

# Grades 3-8

## Black Histories

### Primary Sources Set

There are many records stored at the Archives of Ontario which connect to Black Canadian histories in this province.

The primary sources in this set were chosen to illustrate both community and individual narratives between 1793 and 1925.

#### Textual

Green cards feature textual, or written records.

#### Photograph

Purple cards feature photographic records.

#### Visual

Blue cards feature visual records, including drawings and maps.



[Repealed by 36th George III. c. 4, s. 1.]

1793

## C H A P. VII.

the further introduction of SLAVES, and to limit the Term of Contracts for SERVITUDE within this Province.

[9th July, 1793.]

Preamble.

WHEREAS it is unjust that a people who enjoy Freedom by Law should encourage the introduction of Slaves, and whereas it is highly expedient to abolish Slavery in this Province, so far as the same may gradually be done without violating private property; Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and Assembly of the Province of Upper-Canada, constituted and assembled by virtue of and under the authority of an Act passed in the Parliament of Great-Britain, intituled, "An Act to repeal certain parts of an Act passed in the fourteenth year of His Majesty's Reign, intituled, 'An Act for making more effectual provision for the Government of the Province of Quebec, in North America, and to make further provision for the Government of the said Province,'" and by the authority of the same, 'That from and after the passing of this Act, so much of a certain Act of the Parliament of Great Britain, passed in the thirtieth year of His present Majesty, intituled "An Act for encouraging new Settlers in His Majesty's Colonies and Plantations in America," as may enable the Governor or Lieutenant Governor of this Province, heretofore parcel of His Majesty's Province of Quebec, to grant a licence for importing into the same any Negro or Negroes, shall be, and the same is hereby repealed; and that from and after the passing of this Act, it shall not be lawful for the Governor, Lieutenant Governor or Person administering the Government of this Province, to grant a licence for the importation of any Negro or other person to be subjected to the condition of a Slave, or to a bounden involuntary service for life, into any part of this Province; nor shall any Negro, or other person who shall come or be brought into this Province after the passing of this Act, be subject to the condition of a Slave, or to such service as aforesaid, within this Province, nor shall any voluntary contract of service or indentures that may be entered into by any parties within this Province, after the passing of this Act, be binding on them or either of them, for a longer time than a term of nine years, from the day of the date of such contract.

II. *Provided always*, That nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend to liberate any Negro, or other person subjected to such service as aforesaid, or to discharge them or any of them from the possession of the owner thereof, his or her executors, administrators or assigns, who shall have come or been brought into this Province, in conformity to the conditions prescribed by any authority for that purpose exercised, or by any Ordinance

Recital of Act 30 Geo. III.

The same in part repealed.

Provisions against the further introduction of slaves.

Term of servitude by contract limited.

The owners of slaves at present within the Province, confirmed in their property therein.

nance or Law of the Province of Quebec, or by Proclamation of any of His Majesty's Governors of the said Province for the time being, or of any Act of the Parliament of Great Britain, or shall have otherwise come into the possession of any person, by gift, bequest or bona fide purchase before the passing of this Act, whose property therein is hereby confirmed, or to vacate or annul any contract for service that may heretofore have been lawfully made and entered into, or to prevent parents or guardians from binding out children until they shall have obtained the age of twenty-one years.

III. And in order to prevent the continuation of Slavery within this Province, *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That immediately from and after the passing of this Act, every child that shall be born of a Negro mother, or other woman subjected to such service as aforesaid, shall abide as and remain with the master or mistress in whose service the mother shall be living at the time of such child's birth, (unless such mother and child shall leave such service, by and with the consent of such master or mistress), and such master or mistress shall, and is hereby required to give proper nourishment and clothing to such child or children, and shall and may put such child or children to work, when he, she or they shall be able so to do, and shall and may retain him or her in their service, until every such child shall have attained the age of twenty-five years, at which time they and each of them shall be entitled to demand his or her discharge from and shall be discharged by such master or mistress, from any further service. And to the end that the age of such child or children may be more easily ascertained, the master or mistress of the mother thereof, shall and is hereby required, to cause the day of the birth of every such child as shall be born of a Negro or other mother, subjected to the condition of a Slave, in their service as aforesaid, to be registered within three months after its birth, by the Clerk of the parish, township or place wherein such master or mistress reside, which Clerk shall be authorized to demand and receive the sum of one shilling, for registering the same. And in case any master or mistress shall refuse or neglect to cause such register to be made, within the time aforesaid, and shall be convicted thereof, either on his or her confession, or by the oath of one or more credible witness or witnesses, before any Justice of the Peace, he or she shall, for every such offence, forfeit and pay the sum of five pounds, to the public stock of the District.

