



The Grand Recorder

A brief digital social history of Port Maitland Ontario, and the surrounding area.
Published by Port Maitland, "On the Grand" Historical Association (PMHA) Founded in 2005

The Grand Despatch to the "The Grand Recorder"!

Father Ron Cote, while proofing a much earlier *Grand Dispatch* suggested that the word "I" may have been used too often. My mission while writing *The Grand Recorder* will be to use this *singular subjective case* as seldom as possible. There is a good reason for this. It is simply not about me, but about those who came before us.

It is generally felt that if you don't understand history you will repeat it and unfortunately it is seldom the wiser part of history that gets repeated.

Our first article in the new format is from Sylvia Weaver who has penned a great article on the Underground Railroad as it came up near Canfield Ontario.

CANFIELD'S FORGOTTEN HISTORY

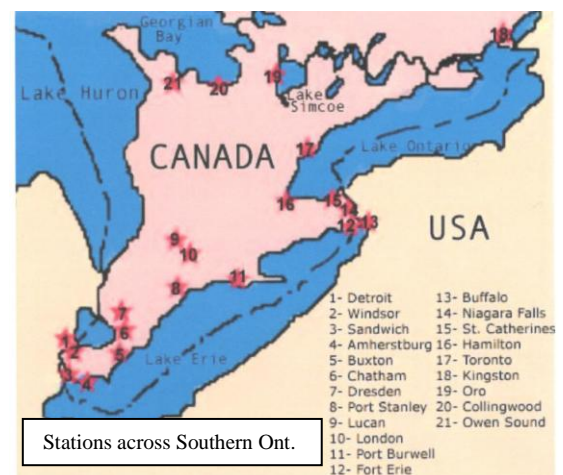
By Sylvia Weaver

The history of the Underground Railroad and Black History in Canfield has been a passion for me for many years. In cooperation with Heritage Haldimand and the Canfield Community Hall Committee it was decided to designate this, our 2017 Sesquicentennial project. To understand what the enslaved Africans experienced, I felt it was important to go back in history 200 to 300 years to Africa. The people of West Africa had a rich and varied history and a long culture before the Europeans arrived and saw a profit in selling Africans as slaves. The white Europeans believed themselves to be at the top of this racial hierarchy, considering their race to be the most intelligent, most moral and the purest of races.

The transatlantic trade was economically

effective for Europeans who made a vast amount of money selling slaves, but it was brutal and inhumane to millions of African people.

When the Europeans arrived in Africa, they forcibly kidnapped the Africans. Children were separated from their brothers and sisters never to see them again. Slaves were captured in the most inhuman way. As many as 20 million Africans were transported by slave ships to the United States, South American and the Caribbean. The men were chained and packed into ships, most women were left unchained in the upper level and children were allowed to roam. The voyage usually took six to eight weeks. Once they arrived in the United States, they were sold at an auctioneer's block. If they were skilled, strong and healthy they could get a better price at the sale. Prices varied depending on sex, age, health, physical build and whether it was in the south or north part of the United States. They were sold like cattle.



Once they were placed on a plantation, the slaves were given one set of clothing a year and the adults were given one blanket and had to sleep on

the damp ground. They worked 10 hours a day to produce one pound of cotton. As punishment, slaves were routinely beaten or separated from their families. Despite all the methods used to try to break the spirit of the slaves, we know many directly resisted or refused to co-operate. They managed to keep their African traditions alive through storytelling and folklore.

