



PEOPLE AND PLACES

Black History Tour

LONDON AND SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO



This picture of a poor fugitive is from one of the stereotype cuts manufactured in this city for the southern market, and used on handbills offering rewards for runaway slaves.

THE RUNAWAY.

The Runaway
From *The Anti-Slavery Record*, New York, July, 1837
Reproduced in W. H. Siebert's *The Underground Railway*

THERE ARE MANY structures and monuments throughout Ontario connected to the province's Black community, whose history extends back into the early 19th Century. Although London had a relatively small Black community until the 1980s, there are several historic sites and monuments from the pre-Civil War era, when Canada was a safe haven for thousands of escaped slaves. There are, as well, many resources in London for Black History studies, some of which are listed here.

Blacks in Canada Before the Civil War

By 1860, more than 20,000 Blacks could be found in Canada West (Upper Canada prior to 1841), most of whom had left the United States in order to escape either slavery or the restrictive life free Blacks were forced to lead even in the northern states in the years before the Civil War. While the free Blacks could emigrate on their own, most of the escaped slaves, known as "fugitives," arrived in Canada via the Underground Railroad which developed in the 1820s and 1830s. The Underground Railroad was a network of escape routes and sanctuaries manned by abolitionists, Quakers and former slaves, who provided food, lodging, directions and transportation. In some cases, fugitive slaves traveled as much as 1000 miles with little more than a compass and a loaf of bread.

In strictly legal terms, Canada West was a haven for Blacks, slave and free. Although slavery was practiced within the province in the 17th and 18th centuries, the number of slaves remained small and a direct slave trade from Africa to Canada was never established. The Upper Canadian Act Against Slavery (1793) prohibited

the importation of slaves into the province and by 1834, slavery itself was declared illegal throughout the British Empire. However, prejudice and racist attitudes persisted. The black population, including former slaves and free people of colour, dramatically increased following the United States Congress' passing of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The Act allowed slave hunters to come into the northern states and retrieve runaways still considered property under the law. The Act also required state and local authorities to assist in the return of escaped slaves.

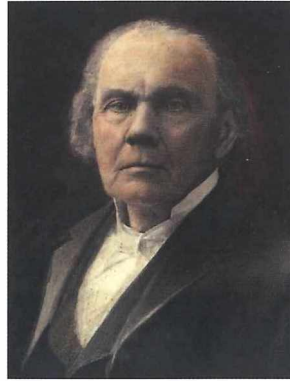
While the Black population of Canada West greatly increased after 1850, there were already several Black settlements in southwestern Ontario, some of which had been specifically established to provide a home for escaped slaves. While many were short-lived, during the time that they flourished, the Black settlements were proof that former slaves could build successful lives for themselves, refuting claims to the contrary.

1. Wilberforce

One of the first Black settlements in Canada, Wilberforce (named after the leading British abolitionist William Wilberforce [1759-1833]) was established in 1829 near the present day community of Lucan, 15 miles north of London, by a number of free Blacks from Cincinnati. In Ohio, violence and prejudice had escalated with the strict enforcement of the state's "Black Laws" which, among other things, required free Blacks to register and provide a \$500 bond for "good behaviour."

Initially led by James C. Brown and later by Austin Steward, the immigrants established a farming community that, within several years, grew to include 32 families from Cincinnati and other states. After initial success, the settlement began to decline due to disagreement among the leadership, mismanagement of funds and the overall difficulty residents experienced transitioning from life in an urban setting to a rural existence in the dense bush of Upper Canada. Several of the settlers stayed on however, including Peter Butler, a former slave from Maryland whose descendants remain in the area today.

An Ontario Heritage Foundation plaque describing the Wilberforce Settlement is located near the Lucan Area Heritage Museum, 192 Frank Street, Lucan. The Butler Cemetery is located just north of Lucan on the Coursey Line at Richmond Street.