IV. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That in case any master or mistress shall detain any such child born in their service as aforesaid, after the passing of this Act, under any pretence whatever, after such Servant shall have attained the age of twenty-five years, except by virtue of a contract of service, or indentures, duly and voluntarily executed, after such discharge as aforesaid, it shall and may be lawful for such Servant to apply for a discharge to any of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, who shall and is hereby required thereupon to issue a summons to such master or mistress, to appear before him to shew cause, why such Servant should not be discharged, and the proof that such Servant is under the age of twenty-five years, shall rest upon and be adduced by the master or mistress of such Servant; otherwise it shall and may be lawful for the said Justice to discharge such Servant from such service as aforesaid, *Provided always*, That in case any issue shall be born of such children, during their infant servitude, or after

Nothing herein to extend to contracts for service already made, nor of parents or guardians.

The children that shall be born of female slaves, to remain in the service of the owner of their mother until the age of 25 years, when they shall be discharged.

Birth of the children of slaves to be recorded.

Penalty for neglecting or refusing to record the same.

Remedy against the undue detention of such children.

Provision for the issue of children of slaves.

Chloe Cooley's fierce resistance led to the passage of significant legislation to limit the slave trade in the British colonies. On March 14, 1793, Cooley, an enslaved Black woman in Queenston, was bound, thrown in a boat, and sold across the Niagara River to a new "owner" in the United States. Her struggle and the violence of this act were witnessed by Peter Martin and William Grisley, who brought her case to Upper Canada's Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe. Simcoe moved to abolish slavery in the province, but was opposed by other politicians, some of whom owned slaves. Rather than support human rights, Simcoe put the needs of his slave-holding colleagues first with a cruel compromise: on July 9, 1793, he passed an act making it illegal to bring any more enslaved people into Upper Canada, and ordered that all children born to enslaved women after the act passed would be freed at the age of 25 — though no slaves already residing in the province were freed. This legislation allowed slavery to continue in Upper Canada. It was also the first piece of legislation in the British colonies to limit the slave trade and set the stage for the great freedom movement of enslaved Africans known as the Underground Railroad.

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***An Act to Prevent the further Introduction of Slaves and to limit the Term of Contracts for Servitude. Statutes of Upper Canada. 33 George III, Cap. 7, 1793***

1854



Thornton and Lucie Blackburn were freedom seekers, entrepreneurs, anti-slavery activists, and community benefactors. After a dramatic flight from slavery in Kentucky in 1831, their recapture in Detroit two years later resulted in the Blackburn Riots. Demands for their extradition prompted Upper Canada to establish its first refugee reception policy. Settling in Toronto, by 1837 Thornton and Lucie had established their own business: the city's first taxi service. The Blackburns' company was a great success. Fast and reliable transportation, available to all those able to pay the fees, was new to Toronto and helped modernize the city. The couple devoted their time and considerable wealth to anti-slavery and African Canadian community causes.

Adapted from Smardz Frost, Karolyn. "Thornton and Lucie Blackburn." The Canadian Encyclopedia. Historica Canada. Article published May 06, 2021; Last Edited May 18, 2021.