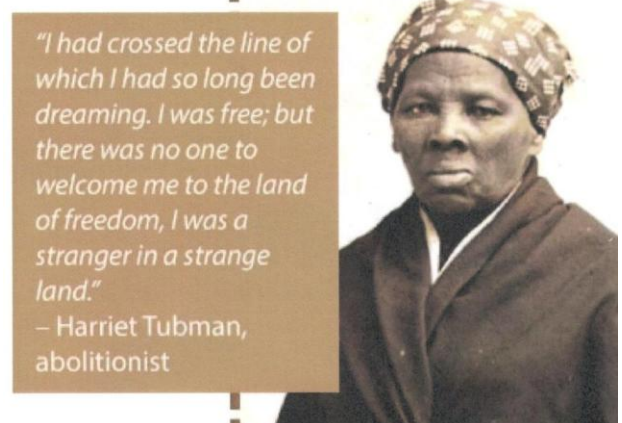
Canada abolished slavery in 1834 which is when many runaway slaves began arriving in Canada. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Act in the United States was one of the most controversial elements and heightened Northern fears of a "slave power conspiracy". There were several free states in the northern part of USA. The act required that all escaped slaves, upon capture, be returned to their masters and that officials and citizens of free states had to cooperate. The black families escaping slavery fled to Canada from the United States through the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was not an actual railroad but a network of safe houses and routes that helped people escape slavery to Canada. It was a secret operation, operated by courageous people willing to hide, feed and assist the fugitive slaves until passage to freedom could be arranged. Meeting places and locations were hidden within the lyrics of gospel songs. (See sample below) The slaves had a long way to travel, guided by the northern star they would disguise their identity posing as the opposite sex, white people for those with lighter skin, free blacks, invalids, servants and even dead people, where they would ship themselves in crates and coffins to reach their destination. Slave catchers would not want to open a coffin in case they could be exposed to a disease. Many crossed into Canada from Niagara, Windsor and Quebec. The lakes, rivers and railroad were ways to escape to the land of freedom.

In the 1700's and 1800's many northern parts of the United States had freed their slaves. One of the most famous conductors was Harriet Tubman called "Moses". Based out of St. Catharine's for

nine years she personally helped approximately 300 slaves to freedom over the course of 19 trips to the south. Once the runaway slaves arrived in Canada the Land of freedom, they travelled from Niagara on an old Indian trail just north of Canfield. This was the only trail from Niagara to the Grand River. Today it is known as the Indiana Road. This area was virtual wilderness which provided a safe haven for the runaway slaves who were fleeing from the unjust conditions in the United States.

The first known black settler in Haldimand County was Samuel Cooper in 1837. In the 1840's, Stepney Street and his wife were the earliest settlers in Canfield. They came from West Virginia and escaped to Canada by the Underground Railroad. It was a humble beginning as they used their small 12'x14' log cabin, for their 12 children. Their kitchen, dining room and sleeping quarters served as a place of worship for 9 years. In 1853 Stepney purchased land on the corner of highway #3 and Haldimand Rd 32 for a log chapel and later built the brick North Cayuga Baptist Church in 1882.

By 1851 there were 137 blacks living in North Cayuga, this was the largest population in Haldimand. Dunnville was the second highest for blacks living in their community. This small community of Canfield was a safe haven which welcomed the blacks with respect, compassion and acceptance.



The Talbot Trail, now known as #3 Highway,

was built with the aid of many blacks. In 1852 the Grand Trunk Railway was completed which also gave many opportunities for employment. This opened the area and Canfield was one of the many stagecoaches stops along the Talbot Road. For many years these new settlers cleared their land and became farmers, helping their neighbors with threshing and other chores. Women assisted others as homemakers. They all worked together. All the children in the community went to school together and they worshipped together in the local churches. The black children integrated into the school system like any other child in the community. They attended the Canfield School, Topp and Lymburner Schools. The citizens of Canfield accepted them and made them part of their community, something they had not experienced as slaves during their lives in the United States.

Many new black settlers lived on Haldimand Road 32. Perhaps you have heard your parents, or your grandparents refer it as the Darky Sideroad. Today, this is not an acceptable term. I asked the president of the Central Network for Black History in Niagara, Donna Ford, about using this name and she said, "History is history, do not change it". Black families such as the Streets, Morris, Williams, Burkes, Greens, Harpers, Barnes, Johnsons, Duncans and others lived in this community for many years.