Reverend William King, c.1870
The University of Western Ontario Archives

2. Elgin

The most successful of the early Black communities was the Elgin Settlement, established in 1849 on a clergy reserve just southwest of Chatham by the Reverend William King, a Presbyterian minister from Ireland. He

brought several freed slaves to the settlement that year, which, by the mid-1850s, had attracted over 1,000 other settlers, most of whom were former slaves. It became a very successful farming community, with its own lumber mill, brick factory and potash industry.

One of Elgin's most significant accomplishments was the establishment of the Buxton Mission School, which gained a reputation for its high-quality education, attracting almost as many White students as Black.

Today, the community of Buxton is home to many descendants of the Elgin Settlement's first inhabitants. The settlement was named for the Earl of Elgin, Governor-General of Canada, who agreed to support the use of the land, while the community was named for Sir Thomas Buxton, a British abolitionist who introduced the Emancipation Bill (1834) that freed almost 800,000 slaves, primarily in the British West Indies. The settlement is now a National Historic Site and a plaque is located next to the museum at 21975 A.D. Shadd Road.

3. Dawn

Other settlements were established to provide homes and education for fugitive slaves. White abolitionists Hiram Wilson and James Canning Fuller, and the black abolitionist and former slave Josiah Henson founded the British-American Institute near present-day Dresden. The school became the nucleus for a large black



Josiah Henson from *The Freedom Seekers* by Daniel G. Hill

community of the "Dawn Settlement", named for the lands it occupied in what was then the township of Dawn. For over 10 years the school was a source of vocational instruction for both young people and adult students, many of whom worked either on the land

around the Institute or in the settlement's sawmill, which produced hardwood lumber.



The Josiah Henson House, c. 1950
Landon Papers
The University of Western Ontario Archives

The settlement's charismatic leader was Josiah Henson, a slave from Maryland who escaped to Canada after trying to buy his freedom. He published several editions of his autobiography, and his life story served as a source for the fictional title character of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Today, Henson's home near Dresden, now part of a seasonal museum site, is referred to as "Uncle Tom's Cabin." *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the first widely distributed description of slave life. It sold 300,000 copies within a year of its appearance in 1852 and played a significant role in raising support for the abolition of slavery and in hastening the start of the Civil War.

London's Black Community in the Fugitive Slave Era

"There are coloured people employed in this city in almost all the mechanic arts; also in grocery and provision stores, etc. Many are succeeding well, are buying houses, speculating in lands, and some are living on the interest of their money."

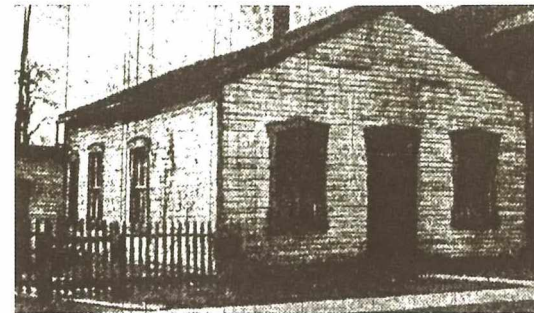
Alfred T. Jones, 1856, a former slave then living in London, from Benjamin Drew, *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, published 1856

Most of the Black immigrants coming to Canada in the years before the Civil War, settled in the larger towns and cities. In London the early Black community, which first appeared in the 1830s, could be found in the vicinity of Horton and Thames streets. Little is known about this early community, though London's first two Town Criers, George Washington Brown and Don Kean, were both Black Freemen. (The Town Crier was a municipal office whose occupant announced official proclamations and by-laws in public places such as the market.)

For his book, *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*, Drew interviewed 16 Black Londoners, several of whom were long-time residents. Benjamin Miller, who escaped from St. Louis, learned the boot and shoe-making trade while a slave. After arriving in London in 1836, he served as a pastor in the Methodist church and raised a family of eight. Alfred Jones, an herbalist who eventually ran a successful drug store on Ridout Street, escaped slavery in Kentucky and came to London in 1833, where he acquired several properties.

