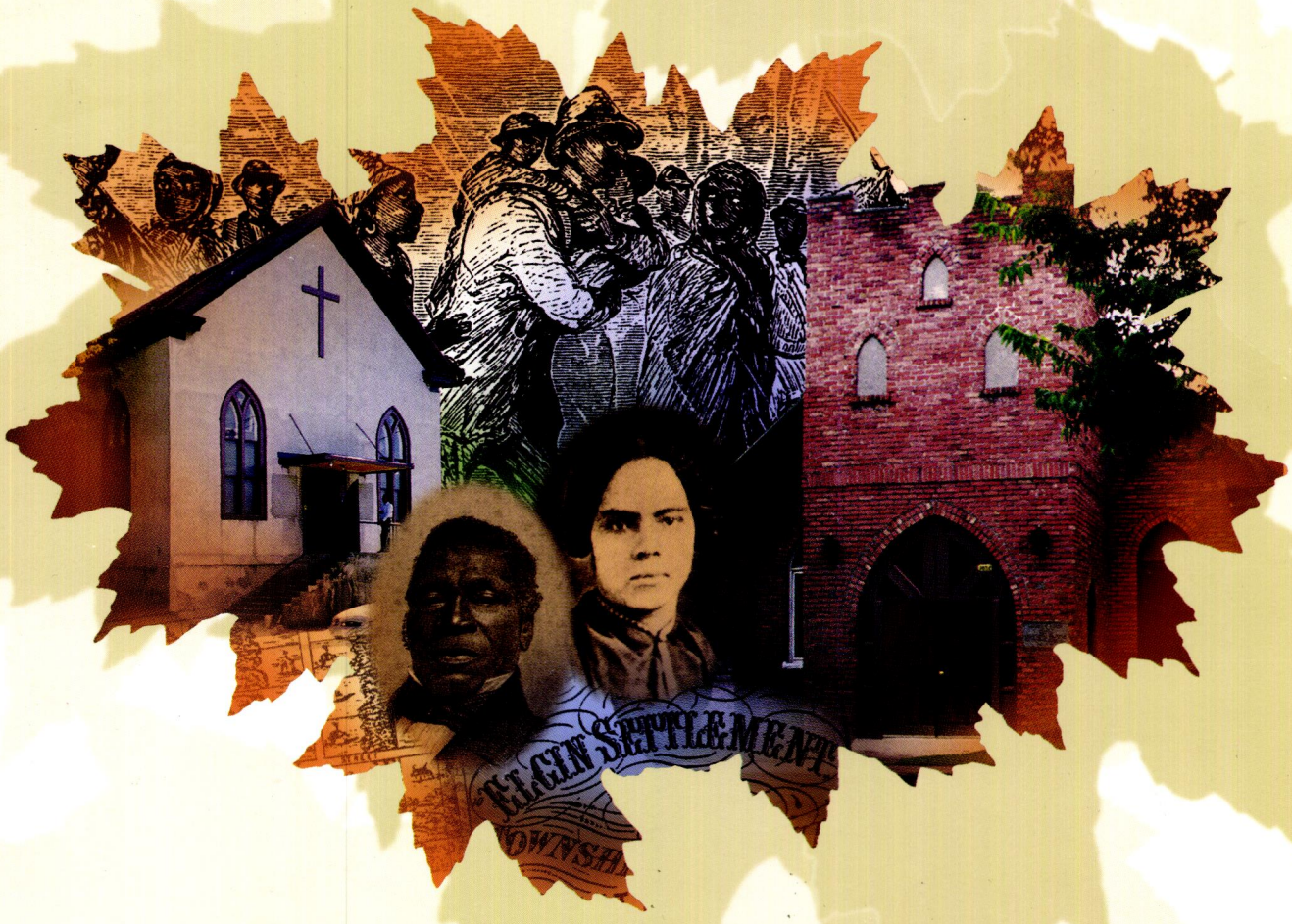
THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES OF CANADA

COMMEMORATING THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD IN CANADA



Identification of images on the front cover photo montage:

1. St. Catharines British Methodist Episcopal Church
2. Refugees from Slavery
3. Sandwich First Baptist Church
4. The Reverend Josiah Henson
5. Mary Ann Shadd Cary
6. Plan of Elgin [Buxton] Settlement

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada is the statutory body responsible for advising the Minister of Canadian Heritage and, through the minister, to the Government of Canada on the commemoration of nationally significant aspects of Canada's history.

The Board encourages public support and involvement to enhance Canadians' awareness of the patterns of the past that have shaped our nation. Almost 80 percent of the subjects considered by the board are proposed by the public.

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ISBN: 0-662-65591-5
Cat: R64-243/2001
Cette publication est aussi disponible en français

www.parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/hsmbc/hsmbc_e.htm

Foreword

The story of the Underground Railroad is the stuff of courage and compassion, heroes and history.

From the 1820s to the 1860s, African American refugees worked with a secret network of supporters in order to escape to Canada. They arrived by the thousands. They came to Canadian communities from Halifax to Victoria, with the largest numbers arriving in what is now southwestern Ontario. In a new place, the refugees built a new home and helped lay the foundations of a new country.

The places and names resonate with our heritage as a society — Salem Chapel, the Buxton Settlement, Mary Ann Shadd, Josiah Henson, Thornton and Lucie Blackburn, and Harriet Tubman. The system of National Historic Sites of Canada preserves and honours the memory of these special places and these special people.

As Canadians, we must cherish the diverse and inspiring stories of the history of our nation. The heritage of Canada connects us to our past, connects us to our future and connects us to each other.

Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage

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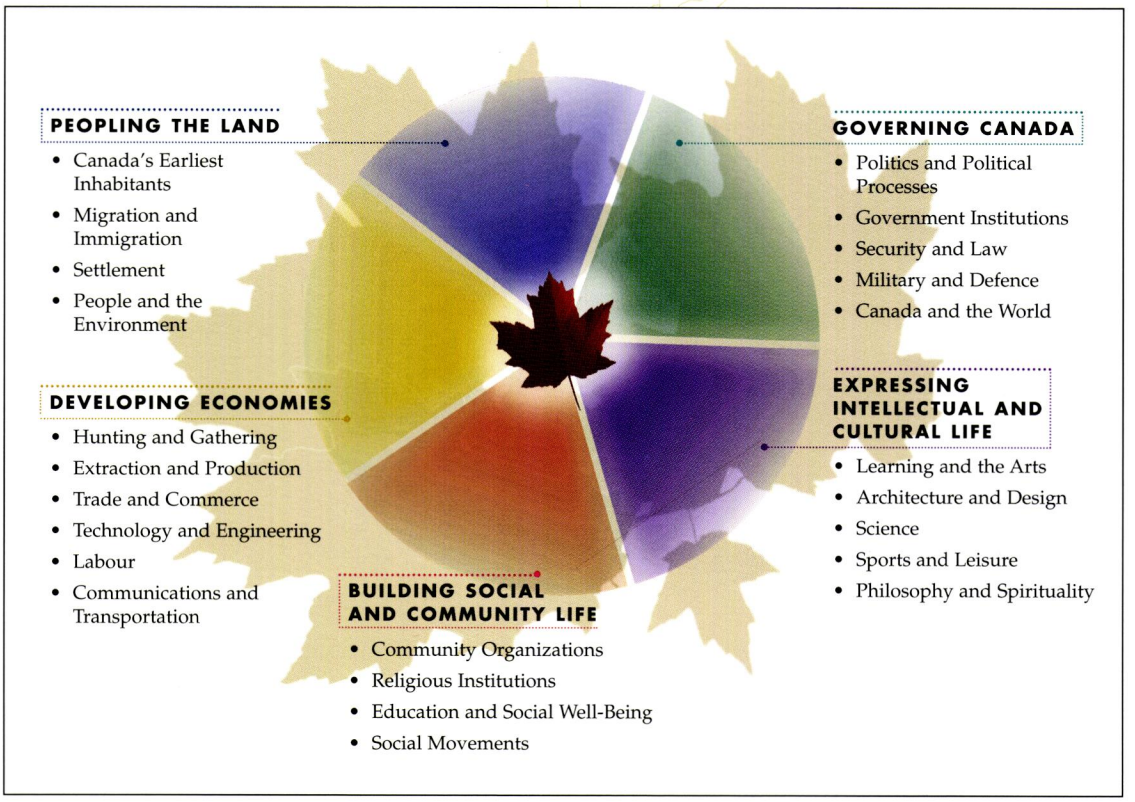
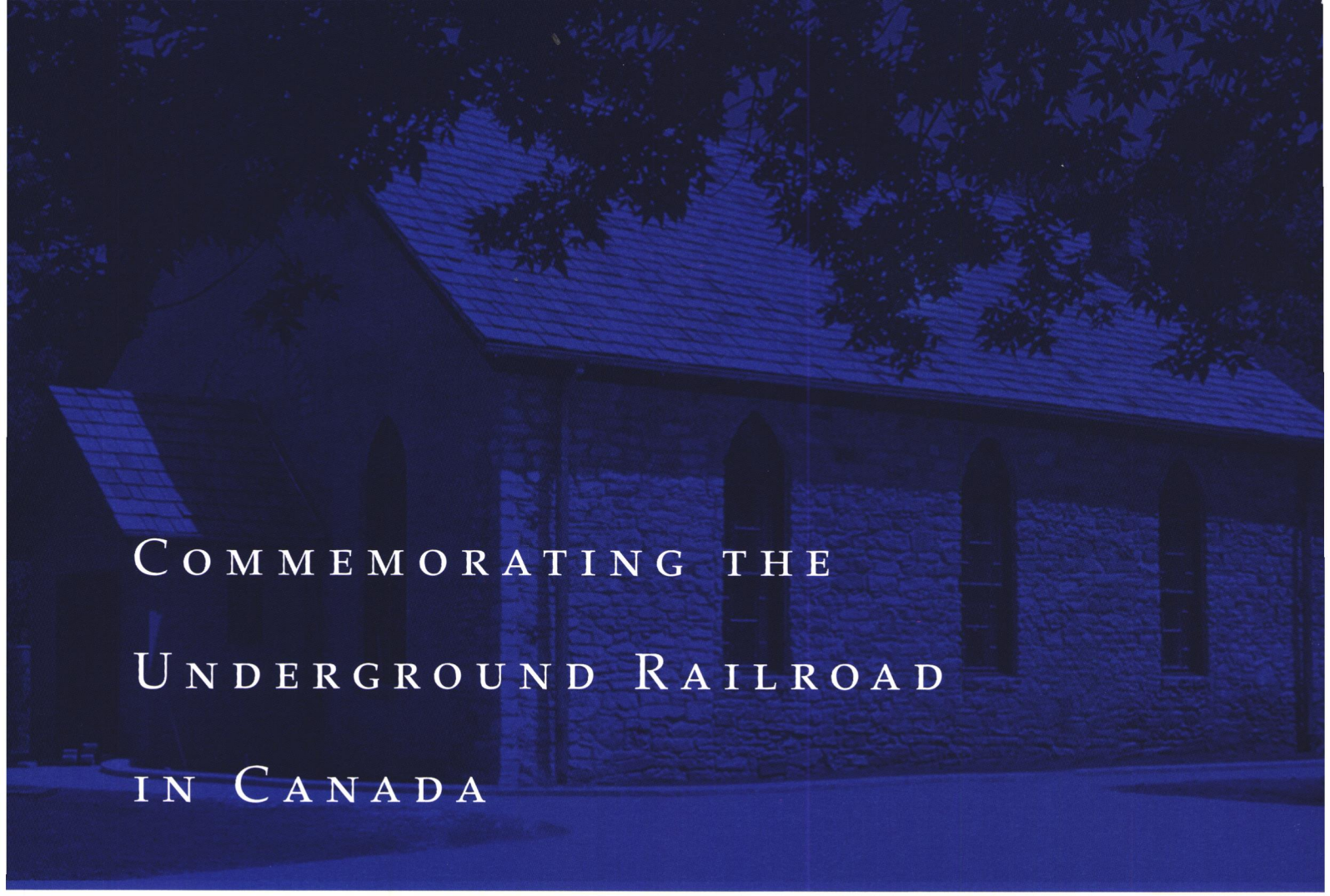
The National Historic Sites System Plan and Thematic Framework

