

## **Pierpoint Settlement Research Project Community Workshop Presentation – Speaking Notes**

The following forms part of the presentation given by Annie Veilleux of A.S.I. at the Community Workshop for the Pierpoint Settlement Research Project. These speaking notes have been shared for information purposes and to address feedback from attendees regarding a desire to receive the speaking notes in an effort to better understand details that were shared during the presentation. These speaking notes do not serve as a complete compilation or summary of all technical work completed or the project's findings and/or recommendations. These notes should be read in conjunction with the final report that will be released in 2023. As these are speaking notes, sources and references are not provided herein. Any questions or clarifications about these speaking notes should be directed to Mariana Iglesias, [miglesias@centrewellington.ca](mailto:miglesias@centrewellington.ca).

### ***What is the Pierpoint Settlement Research Project?***

The Pierpoint Settlement was considered as a potential Cultural Heritage Landscape (C.H.L.) as part of the Township's recent C.H.L. Study and Inventory (2021), as suggested by members of the public. Briefly, the Provincial Policy Statement defines a C.H.L. as a "defined geographical area that may have been modified by human activity and is identified as having cultural heritage value or interest by a community, including an Indigenous community." As part of the evaluation methodology used in this particular study, candidate C.H.L.s were evaluated to determine their cultural heritage value, community value, and historical integrity (i.e., what was there in the past that is still present today that should be protected?). The C.H.L.s that were prioritized for inclusion on the inventory were those with identified physical attributes to be protected and managed.

One of the key recommendations to come out of the C.H.L. Study and Inventory was that further research be conducted on the Pierpoint Settlement to understand its potential historical integrity and boundary delineation, and that further and more focused consultation be undertaken to further understand the significance of this place to the community. The report also recommended that the area should be considered for an interpretation/commemoration plan to disseminate the history to the broader community. While the report provided a number of short, medium and long-term recommendations, the Township prioritized the Pierpoint Settlement Research Project as the first recommendation to address coming out of the C.H.L. Study. ASI was retained to undertake this work.

The goal of the Pierpoint Settlement Research Project is to conduct research to further understand the history, location, and significance of Richard Pierpoint's property, and in consultation with the public and stakeholders, to determine appropriate protection, interpretation, and/or commemoration strategies to recognize and broaden awareness of Pierpoint's significance and history

The first phase of the project was to make connections and gather information.



A number of individuals and groups were contacted as part of the initial phases of the project. Communication was through email and recipients were provided information on the project, including project goals and general timelines, and links to project pages for this project and the CHL inventory project. Stakeholders were also invited to share information regarding the Pierpoint settlement that could potentially assist in this research project. Stakeholders contacted included historians and academics, local residents, a range of museums and archives, representatives of historical/heritage societies/organizations, including the Guelph Black Historical Society, as well as the Centre Wellington Black Committee. Responses received range from a stated interest in the project and a desire to be kept informed, to the sharing of specific feedback, documents, and sources of information, as well as suggestions as to who else we should reach out to.

Next came the research phase. We relied on a range of primary and secondary sources, as well as oral history as recorded in secondary sources. For this project, we focused on Richard Pierpoint's use and associations with his land grant in Garafraxa, rather than on the details of his personal life.

Tonight, we are here to present some preliminary findings of the research, get your input as to whether anything was missed, and work together through smaller discussion groups to share feedback and ideas on potential protection, interpretation and/or commemoration strategies to recognize and broaden awareness of Pierpoint's significance and history

Finally, we will be bringing it all together into an Interpretation Framework to present the results of these tasks with recommendations for next steps for Council approval

### ***Who is Richard Pierpoint?***

Richard Pierpoint has been written about extensively and was designated a National Historic Person by Parks Canada in 2020 in recognition of his life experience, hardships, and contributions as a Black Loyalist in Upper-Canada. The man that would become Richard Pierpoint was born in the Bundu region of what is now Senegal around 1744. At 16 years of age, he was captured and enslaved, brought to America and sold to a British officer. We know that he joined the Butler's Rangers, fighting for the British in the American Revolutionary War. At the end of the war, as a "disbanded Ranger" he was granted his freedom. He spent time as a labourer near Fort Niagara and was granted land in Grantham Township in what is now St. Catharines in 1791 because of his military service. For the next twenty years, Pierpoint appears to have lived and worked in the Niagara area.

