

Searching for the Enslaved in Nova Scotia's Loyalist Landscape

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Volume 43, Number 1, Winter/Spring 2014

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad43_1for03

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Publisher(s)

The Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Cottreau-Robins, C. M. (2014). Searching for the Enslaved in Nova Scotia's Loyalist Landscape. *Acadiensis*, 43(1), 125–136.

Searching for the Enslaved in Nova Scotia's Loyalist Landscape

AT THE CLOSE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, thousands of Loyalists were forced into exile and made their way to British colonies beyond the United States. Most of the Loyalists landed in British North America, particularly the Maritimes. Along with the trauma and losses of the conflict, the Loyalists brought with them a way of doing things, an intense political history, and ideas concerning the imperial structure that framed their everyday lives. This discussion introduces a study of the Loyalists that is contained in fuller form in my doctoral dissertation.¹ Specifically, it explores a prominent Loyalist and his journey from Massachusetts to Nova Scotia along with family members, servants, and labourers (including enslaved persons). A central objective of the research was to highlight the story of the enslaved and emphasize their place in Nova Scotia's 18th century colonial history. The objective was addressed by adapting a holistic perspective that considered a single geography – the plantation. The holistic perspective, developed through an interdisciplinary methodology, explored the people, places, and culture that formed the Loyalist plantation and were informed by it.

As well as enabling the reconstitution of the structure and organization of a Loyalist plantation in the late 18th century, the research supported three key inferences. First, an interdisciplinary approach is fundamental when exploring the subject of the plantation and its inhabitants in Nova Scotia. Secondly, the study of the slaveholder and comparison of his plantation spaces generates an argument for Loyalist continuity and confirms a slaveholding culture during the mass migration. Finally, the research underlines why the Loyalist period should be described as Nova Scotia's age of slavery. The Loyalist migration represented an unprecedented arrival of enslaved persons to the province. Furthermore, the Loyalist migration brought with it a political and ideological framework that embodied perceptions of race and seeds of discrimination that took root.

Three streams of research

Now, whether a Negro is or can be the property of any Man in this Province, will emphatically depend upon another question – Whether a Negro can or cannot be a Slave in this Province? For if he can be a Slave here, I think when we come coolly to consider the legal dominion which the master has over him, he cannot be taken to be anything less than his Master's property.²

1 The doctoral dissertation, which is the full study, is available through Dalhousie University: Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, "A Loyalist Plantation in Nova Scotia, 1784-1800" (PhD diss., Dalhousie University, 2012). Thanks to Ken Donovan and Jerry Bannister, who commented on this paper.

2 Excerpt from *Opinions of Several Gentlemen of the Law on the Subject of Negro Servitude in the Province of Nova Scotia* (Saint John, NB: John Ryan, 1802), pp. 6-12, reel 3934, Nova Scotia Archives (NSA), Halifax. In this interesting review of the status of slavery in Nova Scotia, the

An estimated 2,000 to 2,500 enslaved African Americans arrived in the Maritime colonies with their Loyalist masters at the end of the American Revolution.³ The quotation above is drawn from a published legal debate about slavery in Nova Scotia some 20 years after the main Loyalist migration had begun. It illustrates the impact of the arrival of thousands of slaves to a sparsely populated British colony and the desire for those with enslaved labourers to understand their legal, financial, and political position. For me, discovering such a document in the Nova Scotia archives while immersed in records of the free Black Loyalists, initiated a pause and ultimately a new path of historical inquiry. What about the Loyalist slaves? How did they arrive, where did they settle, and what was their daily life within the framework of the Loyalist master-slave relationship?

Three disciplines were selected as the most appropriate, when integrated, to address questions surrounding the enslaved in Nova Scotia in the Loyalist era: Atlantic world history, historical archaeology, and cultural geography. The Atlantic world history research stream provided the underlying foundation. It represented the review and analysis of primary and secondary documentary sources that offered historical context and a key case study, that of the Loyalist migrant Timothy Ruggles.⁴ The historical archaeology research stream represented the fieldwork component. Historical archaeology offered a hands-on method to collect and record evidence of a Loyalist plantation with enslaved labourers, servants, or hired hands, and so addressed the challenges of a documentary record that has significant gaps. Archaeological excavation and research produced physical evidence of the past, in the form of material culture or artifacts, architectural remains, and landscape features. And the cultural geography stream emphasized the study of two 18th-century plantation landscapes: Timothy Ruggles's estate in Hardwick, Worcester County, Massachusetts, and his farmstead on North Mountain, Wilmot Township,

"Gentlemen" concur with the opinions of Mr. Aplin, the main contributor. Regarding whether "Negroes, so made Slaves, can be the property of their Masters," Aplin reasons "that whatever is made an article of traffic, must necessarily have an owner, and consequently become an article of sale. And whatever may be legally sold, must have been the property of the seller." In the matter, Aplin quotes the Act (of Parliament) 5. Geo. 2. C. 7, which makes Negroes property in the hands of their masters. The act "expressly makes personal Estates of them, and subjects them to be sold under Execution to satisfy the demands of English creditors." Aplin later adds that Negroes, "even in this Province, have always been allowed to pass by Will, as personal Estate."