The system of National Historic Sites of Canada cannot be considered either finite or complete. The federal government is working with others to create a more representative system — one that truly reflects the rich history and heritage that define Canada. Commemorating the *Underground Railroad in Canada* reflects research carried out by Parks Canada on a particular chapter in the history of Canada's many ethnocultural communities, an area of interest that is currently regarded as under-represented within the system. The Thematic Framework organizes Canadian history into five broad, inter-related themes, each of which has a number of sub-themes. The history of the Underground Railroad has been commemorated primarily as it relates to the theme of Building Social and Community Life, although this complex history cuts across all thematic categories. Aspects of the story may fall within any of the other thematic categories.





Commemorating the Underground Railroad in Canada

Nazrey African Methodist Episcopal Church (1848)
Amherstburg, Ontario
Designated a National Historic Site of Canada

During the 19th century, Canada found itself intellectually front and centre in the fierce battle to abolish slavery, and physically on the front line of the secret routes followed by refugees fleeing enslavement in the American South. This dramatic refugee movement, known as The Underground Railroad, was first designated of national historic significance by the Government of Canada in 1925. More recently, the Minister of Canadian Heritage has designated persons as well as sites associated with this important chapter of Canadian history, while Parks Canada has been working with the United States National Park Service to make the international connections in this story better known.

While slavery had previously existed in the Canadian colonies, it had been limited in Upper Canada since the 1793 passage of The Upper Canadian Act Against Slavery (an event designated of national historic significance)and finally abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833. By that time slavery had long been outlawed in the northern United States, but it continued to flourish in the South. From about 1820 to 1860, well over 20,000 refugees from slavery fled to Canada. Their escape struck a blow to the continued economic viability of slavery through the financial

drain brought about by the continuous loss of slaves and the cost of attempting to reclaim them. Furthermore, in the battle to end slavery, examples of refugees who successfully adapted to their new environment were presented to the world as proof that, contrary to Southern propaganda, people of African descent were entirely capable of thriving as independent agents outside of slavery. The presence of these refugees focused international attention on Canada and brought a level of intellectual debate formerly unknown in the pioneer communities. Ultimately, the experience of the Underground Railroad helped to forge Canadians' sense of themselves as a democratic country.

After the arrival of the Loyalists in the 18th century, the immigration of thousands of African Americans via the Underground Railroad constituted the largest and earliest wave of political refugees to have settled in the Canadian provinces. These refugees chose Canada because it was the closest free, largely English-speaking country and because there existed a network of Canadians and Americans who worked with escapees along the way and at reception points on the Canadian side of the border. This network was "run" by an informal group of people, black and white, who used any means at hand to help fugitives from slavery to escape. By the mid-19th century, their methods had become so successful that the process was described by terminology from the cutting-edge technology of the day, the railroad (the name evolved using American terminology). With the help of a network of "conductors" and "station-masters," the Underground Railroad brought refugees to various parts of pre-Confederation Canada from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, but by far the largest influx occurred in the Toronto-Windsor-Niagara Falls triangle, where people made use of the Detroit and Niagara rivers to cross over into Canada.

By the 1850s, the racial situation in the United States was becoming increasingly repressive. Not only did the movement to abolish slavery through legal means seem stalled, but free-born African Americans, some from families free for generations, were threatened. To placate the South, which was outraged by the continuous escape of slaves, a new Fugitive Slave Act was passed by the American federal government. This law assumed that people of colour were enslaved unless they could prove otherwise. Fugitive and free alike were threatened with the possibility of being arrested and sent south into slavery. Numbers of free black people joined the Canada-bound stream of self-liberated slaves.

The northward migration of thousands of African Americans seeking freedom resulted not only in the establishment of new Canadian settlements, but also in lasting impacts on the fabric of Canadian political, legal, religious and cultural life. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada has considered sites, persons and events associated with the Underground Railroad experience in Canada as they relate to a number of major issues, including the Abolition Movement, Settlement, Religious Institutions, Education and the Military.

The Abolition Movement

After slavery had been abolished in the British Empire, anti-slavery organizations in Britain, Canada and the United States focused their efforts on the eradication of slavery in the southern United States, the last large English-speaking slavocracy. American slavery was of some immediate concern to Canada because of the growing number of formerly enslaved as well as free-born Blacks immigrating primarily to Toronto and what is now southwestern Ontario. While some white settlers felt threatened by this new wave of immigrants, Canadian Abolitionists were inspired to action by a growing awareness of the human cost of slavery and of the racist laws aimed at inhibiting the growth of a free black community in the United States.

In 1837, the Upper Canada Anti-Slavery Society was created. As Canada's first major Abolitionist society, it drew members from Upper and Lower Canada and made contact with other Abolitionists in the U.S. and Britain. While this organization was relatively short-lived, passage of the punitive American Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 again galvanized Canadians into action. In 1851, the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society was established. The strength of this organization lay in the inter-racial collaboration between members of the Underground Railroad refugee community, establishment white supporters such as newspaper publisher George Brown, leaders of the Presbyterian Free Church and the Congregational Church, and many members of Toronto's growing business and professional elite.

With increasing numbers of refugees pouring into the province after 1850, the Underground Railroad refugee community and its supporters were kept busy trying to help the newcomers to establish themselves. The Canadian Anti-Slavery Society raised money for refugee relief and ran an adult night school that delivered agricultural training. It also fought extradition, opposed separate schools and sponsored eminent Abolitionist speakers. George Brown's newspaper, *The Globe*, was its mouthpiece. Many smaller papers, mostly owned and operated by Underground Railroad refugees, were also engaged in the Abolition movement, including Henry Bibb's *Voice of the Fugitive*, Mary Ann Shadd Cary's *Provincial Freeman*, Linton Stratford's *The Voice of the Bondsman* and the Reverend A.R. Green's *The True Royalist and Weekly Intelligencer*. George Brown's house in Toronto has been designated a national historic site because of its association with this staunch Abolitionist and

Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823–93)
Designated of national significance

Father of Confederation. Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Canada's first female newspaper editor, has been designated a person of national historic importance because of her work on behalf of the Underground Railroad community.

