

Black Colonists

Black people had been part of the British and French colonies since the earliest days. Slavery was legal in British North America until 1834, but many Black colonists were "free." After 1800, slavery became less and less common. Many Black people chose to immigrate to BNA because they believed they had a better chance of not being enslaved. Some Black people were sent from Jamaica in 1796, but most of the immigrants came from the United States.

Black Loyalists

At the time of the American Revolution, approximately 3000 Black Loyalists came to British North America. They settled mostly in the colonies of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. They didn't get the same benefits as the other Loyalists, however. The pieces of land given to Black Loyalists were not as large, and they had a hard time getting official *title*—a legal record that the land was theirs. This meant they could be forced to move. Even though it was difficult, Black Loyalists set up strong communities that provided medical care, places of worship, and education to their people. Some Black immigrants also came to BNA during the War of 1812.

In the War of 1812, the United States tried to take over BNA. It didn't succeed!

Slavery Outlawed in British North America

There was another big wave of Black immigration when slavery was outlawed in BNA. Between 1840 and 1860, approximately 30 000 Black men, women, and children came to BNA to escape slavery in the United States. They settled in all parts of BNA, but most joined the Black communities already existing in Canada West (now Ontario) and Nova Scotia. Others went to New Brunswick. They also set up communities in Rupert's Land and Vancouver's Island.

This watercolour of a Black Loyalist was painted in 1788. There are very few images of Black people's lives in British North America before 1850. Why do you think this is so?