London's 19th century fugitive slave and free Black population, which peaked at about 400

around 1860, was fairly small compared to those in other Ontario communities, likely because it was so distant from the border crossings. Nonetheless, the black community in London was connected to a larger network of black abolitionists and other settlements through southwestern Ontario. Among the institutional foundations of London's black community was



Former African Methodist Church, 275 Thames Street
London Advertiser, May 8, 1926

the successful and innovative racially integrated school, established with the cooperation of black leaders and the Anglican Church in London working through the Colonial Church and School Society. The school operated from the London barracks, between 1854 and 1859.

4. African Methodist Episcopal Church, c. 1850, 275 Thames Street

Many Blacks in London were members of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Sometime after 1848, they built a small frame church on Thames Street, which still stands today as a private residence. In 1856, the several AME churches in Ontario formed themselves into a separate body and renamed their churches British Methodist Episcopal (BME) signalling their desire to make a closer connection to their new home in British North America. The American abolitionist John Brown may have spoken in the church in 1858 during the weeks he spent in Canada West raising support for the raid he was planning on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry. By 1863, the church had a congregation of 75 and a Sunday school attended by 35 children. As the Black community became more prosperous, many relocated to an area near the corner of Grey and Maitland streets. The congregation built a new church in this neighbourhood, c. 1870, known as Beth Emmanuel British Methodist Episcopal Church.



Beth Emmanuel British Methodist Episcopal Church,
430 Grey Street, 2003.
photo: John Tamblyn

5. Beth Emmanuel BME Church, 430 Grey Street

The church was established in 1847 by the AME leadership in Philadelphia, and was part of a large network of AME churches in Canada. It was the centre of the community's life, known in the 1940s and 1950s for its Southern-style fowl suppers, held each November. The church remains active today despite a serious fire in 1991.

London's Black Community after the Civil War

It "is not what we were yesterday, not yet is it what we are today that gives us so much hope, but it is, according to the handwriting on the wall, what we shall be tomorrow. And thus we have chosen our name: *The Dawn of Tomorrow*"

Robert Paris Edwards, Associate Editor
Dawn of Tomorrow, July 14, 1923

As with those elsewhere in Ontario, London's Black community experienced a decline in numbers following the end of the Civil War in 1865, as many former slaves returned to the United States seeking family members. Even long-term residents wished to return following Emancipation and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. London's 1878 City Directory, which lists the inhabitants of the city along with their addresses and occupations, includes 54 names each with the notation "col'd" beside it, indicating a "coloured" individual. Assuming that at least half of this group were heads of households of perhaps four persons each, there may have been a Black population of about 135 in the 1880s.

The remaining Black community held various occupations; some were labourers and some were in the boot and shoe trade; almost a quarter of the men listed, however, were barbers. Barbering became a traditional Black occupation throughout North America as Blacks sought out ways to serve the White population to achieve a level of economic independence. One of the best known of London's Black barbers was Shadrack Martin. Born a free man in Tennessee in 1833, Martin trained as a barber and came to London when he was 21. The depression in the late 1850s caused him to return to the United States, where he earned a living as a barber on the Mississippi river boats. In 1861 he enlisted with the Union forces at the behest of the captain of a Mississippi river gunboat who wanted Martin for his steward. He stayed with the ship until 1863, when he returned to London. He worked in his own shop across from the market on King Street until World War I.

A large portion of the Black community remained in the vicinity of Grey and Maitland streets, where Beth Emmanuel British Methodist Episcopal Church had been built c. 1870. However, following 1878, the Black residents gradually disappeared from the area and Black

families moving into the city after this period generally located further east.