Toronto's new St. Lawrence Hall was the venue for the Canadian Anti-Slavery Society's meetings as well as for the important North American Colored Convention of 1851. Held for the first time outside the United States, the Toronto convention offered African American leaders the opportunity to meet publicly with Abolitionists from Canada, the United States and Britain without fear of violent reprisal. St. Lawrence Hall has been designated a national historic site both for its outstanding architecture and for the important meetings — notably those arguing for the abolition of slavery — that took place there.

The Courts

With increasing numbers of self-liberated slaves fleeing to Canada, slave owners often attempted to recapture their "property" by legal means or, if necessary, by force. As early as 1819, Upper Canada's Attorney General, John Beverley Robinson, refused to extradite escapees to the United States. While adhering to this general principle, the courts had to consider each case requesting extradition orders on its own merits. Vigilance was required of the refugee community, the Abolitionists and the Canadian authorities, who were consistently challenged by Americans bringing suit against fugitives. Government authorities were pressured on one side by Abolitionists and the refugee community, who were adamantly opposed to extradition of refugees, and on the other side by slave owners and by the U.S. Government, with whom Canadians needed to maintain friendly relations, particularly in light of Anglo-American negotiations concerning the Canada-United States border.

Several cases were tried between the 1830s and 1860s, with one unfortunate refugee, Nelson Hackett, being extradited in 1841 by Governor General Sir Charles Bagot. Precedents for refusing extradition were set with Thornton and Lucie Blackburn's case in 1833, and again in 1861 with the highly publicized case of John Anderson. His fate became a Canadian election issue. When the case was tried in the Court of Queen's Bench at Osgoode Hall, troops had to be called in to control the large, racially mixed crowd of supporters gathered to hear the verdict. Of the many locations associated with cases of this kind, Osgoode Hall is the only site to have survived in a relatively unchanged state. The role of the courts in defending the freedom of Underground Railroad refugees is one of the reasons for the designation of Osgoode Hall as a national historic site.

The Chatham Convention

By the 1850s, the increasingly repressive situation in the United States was causing Abolitionists to lose hope for a peaceful end to slavery. Violence erupted in Kansas as the territory tried to decide whether or not it would enter the American Union as a slave-owning state. Some leaders supported schemes promoting black emigration to Africa, Central America or the Caribbean as the only feasible solution; others saw this as ethnic cleansing, and more aggressively pursued the goal of Abolition while assisting the fugitive flow northward via the Underground Railroad.

One man became a figure of almost mythic proportion through his bold strike against the continued existence of slavery. The world remembers John Brown from the famous marching song John Brown's Body, and thinks of him almost solely in connection with his raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

However, this disastrous action was intended merely as the opening salvo in the establishment of a slave-free "state" to be located in the wilds of the Allegheny Mountains. Slaves from Southern plantations were to flee to this stronghold, where they and free black and white supporters would make a stand against slavery. Their growing numbers would eventually cripple the institution and bring about the downfall of the slavocracy.

In order to turn this plan into a reality, John Brown needed support from the black community. Finding this difficult to orchestrate, given the tense and watchful conditions in the United States, Brown travelled to Upper Canada in 1858. He consulted with the famous Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman in St. Catharines and stopped at Ingersoll, Buxton and Chatham — a town he knew to be a centre of the Canadian Underground Railroad community and a place where he could find potential leaders for his planned state. Brown met with interested men from the refugee communities in and about Chatham at the First Baptist Church, where they agreed on a provisional constitution for this slave-free state. With this blueprint for a government in hand, Brown had achieved what he felt to be the necessary approval of his plans. A traitor caused Brown to delay his strike, and by the time he mounted his attack a year later in 1859, he had lost much of the initial momentum. He moved on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry with a tiny provisional army of 22 men. They were defeated, and Brown was hanged in 1860 for treason against the State of Virginia. Osborne Anderson, a printer at the *Provincial Freeman*, was one of the few raiders to escape. He published his account of the event with the help of Mary Ann Shadd Cary.

