

Black History Resources



An agency of the Government of Ontario

The Slavery to Freedom project

Website: <http://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/stf>

The Ontario Heritage Trust has undertaken a number of initiatives to celebrate Black heritage, with funding support from the Government of Ontario. The Slavery to Freedom web resource is one such initiative. The goal of this web resource is to promote Ontario's Black heritage sites and groups, and to provide online information and resources, with a central focus on the province's rich Black history.

Today, a number of buildings, cemeteries, churches and historic sites exist as a testament to the bravery, determination and spirit of freedom seekers, abolitionists and others who followed in their footsteps to build a strong and vibrant Black community in Ontario. Slavery to Freedom highlights Black history sites and community partners from across the province, providing a forum for them to share their stories and educate visitors about the African-Canadian experience.

We encourage you to take the time to explore Slavery to Freedom and discover the significant people, places and events that have helped shape the diverse fabric of Ontario's cultural heritage.



Ontario Black History Society

Website: www.blackhistorysociety.ca

Founded in 1978, the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) was created to study, preserve and promote Black history to address the absence of African-Canadian educational/historical material. A provincial heritage organization, the OBHS is the leading voice in the celebration of February as Black History Month (BHM) as well as official recognition of August 1 as Emancipation Day.

The OBHS creates the official OBHS BHM poster, launch events, the annual BHM brunch and Emancipation Day celebrations. It also creates permanent, virtual and travelling exhibits (in cooperation with Parks Canada, Historica and the Archives of Ontario). The OBHS offers: year-round presentations and tours; a resource centre with library, historic photographs, film, oral history tapes and special collections; and professional development, conferences and advocacy. The OBHS is proud to initiate the commemoration of historic people, places and events.

In May 2007, the OBHS launched the preview site of the planned centre of African-Canadian

history and culture. With your support, and the direction of our business plan, it will provide a place for the expression of our legacy (the Toronto area is home to half of all Canadians of African origin). Volunteer and sponsorship opportunities abound!

Located in the Ontario Heritage Centre, the OBHS is fully accessible and contains a resource centre, selected onsite exhibits and items for sale.



Buxton National Historic Site & Museum

Website: www.buxtonmuseum.com

The Buxton National Historic Site & Museum, on the original site of the Elgin Settlement, was a terminus on the Underground Railroad for fugitive slaves and free Blacks fleeing oppression in the United States. Founded in 1849 by Rev. William King, this Black settlement – renowned for its superior educational system – became a self-sufficient community for approximately 2,000 people. After the American Civil War, many settlers returned south to find loved ones and to help with the reconstruction effort.

Today, Buxton is inhabited by the descendents of the original settlers who remained in Canada who are dedicated to preserving their rich heritage. This wheelchair-accessible museum complex features three rooms of exhibits, a library and research centre, gift shop, an 1861 schoolhouse, an 1852 log cabin, a replica of the Buxton Liberty Bell, commemorative National Historic Site plaques, a large picnic and playground area and plenty of parking for cars and buses. Several educational programs are available for school groups.



Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society

Website: www.ckblackhistoricalsociety.org

The Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society is surrounded by historic landmarks, parks and heritage plaques. With a focus on preserving the area's rich Black history, we function as both a tourist attraction and research facility.

The self-guided exhibit contains artifacts and interactive audio/visual presentations documenting Chatham's important role in Black history as it progressed from a haven for runaway slaves to become home to a Black community that thrived in business, education, sport, medicine and literary and cultural arts. "Chatham was not a mecca only. In a broader and truer sense, it was the colored man's Paris." (Rev. R.R. Disney after visiting in 1857)

The annual John Brown Festival in May recognizes the recruitment of Chatham's affluent Black community for a famous raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. The secret meetings in Chatham

and the raid are believed to have sparked the American Civil War.

Research resources include genealogical, census and military records, photographs, newspaper articles and land registries. Tours by appointment.



Grey Roots Museum & Archives

Website: <http://greyroots.com>

A Grey County Black History exhibit, *From Slavery to Freedom*, explores the importance of the Underground Railroad to fleeing slaves and the Black struggle to establish new lives as free persons. Other events such as the Emancipation Festival Art Show, the Black History Event and special Black History Month events, celebrate Grey County's link to the Underground Railroad. Built in 2004, Grey Roots Museum and Archives is a modern facility. Resources include: gift shop and washrooms.



