

1993

The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre

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North American Black Historical Museum
and Cultural Centre
277 King Street, P.O. Box 12,
Amherstburg, Ontario, Canada N9V 2C7

Admission to the Centre is free to all members

Non-Members — Adults: \$2.00
Children to fourteen
or Senior Citizens \$1.00
Families \$7.00

Appointments for Special Tours can be arranged or
further information can be obtained by contacting:

Monday through Friday 1-519-736-5433

Hours: *APRIL* - NOVEMBER

Wednesday-Friday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday & Sunday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Our Logo

Our logo was designed by a young Black Canadian. As you read the symbols and explanation, we are sure you will agree how well this young man understood his history.

His imagination and depth certainly does capture the meaning, leaving you with something to think about and give pride to us all.



....Travelling at night
"Runaway Slaves"

told to watch in the sky for
THE NORTH STAR
AND



THE BIG DIPPER



followed these heavenly signs to
"Freedom in Canada"

THE MAPLE LEAF
(Canada's Emblem)



BLACK FIGURE with
OUSTRETCHED ARMS within

Depicts praise to God
and that the Black man is
still growing.....



A Dream Towards Reality

—●—
MELVIN SIMPSON
Founder
1917-1982

"We shall stand tall and proud not only because of our Heritage, but because we are a Race surrounded by mystery—who knows—the Black man may one day be proved, to be the World's First Man."

In 1964, the late Melvin Simpson was inspired by God to try to do something tangible to increase the level of Black awareness in Essex County. It seemed to him, as well as to others, that social, economic and educational problems could be addressed more effectively by a community with a greater self-awareness and pride in being Black.

His vision was one of understanding and of taking great pride in knowing the history of our forefathers. Helping future generations to keep alive the dignity, strength and purpose of being that was so much a part of our past history still has an important influence on us today.

From Melvin's (Mac's) deep concern, developed the concept of a Black Museum which would uncover and preserve the record of the rich heritage Black people have, making it available for the positive development of the Black Community and for the general educational benefit of all people who constitute Canadian society.

In 1966, a major effort was conducted to gather information and to establish contacts so that appropriate sources of resources could be approached to assist the project. During this

period, in an attempt to further the aims of the project, the pastor and members of the Nazery A.M.E. Church raised money to build a hall adjacent to the church for the Black Museum.

In 1971, five members of the A.M.E. Church purchased the adjacent property where a log house stood, which would become part of the museum complex.

Funds were made available from the municipal, provincial and federal governments, as well as the community and large and small businesses. Everyone gave whatever they could.

The hope and dream of a museum to depict our origins in the great civilizations in Africa, the period of slavery, followed by freedom and development in the Western Hemisphere have been incorporated into the three-phase program for the project by its Board of Directors.

Phase One—The Black Historical Museum.

Phase Two—The restoration of the log house to the period circa 1855.

Phase Three—Restoration of the Nazery A.M.E. Church to its state of about 1858, and to make it into a shrine in memory of all slaves who came to Canada seeking a better life.

The North American Black Historical Museum became incorporated on October 20, 1975.

Melvin (Mac) Simpson, died on January 7, 1982. He passed away believing in the legacy of our people, to which he, himself, added to the richness of our heritage.

Mac Simpson lived long enough to see the first Phase become a reality.

The North American Black Historical Museum and Black Cultural Centre had its formal opening on Sunday, September 20, 1981.

Melvin (Mac) Simpson gave his praise to God for allowing him to see his dream.

Dedicated members of the community who believed in his dream are working toward fulfilling Phases Two and Three.

The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre



277 King Street
Amherstburg, Ontario, Canada



A Dream Of Freedom

The Underground Railroad had its humblest beginnings with the runaway slaves fleeing from the southern part of the United States into Canada, which was thought of as "The Promised Land—FREEDOM".

This also included a network of free slaves, former slaves, white Americans as well as Canadian Abolitionists to help to bring them into our Southern Ontario communities. Among the many non-blacks who gave great assistance to the runaways were the dedicated Quakers of Pennsylvania.

Between the years 1800 to 1860 approximately 30,000 to 50,000 fugitives made the pilgrimage into freedom.

Relating to slavery and Canada's HISTORICAL position that made it possible for them to enter are as follows:

- 1793-Governor John Graves Simcoe and the first Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada (as Ontario was referred to) passed Canada's first anti-slavery law.
- 1808-Legal importation of slaves was to end.
- 1833-By Imperial order all slavery was abolished in the British Empire.

1850-September 18, signing of the Second Fugitive Slave Law, by the U.S. Government providing for the return, between states, of escaped negro slaves.

Many slaves came by way of the Detroit River into Amherstburg, because it was the narrowest point to cross. This made Amherstburg one of their largest terminals coming into Canada.

In the summer, many fugitives swam the river with their few belongings tied to their backs. In the winter, many who saw snow and ice for the first time crossed the frozen river with great difficulty. Always with the burning desire and the great taste for freedom, allowing themselves to be rid of the heartache, heartbreak, and misery that only slavery in its worst form had exposed them to.

History fails to state that many of the slaves who came were people of many trades, ambitions, as well as determinations.

They brought with them new life in developing prosperous farms, businesses, and developed their skills into meaningful trades, built churches, schools, and homes. Their rich legacy was left to all future generations but it is necessary to re-discover it as a source of inspiration, and pride, on which to base the accomplishments of today.

If we were to look at many families today, relating to the Underground Railroad, we may find we would walk back through time of four or five generations.



The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre

Our Cultural Centre is on the second floor of the museum. We are very proud of its many uses, not only for the museum itself, but for the community.

Some activities have been an Art Display for both professional and novice artists, sculpture exhibits, photography and other cultural events.

The Centre has also been used for educational purposes as well as seminars, workshops, guest speakers, meetings and many other activities.

Many historical artifacts and materials which are used during exhibits have been donated to the Cultural Centre by many Blacks, as well as other interested members from the community. We are very proud that some Blacks who have donated material are also descendants of the early settlers from the Underground Railroad.

The Centre has a permanent exhibit to the memory of the Underground Railroad, keeping their memory alive forever. This has proven to be one of the favourites over the years.

Allowing the involvement of the community creates an atmosphere of being together and working in harmony.

There is a nominal fee for the use of the facilities which goes towards the museum and its needs.

The Cultural Centre is available during museum hours. Special requests arranged by the Co-ordinator are allowed for evenings, but under very strict guidelines.

On our first floor there is also a small gift shop with books, souvenirs, and items which we are sure you will enjoy.

The building is dedicated to the preservation of the heritage of all Black people, to the encouragement, and to the promotion of community and cultural activities.



PLEASE CLIP OUT AND MAIL TO:
North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre
277 King Street, P.O. Box 12, Amherstburg, Ontario, Canada N9V 2C7

PLEASE FIND ENCLOSED:

(USE CHEQUE FOR MEMBERSHIP AND/OR DONATION)

- Adults \$15.00
- Students or Senior Citizens \$10.00
- Family \$35.00
- Donation \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Province or State _____ Country _____

Postal Code _____ Telephone _____