James Jenkins

James Jenkins and *The Dawn of Tomorrow*

Following WWI, the Black community slowly began to grow again, rising to about 250 people by 1930. This was the estimate made by the Canadian League for the Advancement of Coloured People, an organization

founded in London in 1924. The League, whose leadership included both Black and White Londoners, was organized "to improve the condition of the coloured people of Canada," particularly through the provision of educational opportunities for the young.

The founding of the League was mainly the work of James F. Jenkins, a Georgia native who had been a resident of London since 1907. The League had an official newspaper, *The Dawn of Tomorrow*, which Jenkins had founded in 1923.

The Dawn of Tomorrow

THE NATIONAL NEGRO WEEKLY
DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE DARKER RACES

Vol. IV, No. 24 LONDON, CANADA, MAY 18th, 1931 Price 6 cents

COLORED EDITOR MOURNED BY MANY

Funeral Largely Attended by Citizens and Many Friends From Outside Points

James F. Jenkins, well known London resident, and familiar figure in many parts of Ontario passed away at his late residence, 75 Glenwood Ave. on Wednesday, May 6th. Mr. Jenkins had been ill for several months when he had undergone a serious operation. He was well known to his family and friends, and was being hospitably entertained by his family at his late residence, 75 Glenwood Ave. He was a native of Georgia, and was the second youngest in the family of the late James and Mary Foy Jenkins. He was educated in the Public and Secondary schools passing on after taking the Bachelor's degree in Arts at Atlanta, Ga. He went to Chicago in 1902 where he took a law course and did some writing for the famous paper, The Black.



The Late Editor, James F. Jenkins

Mr. Jenkins came to London twenty three years ago where he has lived and engaged in many enterprises. He was a member of the Independent B.M.E. Church, and an active member of the United Negro College. He devoted much of his time to the interests of a Community and Social nature. He knew his duties and was in the full force of his mind and body that he was among the prime movers of the Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People. His services were valuable in this respect and he was chosen Executive and Organizing Secretary, which office he held to his death. He was a natural judge of the London branch of the League, and his ability to interest his relations was of inestimable value.

The funeral service was conducted in the Independent Church which was held to capacity. Rev. E. A. Phillips, Pastor of the church of St. George, presided by Rev. D. N. McCann of the United Church and Canon H. G. Turner, Judge of the Toronto Court. Dignitaries were represented by Mr. David Ross, B.C., Treasurer of the League for the Advancement of Colored People (Executive), Rev. Geo. Gilmore, President of the Methodist Association, Rev. F. O. Stewart, Assistant Sec. of the B.M.E. Conference, and pastor of St.

FAMED TRAINER SUFFERS ATTACK

Tom Bono, famous colored horse-trainer of Madison, Mo., was struck by a horse attack while riding in the breakfast stable while at the dining performance of the Spring Horse Show on Monday afternoon at the Madison Hotel, Tenn. The attack occurred as the well known participant in the race was riding in the stable of the Oak Lane Hotel, and he was struck in the head by a horse named "The Duke" who was in the stable.

Mr. Bono has ridden in St. Louis many times for more than 40 years and has won many prizes. He has a reputation of being one of the best horse trainers and trainers. Because of his weak heart and advanced years, he had cancelled his riding in recent years. He rode in the St. Louis Grand Tour Show last fall and sold a number of famous horses by that time.

Belle Beach, a horse that was indeed the most magnificent of all high school horses, was trained by Mr. Bono. For many years he was a trainer and sold a number of famous horses of all times.

Whisper, Shards, and Rev. Canon Warner of Congo Memorial Anglican Church.

Rev. Mr. Dickinson, speaking from the pulpit of Christ Church, London, Ontario, concluded a very simple but impressive service with the announcement that all who in faith and trust shall have a resurrection into glory and everlasting life.

Old Harry, postmaster; Col. W. J. Brown, and Prof. Landon, under whose the deceased was serving his U.S.A. work were present, with Mr. F. Williams, president of the West Indian Trading Association of Toronto; Mrs. Rev. Wright, Bradford; Mr. E. Smith, Woodstock; Mr. Wm. Butler, London; Mr. J. Pinkney, Toronto and many others.