3 Estimates vary about the numbers of African Americans who arrived in the province after the revolution. Generally, by 1784, more than 3,000 free Black Loyalists had arrived in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and approximately 2,500 enslaved Black Loyalists had arrived in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. The Black Loyalists came north mainly from the Lowland South, Chesapeake, and New England colonies. For a basic summary of the arrival and settlement of the Black Loyalists, see the NSA web site *African Nova Scotians: In the Age of Slavery and Abolition*: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/africans/results.asp?Search=&SearchList1=2&Language=English>.

4 Atlantic world history provides an agenda that views the Atlantic Ocean as a great trans-Atlantic highway recognizing the movement of people, cultures, ideas, politics, and economies back and forth across the ocean since the 1500s. The Cis-Atlantic approach, an associated concept developed by historian David Armitage, denotes national or regional history within an Atlantic context and seeks to study particular places but within a wider Atlantic context. See David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, "Introduction," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1-7.

Annapolis County, Nova Scotia.⁵ This third research stream connected the historical and archaeological information with the geographical places shaped by Ruggles and those who lived on his plantations. Analyzing the two landscapes took the individual sites and finds and the documentary record associated with Ruggles and his labourers, and joined them together in a wider geographical context.

This research focused on the enslaved rather than the free Black Loyalists of Nova Scotia and the Loyalist context that structured daily life on a plantation. Slavery and indentured servitude were studied as facets of the Ruggles's plantations, yet the project also explored the structure and organization of the entire plantations in order to reconstruct the social worlds of both the slaves and their masters.

Timothy Ruggles: a Loyalist slaveowner case study

Ruggles was a prominent Loyalist and a member of the Massachusetts colonial elite. At the close of the American Revolution, he moved with his family members and slaves to Annapolis County, Nova Scotia. By 1784 he had been issued a 1,000-acre lot of land and soon set to work carving out a substantial plantation concern in the timberland of North Mountain.

Ruggles's life and movements provided historical records, buried evidence, and two historic landscapes for comparative analysis. In general, there are few documentary records about colonial settlement in North Mountain, but the historical documents associated with a prominent individual such as Ruggles helped to narrow the gaps in the background. Furthermore, a close review of the documents suggested that Ruggles, though of a certain pedigree and advantage, countered the Loyalist stereotype once favoured by historians as glorified heroes and aristocrats lamenting the loss of empire. Rather, Ruggles was an industrious individual who had worked hard to establish a plantation in Massachusetts and did so again to develop another property in Nova Scotia. He was ambitious, seeking the ways and means to improve his holdings. He was the opposite of what Stephen Kimber described in the new Loyalist settlement of Port Roseway (Shelburne, Nova Scotia) as aristocratic refugees seeking a "Loyalist dream" that would secure a refined, royal, and cosmopolitan lifestyle that was better than what had been left behind in the cities and towns of the American colonies.⁶

There are few historical documents linking Ruggles directly with the Black Loyalists. The "Book of Negroes" holds evidence of slaves noted as "the General's Property."⁷ Specifically, an entry for 23-27 April 1783 listed the brig *Ranger* bound for Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. The vessel had aboard Hester Ruggles, age 7, a "fine wench" and the property of General Ruggles as well as Jeffery Ruggles, age 6, a "fine boy" and the property of General Ruggles. There was also Prince, age 19, a "stout B [black]," for the general's son Richard Ruggles of Annapolis. Robert

5 A plantation is defined here as an estate or farm containing an area, or areas, of land used for agricultural development or production.

6 Stephen Kimber, *Loyalists and Layabouts: The Rapid Rise and Faster Fall of Shelburne, Nova Scotia, 1783-1792* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2008).

7 Ruggles was promoted to the rank of brigadier general as a result of his service with New England forces during the Seven Years' War. In Massachusetts historical documents, he is often simply referred to as "the General."