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*Whitefield's original views of North American cities, no. 30: Toronto, Canada West: from the top of the jail [detail], 1854. Creator: Edwin Whitefield Endicott and Co., New York, lithographers, I0004748*



Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893) was a journalist, publisher, editor, lawyer, educator, anti-slavery activist, and advocate for women's rights. Born a free Black woman in the state of Delaware, her family relocated north to Canada West, in part to escape the effects of the United States' *Fugitive Slave Act* (1850). They settled in Buxton. Shadd Cary worked tirelessly to improve the lives of Black people, and specifically of Black women. In Windsor, she founded an integrated school with classes for children and adults. She was one of the only Black women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to practice law, developing legal arguments for suffrage and advocating for Black women's right to vote. And, as a founder and editor of the weekly newspaper *The Provincial Freeman*, she was the first Black woman publisher in North America.

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*The Provincial Freeman*

Date: November 11, 1854 (Vol. 1, No. 34), p. 1

1854  
Chatham Canada West July the 7

I now take this opportunity to inform you  
all at present and hope these few lines  
~~will bring the same blessing and the rest~~  
the girls have joined the Methodist Church  
at married to Miss Hopday I have seen the  
~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~part~~ <sup>part</sup> of the Cuntry and I think it is one  
Cuntry I've wos in there is lots of labor  
and a coming every day more or less O Dear  
I should like to see you I would give all of the  
I would love you and I would love but I cant be  
till my Master that I should like to see you  
and all the reste of the folks but give me  
love all the world give my best respects to all  
friends but give my love all to your self wright  
your C. West and let me know all of  
agiting along I remain your truly til  
my god bless you Dearist this is from your  
Tom. Ellice to  
Mary. Warner