The floral expressions and of the black extent to which the deceased was held in esteem was made in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

Surviving him are his beloved wife, Christina and eight children, James, Jr., Edwin, Kathleen, Fred, Charles, David, Henry, and Helen, and an aged aunt, Miss Young, Perth, Ont.

The Dawn carried news of interest to the Black community, much of it originating in the United States. It also brought the Black communities in other Ontario towns and cities closer together by listing their activities in columns of social and church notices. It was also Jenkins's intention to "chronicle any achievements of [the] people and any advance that would spur young people to self effort."



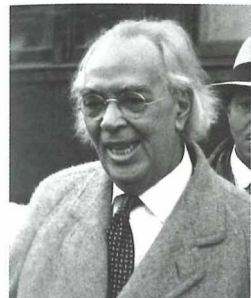
James Jenkins died suddenly following surgery in 1931. His widow Christina (later Mrs. Frank Howson), carried on the publication of *The Dawn of Tomorrow* with the help of her large family. The success of the newspaper, at first a weekly and then a monthly publication, is a testament to the efforts of the Jenkins family. At the height of its success in 1971, it had a total circulation of 48,000 with 21,000 subscribers in various parts of the world. It is still published today, with issues appearing at Easter and Christmas.

Mrs. Frank Howson
Reproduced from *The Dawn of Tomorrow*, August, 1967

The Dawn of Tomorrow, May 18, 1931
Reproduced courtesy, The University of Western Ontario Archives

The Dawn was the official voice of the Canadian League for the Advancement of Coloured People until James Jenkins's death in 1931.

6. Richard B. Harrison Park and Plaque, Wellington Street at the South Branch of the Thames River



Richard B. Harrison, c. 1934
Museum London
photo: A.A. Gleason

Richard B. Harrison (1864-1935) was born in London to parents Thomas Harrison and Isabella Benton, both former slaves who had escaped to Canada in the 1850s. The family remained in London until 1880 when they moved to Detroit, where Harrison trained as an elocutionist. His stage work, which took him all over Canada and the United States, was comprised of dramatic monologues, as well as readings of poetry and literature.

To supplement his acting wages, Harrison maintained a railway porter's job for many years and taught drama and speaking at several colleges. He left his last teaching post to take up the role that would make him famous, that of "De Lawd" in the play *The Green Pastures*.

Written by Marc Connelly, the play is a theatrical version of Roark Bradford's *Ol' Man Adam and his Chillun*. Seen today as somewhat patronizing and fostering African-American stereotypes, the play was well received in its time, winning a Pulitzer Prize in 1931. That same year, Harrison received the NAACP's Springarn Medal, presented annually for outstanding achievement by a Black American. Harrison played "De Lawd" for the last five years of his life, both in the Broadway production and on the road. When *The Green Pastures* came to London's Grand Theatre in October, 1934, Richard Harrison was officially welcomed back to his home town and given the "freedom of the city".

7. The University of Western Ontario Archives, J. J. Talman Regional Collection

Monday to Friday, 10 am to 4:30 pm
519.661.2111, ext. 81111 *please call in advance of your visit as many items must be retrieved prior to your arrival.

Western's Black history holdings have a broad focus on the southwestern Ontario region. Of particular significance are the Fred Landon

Papers; the Canadian Black Studies Project (produced by the Cross Cultural Learner Centre); the Mary Shadd Cary and the Shadd Family papers, which relate to the Chatham area (on microfilm), as well as the Annie Straith Jamieson Papers, which contain materials on the Rev. William King.