In 1863, American President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation abolishing slavery in the United States. Since then many black families that lived in Canfield returned to the United States or moved away. Others stayed as this was the only life they had ever known, and families were now intermarrying. The end of the American Civil War in 1871 was another factor. The Lee and the Douglass families were the last to live in Canfield. Many of descendants of x-slaves have gone on to fight in both World Wars; they became professionals, tradesmen and outstanding Canadian citizens of Haldimand.

When Stepney Street purchased the land on the corner of highway #3 and Haldimand Road 32, they first worshiped in a log chapel for 9 years and then built the brick North Cayuga Baptist Church. Years ago, this church was very active, where both whites and blacks attended; they enjoyed the toe tapping spiritual songs. They held picnics, garden parties and many marriages took place there. They baptized their congregants by total immersion in the Grand River. At one point the church was approached by the Amherstburg Black Baptist Association requesting that this church to be used for blacks only. The North Cayuga Baptist congregation refused, wanting it for all people of both races and faiths. In 1972, after 124 years of service, the North Cayuga Baptist Church with its congregation dwindling was closed.



Donna Ford and Sylvia Weaver at
dedication of Black Memorial

View [Video](#) by Graeme Bachi

The Street family cemetery is located off Haldimand Rd. 32, behind the brick church in a small treed area. It has been unattended for many years, and the tombstones are broken and crumbling into the ground. This is an historic cemetery for the resting spot of the first black settlers in Canfield; also of Harriet Tubman's

niece, Carrie Barnes who married William Andrew Barnes from Cayuga. Carrie is the daughter of William Henry Stewart, Harriet Tubman's brother. Both William and Carrie are buried in the Street Cemetery.

In 2017 Heritage Haldimand and the Canfield Hall Committee decided to recognize the Underground Railroad and Black History. Dunnville Rock Company donated an 8-ton rock for the Underground Railroad and Black History Marker. Vic Powell transported the rock to the site at no charge. Haldimand County gave 35% of the \$10,000 budget for this project. We had no problem raising \$10,000 since there were so many generous people who donated toward this project. On Sept. 29, 2017 the Canfield Hall Committee and Heritage Haldimand unveiled the Canfield Black Settlement Marker. It is located by the Canfield Cemetery behind the United Church in Canfield. Many descendants of the first settlers were present. Invitations went to Black organizations and individuals from Hamilton and Niagara, local and former Canfield residents, politicians, Haldimand County staff, church leaders, and historical groups. Many came out in sweltering heat that day. It was wonderful to see the interest and appreciation that this historical location was finally recognized.

The placement of the marker is to commemorate the Black History settlers who fled from the United States to Canada through the Underground Railroad. Heritage Haldimand, the Canfield Community Center and Haldimand County in Partnership, offer this recognition.

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Settlers who fled the United States through the
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Railroad Heritage Haldimand, Canfield
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*For the slaves coming from the United States to
Canada the Indiana
Road to Canfield was a passage to freedom. The
first known
settler was Samuel Cooper in 1837. In 1844 the
church services to
take place was in Stepney and Lucy Streets
home in the village of Canfield.
By 1851 the North Cayuga Census identified 137
Black Settlers
living in Canfield and the surrounding area.
The Land previously-
deeded by Mr. Street the brick Baptist church
was built on the
corner of #56 and #3 Highways.
This small community was a safe haven which
welcomed the
Blacks with respect, compassion and
acceptance. Residents and
the new settlers lived, worked, attended schools
and worshipped
together in Canfield. ■*

*Sylvia Weaver is a retired nurse. She is
interested in local history of the Dunnville area
and has developed a passion for black history.
Sylvia along with her great niece Faith Roy, are
currently working on a book about black history
in Canfield. You will be informed of its
availability once it is published.*

[Oh Freedom!](#) (Right click to hear song.)

