

Black Lives Lived Here



London Family Photos,
1910s-1960s



Black Lives Lived Here tells visual stories of community and kinship through the lived experiences of Black Londoners from the early to mid-20th century. It features images of decades-old family photographs from the albums of African Canadians who lived, loved, and overcame adversities in London.

The images in this exhibition were compiled with care in collaboration with the people pictured who shared photos of themselves, family, and friends. Each brim with moments of playfulness, joy, and pride: the essential ingredients of everyday life. As family snapshots, they document instants, at once fleeting and preserved, from homes to birthdays to weddings. Slipping out of frame are Black identities inviting us to remember a past looking towards the future.

This exhibition honours descendants of 19th century Black freedom seekers from the United States who came north to resist enslavement. When they arrived in Canada, Black people faced social exclusion and limited opportunities for meaningful work. Still, they created communities, and these photographs embody hard-won histories. The photographs hold details of daily life from the slats of wooden homes, whitewall tires, and pegged pants of zoot suits. Looking back at us are instances of swag, gravity, and vitality. Harnessing the power of the image, this exhibition calls us to rethink and reimagine. It grows the documentation of Black Canadian life.



Zahra McDoom, TD Curator of Collections

Tap dancer Joey Hollingsworth's aunt
Phoebe Henderson, around 1920s.

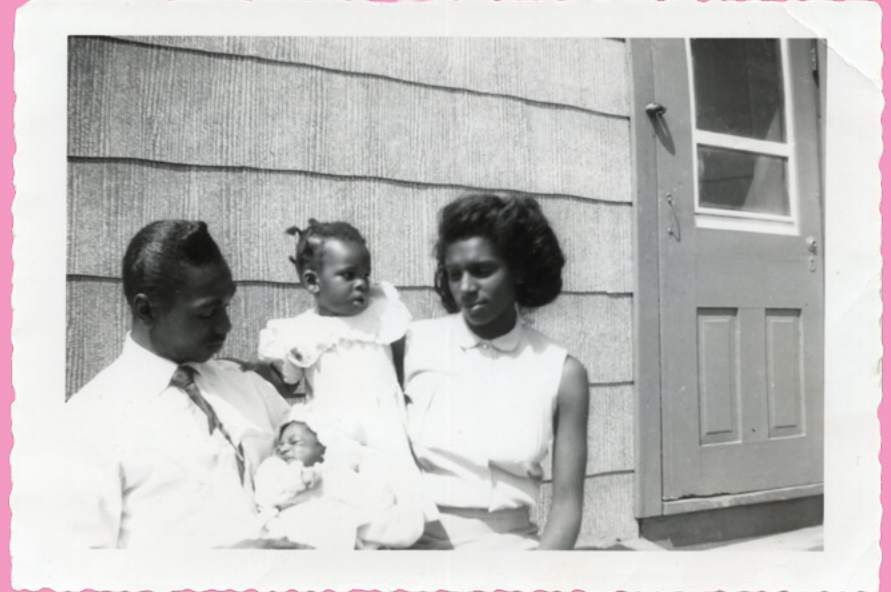
Photograph courtesy of the Ingersoll Cheese and Agricultural Museum.



Cleta Mae Booker was born in the early 1900s. She lived, worked and raised a family in London, Ontario. At 16 years old, Cleta began working as a domestic servant for John Labatt and Guy Lombardo. Later, she married Charles Marshall (b. around 1910) who worked as a porter for Hotel London. Cleta is a descendant of Josiah Henson (1789–1883), a formerly enslaved freedom seeker who travelled the Underground Railroad and became a conductor guiding others to head North towards freedom. Josiah Henson helped establish the Black community Dawn settlement near Dresden, Ontario that included a vocational school. Cleta and Charles had three children. Cleta spoke of dancing the Charleston and the Hucklebuck. Her daughter, Rose-Marie Marshall Drake, attended art college and university. In the 1970s, her daughter and husband became the first Black owners of a McDonald's Restaurant in Canada.

Left: Cleta Mae Booker portrait in a 1920s dress, London, 1920s.
Right: Cleta Mae Booker portrait in her domestic work uniform, London, 1920s.

Photographs courtesy of Rose-Marie Marshall Drake.



The Durrants—Ronald (b. around 1930) and Derena (b. around 1930), with their two children, Shirley and baby Darlene—are shown here visiting the Butler family farm in Lucan. The Butlers were part of the free-Black Wilberforce Settlement in what is now present day Lucan. The Wilberforce settlement was established in 1829. Derena Louise Winn Butler was raised by the Butlers and came to London at 17 years old. In her free time, she enjoyed dancing at the Stork Club, Port Stanley and the Iroquois, London. She played the organ at Beth Emmanuel British Methodist Episcopal Church that had a predominantly Black congregation. The church was the centre of community life for many Black families in London.



Top: Durrant family (Ronald, Derena, and children, Shirley and baby Darlene) visiting Butler family farm, Lucan, 1950s.
Bottom: Sisters Darlene and Shirley Durrant on a pony, London, 1950s.

Photographs courtesy of Shirley Pierce.



'Elite' London women's recreational softball team, Port Stanley, 1923.

Photograph Courtesy of Lena Ruehle.

Barry Howson (b. 1939) was the first Black man on a Canadian National Basketball team. Barry played basketball for Canada in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. As a child, he built a hoop made from a wine barrel with a backboard made of wooden planks. In his youth he also regularly attended Emancipation Day picnics at Springbank Park, participating in three-legged races with attendees from Toronto and the United States. Barry had birthday parties each year where neighbourhood children gathered.