Williams, age 23, a “stout, B [black],” was listed as with General Ruggles.⁸ Williams was described as free-born at Shrewsbury, New Jersey. John Coslin, age 25, a “stout, M [mulatto],” was also noted as with General Ruggles. Coslin was described as freeborn at North Hampshire, Virginia, and with free parents. Such entries demonstrate that along with George Stronach and Benjamin Fales (indentured labourers who worked for Ruggles clearing land for three years in exchange for acreage on North Mountain), and Lavinia Outhit (the widow of neighbor Thomas Outhit and Ruggles’s housekeeper), Ruggles used all forms of labour available to him as he developed his plantation in the forest of North Mountain. There are scant subsequent entries of relevance in the Wilmot Township records except for the baptism of slaves associated with Ruggles’s son John.⁹

Ruggles in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia: the historical record

Hardwick, Massachusetts, contained lands with agricultural potential. Timothy Ruggles began developing his estate on lands originally purchased by his grandfather “from local Indians.” Ruggles established a successful law practice and, by the time of his settlement in Hardwick, had accumulated a considerable fortune. With his wealth, he began to develop a country seat suitable for a gentleman of his social standing and legal influence. Over the years the estate became the most noteworthy in the area, with extensive agricultural holdings and a large mansion house. With slaves in the household as well as working on the estate, Ruggles entertained frequently and in grand style.¹⁰ He pursued scientific gardening, including experimenting with apples and the breeding of cattle and thoroughbred horses.¹¹

Timothy Ruggles had envisioned an Anglo-American empire in which the mother country and her colonies would work together to prosper and progress in economic,

8 “Book of Negroes,” After 31 July 1783, p. 43, RG 1, Sir Guy Carleton Papers, no. 10427, PRO 30/55/100, The National Archives (NA), reel no. 10149, NSA.

9 See Wilmot Township Records from 1783-1856 in Annapolis County, MG 4, vol. 5, NSA.

10 Hardwick was founded on 10 January 1739. Prior to that date, the area was known as Lambsdown Plantation. Timothy Ruggles’s great-grandfather, Samuel Ruggles of Roxbury, purchased the land parcel in 1686 (12 miles by 8 miles for £20). See Henry Stoddard Ruggles, *Ruggles Homesteads* (privately printed, 1912), esp. 10. See also Kevin H. White, *Historical Data Relating to Counties, Cities and Towns in Massachusetts* (Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1966), 34. For the slavery reference, see Leone B. Cousins, “Brigadier General Timothy Dwight Ruggles, Loyalist, 1711-1795,” n.d., essay on file, Middleton Museum, Middleton, NS. An entertaining reference can be found in the diary of Dr. Elihu Ashley of Deerfield, Massachusetts. He describes stopping at Brigadier Ruggles’s Hardwick home on a few occasions. The entry, dated 6 July 1774, describes a fine dinner, walking about with the “Old Gent” – who was very sociable – and the arrival of other guests. See *Romance, Remedies, and Revolution: The Journal of Dr. Elihu Ashley of Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1773-1775*, ed. Amelia F. Miller and A.R. Riggs (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 86-7. A “country seat” is a place of prominence on the rural landscape – a recognized estate in the countryside developed to showcase the prominence, importance, wealth and standing of the estate owner (and common in the 18th century among Ruggles’s class).

11 Miller and Riggs, *Journal of Dr. Elihu Ashley*. See also Ivan Sandrof, “Forgotten Giant of the Revolution: The Story of Brigadier General Timothy Ruggles of Hardwick,” *Worcester Historical Society* new ser. 3, no. 6 (April 1952): 16-28. Sandrof notes Ruggles as having more than 30 choice horses in his stable, including his favourite black “war horse,” and states he spared no expense to obtain the best sires in the colonies and in England.

political, and cultural terms. Ruggles was active in the affairs of the Massachusetts colony during the Revolutionary years. Well aware of the potential of America, he also realized the challenges to social and political cohesion and stability within the colonies as discontent and dissatisfaction grew among the citizens with the tightening of the imperial grip. Great Britain, with its traditions, experience, resources, and military strength, confirmed for Ruggles all the empire could offer in a future partnership. Ann Gorman Condon summed up Ruggles's position in her study of the Loyalists in pre-Revolutionary America: why enter into conflict with Great Britain when "a quality of life that was safer, richer, more stable – and even freer – than any they could hope to provide for themselves in the foreseeable future" was at hand?¹² However, the revolutionaries prevailed, and Ruggles found himself on North Mountain in Wilmot Township, Nova Scotia, with his sons, hired hands, slaves, house servants, and indentured servants.¹³ In the decade he was on the mountain, they cleared the forests and shaped the land in recollection of the Hardwick estate, including building orchards and developing gardens. Had Ruggles lived another decade, his North Mountain estate might have rivaled Hardwick.¹⁴