The next major event that marks Pierpoint's life is the War of 1812. At almost 70 years of age, Pierpoint proposes to create and lead a Corps of Black Men to fight against the Americans. Like other Black men from Upper Canada who enlisted in this war, Pierpoint wanted to remain free, and he intended to fight alongside the British to retain his freedom. While the authorities did in fact establish what was known as the "Coloured Corps," they appointed white officers to lead it. Pierpoint joined the Corps as a private.



After the war, Pierpoint wanted to return to his homeland in West Africa. In 1820, he travelled to York to present a petition to Lieutenant Governor Maitland. In his petition, Pierpoint describes himself as “now old and without property” and that “he finds it difficult to obtain a livelihood by his labour.” Pierpoint asked the Government to provide him with the means to travel to England and from there to his West Africa.

His petition was rejected. Instead, Richard Pierpoint was granted land in Garafraxa Township, just outside of what is now Fergus, as a Militia Grant.

This grant included the east half of Lot 6, Concession 1, the focus of this workshop tonight. He was granted this land in 1822, when he was around 78 years old.

In the 1820s, archival documents still place Pierpoint in the Grantham area (what is now St. Catharines), despite this land grant in Garafraxa. The 1825 certificate that confirms that settlement duties have been completed on his land note that Pierpoint was a resident of Grantham Township at that time.

In 1828, the Accounts from the District Treasurer include a “paupers account” or “money paid on account of paupers”. It noted that a Samuel Wood of Grantham had paid a certain amount of money for the support and maintenance of “Pierpoint.” While the account did not mention the given name of the individual, there is a very strong possibility that it was Richard. His will, also dating to 1828, was witnessed by at least two men who lived in the Niagara region, suggesting that Pierpoint was still very much connected to Grantham Township in Niagara

### ***What is the Pierpoint Settlement?***

According to oral history in the Black Canadian community, as outlined in various secondary sources, Pierpoint travelled widely, carrying with him, and sharing stories with members of the Black community in the Niagara, Garafraxa, and Queen’s Bush regions. Pierpoint was a gifted storyteller in the West African tradition of the griot. Oral history also indicates that Pierpoint’s property was a natural stop over for travellers heading north on the Garafraxa Road, into the unsurveyed Queen’s Bush between Garafraxa and Georgian Bay. Here, travellers would have had a chance to rest before continuing their journey further north.

Stories of Pierpoint during his time in Garafraxa travelled up north to the Queen’s Bush in what is now Grey and Simcoe Counties and stories of Pierpoint were still being recounted in the 1990s in the Collingwood area.

Based on the general research and preliminary information gathered as part of the CHL Study in relation to the “Pierpoint Settlement”, there was an expectation that we would find evidence of multiple lots owned or settled by Black families – as suggested by the term “settlement”.

“Settlement” however, can have many different meanings and covers an extremely broad range of human practices and historical patterns. At its simplest, a settlement can be a place occupied by a



one or more families for some period of time. At its most complex, villages, towns and cities are settlements. A settlement can be permanent or can be occupied on a seasonal basis. While some historical settlements leave behind visible physical evidence on the landscape, others leave behind stories. The concept of a settlement is complex – we started with a certain expectation, but after unpacking it we ended up with a different, but no less significant, understanding.

### ***East Half of Lot 6, Concession 1, Garafraxa Township***

The Garafraxa Township papers showed that the east half of Lot 6, Concession 1 was granted to Richard Pierpoint as a “Militia grant” on July 30, 1822. His service as a private in the “Colored Corps” from September 1, 1812 to March 24, 1815, was noted. The requisite “settlement duties” (which included building a permanent house/cabin, clearing and fencing a portion of the land, planting it with crops, and clearing half of the road allowance “in front” of the lot), was completed for Pierpoint prior to May 9, 1825, as sworn under oath by John Brown and Levi Johnson of the Township of Waterloo, which includes much of Kitchener-Waterloo today. A land grant was in actuality a conditional grant. To be able to obtain ownership of a granted lot, one had to fulfill these settlement duties.

