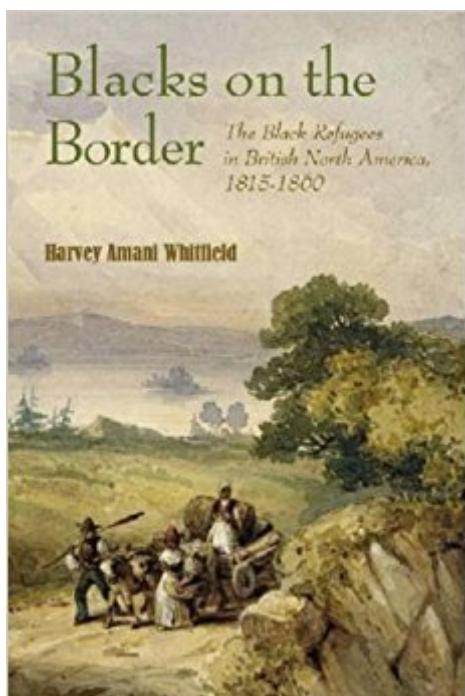


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Blacks On The Border: The Black Refugees In British North America, 1815–1860



Synopsis

Following the American Revolution, free black communities and enslaved African Americans increasingly struggled to reconcile their African heritage with their American home. This struggle resulted in tens of thousands of African Americans seeking new homes in areas as diverse as Haiti and Nova Scotia. Black refugees arrived in Nova Scotia after the War of 1812 with little in common but their desire for freedom. By 1860, they had formed families, communities, and traditions. Harvey Amani Whitfield's study reconstructs the lives and history of a sizeable but neglected group of African Americans by placing their history within the framework of free black communities in New England and Nova Scotia during the nineteenth century. It examines which aspects of American and African American culture black expatriates used or discarded in an area that forced them to negotiate the overlapping worlds of Great Britain, the United States, Afro-New England, and the African American Diaspora, while considering how former American slaves understood freedom long before the Civil War.

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Customer Reviews

Whitfield is unlikely to be surpassed in his analysis of the reasons for emigration to Nova Scotia....an excellent book. •American Review of Canadian Studies

Review Canadians, especially Nova Scotians, are indebted to Amani Whitfield, an American scholar, who first came to Nova Scotia in 1997 to study for his masters in history. After six years of research and writing and a recent Ph.D., he has written a powerful book, a tour de force. With insightful analysis, he describes how former American slaves from diverse backgrounds became

Black Refugees in Canada and eventually formed a distinct culture of Black people before the American Civil War. "New England Quarterly" ...[A]n inspiration for other historians who want to understand race and identity in the Atlantic world. "Journal of the Early Republic" Whitfield writes history as an informed storyteller, not as a remote scientist, and so he brings to life, dexterously, the context and the complexity of the 2,000 or so African Americans who, as a result of a war policy, found themselves "liberated" by British forces and dispatched to Nova Scotia between 1812-1815. "Halifax Chronicle Herald" This study of black refugees to British Canada fills in another part of the puzzle that is African American history. Slowly the simplistic view of blacks fleeing to Canada on the legendary "underground railroad" is evolving into a more authentic study of the spread of African culture throughout the northern hemisphere. Studying the scattered migration of "Diaspora" of blacks away from slavery toward freedom is giving us a clearer picture of the scope of American history from early colonization, through the Civil War and Civil Rights to the modern day. "seacoastNH.com" Based on his doctoral thesis from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Dr. Whitfield has achieved a tour de force in this volume with assiduous research using a comparative methodology that rescues a previously neglected black community from obscurity. His mastery of the secondary sources is admirable as is his fine tilling of primary sources "œ newspapers and scattered documentation "œ drawn from a number of locations. He has enriched the historiography of the black Atlantic and this work deserves to occupy a place on any historian's shelf next to James Walker's "The Black Loyalists" (1976) and Robin Wink's "Blacks in Canada: A History" "Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History" "Blacks on the Border" does double duty as important scholarship on the growing literature on the Black transatlantic experience, all the while also breaking out of the well-worn mold of Canada-US history focused narrowly on business relations between two countries. . . "Blacks on the Border" is an engaging and informative text... "Left History" One of the most important contributions of this study by Harvey Amani Whitfield is that it dismantles the myth that British North America was a multicultural oasis. On Nova Scotia, slavery was for all practical purposes outlawed, but not antiblack racism. During and after the War of 1812, black refugees faced daunting hurdles, including a poorly planned and executed refugee policy. "Journal of World History" This is an excellent addition to the blossoming literature on mid-19th-century black North American communities." "Choice" "Originally researched, fully contextualized, persuasively argued, and leanly and lucidly

written, this ostensibly regional study is in fact a work of transborder and continental, if not hemispheric, history. Some 35 years ago another American historian, the late Robin Winks, put African-Canadian history on the scholarly map. It now falls to Harvey Amani Whitfield to take up the torch and write a braver and newer history which takes seriously the African-Canadian experience and fully integrates it into the wider history—*not only of the Diaspora and the Black Atlantic, but also of Blacks in the British Empire.* (Barry Cahill, Independent Scholar, Halifax, Nova Scotia) “By focusing his lens on Nova Scotia, Harvey Amani Whitfield illuminates the experience of one of the largest and yet most neglected free black communities in all of antebellum North America. This lucid monograph weaves together several important strands of historiography as it seeks to understand the complex identity African-American refugees constructed for themselves on the fringes of the Atlantic world. Perhaps not since Robin Winks has a scholar done as much to illuminate the black experience in Canada.” (Patrick Rael, author of *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (2002)) “In *Blacks on the Border*, Harvey Amani Whitfield details the rich multifaceted history of how black people from disparate American backgrounds formed a distinctive communal identity in Nova Scotia in the first half of the nineteenth century. Written in lucid, engaging prose, this foundational work will be crucial to everyone studying the Black Atlantic, particularly those interested in the history of African peoples in New England and maritime Canada.” (Kari Winter, Associate Professor of American Studies, SUNY Buffalo, editor of *The Blind African Slave: Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace* and author of *Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790–1865*) “*Blacks on the Border* makes an admirable contribution to the history of African Canadians and to Diaspora Studies. Dr. Whitfield’s engaging narrative provides an intimate portrait of the Nova Scotia Refugee experience, and links it convincingly to Black America and the Black Atlantic beyond. It is an essential and enjoyable read.” (James W. St. G. Walker, author of *The Black Loyalists*)

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