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The Jamaican Maroon

From the time of British conquest in 1655, the Maroons in Jamaica waged war against the British colonizers of the island. The Jamaican Government succeeded in overcoming the Maroons in 1796, after 140 years of intermittent warfare. To rid themselves of “the problem”, the Legislature decided to remove one group of the Maroons, the Trelawney, and resettle them in lower Canada (Quebec). Later, a change in decision led to the Maroons being sent to Halifax, N.S.

On June 26, 1796 three ships set sail from Port Royal Harbour, Jamaica. A total of 543 men, women, and children arrived in Halifax between July 21 and 23. After their arrival, the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in North America employed the entire group to work on the new fortifications at Citadel Hill in Halifax.

A credit of £25,000 in Jamaican currency was given from the Jamaican Government for the resettlement. £3,000 was expended for 5,000 acres of land and the building of the community of Preston. After the first winter, the Maroons raised an independent and dominating culture.

At the time, military authorities were afraid that the French might try to recapture Nova Scotia through invasion. The Maroons proved themselves to be excellent fighters, and they were said to have been organized shortly after they arrived into military units in the style of self-government they had been used to in Jamaica. Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Wentworth later went on to inform the British Government that he believed the Maroons would “be useful and faithful corps to oppose an invading army”. The winters of 1796-98 were severe, causing suffering and discomfort for the Maroons. This led to tension, and in the spring of 1799,

Governor Wentworth felt obliged to dispatch Captain Solomon and 50 men of the Royal Nova Scotia Regiment to Preston, where they withheld supplies from the most refractory, as a strategy to maintain order.

The money given by the Jamaican Government was running out and the Jamaicans were not in favour of the suggested ways of supporting themselves. In accordance with the demands of the Maroons, the Lieutenant Governor came to the conclusion that the best resolution would be to have them leave Nova Scotia.

Sierra Leone had also been suggested as a possible place of settlement in 1796, however, the Sierra Leone company was not in favour of receiving a “body of Negroes whose reputation could not be held to warrant such a step.” The reasons for objections by the company were that there was a rebellion by the earlier settlers from Nova Scotia against the Sierra Leone Government, and the colony was said to be intended for Christian Blacks (many of the Maroons were not in the Christian faith). Eventually, the Sierra Leone Company was persuaded to receive them and plans were then made for their transportation to Africa.



The Maroons arrived in Freetown Harbour, Sierra Leone on October 1, 1800. Upon arrival, the Maroons were instructed to put an end to the insurrection of the Black Loyalists who had revolted against the government one year after their placement in Sierra Leone.

Although the majority of the Maroons left Nova Scotia, there were a few who remained. For example, a census done in 1817 of Black communities in the Preston Area and Guysborough County revealed that several persons living in the community were descendants of the Maroons.