The Abstract Index to Deeds, however, shows that this part lot, containing 100 acres was patented by Richard Pierpoint on Sept. 22, 1836, more than a decade following the completion of his settlement duties. This may, in large part, have had to do with Pierpoint’s financial status. Records suggest that Pierpoint was being financially supported for a time in Grantham Township in his later years. Land patents were not totally free of expense for the grantee: the patentee still had to pay the cost of the survey fees to the Surveyor General, plus a patent fee to the Provincial Secretary (to offset the cost of parchment and sealing wax) before the document was issued. Therefore, it may have taken Pierpoint several years of saving money whenever he could afford to set some aside for payment of the requisite fees. The late patent date of 1836 probably also explains why Pierpoint was not recorded as a landowner on the 1834 assessment roll for Garafraxa Township.

As mentioned earlier, Pierpoint’s will, dated Jan. 28, 1828, was witnessed by at least two men who lived in the Niagara District and who owned property in Grantham and Louth Townships, suggesting that Pierpoint was in the Niagara area during that time. Pierpoint’s will indicated that he had no heirs or relations, and he left his property to Lemuel Brown. The will was registered on title in early October 1838.

In November 1838, Lemuel Brown sold the Pierpoint property in its entirety to Alexander Drysdale, a neighbouring farmer who appears to have been a native of Edinburgh, Scotland. It is assumed that the use of Pierpoint’s property as a stopping place while enroute to the Queen’s Bush, likely came to a halt after the sale of the property.

The Pierpoint property was owned by just four principal families after Lemuel Brown: farmer Alexander Drysdale (1838), school inspector Alexander Dingwall Fordyce (1851), Toronto realtor



James Lamond Smith (1853), and grain merchant John Black (1880.) This lot remained in the possession of the Black family, as part of the “Blackburn Farm” for more than a century.

Due to the absence of good, early mapping, it is not easy to tell with any certainty where Pierpoint’s cabin may have been built within the east half of Lot 6, Concession 1. A few locations have been suggested, including along Lamond Street near the John Black School; within Pierpoint Park; as well as a few locations outside of the boundaries of Pierpoint’s land grant.

As mentioned earlier, part of the required settlement duties included clearing a road allowance along the property. It is probable that the cabin would have been built close to that road allowance that Pierpoint and/or his assistants (e.g., John Brown, Levi Johnson, or others) would have cleared. This would have provided convenient access to the road, rather than building at a site deeper within the lot which would have required additional land clearing. The least amount of work in this respect would have been along the front of the lot (between Lots 5 and 6), or along the sideline between Concessions 1 and 2. Clearing the strip of land between the river and the road allowance between Lots 5 and 6, as well as the road, and building a cabin on that strip of land, would have also provided convenient access to the Grand River.

It has been mentioned that Pierpoint’s property is located within the Grand River floodplain and may have been prone to flooding. This is one reason given for the suggestion that his cabin may have been built on higher ground outside of the limits of his grant. Historical mapping, however, indicates that structures could be built within the land grant despite the threat of flooding, as seen from the structures illustrated on the south side of the river on mapping from 1861 and 1906.

### ***Black Land Ownership in Upper Canada***

The Upper Canadian government had a very circumscribed policy on land ownership by Black settlers from a very early period.

In June 1794, a petition was presented to Lieut. Governor Simcoe and the Executive Council by nineteen Black men who were residents of the Niagara District, including Richard Pierpoint. They wished to be granted a “Tract of Country to settle on, separate from the white settlers,” so that they could “give assistance (in work) to those amongst them who may most want it.”

When the Upper Canada Land Petitions are examined for some of the men who signed the petition in 1794, it becomes clear that land ownership by Black families was restricted to those who could claim military service. Thus, Pierpoint obtained land in Grantham Township in the 1780s as a Loyalist and former member of Butler’s Rangers, and in the early 1820s in Garafraxa on account of his services during the War of 1812. The other men who signed the 1794 petition, even though they were free Blacks, did not have military service or Loyalist status, and therefore their petitions were denied.



John Cesar, for example, was a free Black who had resided in Upper Canada since 1782. In July 1797 he petitioned the Executive Council for a grant of land. The verso of the document is endorsed with the remark that the prayer of the petition was denied and that lands were [quote unquote] “not granted to people of the petitioner’s description who have not military claims.”