The historical record demonstrates that Ruggles differed in some respects from other prominent Loyalist migrants. In the Annapolis Valley he did not invest either time or energy in the political affairs of the day, as did many of his Loyalist peers who wished to re-establish their positions and authority. He focused on the key elements that defined who he was: the plantation and the improving and growing of things. The creation and command of a landscape that had an elevated viewplane, together with an experimental approach to planting, was important to Ruggles, and within a decade the North Mountain plantation was noted for its “very fine” and “most extensive prospect.”¹⁵

Historical archaeology and the Loyalist period

Detailed documentary records concerning slaves, servants, or general labourers connected to households and estates in the Loyalist and Revolutionary War period are hard to find. Often slaves, servants, and labourers are recorded briefly as notations in estate ledgers or probate inventories, bequests in wills, or as numbers in the columns of tax valuation and census records. Only occasionally will a personal journal hold more descriptive detail.¹⁶ Archaeology thus becomes

12 Ann Gorman Condon, *The Loyalist Dream for New Brunswick* (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1984), 2.

13 "Book of Negroes," entry for 23-27 April 1783, on the brig *Ranger* bound for Annapolis Royal, RG1, Sir Guy Carleton Papers, no. 10427, PRO30/55/100, NA, reel no. 10149, NSA.

¹⁴ “Bishop Charles Inglis Papers,” 16 September 1791, Book 5 for 1791, p. 17, MG1, vol. 480, NSA. The diary of Anglican Bishop Charles Inglis, who was touring the province in this period, enters comments about Ruggles and North Mountain. For similar notes, see the journal of Loyalist Benjamin Marston – *Benjamin Marston’s Diary 1782-1787*, Winslow Family Papers Online Collection, vol. 22, p. 170, University of New Brunswick Archives, Fredericton, <http://www.lib.unb.ca/winslow/fullimagerecord.cgi?id=17533&level=3&DOCURL=%2Fwinslow%2Ffullrecord.cgi%3Fid%>.

15 "Bishop Charles Inglis Papers," 16 September 1791, Book 5 for 1791, p. 17, MG1, vol. 480, NSA.

16 Rhys Isaac, *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Alexandra A. Chan, *Slavery in the Age of Reason: Archaeology at a New England Farm* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2007).

essential.¹⁷ The archaeological record worked in tandem with the documentary record to widen the narrative of Ruggles's experience within Nova Scotia, particularly his settlement approach and his relationship with the pioneers shaping a home and plantation for him.¹⁸

Archaeology is the study of past peoples based on the objects they left behind and the ways they left their imprint on the world.¹⁹ A main goal of this study was to find a place on Ruggles's land where the slaves had lived and to excavate that place, thereby gaining insight into the daily lives of the enslaved people. One of the sites recorded on the land grant contained the remains of a rudimentary shelter close to the Ruggles Road, with a dry-laid stone foundation, interior hearth, and a collection of basic domestic and architectural material culture consistent with the late 18th century.²⁰ Particular focus was shifted to this small hut or cabin given its potential 18th century connection and shared characteristics with other recorded slave quarters of the Revolutionary War period: the dry-laid stone foundation, possible earthen floor, clapboard construction, sparse window glass, small size, and location close to the fields and visible from the main house.²¹ Artifacts and architectural features did not exhibit Africanisms as documented by researchers in the United States, nor did they exhibit a recognizable process of creolization – a fusing of African and Anglo traditions – or even a representation of two distinct groups (slave and slaveholder or enslaved and free).²² Clearly, though, this was a place where

17 For noted archaeologist Charles E. Orser, Jr., “Only archaeology has the power to resurrect the daily lives and cultural patterns of the invisible men and women of the past. By piecing together the often scant evidence left behind by a people in their artifacts and building remains, archaeologists can construct pictures of the past that are unique, insightful and intimately human.” See Orser, *Images of the Recent Past: Readings in Historical Archaeology*, ed. Charles E. Orser, Jr. (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1996), 10.

18 This approach is similar to Lewis R. Binford's “Middle-Range Theory” approach, where two groups of evidence – documentary and archaeological – are developed independently and then, through a precise system of description, are brought together to facilitate comparisons – thus creating a dynamic relationship between the two. For a historical archaeology adaptation of Binford's method, see Mark P. Leone and Parker B. Potter, Jr., eds., *The Recovery of Meaning: Historical Archaeology and the Eastern United States* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988).

19 James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Press, 1977), 4.

20 One hundred and sixty-six artifacts out of a total of 279 artifacts at the hut date to the 18th century.

21 These characteristics have been recorded by other scholars/researchers regarding slave quarters of the Revolutionary War time period. For a detailed survey of 18th and 19th century domestic architecture built by slaves and free blacks and/or inhabited by slaves and free blacks from the Low Country to the Chesapeake to New England and the Maritimes, see Catherine Cottreau-Robins, “Domestic Architecture of the Black Loyalists in Nova Scotia, 1783-1800” (MEDS thesis, Dalhousie University, 2002).