Also held are volumes of *The Dawn of Tomorrow* (1923-) and annual reports of the Canadian League for the Advancement of Coloured People, which are found in the Landon Papers and the Donald Simpson thesis, *Negroes in Canada from Early Times to 1870*. Several monographs in the Archive reading room detail black history—*Under the North Star: Black Communities in Upper Canada before Confederation* by Donald Simpson; *Ontario's African Canadian Heritage: Collected Writings of Fred Landon 1918-1967* by Karolyn Smard et al; *Wilberforce Beginnings: The Wilberforce Settlement and the Butler Family* by Victoria Purcell.

8. The Ivey Family London Room, Central Library, London Public Library, 251 Dundas Street

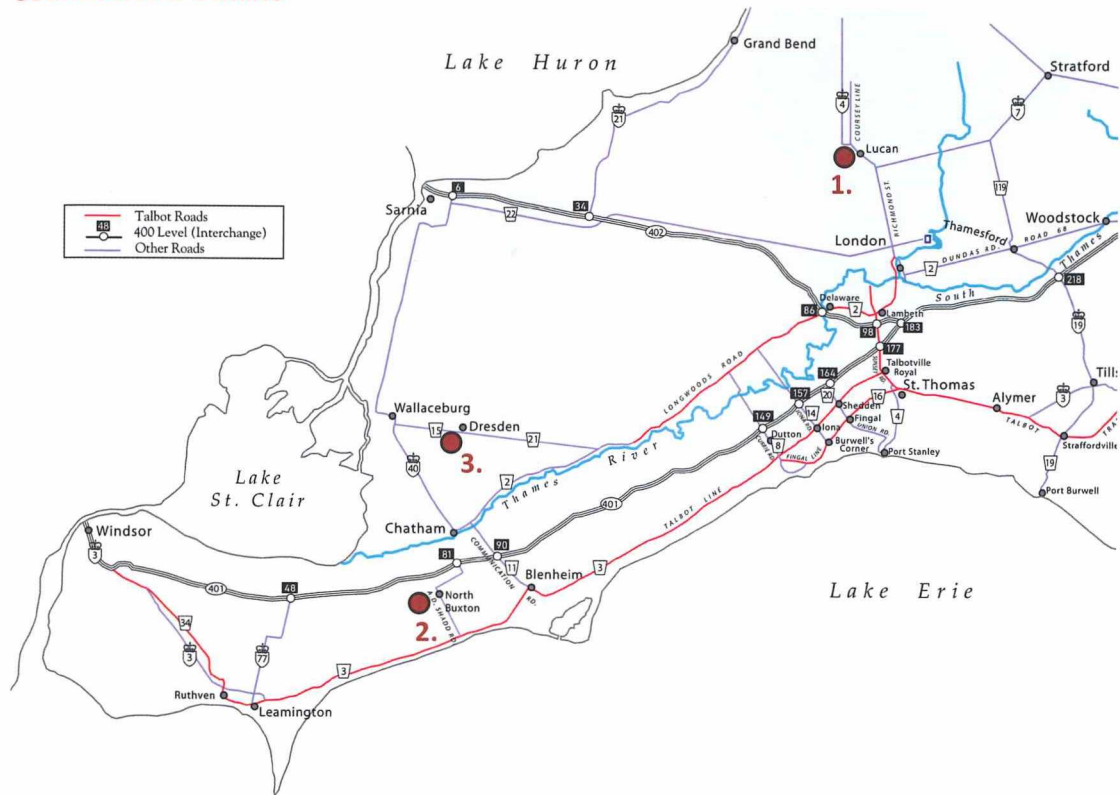
Call 519.661.2410 for hours

The Ivey Family London Room has a large number of issues of *The Dawn of Tomorrow* from July 14, 1923 to the present as well as *London Free Press* newspaper clipping files on the Black community and the Beth Emmanuel Church. There are also materials on the Wilberforce Settlement (Lucan), the Black community in Otterville (Oxford County) as well as extensive resources for genealogical research.