Griffin House National Historic Site

Website: See www.conservationhamilton.ca (under "Historical Sites") or www.hamilton.ca (under "Hamilton Civic Museums")

The Griffin House stands today as a testament to the determination of the African-American men and women who settled in Upper Canada. The site was designated in 1991 by the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee. In 2008, Parks Canada declared it a National Historic Site. Located at 733 Mineral Springs Road in Ancaster, it is managed jointly by the Hamilton Conservation Authority and the City of Hamilton.

Enerals Griffin was an African-American who came to Upper Canada with his wife Priscilla in 1829 to seek a better life. Griffin purchased the house and 50 acres in 1834 and settled here with his family. For over 150 years, their descendants lived and worked on the farm as members of the Ancaster community.

The circa 1827 four-room frame house displays the solid, simple architectural style once common in Upper Canada. Acquired by the Hamilton Conservation Authority in 1988, the Griffin House was restored to its pre-1850 appearance.



Guelph Museums

Website: www.guelph.ca/museum

The Guelph Museums consist of two sites – the Guelph Civic Museum and McCrae House. McCrae House is the birthplace of John McCrae, author of the poem *In Flanders Fields*. It has been designated as a National Historic Site. The Guelph Civic Museum is the community space that hosts the Children's Museum, permanent exhibits and travelling exhibits.

Resources

Visit our online exhibit – Black history in Guelph and Wellington County (<http://guelph.ca/museumsites/BlackHistory/index.htm>).



John Freeman Walls Underground Railroad Museum

Website: www.undergroundrailroadmuseum.com

This historic site commemorates a family chapter in the famous Underground Railroad freedom movement. A commemorative plaque reads: "In 1846, John Freeman Walls, a fugitive slave from North Carolina, built a log cabin on land purchased from the Refugee Home Society. This Organization was founded by the abolitionist Henry Bibb publisher of the Voice of the Fugitive, and the famous Josiah Henson. The Cabin subsequently served as a terminal of the Underground Railroad and the first meeting place of the Puce Baptist Church. Although many former enslaved people returned to the United States following the American Civil War, Walls and his family chose to remain in Canada. The story of their struggles forms the basis of the book *The Road That Led To Somewhere* by Dr Bryan E. Walls."

Modern-day Underground Railroad conductors (many are direct descendents) take their passengers back in time to create a memorable interactive and educational experience, emphasizing the theme of mutual respect and reconciliation.



Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church

Website: www.njheritage.ca

The British Methodist Episcopal Church was established in 1814. The Norval Johnson Heritage Library, established in 1991, is an information resource centre for students, researchers and the community, providing a focal point for local/Niagara Region Black Canadian history materials and genealogical research.

Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel, a designated National Historic Site on the Underground Railroad, is located on property donated by freedom seeker Oliver Pernell in the old Drummondville area of Niagara Falls. Together, these comprise the Norval Johnson Heritage Centre, one of the most important stops on the Niagara Freedom Trail Tour.

Volunteers contribute their time to operate the library and provide information and guiding services for the chapel and local aspects of the Underground Railroad. Offsite presentations are regularly delivered for school, community, social and church groups.

The Centre contains a 1,400-volume reference library that also provides access to the Next Generation genealogy program. There is a gift shop and the chapel is wheelchair accessible.



Niagara Falls History Museum

Website: www.niagarafallsmuseum.ca

Housing a vast collection of Niagara Falls history, this museum provides a showcase for the unique history of the famous city. After \$12-million renovations, a dynamic space to examine and explore our diverse history now greets visitors. The renovation and expansion was designed by Toronto firm Moryama and Teshima; three unique galleries tell the most compelling Niagara Falls stories with engaging and hands-on exhibits. The museum is located within steps of the Drummond Hill Cemetery, which is the focal point of the Battle of Lundy's Lane, the bloodiest battle of the War of 1812. The starting point for any trip to this battlefield will be a visit to the museum.



North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre

Website: www.blackhistoricalmuseum.org

The North American Black Historical Museum illustrates the story of Black migration from Africa to Canada through a series of displays of historical artifacts, documents, various Black heritage exhibits, video presentations and workshops. The facility also includes a research/resource library and archives, and offers guided tours to visitors.



Oakville Museum at Erchless Estate

Website: www.oakvillemuseum.ca

The Oakville Museum, on the four-acre Erchless Estate, includes the historic home of Oakville's founding family, the 1856 Custom House, outbuildings and beautiful grounds and gardens.

The Oakville Museum at Erchless Estate is the permanent home of *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop, Freedom* – an innovative multimedia presentation that celebrates the heritage of Black Canadians in our community (created by Parks Canada in partnership with the Ontario Black History Society and the Royal Ontario Museum).

