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EDITORIAL**The Advantage of Owning Slaves in Old British Canada**

By the Honourable William Renwick Riddell, LL.D., D.C.L., F.R. Hist. Soc., etc., Justice of Appeal, Ontario.

During the French regime, slaves were known in Canada, though some of the French-Canadian writers utterly deny it—One says concerning the institution: "l'esclavage, cette plaie inconnue sous notre ciel du Nord", i.e., "slavery that plague unknown under our northern sky"; Garneau: Histoire du Canada, (1st edit.) Vol. II, p. 447.

Many of the slaves at that period were Indian, bought or captured, and generally called "Panis"; but Negro slaves were not unknown.

When by the Treaty of Paris, 1763, Canada became definitely and permanently British, slavery became more important. While the greater part of the territory, now the Province of Ontario, was reserved for the production of all-important furs, and settlement was there discouraged, if not actually forbidden, the eastern part of the country, formed by the Royal Proclamation of October 7th, 1763 into the "Government" or Province of Quebec was intended and expected to furnish a home for immigrants from the mother country and the American Colonies, still British. It was recognized that the settling of a country still almost virgin, necessitated labor other than that of the owners of the land and their progeny; and General James Murray, the first Governor-in-chief of the new government or province, but expressed the common view when he said: "Black slaves are certainly the people to be depended upon" for this purpose. He asked his correspondent in New York, "if possible procure for me two stout young fellows, who have been accustomed to country business" adding: "you may buy for each a lean young wife, who can wash and to the female offices about a farm". Letter from Murray to John Watts of New York, Quebec, November 2nd, 1763: Canadian Archives: Murray Papers, Vol. II, p. 15.

Every encouragement was given to the importation of Negro slaves, who were thus characterized by Murray as the most dependable of servants for the most important purpose.

One of these and one of the most effective measures of encouragement have not been noticed by historians, though in my view it is eminently

worthy of notice.

Governor Murray received Royal Instructions, December 7th, 1763, which inter alia, are obviously, and, indeed, expressly directed to the "speedy settling our colony" by a "sufficient number of white persons and Negroes . . ." It was ordered "That one hundred acres of land be granted to every person being master or mistress of a family, for himself or herself, fifty acres for every white or black man, woman or child, of which such person's family shall consist, at the actual time of making the grant . . ." Shortt & Doughty: Documents relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759—1791, (2nd Edit.) Ottawa, 1918, pp 181, sec., esp. at p 196.

This direction was repeated, verbatim et literatim, in the Royal Instructions given in 1768 to Sir Guy Carleton (afterwards Lord Dorchester), after his appointment to succeed Murray in the governorship: do do, pp. 301, sec., esp. at p. 315.

This was of course, before the inclusion in the government or Province of Quebec, by the "Quebec Act" of 1774, of all the territory extending south to the Ohio and west to the Mississippi, including the present Province of Ontario.

Carleton continued to be Governor of this Province when it was enlarged in 1774; and he received Royal Instructions as such, January 3rd 1775; these are not specific as to the quantity of land to be granted to applicants, but the old regulations remained in force. The only specific reference to Negroes was in the direction to protect the monopoly of the United East India Company by preventing any but its ships from bringing in "Goods, commodities, or Negroes"; do. do. pp. 594, sec., esp. at 631—633.

After an American Revolution had succeeded and the independence of the United States had been acknowledged by the Treaty of Paris, 1783, not a few—and not the least admirable—of the former colonists desired to remain British subjects; and the authorities at Westminster made provision for them in the Province of Quebec, now denuded of all the territory south of the Great Lakes. Royal Instructions were given, July 16th, 1783, to General Frederick Haldimand, who had succeeded Carleton in the government of the province in 1778. These began with the preamble: "whereas many of our loyal subjects, inhabitants of the colonies and provinces, now the United States of America, are desirous of retaining their allegiance to us, and of living in our Dominions, and for this purpose are disposed to take up and improve lands in our province of Quebec And whereas we are also desirous of testifying our approbation of the bravery and loyalty of our force serving in our said province and who may be reduced there, by allowing a certain quantity of land to such of the non-commissioned and private men of our said force, who are inclined to become settlers therein Then the direction is given to allot to the loyal subjects, non-commissioned officers and private men . . . so reduced To every master of a family, one hundred acres, and fifty

acres for each person, of which his family shall consist do. do. pp. 730, 731.

The same instructions were given, August 23rd, 1786, to Lord Dorchester now reinstated in the government of the province in that year: do. do. pp. 816, sec., esp. at p. 830.

In every case, an additional fifty acres were given for every member of the family, and not only every child but also every Negro or other slave was counted a member of the family. It paid to have Negro slaves—and it is historical that many of the United Empire Loyalists brought in with them as many slaves as they could to increase their allotment of land. Slaves were bought for the purpose—gossip had it that sometimes slaves were borrowed and served to magnify the grant of more than one loyal immigrant to Canada before the end of the Eighteenth Century. Osgoode Hall, Toronto, February 19, 1934.

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