22 See Leland Ferguson's discussion of colonoware ceramics in Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992). Also see Mark P. Leone's discussion of spiritual caches at the Charles Carroll House in Annapolis, Maryland, in Leone, *The Archaeology of Liberty in an American Capital: Excavations in Annapolis* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 192-244. Finally, see several contributors to “*I Too Am America*”: *Archaeological Studies of African-American Life*, ed. Theresa A. Singleton (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1999). Of particular note is Part 1 of the volume, entitled “African-American Identity and Material Culture.”

people of lower economic status lived, probably workers or labourers.²³ They were likely Black Loyalists, given the artifact patterns observed and recalling that Ruggles and his sons were slaveholders.

On North Mountain, under Timothy Ruggles, the Anglo-American influence affected the built environment and this influence was consistent with the artifacts collected. Could the slave-holding Anglo-American/Loyalist framework active on North Mountain mask a culturally defined Black Loyalist presence? More fieldwork is needed for comparative analysis.

The landscape review

Landscapes, then, can be physical, iconological and ideological. They can also be representations, and landscapes can themselves represent the processes out of which they have emerged. In addition . . . perhaps the most important meaning attaching to landscape is the cultural. This suggests that landscapes are products of human values, meanings and symbols, and of the, usually, dominant culture within society; they are cultural products.²⁴

The landscape study represents the third research stream. The landscape study also provided a framework to explore why Ruggles did as he did in the places where he lived. Furthermore, linking Ruggles's culture – Anglo-American Loyalist – to his physical spaces had the potential to provide insights about him and those he expected to help bring his plantations to maturity. The study of landscapes was most intriguing when considering the two historic geographic places developed and shaped by Ruggles and his group.²⁵ It is possible to understand Ruggles's homesteads as symbolic places. They represented his values as a gentleman and a well-informed leader with wealth, status, education, and British favour.²⁶ Ruggles

23 This is emphasized by the lack of artifacts at the site illustrative of activity beyond food preparation, storage or service, and nails and a bit of glass for building. Personal items are absent except for two clay pipe fragments and a few fragments of glass, as well as items related to labour, clothing, and general household activities.

24 Iain Robertson and Penny Richards, "Introduction," in *Studying Cultural Landscapes*, ed. Iain Robertson and Penny Richards (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2. The complexity of studying landscapes is also emphasized in archaeology. See Christopher C. Fennell, "Carved, Inscribed and Resurgent: Cultural and Natural Terrains as Analytical Challenges," "Introduction," in *Perspectives from Historical Archaeology: Revealing Landscapes*, ed. Christopher Fennell, no. 5 (n.p.: Society for Historical Archaeology, 2010), 1-11.

25 The "group" means his kin, servants or slaves, and hired labourers. There are references to all three in the documentary record related to Timothy Ruggles.

26 For a further portrayal of a Massachusetts gentleman of the era see Chan, *Slavery in the Age of Reason*, 96-102. Chan notes that this "mode of being" was rooted in the Italian Renaissance, but it took on a particular meaning in the 18th century with the Enlightenment or the Age of Reason. During this period, an emphasis was placed on order, hierarchy, control, and the rise of scientific thought. Equally important for gentlemen of the day and their families were visual representations of elevated standing and authority and "material statements of distinctiveness." Ruggles had British favour as a result of his concentrated efforts to support the British cause and his demonstrated loyalty to king and empire. His peers were the loyal colonial elite, and many stepped forward to submit character statements on his behalf to the British government at the end of the war. Due to this support, Ruggles

held his core values so firmly that even in the face of forced migration, war, and extreme personal loss he desired to represent them once again in a physical way on his land in Nova Scotia. This is where looking to his particularly shaped places becomes relevant. His places were a reflection of a time and encoded with how Ruggles viewed the world. It was possible to “trace relations in power” (as in the master-slave or planter-labourer relationship) and the “conditions of labour” (as evidenced by the remains of the hut in the Elliott field) in Ruggles’s landscapes.²⁷

