

Petition of Coloured People at Preston

To His Excellency
Lord Viscount Falkland
Lieut. Governor of Nova Scotia

We the undersigned Inhabitants of the Township of Preston, beg leave respectfully to approach your Excellency with a statement of the hardships of our Situation, and to request your Excellency's aid to remove the disabilities under which we labour.

Petitioners are Refugees, brought from the plantations of the southern States, during the American War or their descendents, being placed by Government upon ten acre lots, of poor land, many of them including swamps and likewise entirely barren & unproductive, and none of them sufficient to yield subsistence for a family however skillfull and industrious, they have dragged on a miserable existence but few, if any of them, rising about the level of hopeless poverty. But few white men in this country seldom make a living upon ten acres even of good land, and petitioners believe that any number of them similarly placed to themselves in a strange country, and beneath a rigorous climate, after being recently relieved from the associations and pressures of slavery and the heat of a southern sun, would have for many years presented the same spectacle that the coloured people of Preston have exhibited.

The Object of the Petition is twofold:

1st. To humbly pray your Excellency to allow grants to pass confirming our titles to the lands we occupy, that those of us who wish to sell and remove to better locations or follow other employments may dispose of our lands and improvements to those who remain. At present, holding [land] under Tickets of Location, we cannot sell to advantage, we are tied to the land without being able to live upon it, or even vote upon it, without being at every Election questioned, brow beaten, and sworn.

2nd. Our humble prayer is, that your Excellency will cause some larger and better lots of land to be laid off, and assigned to those of us, who are willing to remove upon such terms of settlement as will enable us to acquire a freehold by patient industry and frugality and your Petitioners as is duty bound will every pray.

[signed by William Dair Sr., Samuel Carter, and about 105 others.]