In 1834, the town became an official port of entry into Canada. Ships arrived from all over the Great Lakes and beyond, and many freedom seekers were assisted by ships' captains to stow away in their vessels. The story of Oakville's role in the Underground Railroad is told in a new permanent gallery.

Currently, the Black history exhibit is not wheelchair accessible. The main floor of the museum, however, which includes period room settings and changing exhibitions, is accessible. There is a gift shop with a variety of books, artwork and pioneer toys.



St. Catharines Museum at Lock 3

Website: www.stcatharines.ca

The St. Catharines Museum at Lock 3 is a fully accessible facility that includes: a lock-side Discovery Park featuring heritage and marine artifacts; a library and archives documenting early Black citizens of St. Catharines and greater Niagara; several exhibit galleries; and our award-winning exhibit *Follow the North Star*.

This exhibit explores the experiences of Black veterans from the 18th century, travellers arriving on the Underground Railroad and citizens finding freedom in a new land. Early settlers included Black veterans of the American Revolution. The construction of the Welland Canal spurred the development of the city of St. Catharines from the early 19th century through the early 20th century. Black citizens made a significant contribution to the community as sailors, shipbuilders and tradesmen, and as part of the "Colored Corps," a unit of Black militia formed during the War of 1812 who later kept peace in the rowdy worker settlements along the Welland Canal.



Salem Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church

Website: www.salemchapelbmechurch.ca

The present British Methodist Episcopal Church, Salem Chapel was built in 1855 by freedom seekers. With its association to the famed conductor Harriet Tubman, this church had a membership exceeding 200 for service in that era. Today, this designated National Historic Site remains a testament to the courageous settlers who made St. Catharines their home. This well-preserved three-level chapel displays original documents, artifacts, a rare book collection and more.



Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site

Website: www.uncletomscabin.org

Recognized internationally for his contribution to the abolition movement, Rev. Josiah Henson – an escaped slave from Kentucky – quickly attained the status of leader within the Underground Railroad community of southwestern Ontario. In 1841, he co-founded the British American Institute, a vocational school for Underground Railroad refugees. The Dawn Settlement, comprised of mostly Black settlers, grew around the school.

Residents of the settlement farmed, attended the Institute and worked at saw mills, gristmills and other local industries. Some returned to the United States after emancipation was proclaimed in 1863. Others remained, however, contributing to the establishment of a significant Black community in this part of the province.

Harriet Beecher Stowe referred to Josiah Henson's memoirs, published in 1849, for her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Henson's dramatic experiences and his connection with Stowe's book made him one of the most famous Canadians of his day.

This five-acre site includes an interpretive centre – featuring the exhibit *I'll Use My Freedom Well* – three historic buildings, including Rev. Henson's last dwelling, two cemeteries, extensive artifacts and a gift shop.

Henson was designated a figure of national historic significance by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in 1999.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH
IN CANADA



Radio Canada International

<http://www.rcinet.ca/histoiredesnoirs/en/>

Radio Canada International: The Black History Month in Canada project has been developed

by a team of Radio Canada International journalists and web masters international. Black history in North America, unlike “white” history, must take into account the hundreds of thousands of Africans who were brought to this continent against their will. The experience of slavery, in Canada and the United States, wreaked havoc for generations. Canada played a role in the liberation and eventual return of some slaves to Africa, but for many others, their lives had already taken root here.



Citizenship and Immigration Canada

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/black/index.asp>

Every year, Canadians are invited to participate in Black History Month festivities and events that honour the legacy of black Canadians, past and present.

This year, Black History Month will recognize the bicentennial anniversary of the War of 1812 and the contributions of black soldiers in the fight for Canada. Read a [statement from the Minister on Black History Month 2012](#).

We take this time to celebrate the many achievements and contributions of black Canadians who, throughout history, have done so much to make Canada the culturally diverse, compassionate and prosperous nation we are today. During Black History Month Canadians can gain insight into the experiences of black Canadians and the vital role this community has played throughout our shared history.



Historica Dominion Institute: Black History Canada

<http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/>

An annotated guide to online resources on the history of Canada's black community. The website includes Profiles, Events, Arts&Culture, Timelines, and a For teachers link to lesson plans and resources.



Kuumba Festival

<http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/kuumba/>

Celebrating creativity and vitality!

Come down to Harbourfront Centre for three days of FREE Black History Month events, including music, film, panel discussions and more.