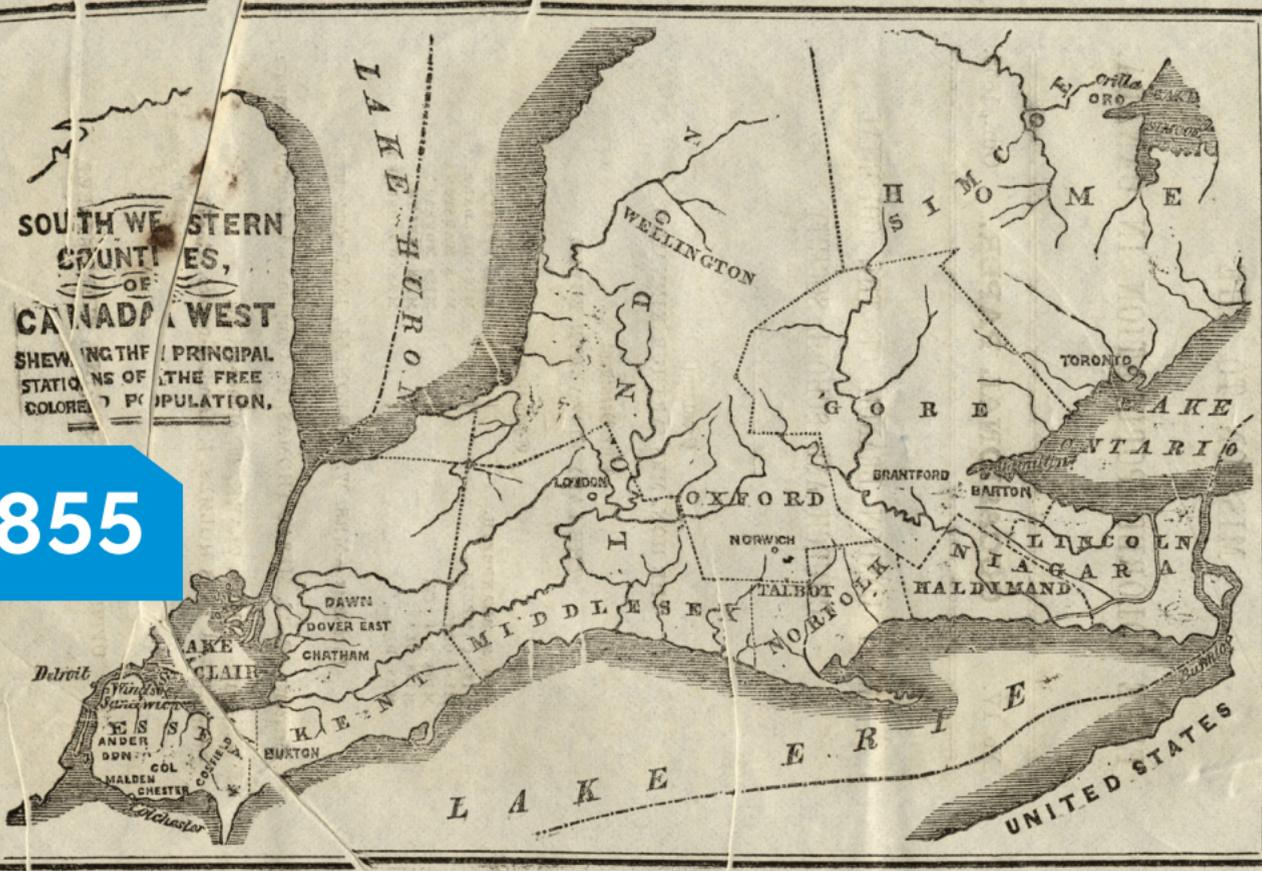
1854

Dated 1854, this one-page letter is believed to be from a refugee of slavery from Kentucky and describes the writer's preference for his new country, Canada West. The letter is significant, as it's likely the first credible, eyewitness account of a formerly enslaved person who travelled via the Underground Railroad to Chatham, Ontario.

To read a transcription of Tom's letter to Mary, visit the Archives of Ontario's website to view the [“Letter from Tom Elice \(Ellis\) to Mary Warner”](#) online exhibit.

**SOUTH WESTERN  
COUNTIES,  
OF  
CANADA WEST**  
SHOWING THE PRINCIPAL  
STATIONS OF THE FREE  
COLORED POPULATION.

**1855**



In 1850, the American *Fugitive Slave Act* required that enslaved people who were caught escaping be returned to their “owners,” even if they were arrested in a free state. As a result, Black people across the United States were targeted by slaveholders, slave catchers, and citizens seeking rewards for turning in fugitives of slavery. In many cases, free Black people were also arrested or kidnapped. The Underground Railroad network of freedom seekers and their supporters grew, and at least 60,000 Black people fled to Canada and freedom.

Newly arrived Black people often landed in Windsor, Niagara Falls or Toronto, or in the all-Black communities of Dawn, Elgin, or Wilberforce. Later, many moved to other areas in search of family members, an urban home, or a market for their skills.

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*Southwestern Counties of Canada West - shewing the principal stations  
of the free colored population, 1855, I0049638*

King St School Section No. \_\_\_\_\_ Township of Amherstburg  
 ATTENDANCE FOR THE MONTH OF January 1893

PUPIL'S REGISTER NO.	AGE	CLASS	NAMES OF PUPILS	1st WEEK							2nd WEEK							3rd WEEK							4th WEEK							5th WEEK							TOTAL				
				MON. TUE. WED. THU. FRI. SAT. SUN.							MON. TUE. WED. THU. FRI. SAT. SUN.							MON. TUE. WED. THU. FRI. SAT. SUN.							MON. TUE. WED. THU. FRI. SAT. SUN.							MON. TUE. WED. THU. FRI. SAT. SUN.											
				MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	SUN.					
<i>J. H. Alexander</i> Teacher, Day of the Month.																																											
		IV.	<i>Birsha Wesley</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	21							
			<i>Maud Holbert</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	20							
			<i>Lulu Adams</i>			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12																				13						
			<i>Lena Adams</i>			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12																				13						
		III.	<i>Amie Wesley</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		21							
			<i>Ella Holt</i>	1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15																		15						
			<i>Effie Bowles</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		21							
			<i>Emma Holt</i>	1	2	3	4						5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15														15						
			<i>Carrie Simpson</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19														19							
			<i>Ella May Adams</i>					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15														15							
			<i>Habel Binger</i>																				1	2	3	4	5	6	7						7								
		II.	<i>Lizzie Jones</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		21							
			<i>Bertha Johnson</i>	1	2	3	4																													10							
			<i>Nary Cobb</i>					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14															14							
			<i>Allice Curtis</i>										1	2	3	4																				4							
			<i>Kattie Kirk</i>																				1	2	3	4	5	6	7						7								
			<i>Josie Lewis</i>																												1	2				2							
		PII.	<i>Mertle McDowell</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		21							
			<i>Mary Alexander</i>	1	2	3	4																													12							
			<i>Grace Bush</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18															18							
			<i>Louisa Thompson</i>	1	2	3		4	5	6	7																									14							
			<i>Alice Thompson</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		20							
			<i>Ella Foster</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		20							
			<i>Carrie Bradford</i>					1	2	3																										10							
			<i>Grace Wilson</i>																												1	2	3	4	5	10							
			<i>Lily Dodson</i>																												1	2	3	4	5	10							
		PI.	<i>Esther Green</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6																											6							
			<i>Edith Thompson</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6																						1	2	3	4	5	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	17
DAILY ATTENDANCE.				17	17	17	14	18	18	16	16	16	14	20	21	21	22	21	21	23	24	21	17	19	20												396						