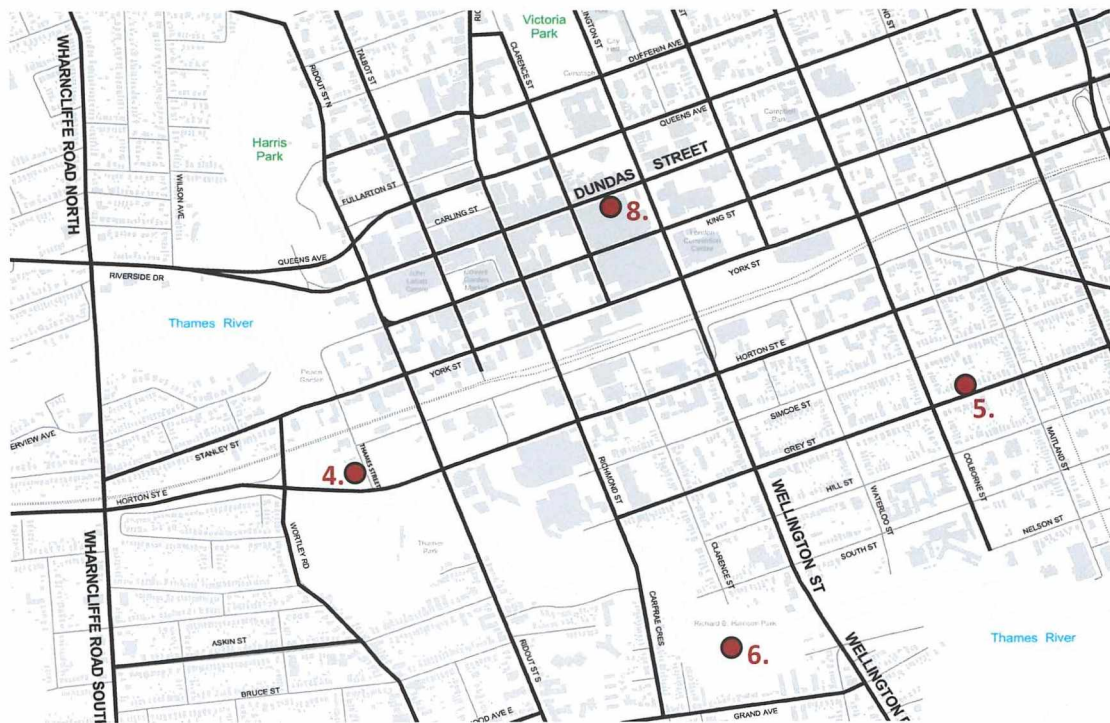
Other Resources *Black Abolitionist Papers, 1830-1865* by C. Peter Ripley and George E. Carter
 Promised Land Project at Huron University College http://www.huronuc.on.ca/research/promised_land_project/
 Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society <http://www.ckblackhistoricalsociety.org>
 Buxton National Historic Site and Museum <http://www.buxtonmuseum.com>