Timothy Ruggles spent a decade replicating on North Mountain the New England landscape that he dominated in Hardwick, thus making his story one of Loyalist continuity. Ruggles essentially continued a formula in Nova Scotia that had been successful in Massachusetts, developing a highly regarded and productive plantation supported, crucially, by labourers of all modes – from house servants to field workers. The result of his efforts in Nova Scotia, after a decade on North Mountain, was regarded as “very fine and commanding a most extensive prospect with excellent soil.”²⁸ Supporting the argument for continuity were the landscape data. Information gleaned from documentary sources and field observations illustrated Ruggles’s efforts as he turned land to landscape. The long list of similarities between the two places was evidence of a continued approach to development and management of a plantation. Ruggles’s landscapes were “cultural products” that symbolized his concept of the natural order of things, values regarding improvement and prosperity, and a hierarchal framework rooted in the Enlightenment agenda.²⁹ Also contributing to these “cultural products” was Ruggles’s Loyalism. Being a Loyalist was an integral part of Ruggles’s identity.³⁰ Janice Potter summarized Loyalist ideology, in the context of Revolutionary War era Massachusetts and New York: “It rested on certain basic assumptions, which were shared by respected and influential British theorists about man’s nature and government’s role. It provided well-reasoned defences of the imperial status quo at the same time it outlined ways of improving both the British Empire and the British institutions in America.”³¹ Potter’s summary applied to Ruggles. He was a true Anglo-American and in favour

fared well despite losing extensive holdings in Massachusetts. He received compensation for his losses during the war, a sizable land grant on North Mountain, and a yearly pension.

27 See also Robertson and Richards, *Studying Cultural Landscapes*, 3.

28 Robertson and Richards, *Studying Cultural Landscapes*, 3; “Journal of Occurrences Noted by Charles Inglis.”

29 Robertson and Richards, *Studying Cultural Landscapes*, 3. The Enlightenment, which valued rational thought, the scientific method, and the use of one’s own intellect when questioning traditional institutions was prevalent throughout the crisis of the American Revolution and warranted exploration in the thesis narrative principally in regards to Timothy Ruggles, his values and ideals, and slave-holding practices. See Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York, W.W. Norton, 2000).

30 For examples, see Ruggles’s call to form a Loyalist Association in “The Association,” an article in the *Boston News-Letter*, 29 December 1774, Issue 3718, p. 2; Ruggles’s published response to his decisions at the Stamp Act Congress; Ruggles’s development of military units in Boston and New York; and Ruggles’s Loyalist Memorial papers.

31 Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 12–14. A key element of Loyalist ideology was the vision of an Anglo-American empire, uniting Britain and America through history, trade, and a shared attachment to the empire and the British government, a view that was longstanding for Ruggles.

of a solution that would see Britain and America – or, at least, the diminished British North America – as collaborators for improvement and stability.

Conclusion: an interdisciplinary approach to the Black Loyalist migration

The subject that has driven this research from the beginning has been the enslaved Black Loyalists.³² Until the last decade or so, their story was nearly absent from the Maritime Atlantic and the Canadian historical narrative. More recently, the inclusive nature of the Atlantic world history framework has worked in favour of new interpretations and insights. Yet, even though the enslaved Black Loyalists and their descendants have long been integral to the social and cultural fabric of Nova Scotia, their past is still poorly understood. When the Black Loyalists arrived in the Maritimes to settle, a new beginning was signaled for many. For others, the history of subjugation that accompanied them continued and left an imprint and a legacy in the developing northeast British colonies. The Black Loyalists can inform us about a time in colonial history when a specific race-related framework was active – a framework that took root and affected the lives of African Nova Scotians during the centuries that followed. Given the impact of the immigration of thousands of Black Loyalists, their story represents the beginning of African Nova Scotian history on a substantial scale. The Black Loyalists also represented the beginnings of community formation for African Nova Scotians. It was in the Loyalist period that newly freed slaves acquired land (such as in Birchtown and Tracadie), worked together to establish homesteads and schools, and were guided by influential religious and community leaders such as John Marrant, Boston King, David George, Thomas Brownspriggs, and Stephen Blucke. For some of the Black Loyalists, their descendant communities survive today. Those who arrived still enslaved, while not forming a majority of Black Loyalists, shaped an important part of the African Nova Scotian experience, and one that offers a unique opportunity to study race relations in Nova Scotia and the legacy of the Loyalist era.

A significant challenge regarding the subject of the enslaved Black Loyalists lay in determining how and where to acquire historical evidence. How to find records of the invisible, the marginalized, and the dehumanized? The approach had to be from multiple directions and layered: in other words, interdisciplinary. The historian's research tools were not sufficient. The physical evidence of the past had the potential to reveal a perspective of the enslaved experience that was missing from the documentary archive. But could another research layer be added? What about the larger context in which slavery unfolded? A review of the slave-holding plantation landscape held possibilities for further insights. As the research

32 The validity of the term "Black Loyalist" has been debated. The Cahill and Walker *Acadiensis* forum of 1999 is often referenced, and focuses on the subject. For the purposes of this research, the term is used to represent the enslaved refugees who arrived with their Loyalist masters to the Maritimes. On page 98 of the forum, Walker quotes from the *Canadian Encyclopedia* a definition of Loyalist that is also applicable to this research: Loyalists are "American colonists of varied ethnic backgrounds who supported the British cause during the American Revolution . . . for highly diverse reasons." See Barry Cahill, "The Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis* XXIX, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 76-87, and also James W. St. G. Walker, "Myth, History and Revisionism: The Black Loyalists Revisited," *Acadiensis* XXIX, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 88-105.

progressed and the difficulty in finding records of the enslaved was confirmed, the interdisciplinary model became fundamental and added explanatory strength. Furthermore, the application of a case study sharpened the focus and brought the study to the scope of the local plantation and the relationships that unfolded within that defined context.