We know that two other Black men were granted lands in Garafraxa Township in recognition of their services during the war of 1812. John Van Patten was granted 100 acres on the east half of Lot 4, Concession 1(a bit south of the Pierpoint property) in 1823. Van Patten flipped his land and sold it about one month later. Robert Jupiter was also granted land in Garafraxa Township, but he died before he could obtain the Crown patent. Of land granted to Black men for their military service in Garafraxa, only Pierpoint’s property seems to have retained Black ownership or use for any length of time.

### ***Queen’s Bush Settlement***

The Queen’s Bush settlement further demonstrates the additional restrictions and barriers that Black individuals faced related to land ownership.

The land which comprises the majority of the “Queen’s Bush” was acquired by the Crown through several treaties in the 1810s-1830s. The townships in these tracts were generally not surveyed until the second quarter of the nineteenth century (and generally around the 1840s) when the first settlers were granted lands there by the government or purchased from the Canada Company. Garafraxa Township, where Pierpoint was granted land, was surveyed in 1821. Anyone who made the difficult journey to these unsurveyed lands, where roads were generally non-existent and often impassable, were considered “squatters” even if they fulfilled what would be considered settlement duties such as clearing the land, planting crops, and building a cabin.

More than 1,500 free and formerly enslaved Blacks from both the United States and Upper Canada, as well as Canadian-born Blacks, made the trek to the Queen’s Bush and established farms and communities. A majority settled in the southeast corner of Peel Township, in what is now Mapleton, between ca. 1835 and 1850. When the land was finally surveyed in the late 1840s and lots could be purchased, many could not afford the purchase price for the land that they had settled on, which was then considered to be “improved” land (i.e., cleared, planted, and with standing structures) and so it commanded a higher price than “wild” or unimproved land they had first arrived to. Despite five petitions from various Queen’s Bush residents requesting the permission to be able to keep their properties, each were ignored. As a result, many Black families were forced to abandon their homes and their community. While some people were able to purchase their lands and remain, most returned to the established cities, towns, and villages. Some moved to the area around Owen Sound where they obtained fifty-acre grants, while others moved to Black settlements such as Buxton or the Elgin Settlement

Other Queen’s Bush settlers moved to the Durham Road in what is now Grey County, north of what is now Fergus along the Garafraxa Road. Two men who appear in both the 1843 Queen’s Bush petition



and an 1851 petition from settlers on Durham Road, include John Brown and Levi Johnson. Another familiar name that appears on the 1851 Durham Road petition is that of Lemuel Brown. These three men were acquainted with Richard Pierpoint and would have helped carry stories of Pierpoint from his time in Garafraxa, up the Garafraxa Road.

### ***Research Findings***

We have come to understand that settlement activities associated with Pierpoint and his relationships to the broader Black community relate to his property/cabin that we know was located and built just outside of what is now Fergus and that was probably used on a seasonal basis and may have been used as a stopping point for people travelling to the Queen's Bush, along the Garafraxa Road. We also know that the construction of this cabin was supported by affiliates of Pierpoint, who were also Black.

While land grants were given to three Black men in West Garafraxa because of their military service, only Pierpoint's property appears to have retained Black ownership or use by the Black community for a period of time, between 1822 and 1838, and as based on archival records. The fact that Garafraxa Township was surveyed and lots were being granted and purchased during Pierpoint's time there, may have had an impact on the size or longevity of any Black settlement in this area. Unlike the Queen's Bush Settlement which remained unsurveyed and more or less free for the taking for anyone willing to make the difficult journey and take on the task of building themselves a home out of the wilderness.

There is demonstration of a community associated with Pierpoint that was engaging in acts of settlement. And these acts of settlement are temporally consistent with other acts of petitioning for and claiming land by disenfranchised Black communities. Unlike many other Black individuals, Pierpoint because of his military service was allowed to own land. The archival record shows that he had help fulfilling his settlement duties – the oral history shows that he would have shared his land with others, on their own journey to set down roots in this part of the province.

Despite being out of the way and difficult to reach, it was important for Pierpoint to complete the settlement duties and to own this piece of land, even if it took him almost a decade to do so. Pierpoint was well respected in Niagara, where it looks like he had a support system, had friends and associates, but still he chose to do this at a very advanced age.

So now, we have this story. It was perhaps not what we were expecting at the beginning of this project, and we might have missed some pieces. Now we need your help to fill in those missing pieces, if any, and to work through what could be appropriate protection, interpretation, and/or commemoration strategies to recognize and broaden awareness of Pierpoint's significance and history.