*Oh freedom,
Oh freedom,
Oh, freedom over me!*

*And before I'd be a slave,
I'll be buried in my grave,
And go home to my Lord and be free.*

*No more moaning,
No more moaning,
No more moaning over me!*

*And before I'd be a slave,
I'll be buried in my grave,
And go home to my Lord and be free . . .*

This second article is a history of Port Maitland Nova Scotia. It was sent to me by Lisette Gaudet the curator of the Dartmouth Museum in Dartmouth NS. It is written by the Yarmouth County Museum and Archives. If you ever get a chance to visit there, you will enjoy the historic similarities to Port Maitland Ontario; including its namesake.

History of Port Maitland, Nova Scotia, Canada

Article composed by the Yarmouth County Museum and Archives

Originally Port Maitland, Nova Scotia was named Green Cove and was part of the larger village of Beaver River. Green Cove was so named because of the [giant beech](#) and birch trees that could be found in abundance in the area. These trees reached all the way down to the beach (or the “cove”) and settlers decided on the word “green” for the trees and “cove” for the beach. The first settler of this region was believed to be Joseph Sollows. His grandfather, John Sollows, built the first vessel to be launched in Yarmouth County. Joseph worked hard at building up this community, starting with the construction of his own home where he raised his six children. His home would remain in the family for many years to come, with his great grandson, Arthur Sollows, living in it. Joseph also built a breakwater, operated a general store and traded fish. Another early settler of the area was Richard Rose. He operated a large farm and his wife, Mary McGray, was the first person to be an acting doctor in Port Maitland. Mary used recipes of herbal medicines and Richard sold them under the name, Dr. Herbert Rose.

In the 1820s there was a boom in the population of Green Cove/Port Maitland after a large fire devastated a part of Beaver River. At this time, many people relocated to Port Maitland where they built homes, farms and businesses. It didn't take long before people realized there was an abundance of fish and the men of the area began

a thriving fishing industry. Along with the blossoming fishery, the shipbuilding industry began to prosper. This industry was started by Eleazer Raymond, who had also launched the first ship in Yarmouth County, the one built by John Sollows. Between 1860 and 1889 over 28 ships, brigantines, schooners and brigs were built at Eleazer's family-run shipbuilding company, Raymond Shipyards. The first wharf was built in 1841 by Joseph Sollows and in 1897 the first lighthouse was erected due to the increased fishing trade.



In 1837, there was a large political shift to the community when the Legislature of Nova Scotia passed a bill to divide Annapolis County in the Counties of Digby, Annapolis and Clare. With this division it meant that one half of Beaver River was moved to the new District of Clare while the other half, including Green Cove/Port Maitland, was placed in Yarmouth County (this county had been formed the previous year in 1836). Following these new divides and Yarmouth becoming a Port of Entry, the shipping industry rose in profit and the community's economy benefited greatly. Unfortunately, a decline in the shipbuilding industry began in 1919 as the rise of iron ships and steam engines started.

While Green Cove/Port Maitland was built on the shipbuilding and fishing industries, another aspect of life for its residents that took a very

high priority was religion. The Baptist Church of Beaver River first opened its doors on August 22, 1846 with a membership of 34. In 1859 the first Baptist Church was built in Green Cove/Port Maitland. Sadly, this church was completely destroyed by a fire in 1879 but because of the people's strong faith it was decided at that time to build two churches, one in Beaver River and one in Port Maitland (it was around this time that Green Cove's name was changed). In 1894, an Act of Incorporation was passed that the two congregations combine together and it became "The Bay View Baptist Church of Port Maitland". In 1905, the Bay View United Baptist Church began. Other churches in the community included the Methodist Church, the *(See service Easter 2020)* [Wesleyan Church](#) and the Reformed Baptist Church. People's faith led them through trying times, such as financial struggles for church and community groups, fires and daily struggles. Religion often brought residents together in shared celebrations.



Throughout the years, there have been many services in Port Maitland, including a mortuary, blacksmiths, sawmills, and a livery. Telephone services began in 1879 and the Maitland Telephone Company was incorporated in 1886. A newspaper called "The Bluenose" started in 1904. The tourism industry was also booming in Port Maitland for many years, with a large variety of accommodations. The "Maitland House" was the first hotel in the area, followed by the Ellis House, the Mumford Lodge, the

Saltair Lodge, Sears Cabins and Rose's Lakelawn Farm. Activities available for tourists in the area were horse racing and in the 1950s deep sea fishing rose to popularity.