Thus, interdisciplinary research has opened and expanded the story of the enslaved on a particular plantation in Nova Scotia. Documentary records pertaining to Timothy Ruggles show that a legacy of slaveholding immigrated north with the Loyalist refugees.³³ Ruggles – notwithstanding his advanced education, scientific knowledge, varied life experience, and prominence in a range of fields as part of Massachusetts “gentry cliques” – was a slave-owner. He was comfortable with the system of forced labour prevalent in the day and supported by a contemporary ideology of natural hierarchy among men and under God. Massachusetts records, indeed, indicate an extended history of slaveholding in the Ruggles family. Ruggles’s Loyalist memorial notes servants in Hardwick. When forced to Nova Scotia to start over, Ruggles brought with him the resources he needed. Within a decade, Ruggles and his labourers, free and unfree, had transformed the North Mountain forested tract into a notable and admired plantation. The Ruggles narrative confirms that in the Loyalist era in Nova Scotia there was an active slaveholding policy carried out and maintained by the Loyalist colonial elite. Established in the British colonies through parliamentary rule, this slaveholding policy arrived in Nova Scotia with the Loyalists. It marked the period as the age of slavery for Nova Scotia, as forced labour was used to settle, rebuild, and prosper on a scale unprecedented in the colony.

Slavery among the Loyalists in Nova Scotia differed from the forms it had taken in the colonies that now formed the United States.³⁴ Scale has to be considered, because Nova Scotia had fewer enslaved people. The “Book of Negroes” does not describe any more than ten enslaved individuals arriving in the province as the property of any one master. Furthermore, many parts of the colony were unsettled. Daily life consisted of assisting in pioneering tasks: clearing land, building shelters, and planting crops. Records for colonial America noted that enslaved workers laboured side by side with the slave owner during the initial pioneering phase of settlement. Similar activity likely occurred on North Mountain.³⁵ This image does not signify a more benevolent form of slavery in the northern colonies, but rather a less structured form of slavery for Nova Scotia during the post-Revolutionary era as tasks were shared out of necessity as the plantation landscape was being carved out of the forest.

Archaeological evidence from North Mountain is crucial to understanding the experience of Ruggles’s labourers, and the life of Ruggles himself. Reconnaissance survey, testing, and excavation of the land parcels constituted a substantial amount of

33 Only a small portion of the evidence of the life of Timothy Ruggles has been presented here. Historical records, especially in Massachusetts, are substantial.

34 Nova Scotia in the context of this research refers to the modern boundaries of the province rather than the pre-1784 boundaries that included New Brunswick.

35 Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

fieldwork. Through the archaeology it was learned that Ruggles constructed a significant house on North Mountain, comparable to other Loyalist houses of the colonial elite in the Annapolis Valley. Behind the house there was a barn and a walled pasture. Remnant apple orchards surround the Ruggles house as well as early roadways no longer in use. East from Ruggles's house, across the Ruggles Road and in a naturally heated gully, is the suspected vaulted area of what was probably a scientific garden. Remnant dry-laid stone walls mark the place, as well as old stands of apple trees. On the Ruggles Road, south of the mansion house but viewable from the main elevation, is the site of a residence: a late 18th-century to early 19th-century rudimentary hut designated as a labourers' quarter. Situated near the fields and adjacent to the road, with its indications of enslaved occupants, this hut feature is the most intriguing. A clear differentiation in socio-economic status can be seen between the labourers' hut and Ruggles's house. At the labourers' hut there is little material culture and what remains is fragmented and basic. Architecturally, it is small and simple, and contrasts strikingly with the mansion house up the road that overlooks it.

The archaeological record also informs the argument for Loyalist continuity. The fieldwork confirms that Ruggles worked to develop a plantation landscape similar to what he left behind in Hardwick. Landscape review provides evidence of a comparable plantation layout. Ruggles's efforts to reconstruct a plantation speak to the continuity of what was most important to him – the land and its improvement and peaceful prosperity within a British imperial framework. His personal ideology as a Loyalist, a slaveholder, and an authority over his domain was deeply connected to the very public statement he developed on North Mountain. Ruggles, the master of his plantation landscapes, was in control of what was most important to him and what defined him.

