

Sam Langford's Black Loyalist Land Roots

By Brian McConnell, UE *

Samuel "Sam" Edgar Langford was called by the Canadian Press the "Fighter of the Half – century" elected to America's Boxing Hall of Fame in 1955 and to Canada's Sport Hall of Fame as well as being an original inductee of the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame. (1) His ancestor James Langford was one of the Black Loyalists who acquired land in Nova Scotia after the American Revolution.

It has been estimated 3,550 black loyalists were transported to Nova Scotia and 385 are recorded as having received legal title to land. At Birchtown, near Shelburne, 184 received a total of 6,382 acres. At Little Tracadie in Guysborough County, 74 received a total of 3,000 acres. In Preston, Halifax County, 51 received 2,557.5 acres. (1) At Brindley Town, near Digby, 76 one acre lots were granted to Black Loyalists, 23 of whom served with the Black Pioneers, a British Regiment in the recent American conflict. (2)

The Brindley Town land grant stated:

His Excellency Governor Parr was pleased to give by Grant bearing date the 29th day of July, 1785 to the undermentioned Black people certain town lots consisting of one Acre each in a town called by them Brindley Town with the Township of Digby

Names	Lot Number	Remarks
John Jingo & John Irwin	1	
Edward Godfrey	2	
Henry Brewen	3	
Thomas Bing	4	present
Bristen Godfrey	5	present
Robert James	6	
Lewis Curby	7	present
John Holland	8	present
John Prince	9	present
Benjamin Davis	10	present
John Shephard	11	present
Frances Griffith	12	present
James Jackson	13	present
John Sampson	14	present
James Liverpool	15	present
Church Ground	16	
Miles Jordan	17	present

Names Continued	Lot Number	Remarks
David Edmun	18	
John Gordon	19	
Henry Floyd	20	m. Nancy Stuart 1 July 1787
George Scarbury	21	
Larry Wright	22	
Abraham Leslie	23	
Isaac Williams	24	
Henry Williams	25	
Henry Reddick	26	
William Williams (alias Bush)	27	
John Warren	28	present
Liberty Logree	29	present
Joseph Martin (alias Mason)	30	
Frances Roberts	31	present
Thomas Bird	32	present
Henry Mitchell	33	present
John Godfrey	34	
Mungo Jordan	35	m. Phebe Colborn 31 December 1788
John Walk	36	
Samuel Tomkins	37	present
Cornelius Brewer	38	
Thomas Tucker	39	m. Diana Saunders 12 December 1787
Ajaf Benson	40	
Jacob Brumel	42	present
Demps Dixon	43	present
Walter Dixon	44	
Thomas Ledeker	45	dead
Peter Youman	46	present
Henry Wright	47	
Henry Beaverhout	48	present
Henry Middleton	49	present
Samuel Farmer	50	present

Names Continued	Lot Number	Remarks
Christian Hallstead	51	present
Isaac Mead	52	present
John Custard	53	present
Benjamin Niles	57	present
William McNight	58	m. Ann Johnson 20 May 1788
Joseph Leonard	59	present
James Austin	60	
York Shephard	61	
Joseph Clayton	62	
Abraham Saunders	63	
William Scarbury	64	
Murphy Steel	65	
James Bates	66	dead
John Willams, Jr.	67	
John Cobas	68	
Thomas Timpany	69	
Pompey Benjamin	70	
John Tillis	71	
Charles Francis	72	
Thomas Demaret	73	
John Schooner (alias Salter)	74	
Samuel Fryer	75	
Thomas Peters	76	

The community of Brindley Town did not last. The inhabitants were discouraged by treatment and conditions. Many left for Sierra Leone with Thomas Peters in 1792 when the British government made available land there and provided transportation. (3)

Here are some individual cases where Black Loyalists managed to obtain land:

1. David George was a Black Loyalist and Baptist Preacher who arrived with the British in Halifax, Nova Scotia in December, 1782. He went to Shelburne in June, 1783 to preach to Black Loyalists and was conveyed land in the town. The Deed to him dated April 6, 1785 may be the first Deed made to a Black person in Nova Scotia. It was recorded on May 7, 1785. (Source: Nova Scotia Property Online, Book 2 at Page 183, Shelburne County)
2. Deed dated July 18, 1787 in which Samuel Balcom and his wife Mary of Wilmot in the County of Annapolis conveyed 17 acres to "Samuel Brown (a Black man) of the County & Province aforesaid, Farmer". The price paid was 7 pounds 10 shillings. In a subsequent Deed on May 30, 1789 "Samuel Brown, a Black Man" and his wife Hannah of Wilmot sold the land for 10 pounds. (Source: Nova Scotia Property Online, Book 3A, Page 399, Annapolis County)
3. Deed between two Black Loyalists dated April 19, 1792 from Isaac Ringwood to Frances Wells. Each was described as a "Black man" and Deed conveyed 50 acres of land in Digby County, Nova Scotia for two pounds ten shillings. It was registered on February 5, 1810. (Source: Nova Scotia Property Online, Book 4, Page 131, Digby County) Both were formerly members of the Black Pioneers, a unit raised by British for service during American Revolution.
4. Deed dated 29 Sept. 1798 to William Barton, identified as a "black man", of Brindley Town, Digby County, Nova Scotia from Loyalist Richard Hill. The Deed conveyed 50 acres of land at Joggin for price of 17 pounds, 10 shillings. (Source: Nova Scotia Property Online, Book 3A, Page 399, Digby County) On May 16, 1790 William Barton married Susanna Williams, possible daughter of Isaac, Henry or William Williams who received land at Brindley Town.

5. Deed dated Sept 26, 1802 from Thomas Cornwall, Esquire of Town of Annapolis conveyed land to James Langford described as a "Black Man and Ship Wright of the Township of Digby". Cornwall had served as a Captain in King's American Regiment in American Revolution. Langford appears in Book of Negroes with a General Birch Certificate of Freedom and was originally from Maryland. The Deed conveyed 100 acres on the South side of the Sissiboo River for the consideration of 25 pounds. (Source: Nova Scotia Property Online, Book 1A, Page 129, Digby County). He was the great grandfather of boxer Samuel Edgar Langford, born in Weymouth Falls, Nova Scotia who defeated many world champions.
6. On April 8, 1822, Jane James, Black woman, possible wife or daughter of Black Loyalist Robert James who appeared on the 1784 listing of refugee negroes settled at Digby, signed a Deed by making her mark of an X. It was for two lots of land of one acre each, being lots six and seven in Brinley Town. It was very uncommon for a black woman to own land at this time. (Source: Nova Scotia Property Online, Book 7, Page 76, Digby County). The Deed has been transcribed in part as:

This Indenture made the 8th day of April, 1822

Between Jane James, Black woman of the Township of Digby, County of Annapolis, of the one part and Charles Budd of the same place of the other part.

Witnesseth that the said Jane James in consideration of the sum of eight pounds lawful money of Nova Scotia to her is been paid by the said Charles Budd the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledge Hath Granted bargain and sold and by these presents do Grant bargain sell unto the said Charles Budd his heirs and assigns all sand singular those two lots in the Township of Digby aforesaid known and distinguished by the names of number six and seven in Brindley Town so called at the head of the Little Joggin containing two acres more or less with all and singular the privileges and appurtenances thereunto belonging ...

Notes:

- Brian McConnell, UE is the Past President of the NS Branch of the UELAC as well as an author and historian. He prepared this article on February 11, 2025.
- (1) Sam Langford, Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame. Accessed on February 11, 2025 at <https://nsshf.com/inductee/sam-langford-2/>
 - (2) Brudenell, Edward, Letterbook on Loyalist 1785 – 1786, MS Can 48, volume 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
 - (3) Walker, James W. St. G. "The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783 – 1879: University of Toronto Press, 2017