In the 1920s and 30s, residents and visitors could enjoy traveling to town in local E.H. Porter's truck on Saturday nights to enjoy shopping, movies and community events such as the Cherry Carnival. The fare for a round-trip was .25¢. Wintertime provided the opportunities for residents to enjoy fun in the snow with sleigh rides, skating on ponds and of course playing hockey. One of the most famous attractions in Port Maitland has always been the beach which locals and visitors today still enjoy.



Port Maitland also did their part during World War I and World War II. During WWI the Port Maitland Red Cross Society raised funds and in WWII they supplied hundreds of knitted articles and quilts that were sent to soldiers. During

WWII 70 men and women formed the 2nd Reserve Army of the West Nova Scotia Regiment.

While the community of Port Maitland is not as prosperous as it was during the hay-day of the shipping industry, residents today thrive on the beautiful and peaceful area that they call home. Port Maitland, while there are fewer businesses, continues to be well-populated.



Our namesake, Sir Peregrine Maitland

Port Maitland is located 2.5 kilometres south of the Digby County Line in Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Sources:

Historical Trails through Port Maitland, compiled by High Hopes Senior Citizens Club 1895

Port Maitland Community Council Scrapbook

Port Maitland Women's Institute notes, compiled in 1946

Photographs

PH-80-Port-4: View of Port Maitland's main road. Circa 1890s.

PH-80-Port-8: Main Street in Port Maitland. Circa 1890s.

PH-80-Port-10: A collection of photographs from Port Maitland.

PH-80-Port-12: Port Maitland beach. Dated 1895.

Lisette Gaudet is the Archivist at Yarmouth County Museum and Archives. Lisette can be reached at Museum and Archives 22 Collins Street Yarmouth NS Canada or by at Phone 902 742-5539, or email at www.yarmouthcountymuseum.ca

Report on the Cairn Property

It is hard to believe the damage that wind and water can do, but a look at the cairn property will give you some idea. One would think situated up river approximately a half mile it would not be affected by Lake Erie storms. However, a short rest on one of the benches will reveal that it is directly lined up and vulnerable to south west winds blowing in between the piers.

Considerable conversations have taken place over the past years about what to do to protect the shoreline including leaving any logs that gather on the shore. Unfortunately those logs became the enemy last fall when they were blown onshore and became bulldozers. Oddly enough where there were no logs there was little damage to the park. Debris did float up along the entire length of the park but the damage was done only where the logs came ashore.



Earlier this spring Geo Barnes & Sons Limited were contracted to remove the many logs that were along the shoreline as well as remove most of the debris and large rocks that were also pushed in from the river. This was paid for by donations made to the Cairn Property Repair Fund as well as Jim Barnes donated a considerable amount of the cost in kind. Thank you Jim.



There is a need to place four or five loads of soil where Barnes removed the debris. The park is covered in stones of various sizes that need to be removed. The employees at Innophos Cdn. have agreed to do that once they can get on the property. Due to COVID-19, it is unlikely we will be able to gather enough volunteers at the park this summer to do a final cleanup and reseed of grass. Any funds received so far have been placed in a separate account to be used as soon as we are able to get on site. By the way, due to COVID-19 the county has placed the park off limits. You can be fined if found on it! Permission will be sought from the county to permit the people from Innophos to do their thing and to permit the lawn to be cut once it is safe for the mower to do so.

If you wish to contribute to the Cairn Property Cleanup Fund, Please make payment to Port Maitland, "On the Grand" Historical Association and mail to Bill at address below. OR why not send your donation from your online banking to payment@port-maitland.ca !

ARE YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEES

Membership fees have changed due to the fact that we no longer print and mail out the newsletter. Fees are \$15.00 for two years ending September 30, 2021. Your support is needed. Please continue to support PMHA.

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