1893

Education played a leading role in Black Canadian communities' efforts to be a productive part of society in Upper Canada and Ontario. From the earliest days, Black parents insisted that their children had the same right to an education as any other member of the population.

Black teachers played an important role in the children's education, training teachers and serving in the sometimes small and poorly equipped schools. The records of school attendance maintained by these teachers represent an important source of information about the youngest members of Black communities in Ontario.

ca. 1890s



In 1846, racism meant that Black students were prohibited from attending the public school in Amherstburg. *The Common Schools Act* (1850) legalized this segregation of schools in Ontario, so that Black parents across the province were forced to open separate schools for their children — including the King Street School, in 1851.

By the 1890s, when this photograph was taken, the King Street School was led by John H. Alexander, whose father had fled enslavement in Kentucky and settled in Anderdon, Ontario. Alexander built his reputation as a teacher and made the King Street School a place where students of all races were welcome to attend, which explains why this photograph shows a multiracial class of students at a time when Ontario's classrooms were still segregated. Alexander remained the principal of the King Street School for 30 years, from 1879 to 1909. Ontario's last segregated school closed in 1966.

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**Students of King Street School in Amherstburg, Ontario with  
their teacher, J. H. Alexander, [ca. 1890s], I0027815**

ca. 1850



**N**asa McCurdy Jr. (1814-1886), was a carpenter and conductor for the Underground Railroad freedom movement. Born to formerly enslaved parents in Pennsylvania in 1816, Nasa McCurdy Jr. married Permelia Bailey and settled in Zanesville, Ohio. According to family history, he operated as a conductor for the Underground Railroad from Ohio and made several trips to Amherstburg, Ontario, to help refugees of slavery flee the United States and settle in Canada. By 1856, the McCurdys and their children had emigrated to Ontario and settled in Amherstburg. McCurdy worked as a carpenter and helped establish the Nazrey American Methodist Episcopal Church — a destination on the Underground Railroad and a hub for Amherstburg's Black community.



“Tintypes” were photographs developed onto thin sheets of steel, rather than tin, as the name would suggest. Less expensive than other photo formats, tintypes were durable and easy to transport or send through the mail, enabling many individuals and families from more diverse class, racial, and geographic backgrounds to purchase and share portraits of themselves. The clothing, accessories, postures, and expressions found in these images show Black people building and shaping their identities using the language of portraiture. These tintypes illustrate individuals within 19<sup>th</sup>-century Black communities in Ontario using photography to declare and communicate their presence.

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Clockwise from left: Unidentified woman, [ca. 1890], I0024787; Unidentified woman, [ca. 1890], I0024789; Unidentified child, [ca. 1875], I0028820; Unidentified Man, Woman and Child, [ca. 1875], I0024785; Unidentified man, [ca. 1875], I0024805

1897



**A**lbert Jackson is thought to have been the first Black letter carrier in Canada. Jackson was born into enslavement in the United States and escaped to St. Catharines, Ontario with his mother and siblings when he was a toddler in 1858. In 1882, Jackson was hired as a letter carrier in Toronto, but his racist co-workers refused to train him on the job. The Black community in Toronto acted in support of Jackson, meeting with Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald — then facing an election and courting Black voters — to have Jackson reinstated. Jackson returned to his post days later and served as a letter carrier for almost 36 years. Jackson married Henrietta Jones in March 1885 and the couple had four sons: Alfred, Richard, Harold, and Bruce.