His mother, Christina Groat Jenkins Howson (1898–1967), aided in running the Black newspaper the *Dawn of Tomorrow*, with her first husband James F. Jenkins (1875–1931). The paper's motto was "Devoted to the Interests of the Darker Races." After Jenkin's early passing, she continued the paper, marrying her second husband, Barry's

father Frank Howson, the late 1930s. Frank cheered on Barry at basketball games and worked as a car cleaner on the London Port Stanley Railway.



The Elite softball team was composed of Black women from London and the area. These women were pioneers in sport and many worked to gain equal rights for the Black community in the 1920s. Seated in the front row centre is Helen Ball (1904–2002). Helen's grandfather, Reverend Richard Amos Ball (1845–1925), founded Ball Family Jubilee Singers. When Rev. Ball died, London's Black newspaper the *Dawn of Tomorrow* claimed, "no one person in all of Canada [h]as done so much as he did to raise the status of the [Black People] of the country." ('Unsung Heroes', *Dawn of Tomorrow*. January 2, 1926, p.2)

Seated in the middle row, third from the left is Pearl Brown (b. around 1896). In 1927, Pearl Brown was the secretary for the London-based *Canadian League for the Advancement of Colored People* (CLACP). Forth from the left is Freda Anderson (1911–?). Freda was described by her granddaughter as fearless, loveable, and she enjoyed playing the piano.

In the back row, second from left, is Mrs. Cromwell, a member of CLACP. Roy Anderson, in the back row, was known in the community for his baseball skills. He played on London's *Colored Stars*. On the right, in the back row, is the *Dawn of Tomorrow* advertising manager Christina Groat Jenkins. The Elite softball team were community-builders and trailblazers. The photo was taken in the recreational beachtown of Port Stanley.

Top: Neighbourhood children at birthday party for Barry Howson, 95 Glenwood Ave, London, 1940s.

Bottom right: Barry Howson making a basketball hoop at home, London, 1940s.

Bottom left: Young Frank Howson in hats, London, 1910s.

Photographs courtesy of Barry Howson.



Joey Hollingsworth (b. 1936) is a tap dancer, actor and singer. In the 1950s he was an early Black performer on CBC television. His numerous television credits include the Ed Sullivan Show and Mister Rogers Neighborhood. In the 1960s, he danced at civil rights events, sharing the bill with greats like Oscar Peterson, raising funds for the work of Dr. Martin Luther King and the Congress for Racial Equality. As a child, his father, Cecil Hollingsworth (1908–1966) hand sewed his costumes. Cecil worked in a coal yard. After a work injury, Cecil and his wife Jeanne (née Henderson, 1911–1993) were washroom attendants at the Brass Rail. They brought Joey to the waitress table and he saw performers from the Southern States like the Three Peppers, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and Big Mama Thornton. This influenced Joey's Black style tap, rhythm and blues.



Top: Joey Hollingsworth sporting his car, London, 1958.
Bottom left: Joey Hollingsworth at the waitress table, Brass Rail, London, 1956.
Bottom right: Joey's parents, Jeanne and Cecil Hollingsworth, London, 1956.

Photographs courtesy of Joey Hollingsworth.



Stan 'Gabby' Anderson (1929–2016) played baseball for the Intercounty Baseball League London Majors (also known as the London Pontiacs) in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1959 he was named 'Most Valuable Player' with a .420 batting average. Stan Anderson grew up on Glenwood Avenue, London. His father, George Anderson, and his uncle, Allan Anderson, were sleeping car porters on the Canadian National Railway. Stan's mother, Lorraine Anderson, took care of the eight children when his father worked carrying luggage, setting up beds, and shining shoes. This was one of the few jobs available to Black men in the early to mid 20th century. Their descendants are a close multi-faceted multi-generational family.



Top left: Hanging out—Helen Green, Lillian, Lorraine, Greg, and Stan Anderson, 1950s, London.
Top right: London Majors / London Pontiacs Stan 'Gabby' Anderson in front of Pontiacs door, London, 1960s.
Bottom: Stan Anderson (standing) and friends, London, 1930s.

Photographs courtesy of Jeff Anderson.



Black history **sounds** like the ebb and flow, the push and pull of a polyrhythm.

–Travis Knight, Professional Tap Dancer

Black history **looks** like communities filled with an innumerable number of stories that span centuries, and geographies of space and place.

–Dr. Cheryl Thompson, Director of Mapping Ontario's Black Archives \ MOBAProjects.ca

Black history **tastes** like the inheritance of women who cooked freedom into every pot. In our kitchens, history is not past. It is alive in the warmth of bread, the comfort of spice, the dignity of feeding one another.

The taste of the diaspora is not singular—it's marooned, braided, and creolized. At our tables, we meet in relation. Food becomes the vessel where identity is not reduced but remixed.

–Malvin and Maryam Wright, curators of Yaya's Kitchen



Black history **smells** like rain-soaked soil after a long drought, full of life and promise, igniting in us the strength to grow and the courage to walk to the place in our hearts where the rain never stopped.

–MittyPoems, Poet



Top: Lillian and Lorraine Anderson at the wedding of Stan and Lorrie Anderson, London, 1957. Photograph courtesy of Jeff Anderson.

Bottom: Joey Hollingsworth touring Japan, 1960s. Photograph courtesy of Joey Hollingsworth.

With humility and respect we acknowledge that Museum
London sits at the forks of the Deshkan Zibi on the
traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee,
Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron.

We extend our gratitude to the
families sharing their photos and to
the countless people preserving Black
history and imagining Black futures.



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the Atrium at Museum London, in London
Ontario, from August 9 to April 5, 2026.

museumlondon.ca

Cover: Jim, Arthur, Melvin, and Ken Moxley, Charlie
Smith, Allan Anderson (crouching), and an unknown girl,
London, around 1960.

Photograph courtesy of Jeff Anderson.

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