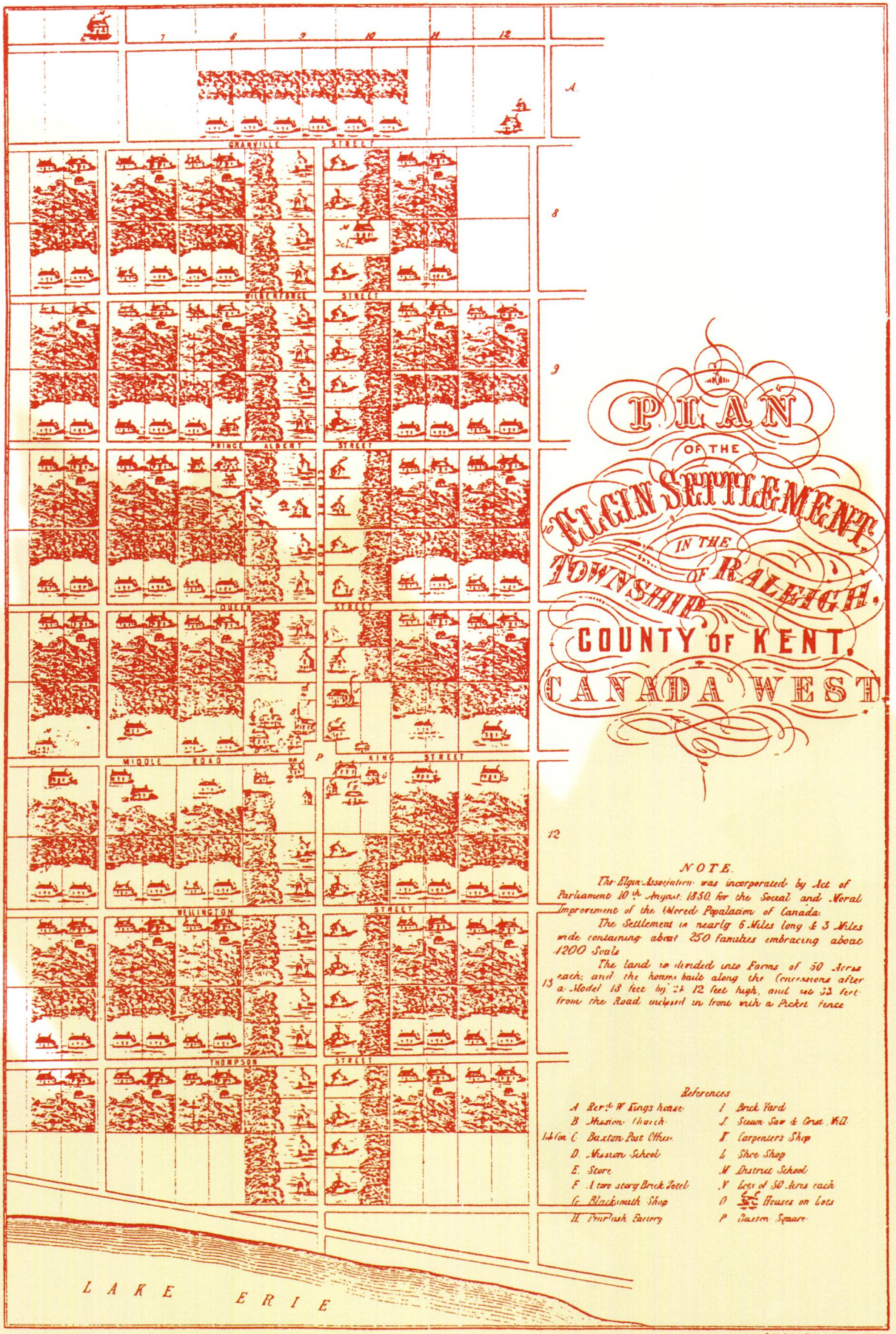
The raid drew intense response from both pro- and anti-slavery factions in the U.S. and abroad. In Canada, large memorial services were held in various centres, including Toronto, at St. Lawrence Hall, and Montréal, at Bonaventure Hall. In Europe, liberal thinkers such as Victor Hugo and Giuseppe Garibaldi mourned his passing and decried the pernicious system of slavery that had caused it. Meanwhile, pro-slavery Americans accused the Canadian government of collusion. John Brown continues to be a highly controversial figure, but historians generally agree that his raid at Harpers Ferry was one of the factors contributing to the outbreak of the American Civil War. His daring strike against slavery and his willingness to sacrifice his own life have made him a hero to many. The role of the Canadian Underground Railroad community in this tragic episode is presented in Chatham at the W.I.S.H. (Woodstock Institute Sertoma Help) Centre and at First Baptist Church, now known as the John Brown Meeting House.

Settlement

Estimates of the number of Underground Railroad refugees arriving in Canada during the mid-19th century, and in particular into what was then Upper Canada, have varied considerably. According to the latest research, of the more than 20,000 refugees who immigrated to Upper Canada, only about 20 percent returned to the United States during or immediately after the Civil War. A surprisingly high proportion, perhaps as many as one-third, had been born free. The 1861 Upper Canada census recorded people of colour in 312 townships and city wards, making them one of the most widely dispersed groups in the province at that time. The largest concentration was found in Kent and Essex counties, and there were more than 1,000 listed in the city of Toronto, most of whom came in this mid-19th century wave of Underground Railroad immigration.

These new settlers were a diverse group. A few came with some capital, education and marketable skills, but most arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs. Many immediately sought work in the villages and towns near crossing points at either end of Lake Erie, or on farms in these areas. In time, some of the wage earners moved to larger centres such as Toronto, where opportunities were more extensive, while others bought their own farms. In a few instances, schemes were mounted to create "block" settlements, where groups of refugees could help each other establish self-sufficient farms.

At no time, however, were their efforts at settlement considered merely as part of the ongoing process common to a settler society. The refugees remained under the microscope of a Canadian society consumed by the often conflicting fears and aspirations of Abolitionists, pro-slavery supporters and politicians anxious to avoid the anger of fearful white voters. Additionally, they were regarded by many as a test of the ability of people of African descent to thrive outside the institution of slavery. Always aware that they represented more than merely individual immigrants, the fugitives struggled to establish themselves. Most quietly tried to integrate into the nascent urban centres of what is now southwestern Ontario. While the rural block settlements have come to be fairly well-known, only about 5 percent of the refugee population was involved in these separate communities.



Plan of the Elgin [Buxton] Settlement Kent County, Ontario 1866

Block Settlements

Underground Railroad refugees did not receive free land: most rural settlement schemes involved a block purchase of land, often by a church mission. This land was then sold in small lots on manageable terms to families who wished to farm. Very few of these schemes were adequately financed or managed, and few achieved real viability. What they did contribute was the chance for a few determined families to establish themselves on a plot of land, despite the fact that the expected settlement may never have fully materialized around them. The John Freeman Walls Historic Site at Puce preserves a homestead from one such settlement scheme. Major block settlement schemes included Wilberforce, near Lucan; the Sandwich Mission near Windsor; the Elgin Settlement at Buxton; and the Dawn Settlement at Dresden.

Of these, the most successful was the Elgin (Buxton) Settlement, established in 1849 by fifteen former slaves under the leadership of a Presbyterian minister, Reverend King. Assisted by more established members of the Underground Railroad community and by the Free Presbyterian Church of Canada, its hardworking pioneers created a successful farming community on the shores of Lake Erie. The community survives and has been designated a national historic site of Canada. Josiah Henson, the co-founder of the Dawn settlement and inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, has been designated a person of national historic significance. He is commemorated at Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site near the original site of the Dawn Settlement at Dresden, Ontario.

