

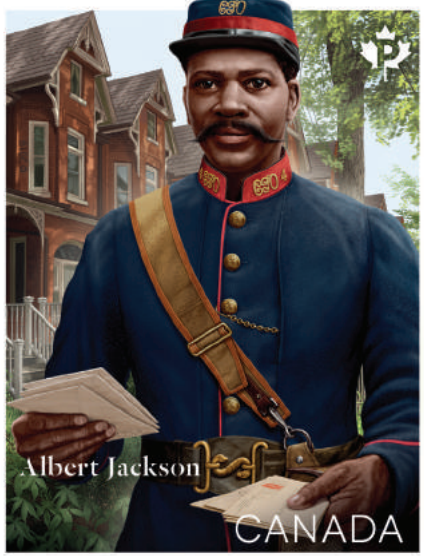
Follow the Drinkin' Gourd

The history of black settlement and accomplishments in Ontario is rich and complex.

In the nineteenth century, while many escaped slaves travelled the Underground Railroad from the southern U.S.A. across Ohio to northern states, using the Great Dipper (also known as the Drinking Gourd) constellation as a guide, many in the north found they were not as safe there as they could be in Canada. Even some of the states that had outlawed slavery were collaborating with law enforcement in southern states to capture people who had escaped. Harriet Tubman herself brought groups to Canada, and lived in Southern Ontario for a while. Saint Catharines became an important terminus of the Underground Railroad.

Black communities in Ontario faced great oppression and barriers to create and accomplish the material and cultural wealth of the province.

Black Ontarians today have reached Canada through various avenues of the African diaspora, supplementing the Black populations who have been building Ontario's prosperity for more than a century. Activists and historians are still working to gain due recognition and celebration of Ontario's Black history.



Albert Jackson: A former child slave from the U.S. who escaped to Canada through the Underground Railroad and became the first black letter carrier.



Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society & Black Mecca Museum: In the early 1800's Black families settled along McGregor's Creek in the tiny town of Chatham, then known as "the Forks". The Village soon became a haven for runaway slaves and by 1850, its population was 1/3 Black. Once here, people thrived in business, education, medicine, sport, and literary and cultural arts. News of their success attracted Blacks to the area from across North America.

BME Freedom Park: Located on the site of the first BME Church in Canada it is one of the earliest religious institutions owned and governed by former slaves who escaped to and settled in Canada. The park's focal point is a bronze bust of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, sculpted by Artis Shreve Lane.



Mary Ann Shadd Cary: An American-Canadian anti-slavery activist, journalist, publisher, teacher, and lawyer. She was the first Black woman publisher in North America and the first woman publisher in Canada.

February is Black History Month



1934 Chatham Coloured All-Stars Baseball Team: The first all-Black baseball team to win the baseball provincial championship. Facing racism and discrimination on the road, not being able to stay at hotels or eat at certain restaurants and still were able to overcome all of that to win it all.



Harriet Tubman: An American abolitionist who devoted her life to serving others and fighting for freedom and equality. She lived for a time in St. Catharines, a terminus of the Underground Railroad, and made at least 10 trips, transporting at least 70 people, her own family included, to freedom in Canada.



Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: Black Canadian porters formed the first Black railway union in North America (1917) and became members of the larger Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1939. Both unions combated racism and the many challenges that porters experienced on the job.



Walter Perry: Better known as 'Mr. Emancipation,' began the biggest Emancipation Day Celebrations Ontario had ever seen when he organized the event in Windsor beginning in 1931.



Nazrey A.M.E. Church: Built in 1848, the church was a terminus for the Underground Railroad.



Rev. Addie Aylestock: A Canadian minister in the British Methodist Episcopal Church, the first woman minister to be ordained in that church, and the first black woman to be ordained in Canada.