Maps

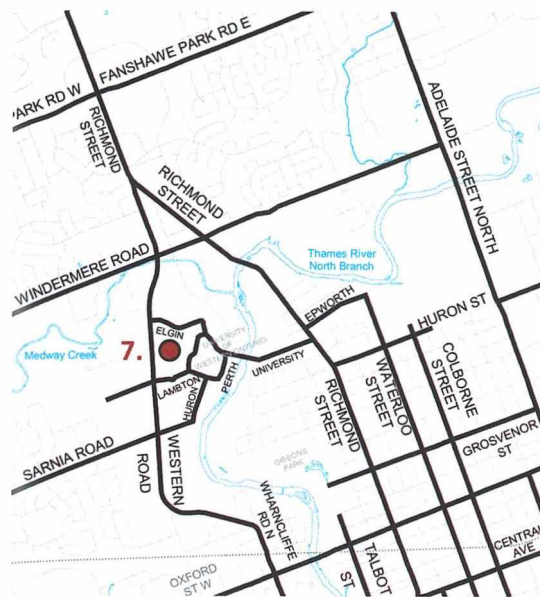
Southwestern Ontario



Central London



Northwest London, including UWO Campus



Legend

1. Wilberforce, Lucan, Ontario
2. Elgin, North Buxton, Ontario
Buxton National Historic Site and Museum, 21975 A.D. Shadd Road, CR 6, North Buxton, Ontario NOP 1Y0 519.352.4799
3. Dawn, Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site and Josiah Henson House
29251 Uncle Tom's Road, Dresden, Ontario NOP 1M0 519.683.2978 or 519.862.2291 (winter)
4. African Methodist Episcopal Church, c. 1850, 275 Thames Street
5. Beth Emmanuel BME Church, 430 Grey Street
6. Richard B. Harrison Park and Plaque, Wellington Street at the South Branch of the Thames River
7. The University of Western Ontario Archives, Weldon Library, UWO Campus
8. Ivey Family London Room, Central Branch, London Public Libraries, 251 Dundas Street


Newberry Sentinel (S. C.), Nov. 17, 1852:

NOTICE:

RANAWAY from the subscriber, on the 9th of July last, my Boy WILLIAM, a bright mulatto, about 20 years old, 5 feet 9 or 10 inches high, of slender make, quite intelligent, speaks quick when spoken to, and walks briskly. Said boy was brought from Virginia, and will probably attempt to get back. Any information of said boy will be thankfully received.

JOHN M. MARS.

Near Mollohon P. O., Newberry Dist., S. C.
Nov. 3. 414t.

 *Raleigh Register* and *Richmond Enquirer* will copy four times weekly, and send bills to this office.

Greensboro' Patriot (N. C.), Nov. 6:

10 DOLLARS REWARD.

RANAWAY from my service, in February, 1851, a colored man named EDWARD WINSLOW, low, thick-set, part Indian, and a first rate fiddler. Said Winslow was sold out of Guilford jail, at February court, 1851, for his prison charges, for the term of five years. It is supposed that he is at work on the Railroad, somewhere in Davidson county. The above reward will be paid for his apprehension and confinement in the jail of Guilford or any of the adjoining counties, so that I get him, or for his delivery to me in the south-east corner of Guilford. My post-office is Long's Mills, Randolph, N. C.

P. C. SMITH.

October 27, 1852. 702—5w.

75 NEGROES.



I have just received from the East 75 assorted A No. 1 negroes. Call soon, if you want to get the first choice.

BENJ. LITTLE.

NO. II.

CASH FOR NEGROES.



I will pay as high cash prices for a few likely young negroes as any trader in this city. Also, will receive and sell on commission at Byrd Hill's, old stand, on Adams-street, Memphis.

BENJ. LITTLE.

NO. III.

500 NEGROES WANTED.



We will pay the highest cash price for all good negroes offered. We invite all those having negroes for sale to call on us at our Mart, opposite the lower steamboat landing. We will also have a large lot of Virginia negroes for sale in the Fall. We have as safe a jail as any in the country, where we can keep negroes safe for those that wish them kept.

BOLTON, DICKINS & Co.

This tour was produced with research assistance from the 2003-04 Public History Class at The University of Western Ontario: Amanda Judge, Jaclyn Smith, Carly Adams, Erin Semande, Christine O'Bonsawin, Rebekah Bebee, and Kim Murphy under the direction of Professor Alan MacEachern. Additional assistance was provided by Nina Reid-Maroney.

And with material and assistance from:

- Buxton National Historic Site and Museum
- J.J. Talman Regional Collection,
The University of Western Ontario Archives
- London Room, London Public Libraries

Produced in partnership with the London Black History Coordinating Committee and Museum London.

MUSEUM | LONDON

421 Ridout Street North, London, Ontario N6A 5H4

519.661.0333 • www.museumlondon.ca

From the *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1854, a book of sources published by Harriet Beecher Stowe in response to charges that her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did not accurately portray the lives of the slaves.