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Jackson family [Albert and Henrietta with their sons Alfred, Bruce, Richard, and Harold], 1897, I0052485

1907



**W**illiam Peyton Hubbard was a baker, inventor, coachman, and politician. Hubbard's parents had relocated to Toronto in 1840 after being freed from enslavement in Virginia. As a young man, William worked as a baker, specializing in cake making, and invented the Hubbard Portable Oven. At some point in the 1860s or 1870s, Hubbard was hired as a driver by newspaperman and politician George Brown. As his friendship with Brown grew, Hubbard was inspired by Brown to seek elected office.

Hubbard was elected to City Council in 1894 and served for a total of 15 years, frequently as Senior Controller and periodically as acting Mayor. He championed minority rights, pushing to fight officials' corruption, lobbying for continued municipal control of the city's water supply and transportation systems, and helping people living in poverty.

ca. 1910



After they built their homes, newly-established Black communities in Ontario constructed churches — many of which are still in use today. Churches formed the heart of the community, serving many purposes from spiritual spaces to debating forums. Often these structures housed schools.

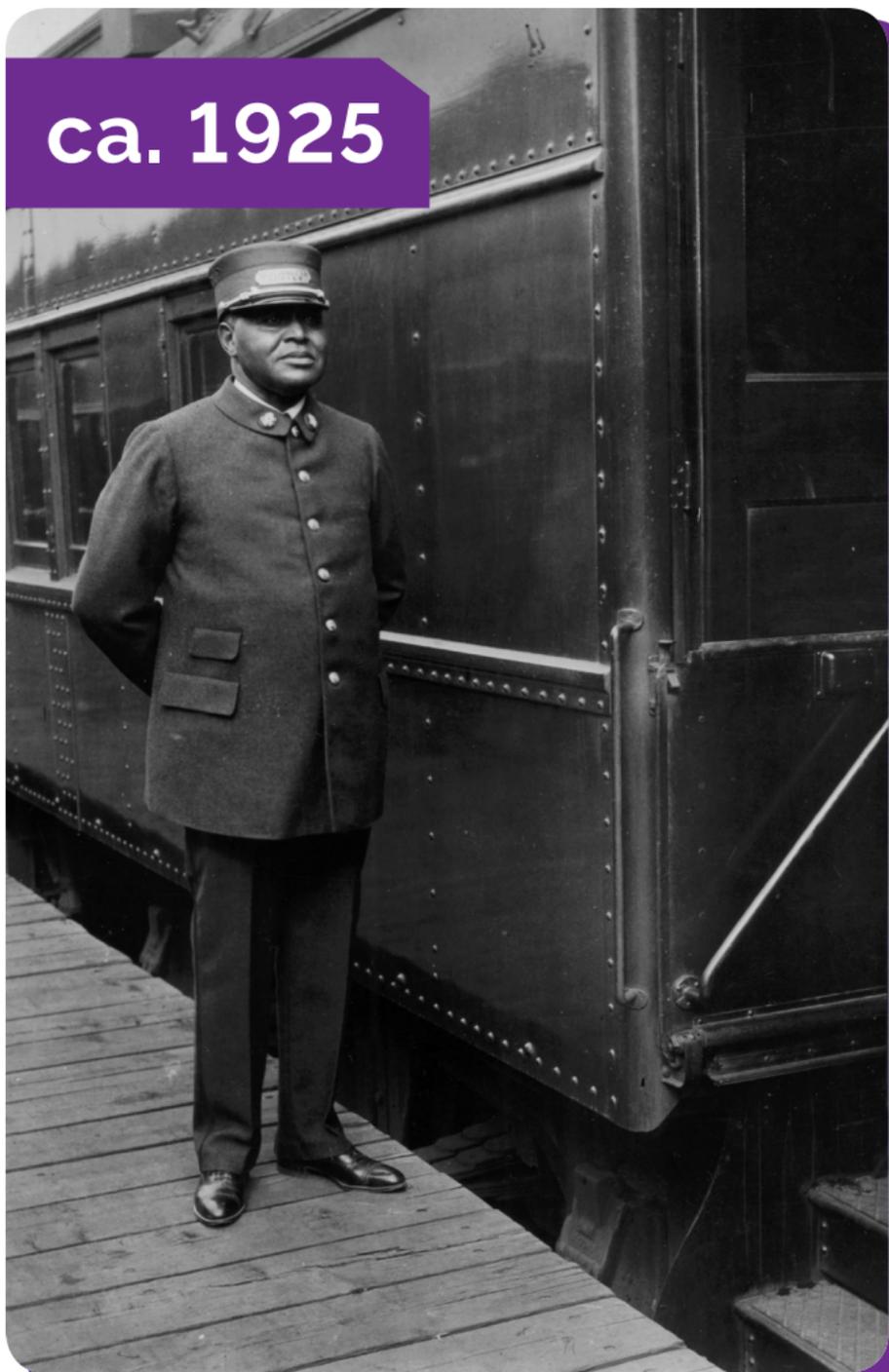
No matter where they settled, for many newly arrived refugees of slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, freedom meant building a home for one's family, a church for the community, and a school for the development of future generations.