This event is part of the **TD Then & Now** series, an inspiring and entertaining cultural showcase of one of Canada's prominent communities. The lineup of events includes films,

concerts, exhibitions, and performances by a host of Canadian and international artists.



City of Toronto Celebrates Black History Month

<http://www.toronto.ca/blackhistory/>

Each year, the City of Toronto is proud to support events and exhibits scheduled for Black History Month, inviting members of the public to explore and celebrate the heritage, traditions and culture of African-Canadians.



Library and Archives Canada

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/black-history/index-e.html>

February is Black History Month, a time to recognize and honour the legacy of Black Canadians. To commemorate this occasion, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is offering a Web portal of the online resources available on its website relating to Black History in Canada.

Throughout February, a series of events organized by Black History Ottawa (www.blackhistoryottawa.org) will take place at LAC.

On this web portal, see [LAC Resources](#) for a list of related online exhibits and research tools. See [Related Sites](#) for a selection of external websites.

Black History Month 2012

*Then: A people's triumph.
Now: An unforgettable
celebration.*



Then & Now

<http://www.td.com/to-our-customers/bhm-en-tor.jsp>

This February, we're once again pleased to present an inspiring and entertaining cultural showcase of one of Canada's prominent communities. Called Then & Now, our lineup of events includes films, concerts, exhibitions, and performances by a host of Canadian and international artists. So come celebrate Black History Month. Who knows, with so much excitement around, you may end up creating some history of your own.



Mississauga Heritage

<http://www.heritagemississauga.com/page/Black-Settlement-History-in-Historic-Mississauga>

It was a difficult life for a black settler in 19th Century Upper Canada. Many came to Canada as fugitive slaves. Others came as free men and women with idealistic hopes of solidarity and acceptance by the predominantly white society. It is estimated that at its peak, the black

population in Upper Canada totaled around thirty-five to forty thousand people, which made up only a small percentage of the overall population of Upper Canada.

Mississauga (formerly Toronto Township in the Region of Peel) was not a place where Black settlers congregated in the early to mid-nineteenth century. In the Peel Region (which now comprises Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon) there are no records of an African Methodist Church (a sure sign of a Black community), no predominantly Black schools, and no established Black communities.



Passages to Canada

<http://www.passagestocanada.com/en/>

Passages to Canada is one of the Historica-Dominion Institute's flagship educational programs. Since 2002, more than 100,000 students and New Canadians across the country have heard the inspiring personal stories of immigration from some of Canada's most successful immigrants. Through Passages to Canada, you will hear how it feels to leave one's homeland and to arrive in a new and strange place; how it feels to encounter racism and misunderstandings about one's culture; how it feels to try to fit in, to learn a new language and to have to start over; how it feels to realize that you have indeed found a new home in Canada.



The
African Canadian
Literature
Project

[The African Canadian Literature Project](http://www.yorku.ca/acc/)

<http://www.yorku.ca/acc/>

African Canadian Literature curriculum for schools. This curriculum includes a selection of TEXTS, SUPPORTING MATERIALS, and ideas for LESSONS and ACTIVITIES. All are welcome; however, some of the materials presented are COPYRIGHT RESTRICTED, and so are available only to SCHOOL BOARDS THAT SUBSCRIBE to the [Orion Network](#). Links to these materials will simply take non-subscribers to a blank web page.

For more information on the African Canadian Literature Project, please contact us at orionac@yorku.ca.

For additional resources, please feel free to also visit the African Canadian Online website at www.yorku.ca/aconline.



Catholic Education Foundation, LLC

[The National Black Catholic Congress](http://www.nbccongress.org/)

<http://www.nbccongress.org/>

The National Black Catholic Congress, comprised of member organizations, represent African American Roman Catholics, working in collaboration with National Roman Catholic

organizations. We commit ourselves to establishing an agenda for the evangelization of African Americans; and to improve the spiritual, mental, and physical conditions of African Americans, thereby committing ourselves to the freedom and growth of African Americans as full participants in church and society.



CBC

[CBC Make Black History](#)

<http://www.cbc.ca/toronto/features/blackhistorymonth/>

History is full of examples of black men and women who overcame prejudice and discrimination to become examples of achievement. Their actions helped people of all ethnicities gain human rights and freedoms. For Black History Month 2013, we asked our audience to tell us how they were making black history. In a hundred years, why would they be an example for others? The website also includes Contributions to Canada: 23 historical Black Canadians you should know, Black History Month Kickoff: History brought people and cultures from around the world together in Canada, Celebrating Black History: A selection of radio and TV clips that honour black history, and much more.