



Richard Pierpoint Heritage Minute Learning Tool

Supplemental Activities

The **Historica Dominion Institute's** new Heritage Minute tells the story of Richard Pierpoint, a formerly enslaved Black Loyalist who, at age 68, enlisted Black men to fight with the British in the War of 1812. The Coloured Corps fought in a number of battles in the Niagara region (including Queenston Heights) and were instrumental to the war effort. The following activities will help deepen your knowledge of Black history in Canada.

"Runaway Advertisement" Activity

Historical Context: Enslaved Africans

By the 1790s, there may have been 500 to 700 enslaved men, women and children of African descent in Upper Canada. White Loyalists who began migrating to the province near the end of the American Revolution brought their slave property, also known as **chattel**, with them. Enslaved Blacks were forced to work as domestic servants, farmhands or as skilled craftsmen. Some were sold, handed down in wills or given as gifts.

Many slaves resisted their enslavement by running away to free northern U.S. states such as Pennsylvania and New York, and free U.S. regions like the Michigan Territory. Slave owners would post advertisements about runaways, encouraging local law enforcement and ordinary people to return the slaves for a reward.

Slavery was completely abolished in British North America and other British colonies on August 1, 1834 when the Slavery Abolition Act, which had been passed by the British Parliament the year before, came into effect. The end of slavery culminated in a celebration of freedom called Emancipation Day.

Activity

- Examine each runaway ad and identify:
 - the owner
 - the enslaved person
 - the location the slave fled from
 - the slave's skills
 - the description of the runaway
 - the reward
- Investigate how Emancipation Day was commemorated by African descendants.

Discussion Questions

- What was the purpose of runaway advertisements? What do they reveal about that time in history?
- Describe how slavery forced the **displacement** of African people. What impact did it have on them?

Definitions:

Chattel

Personal property that could be bought and sold, including slaves.

Displacement

When people are forced to leave their homes due to deliberate actions of others or natural disasters

RUN away on the 27th Inst. a Negro Man, named, DICK, (belonging to Mr. BENJAMIN DOUGLASS, late Ensign in the Kings Carolina Rangers) about five feet eight Inches high Stout Made, had on when he went away a red Coat turn'd up with blue, white Waistcoat and Breeches, Aged about Twenty seven Years. Whoever will apprehended said Negro and bring him to Mr. ANDREW THOMSON, of Halifax, Merchant shall be handsomely rewarded.
Nov. 29th, 1783.

◊ Runaway slave advertisement in *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle*, 9 December 1783, p.4; NSA Newspaper Collection (microfilm no. 8159).

RAN away from her Master JOHN ROCK, on Monday the 18th Day of August last; a Negro Girl named Thursday, about four and an half feet high, broad sett, with a Lump above her Right Eye: Had on when she ran away a red Cloth Petticoat, a red Baize Bed Gown, and a red Ribbon about her Head. Whosoever may harbour said Negroe Girl, or encourage her to stay away from her said Master, may depend on being prosecuted according as the Law shall direct. And whosoever may be so kind to take her up and send her home to her said Master, shall be paid all Coils and Charges, together with TWO DOLLARS Reward for their Trouble.
JOHN ROCK.
HALIFAX, Sept. 11t, 1772.

Fugitive slave advertisement in *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle*, ◊ 1 September 1772, p.3; NSA Newspaper Collection (microfilm no. 8155).

Black Loyalist Activity

Historical Context: The Coloured Corps (Runchey's Company of Coloured Men)

Like other volunteer militia companies, the Coloured Corps consisted of able-bodied men who were called to serve on a full-time basis for the duration of the war. Today, the stories of the nearly 40 soldiers who made up the Coloured Corps have not been well known. They can be identified by name, but their personal stories and contributions have been lost. The absence of their true names contributes to their lost histories, making it impossible to trace most of these men's lives before their adoption of western names.

Analyzing a Primary Source: The "Book of Negroes"

We can learn more about Canada's Black history from all kinds of historical documents. Original documents that provide first-hand accounts of a historical period, such as military records, government documents, letters, photographs and diaries, are considered primary documents.

The names of Black settlers who left the United States after the American Revolution are recorded in the "Book of Negroes," a 150-page military ledger. It can be found among other official documents from the period here: www.blackloyalist.com/canadiandigitalcollection/documents/official.htm

1. What is this document and what was its purpose?
2. When and where was this document created?
3. Who was the author of the source and who was the intended audience?

Quotation Analysis

- Analyze these quotes made in reference to Richard Pierpoint and the Coloured Corps. Comment on what each statement reveals about the men of the all-Black militia unit.
- After completing the activities in the Richard Pierpoint Learning Tool, create your own quote that expresses your opinion on Black participation in the War of 1812, and in the Canadian military.
- Describe the perspective that White commanding officers had of Richard Pierpoint and the Coloured Corps.

Quotes

"I do hereby certify that Richard Pierpoint, a man of color, served His Majesty in North America, during the American Revolutionary War in the Provincial Corps Called Butler's Rangers. I further Certify that the Said Richard Pierpoint, better known by the name of Captain Dick, was the first colored man [sic] who proposed to raise a Corps of Men of Color on the Niagara Frontier, in the last American War; and that he served in the said corps during the War, and that he is a faithful and deserving old Negro."

– Adjutant General's office, York, July 21, 1821

"The truly amazing fact about Captain Dick is that we know of him at all."

– Peter and David Meyler, *A Stolen Life: Searching for Richard Pierpoint* (1999)

"When I visited the Niagara Frontier ... I found that a corps of Free Men of Colour had been raised ... but had been turned over to that of the Engineers, any necessity for this I never could learn, but it seems to have been the fashion in Canada to heap all kinds of duties upon the latter." – Lieutenant Colonel Gustavus Nicolls, 1815

"No people could be better calculated to build temporary barracks than these Free Men of Colour as they are in general expert axemen."

– Lieutenant Colonel Gustavus Nicolls, 1815

Make Your Own Heritage Minute Activity

1. If you were the writer of the Richard Pierpoint Heritage Minute, what period of his life would you feature in your film? Why is that period most important to his story? You can include parts of his life that are not included in the Heritage Minute (for example, his life as a slave in the United States, or his involvement in the American Revolution).
2. If you were hired to make the next Heritage Minute about the War of 1812, what part of the war would you choose? Whose story would you tell? Write the screenplay for your Heritage Minute and then stage it for your class. Remember, it has to be exactly 60 seconds long!
3. Design and draw a poster promoting your favourite Heritage Minute.