Integrated Settlement

On arriving in Upper Canada, most of the new immigrants headed for centres of employment near the border. Smaller towns and villages, at first sympathetic to the plight of the refugees, soon became alarmed at their growing numbers. Racism often won out over good intentions, making equal opportunity in employment, housing and education an exception rather than the rule. Despite the difficulties, there were many successful individuals and enterprises in Chatham, Collingwood, Amherstburg, Windsor and other communities in southwestern Ontario.

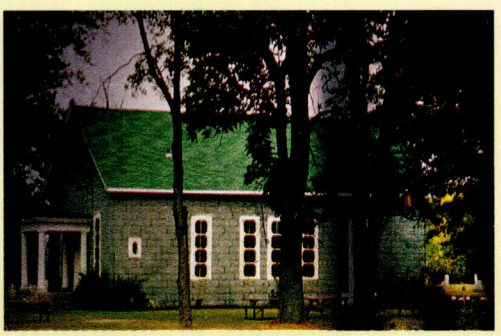
The Reverend Josiah Henson (1789–1883)
Designated of national significance

Surviving homes of Underground Railroad settlers are difficult to find, as most of their modest houses have been replaced or greatly changed. Among the scarce survivors in Ontario is the George Taylor House, now preserved as part of the North American Black Historical Museum in Amherstburg. Originally built as one of several small cottages for army pensioners, this refugee family home illustrates the limited accommodation available in the small border towns that were receiving growing numbers of refugees in the mid-19th century. One can still get a sense of the refugee farming experience at the Griffin House near Hamilton. This restored rural home was occupied by the Griffin family for generations, and is now operated by the Fieldcote Museum in Ancaster. It is an excellent example of the many small Underground Railroad refugee farmsteads that once dotted the landscape of southwestern Ontario.

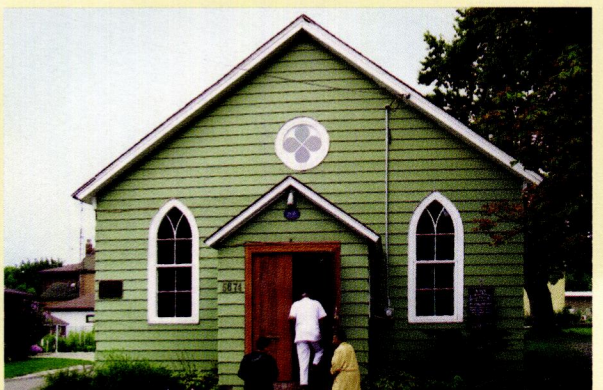
The growing city of Toronto offered more opportunities than many smaller centres. It was particularly attractive to women who had arrived alone or with small children and needed employment. Estimates of the size of the black population of Toronto during the Underground Railroad era vary. One 1859 estimate put it at between 1,200 and 1,600 out of an overall population of some 50,000. Many of the refugees settled in the neighbourhood of the present City Hall, although they could also be found in scattered locations throughout the city. While colour prejudice did exist, black Torontonians of this time period were generally able to find work, establish businesses, send their children to integrated schools, worship and purchase homes where they chose. They developed a lively urban culture where debating societies, literary groups, women's associations and self-help organizations enriched the lives of the new immigrants.

Because of constant redevelopment activity, few early homes in the city centre have survived. An archaeological remnant of a first-generation house belonging to Thornton and Lucie Blackburn has been investigated. The Blackburns have been designated persons of national historic significance as representatives of the many Underground Railroad refugees who made Toronto their home. Like many others, the Blackburns found work, built a home and, in this case, established Toronto's first taxi business. Two later houses, one built for Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott and another for Toronto alderman William Peyton Hubbard, illustrate success stories from the second generation of this group.

Former Raleigh School House Number 13 in the Buxton Settlement National Historic Site
Buxton, Ontario

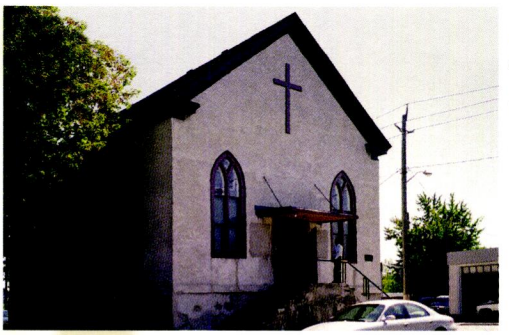


R. Nathaniel Dett British Methodist Episcopal Church (1836; 1856), Niagara Falls, Ontario
Designated a National Historic Site of Canada



Religious Institutions

The building type associated with the refugees that is most likely to have survived is the church. It represented the institution most central to the lives of the Underground Railroad settlers. Churches ministering specifically to the black population were established largely in response to negative attitudes of the white majority, who, while decrying slavery, were often unwilling to accept the formerly enslaved on an equal footing. The black churches became the most visible symbol of the parallel societies that evolved in places where numbers of Underground Railroad refugees settled.



St. Catharines British Methodist Episcopal Church (Salem Chapel) (1851–55), St. Catharines, Ontario
Designated a National Historic Site of Canada

The African Methodist Episcopal Church

By the 1820s, the American-based African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church had established branches throughout south-western Ontario. Within a decade it had spread as far east as Toronto and had a membership of some 2,000 congregants. The Nazrey AME Church, hand-built by its congregation and preserved as part of the North American Black Historical Museum in Amherstburg, has been designated a national historic site.

The British Methodist Episcopal Church

After 1850 and passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, it became increasingly dangerous for African Canadian church officials to travel to the annual conferences of the AME Church in the United States. Desiring a more accessible church government closer to home and anxious to underscore allegiance to their new homeland, members of the AME Church in Canada began to lobby for local self-government of their church. Eventually they succeeded, and in 1856 the British Methodist Episcopal Church (BME) was created. A former AME minister, the Reverend Willis Nazery, was elected as its first bishop. The BME Church continued the growth begun under the AME, establishing congregations not only in Upper Canada but also in Nova Scotia and Bermuda.

