

GRAND BAY-WESTFIELD HISTORIC PLACES

GPS Coordinates
45 21 10.28 N 66 14 29.93 W



Hwy 7 (exit 80) at Kingdom Road

Black Loyalist Land Grants of 1787 1550 acres near the junction of Highway 177 and 102 and extending to Richards lake.

These land grants issued in Grand Bay-Westfield by the Crown to Black Loyalists in 1787 encompass 1550 acres that were originally granted to 31 free black petitioners. It represents a little-documented chapter of the history of Grand Bay-Westfield and the history of black settlers in the Province.

The first free black settlers arrived in New Brunswick after the American War of Independence in 1783. Several hundred men, women, and children arrived in Saint John between April and November, with the expectation that they would receive grants of land as well as provisions for three years, as promised by the British. Few experienced the fulfillment of this promise. Many were forced into slavery, which was still prevalent in New Brunswick, and others became indentured servants, or found menial jobs in order to survive.

In 1785 several groups of black Loyalists residing in the area around Saint John submitted group petitions to receive land as they had been promised. **Richard (Corankapoon) Wheeler** led one such petition representing 56 other blacks, including several he had met aboard the **Clinton** en route from New Jersey. Corankapoon and 30 additional petitioners were issued grants of 50 acres each in Westfield surrounding **Corankapoon Lake**. These black settlers faced many of the same difficulties as their white counterparts, including difficulty clearing and farming the wilderness land. The poor quality of the land they received intensified their struggles, and by 1790 most of the black settlers relocated to Saint John to eek out a living as menial labourers. The land grants were sold or reverted to the crown and were redistributed to white settlers.

The value of the historic place also resides in its association with the migration of black settlers from New Brunswick to Halifax and onwards to the new **British Colony of Freetown, Sierra Leone**. Discouraged and in search of a better life, Richard (Corankapoon) Wheeler and four companions walked from Westfield to Halifax in December 1791 to board a transport ship bound for Sierra Leone in 1792. Other black settlers who made that journey from New Brunswick to Halifax perished along the way. Many more died at sea before reaching Africa, and those who arrived safely struggled to acquire land to support themselves and their families. Still others were recaptured and sold back to the slave trade. Richard (Corankapoon) Wheeler, having spent eight years in New Brunswick, became a constable in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and an important community leader.



Black Loyalist Land Grant Map:
Richard (Corankapoon) Wheeler land shaded above



Old mill wheel found at Negro Lake



Corankapoon Lake



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