Richard Pierpoint: Life and Legacy

Early Life and Military Service



This land was once part of a parcel owned by Richard Pierpoint, a prominent Black Loyalist, soldier, griot, early settler, farmer and National Historic Person of Canada. Born in the Bundu region (present-day Senegal), Pierpoint was kidnapped and sold into slavery at the age of 16 to a British officer serving in the British Thirteen Colonies (present-day USA).

As the American Revolutionary War broke out in 1776, Pierpoint seized the opportunity to fight for his freedom, a major incentive to enlist with the "Butler's Map of Sites Associated with Richard Pierpoint Rangers". This Loyalist military unit, alongside Indigenous allies, played a crucial role in Britain's retention of the Great Lakes region. When the war ended in

1784, he regained his freedom. Those who fought for the British Army, including emancipated individuals, were granted land after the war. However, racial prejudice and isolation made successful settlement for Black Loyalists in Upper Canada extremely difficult. He struggled to establish himself on his 200-acre land grant near St. Catharines and then sold it in 1806. During the War of 1812, at nearly 70 years of age, he was credited with forming the "Colored Corps", an all-Black military unit that fought for the British Army once again.

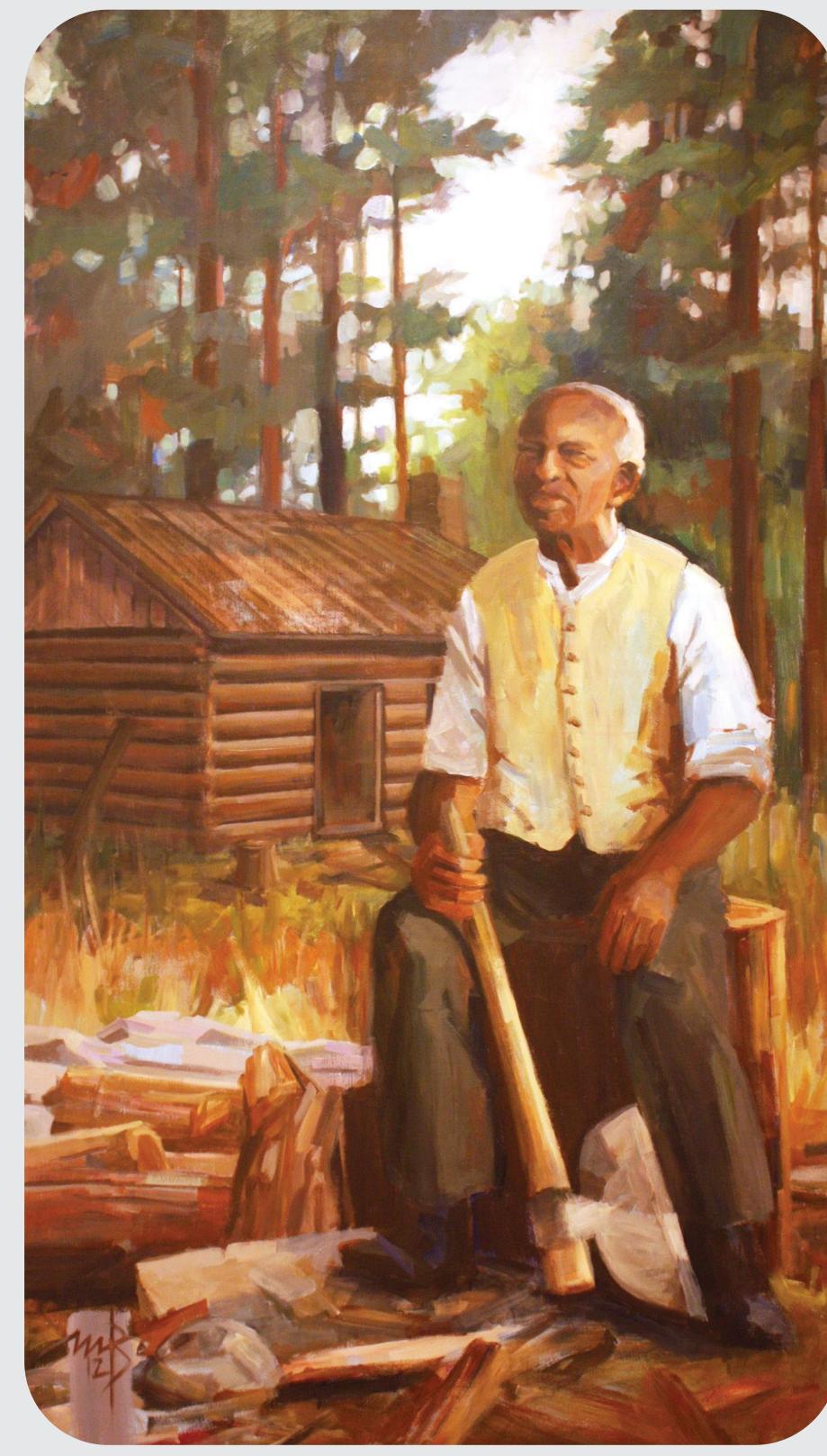
Black Settlement in Centre Wellington

After being discharged, Richard Pierpoint requested passage back to his homeland in Africa. Instead, in July 1822, he was awarded a Militia Grant of 100 acres in recognition of his service. The grant covered the east half of Lot 6, Concession I (Garafraxa Township), situated along the Grand River, including this property. As a condition of the grant, Pierpoint cleared 5 acres of land, built a cabin, and established a road allowance with the help of friends and neighbours. By 1826, he was granted full ownership of the land which came to be known as the Pierpoint Settlement. His land became a refuge where free Black settlers and fugitives could stay, rest, and find community while traveling to and from other Black settlements throughout the Queen's Bush, which stretched from Wellington County to Lake Huron.



Pierpoint's Legacy

Richard Pierpoint's legacy is one of resilience, leadership, and advocacy for Black settlers in Upper Canada. After gaining his freedom through military service, he dedicated his life to supporting Black communities and petitioning for their rights and opportunities. When he passed away in September 1838 at the age of 94, he left his land and possessions to Lemuel Brown, a close friend from his years in the Niagara region. Local historians believe Pierpoint may have been buried somewhere on his property, which remains a significant marker of Black migration, displacement, and settlement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. His contributions continue to inspire and educate, highlighting the struggles and



triumphs of Black Canadians in shaping the nation's history.

Pierpoint Fly Fishing Nature Reserve

This property is now known as the Pierpoint Fly Fishing Nature Reserve. It was donated to the Township as a passive park encouraging the appreciation of a naturalized environment along the Grand River, a Canadian Heritage River. Within the Township of Centre Wellington, both the Grand River and the Nature Reserve have been identified as Significant Cultural Heritage Landscapes. Before the Township was settled and developed by Black and European settlers, it was part of the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee. The Grand River was an important natural feature and a known Indigenous transportation route, supporting hunting, foraging, fishing and farming. The Nature Reserve supports many native and non-native species of birds, mammals, amphibians, and insects, which can be spotted throughout. It is part of the long history of environmental conservation efforts in Centre Wellington.