The R. Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel in Niagara Falls, one of the oldest BME churches in Ontario, has been designated a national site, as has The St. Catharines BME Church (Salem Chapel). It is one of the churches believed to have been attended by the famous Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman during the years that she lived in St. Catharines. After passage of the American Fugitive Slave Act made it unsafe for fugitives from slavery to remain in the northern states, Tubman guided some 300 fugitives, including her elderly parents, to Canada. BME Church membership

peaked just before the American Civil War, after which reduced populations brought about the amalgamation of several formerly separate congregations. Most AME and BME churches united in 1884.

The Baptist Church

The Baptist Church was the other major denomination favoured by the African Canadian community. In Upper Canada, black participation in the Baptist Church had begun in earnest with William Wilks, who in 1818 escaped from Virginia to Amherstburg. He preached to other refugees, acting as an unofficial pastor until he was ordained a Baptist minister in 1821. Through the 1820s and 1830s, Washington Christian, a refugee from New York, formed black Baptist congregations in Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.

In 1841, African Canadians joined with fellow African Americans in Detroit to form the Amherstburg Regular Missionary Baptist Association. The association was a coordinated effort to supply needed religious and practical assistance to fugitives in the face of indifference and sometimes hostility expressed by white Baptists in Canada. It also spoke out strongly for the abolition of slavery and broke with all pro-slavery Baptist churches. The Sandwich First Baptist Church in present-day Windsor was a member of the Amherstburg Regular Missionary Baptist Association, and has been designated a national historic site.

Like the Methodists, Baptist preachers travelled the sparsely settled countryside, bringing both religious and social comfort to isolated homesteaders. The women of the congregation often organized philanthropic organizations such as the Baptist "Women's Home Missionary Society" to assist the newly arrived or the needy. The church building itself provided a venue where the local community could come together to celebrate, to offer mutual support and to share experiences as well as views on religion, politics and events of the day.

From an early date, a major preoccupation of the churches was the education of refugee children. Where schools were lacking, or where existing schools barred attendance by black children, churches sometimes organized their own. By 1852, the AME Church had established five schools accommodating about 250 students. Sunday Schools often provided more than just religious instruction, also augmenting otherwise inadequate educational facilities. A report of BME Sabbath schools in 1858 recorded approximately 900 students in attendance, with 12 libraries making available over 2,000 books.

Remarkably, many of the early church buildings established by African Canadian congregations have survived to the present. This can be attributed, in part, to the importance of these institutions to their communities. In addition, most are found in rural areas or small communities, where the absence of redevelopment pressure has made these modest structures less vulnerable than their sister churches in larger centres such as Toronto. There, almost all the early African Canadian churches have disappeared, succumbing to fire, to the need for larger buildings to accommodate growing congregations or to redevelopment pressure.

Education

"Few who were not right in the midst of the scenes can form any exact idea of the intense desire which the people of my race showed for education.... Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn."

So said an elderly refugee, recalling the community's first heady years of freedom. Education was surely next to religion in the 19th-century scale of social values. In this "improving" age, education was seen by many as essential to "civilizing" the vastly different peoples of the European colonial empires; of assimilating the Aboriginal cultures of the new world; and of ameliorating the lives of former slaves who, in the language of white missionaries, had lived their lives in degraded circumstances. For refugees from slavery, the Southern planters' ban on the education of slaves had only served to underscore the connection between learning and power. Having freed their own bodies, education was seen by fugitives as the path to freeing the mind.

In a practical sense, training and education rendered a black refugee as qualified as any white person, eradicating any legitimate barriers to advancement. Where adequate educational facilities existed, African Canadian graduates often went on to train as teachers or to further their studies at colleges and universities. Many subsequently returned to their communities to pass the knowledge they had gained on to the next generation or to serve in a professional capacity. Nevertheless, acquiring such education was often far from easy.

The provision of public education expanded slowly in Upper Canada, along with the growth of settlement. In some cases, black children attended school along with white children; in others, white resistance to integration made this impossible. As with settlement in general, there were two approaches: one was to insist on the legal right to integrated schools (the approach much favoured by equal rights advocates such as Mary Ann Shadd Cary); the other was to accept de facto segregation at schools provided either by the government or by various missions.

Public Schools

The establishment of segregated schools was spurred by the reluctance of many white parents to sanction integrated education, and was bolstered by the legal basis on which education was made available to settlers in Upper Canada. During the period of the greatest influx of Underground Railroad refugees, formal schooling was not always readily available to the general public. The Common Schools Act of 1816 provided funding for "common" or public schools in places where there were 20 or more children. In such cases, the commu-

nity had to build the school, elect trustees to manage it and answer to the provincial Board of Education, which supervised the system. Limited funding meant that deficits were made up with student fees. Strapped for money to pay qualified teachers, provide books and maintain the facilities, local schools were not often able to provide quality education.

Even this modest level of education was often denied the refugees. When African Canadian parents could pay the requisite fees, many schools refused to admit their children. A protest to Lieutenant-Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland in 1828 brought no action.

By 1850 the number of schools in the province had increased dramatically. While black children attended along with white in centres such as Burlington and Toronto, they were barred from attending in Hamilton and in many small towns such as Amherstburg, Chatham and Sandwich, despite costly and determined petitioning from the refugee community. When renowned educational reformer Egerton Ryerson became Superintendent of Schools for Upper Canada, he set about achieving a universal, free, practical and compulsory education system. To do so, it became politically expedient to ensure the survival of religiously based instruction. Separate school systems for Protestant and Roman Catholic children were created through the Separate Schools Act. While intended to accommodate denominational schools, the act was interpreted racially in the smaller communities of southwestern Ontario. In cases where separate public schools were established for black children, the quality of education was often noticeably inferior to that of nearby white schools.