The historical and archaeological investigations are, for the most part, silent concerning day-to-day interactions between master and slave, but the landscapes reinforced a hierarchal arrangement constructed by Ruggles with his mansion house at the top and others on the land or in the quarter below. Not only was this, for Nova Scotia, the age of slavery, but – as became evident when the interdisciplinary research results were integrated and mapped – it was also characterized by a landscape of slavery.³⁶ More work is needed to clarify and confirm specific details, but mapping of actual and likely slaveholders in Ruggles's vicinity (see Figure 1) strongly suggests that during the Loyalist period in Nova Scotia there was not just the occasional enslaved person here and there and mostly unknown and unseen. Rather, there was a larger and more pervasive reality that requires closer exploration and study, with continued use of interdisciplinary methods to examine the slaveholding of Ruggles and other Loyalists.³⁷

36 The phrase "landscape of slavery" is not original to this research but has been used by other landscape and archaeology specialists outside Canada. See, for instance, Angela D. Mack and Stephen G. Hoffius, eds., *Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art* (Charleston, NC: Gibbes Museum of Art and Carolina Art Association, 2007).

37 Next steps regarding further exploration of the landscape of slavery in Nova Scotia's Loyalist era include mining Loyalist claims and Crown land grant documents for references and clues to slaveholders and slaves. Continued review of the "Book of Negroes" and field investigations of additional plantation landscapes should also prove fruitful.

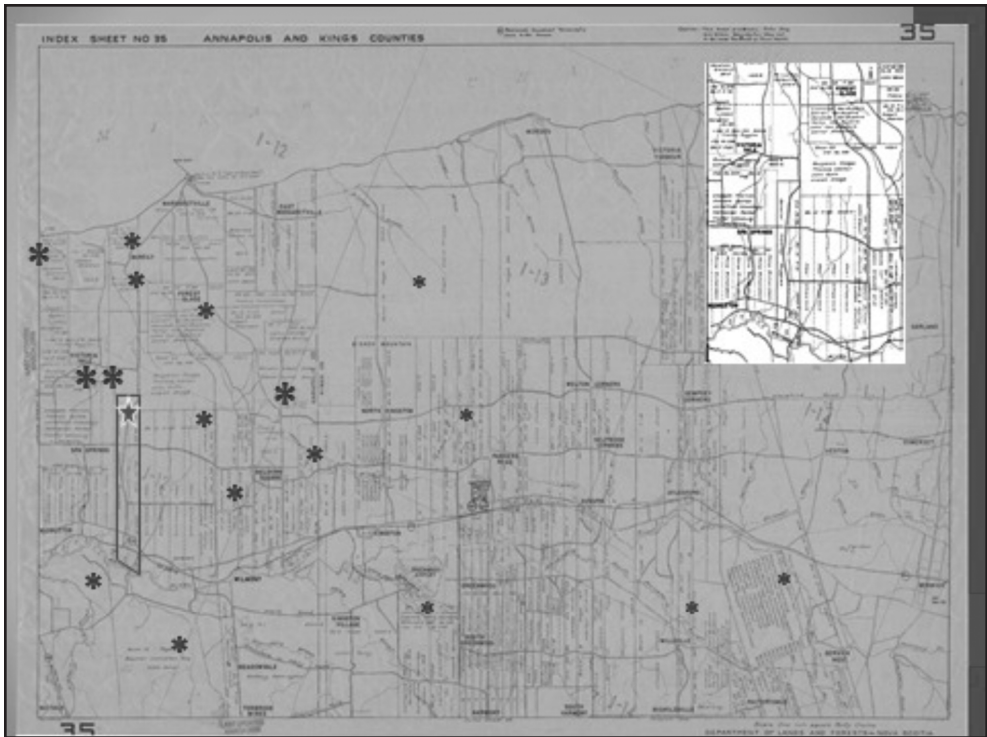


Figure 1: This map encompasses parts of Annapolis and Kings Counties, Nova Scotia. Ruggles's 1,000-acre grant is outlined on the left. The large five-pointed star and four large florets represent Ruggles, his family members and close associates directly linked to enslaved individuals. The eight medium-sized florets represent neighbours of Ruggles. They are comparable to Ruggles in many ways and were most likely engaged in slavery in Nova Scotia or colonial America. Finally, moving into the larger Wilmot Township, the additional five small florets represent peers of Ruggles, with shared backgrounds and practices and who likely were connected to slavery. As historical data came together, clues to a wider and deeper landscape of slavery in the Loyalist period became evident. See Crown Land Index Sheet No. 35, 1963, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources Map Library, Halifax.

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