1915



Milton Augustus Adams was a cook, soldier, and metalworker born in Amherstburg, Ontario in 1893. One of eleven siblings, Milton had seven sisters and three brothers. According to local newspapers, Adams cooked alongside his father, William Adams, who had worked on ships throughout the Great Lakes, at local hotels, and at Boblo Island Amusement Park. Milton enlisted as a Private in the 1<sup>st</sup> Depot Battalion of the Western Ontario Regiment, Canadian Infantry in February 1918. Racism made enlistment difficult for Black Canadian men who wanted to enlist in the early years of the First World War. After years of work by Black communities, Black soldiers were gradually accepted in a limited number of regiments. This photograph of Adams was taken while he was in England, awaiting deployment. By October 1918, Adams was in Le Havre, France, where he witnessed the Armistice of November 11 and the end of the First World War. In March 1919, he was briefly hospitalized with influenza as the Spanish Flu pandemic continued to circulate worldwide. He returned to Canada via Liverpool in May 1919. That same year he married Anna Washington in Detroit and worked as a metalworker. Milton and Anna later relocated to Windsor and had two daughters: Fern Marie and Aline.

ca. 1925



Employment as a railway porter was one of the few jobs open to Black men in Canada in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During a period when most people traveled long distances by rail in Canada, they earned low wages, worked under discriminatory conditions, regularly dealt with racism from white passengers, and were often the sole breadwinners supporting their immediate and extended families.

Unjust treatment inspired porters to fight for racial equity and social justice. Through the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) in 1925 and under the leadership of union activist Stanley Grizzle, these men fought anti-Black racism in the workplace and championed the cause of fair employment.

ca. 1900



Barbershops like this one in Essex County circa 1900, offer an important glimpse into Black entrepreneurship and community life in Ontario. Many of the first barbershops in Canada were started by Black men who had escaped slavery in the US, having been trained in the profession by providing shaves and haircuts to their white "owners." With racism excluding these men from other skilled trades, barbering offered them the opportunity to run their own business and, through apprenticeships, support employment opportunities for other Black men in their communities. As early as the 1860s, almost every African Canadian community had a barbershop. At first, affluent white men were the main customers of these early Black-owned businesses, until increasing racism made segregated barbershops serving Black clients the norm by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These businesses provided (and continue to provide) essential spaces for Black community members to gather, connect, and celebrate their identities.

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**Photograph of two barbers in their shop, Essex County, Ontario, [ca. 1900]**

**Reference Code: F 2076-16, I0015263**