While Ryerson expressed dismay at what he termed a misuse of the act, and despite continued protests and legal action by the African Canadian community, nothing was done to alter the situation. On Ryerson's advice, Dennis Hill of Dresden brought a case against segregated schools in 1853, only to have the Chief Justice of Upper Canada, John Beverly Robinson, rule that, where a separate school had been established, all black students must attend it no matter what the quality of education. The legal system, like Ryerson, sacrificed the education of African Canadians in order to ensure the educational gains achieved through the act for the majority white population. Consequently, the children of many tax-paying African Canadian parents were either entirely prohibited from access to publicly funded education or provided with substandard services.

Activists within the refugee community, including educators Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Henry Bibb, religious leaders such as Bishop Nazery, and Abolitionists such as George Brown, constantly spoke out against segregated schools, urging communities to fight against them. This was easier said than done: at least one refugee settler was forced to sell his farm in order to pay legal expenses incurred in attempting to fight the educational system. In larger centres where the African Canadian population comprised

Sandwich First Baptist Church (1851), Windsor, Ontario
Designated a National Historic Site of Canada

a smaller and less threatening percentage of the total population, there was an easier relationship. In Toronto, where schools were always integrated, few objections were raised. William Peyton Hubbard, a successful businessperson and Toronto alderman for 14 consecutive terms, is an example of a child of refugee parents who graduated from Toronto's integrated school system.

Raleigh Schoolhouse No.13 in North Buxton is a rare survivor of the early public schools. Built in 1861, it served children of the Buxton Settlement until 1968, and is now an important element in the Buxton Settlement National Historic Site of Canada.

Private Schools

Education was too important to the Underground Railroad community to leave in the hands of government officials, whose priorities often lay elsewhere. Early on, churches and mission societies stepped in. While they were not able to completely compensate for the lack of public education available to the refugee community, and while they were often criticized for contributing to continued segregation, their schools did allow many adults and children to obtain varying degrees of literacy and, in some cases, high levels of academic achievement. Missions ran or helped subsidize schools in what was then called the Queen's Bush along the south-eastern shore of Lake Huron, and in Chatham, London, Windsor, Buxton and Dresden. In some cases, groups of parents attempted to support the salary of a teacher themselves, but with the new settlers already struggling to make ends meet, most of these schools required outside assistance in order to remain open for very long. Mary Ann Shadd Cary began her career in Canada teaching in such a school in Windsor.

The original school at the Buxton (Elgin) Settlement was supported by the Presbyterian Synod of Toronto and overseen by the determined Reverend King. This mission school was so well regarded that it drew enough neighbouring white children to force their former school to close. The Elgin Mission School offered a classical education including Greek and Latin, and its graduates were accepted at the University of Toronto and the Toronto Normal School. Other schools were established to serve children in various parts of the settlement. By the 1870s, these schools, like Raleigh Schoolhouse No.13 in North Buxton, had become part of the public school system.

The Military

Even before the influx of Underground Railroad refugees to Canada in the 19th century, African Canadians had been serving in the military. Some had come to Canada with British regiments fighting in the American Revolutionary War and had settled in Nova Scotia. In Upper Canada, the Loyalist Butler's Rangers also included free black soldiers.

Richard Pierpont, a private in this unit, was one of ten black United Empire Loyalists to be officially recorded on the U.E.L. list. When hostilities broke out with the Americans again in 1812, he petitioned the government to raise a company of black troops. Pierpont was typical of most African Canadians at that time who, enjoying a degree of freedom under British rule not to be found in the United States, were amongst the Crown's most loyal subjects. The petition was granted and a company was raised under the command of a white officer, Robert Runchey, Sr. The company became known as Captain Runchey's Company of Colored Men. African Canadians as well as African Americans also joined other Upper Canadian militia regiments at this time. They fought valiantly on

many of the War of 1812 battlefields, including Queenston Heights, Fort George, Niagara, Stoney Creek and Lundy's Lane, and in naval engagements on Lake Ontario. This history is presented at Fort George National Historic Site of Canada, in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

At the end of the hostilities, veterans were promised severance pay and land grants. Although not all black veterans obtained grants, a few did settle on land made available in Oro Township near present-day Barrie. Here, the government hoped they would serve as a defensive bulwark against potential American invasion via Georgian Bay. The Oro AME Church in Edgar is recognized as nationally significant because of its association with this early period of black settlement. The role of black military forces in the War of 1812 continued to inspire African Americans with the hope that a free life was possible if they could reach British territory. Following the war there was a steady movement of refugees into Upper Canada.

By the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1837, the black population in Upper Canada had grown considerably. To reformer and rebel William Lyon Mackenzie's frustration, African Canadians remained steadfastly loyal to the Crown. In December 1837, a request was made to raise another regiment of black militia. Additional black units were raised under James H. Sears and Hugh Eccles in the Niagara area. Near Chatham, a First and a Second Coloured Company were mustered. Like many other communities close to the border, African Canadian communities did not always wait for formal military mustering and often formed volunteer units and drilled themselves. In Windsor, Underground Railroad community leader Josiah Henson commanded such a company of volunteers, which was associated with the Essex Militia.

The service records of the black militia units were impressive. Sears' company supported the attack on the American ship *Caroline*, which had been supplying Mackenzie's forces on Navy Island. Near Sandwich, the Essex Militia, including Josiah Henson's unit of volunteers, took possession of the rebel schooner *Anne*, which had been firing on the town from the Detroit River. Along with Capt. Caldwell's Coloured Corps (123 volunteers), Henson's men also helped defend Fort Malden from December 1837 through May 1838. Hastily re-mustered troops, including 50 black volunteers, defended Windsor from a late attack in 1838. The role of the black militia at Amherstburg is integral to the reasons for the designation of Fort Malden National Historic Site of Canada.

Conclusion

The wide range of Underground Railroad-related places, persons and events reflects the deep roots that the refugees nurtured once they had reached Canadian soil, and the geographic dispersal of historically important sites gives an indication of the degree to which these new arrivals integrated into the fabric of Canadian society. The remarkable survival of so many of their modest and potentially fragile structures is a tribute to the determination of their descendants to safeguard the traces of their forebears' struggles and endurance. Each of these expressions of this significant chapter in Canadian history tells part of the story; each is a valuable piece of a larger picture.

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