, prominent sports figures, lawyers, politicians, and many more.

Afterword

Much like Part I of this writing, this would not have been possible without the assistance, guidance, and constructive criticism of Dr. Lynn Jones. She was also kind enough to offer tidbits of history based on her own personal experience growing up in the African Nova Scotian community in Truro, Nova Scotia. During my past five years of knowing Lynn, she has taught me so much and I am forever thankful for her role in my learning journey.

I would also like to thank several other African Nova Scotian community members who have been willing to share their stories and thoughts with me throughout this journey, including Nevin Jackson, who has been a diligent researcher in the Colchester Historeum’s Archives during my time working there. He, too, has been part of my learning journey.

I owe the early days of my learning journey to friends from the African Nova Scotian community in Truro who I grew up with. Their willingness to share firsthand experiences and information that had been passed down to them from their families is significant because, long before I was pursuing a career in the heritage sector, they brought my attention to the realities that their community faced. Those stories will stay with me forever.

This writing came to fruition as a culmination of several things. When I began working at the Colchester Historeum as the Archivist, I quickly noticed a lack of documentation regarding racially visible communities (African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaw) in Colchester. And there was a demand for such information. But archives are inherently colonial–they contribute to systemic

racism in many ways. Archives exist to retain documents as "evidence"—evidence of colonial practices, such as land ownership. Therefore, there is bias in what documents get chosen to be archived. For example, archives prioritize written documentation. In the minds of many researchers and scientists in our society, if there is no written documentation or visible evidence of something, in their minds it does not exist. Historically, archives have seen value and truth only in the written word. Archives cannot possibly reflect a true representation of history, however, if entire racially visible communities have been denied access to education and, therefore, the ability to produce the written word, or if entire cultures have not always had a written language and histories have been passed down orally, this is the epitome of systemic racism. We cannot combat racism in general if we cannot acknowledge these realities and change our ways of thinking.

The decision to write this piece was born out of my firsthand experiences discussing racism with visitors, researchers, and peers. Institutions have failed to acknowledge racism and the inherent problems in the system. Without acknowledgment, there is a hesitancy to accept that racism existed in Truro and continues to exist. This is a systemic problem, as our education system has failed, time and time again, generation after generation, to acknowledge the realities of our past and help our youth understand how we have arrived at this point in history.

Systemic racism needs to be combated from within our institutions. This writing is my effort to make information, which has existed in fragments, more publicly available. I have been fortunate to have had the ability to collect "breadcrumbs" over the course of four and a half years of working at the Colchester Historeum and this is my attempt at trying to help people better understand aspects of our past that have been ignored and erased for centuries.

It had been my intention to create a third part of this narrative that focused on individuals and highlighted some of the community's notable members and their accomplishments– there are so many that deserve mention! But perhaps this will be pursued by future researchers. It is just one more aspect of the African Nova Scotian History in Colchester that is scant and poorly documented.

An archivist's job isn't really to perform research or write papers. But their job is to provide access to information for researchers. It is also their job to choose

how to collect, arrange, and describe information. Their role inadvertently carries a lot of power. To contribute to change, we need to disrupt the systems that uphold inequality. So, although it is unconventional for a (past) archivist to write something like this, I have also been in the position to gain access to bits and pieces of information that would otherwise take researchers hundreds of hours to find. The least I can do is share it with the world and hope it makes a small difference on the road to liberation and reparations.

If you've followed the narrative up to this point, I hope you will not see this as the end. There is so much more to be uncovered and written and this is only the beginning.

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