

## NIAGARA'S FREEDOM TRAIL SITES AND EXHIBITS

### FORT ERIE

#### **The Crossing** - Niagara River by Historic Fort Erie

A Niagara's Freedom Trail Plaque describes the ferry system which crossed into Canada. An illustration shows a ferry, circa 1895, which aided many blacks in their escape to freedom near here.

#### **Little Africa** - Fort Erie - marked by a Niagara Freedom Trail plaque

A community of blacks established in the 1840s, who made their living supplying lumber to local railroads and ship building firms. A Niagara's Freedom Trail plaque now marks this site.

#### **Bertie Hall** - 657 Niagara Parkway (905) 871-5833

This stately home was reportedly used as a "safe house" for freedom seekers once they crossed the Niagara River. (It was still necessary to take shelter this close to the U.S. border) A Niagara's Freedom Trail plaque on the grounds details the history of the building which today houses the Mildred M. Mahoney Silver Jubilee Dolls' House Gallery.

### NIAGARA FALLS

#### **Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel British Methodist Episcopal Church & Norval Johnson Heritage Library National Historic Site** - 5674 Peer St (905) 358-9957

The chapel was built in 1836 and has served the community continuously since then. The Chapel was named for R. Nathaniel Dett Mus.D, a renowned musician and composer and former member. In July 2000 the chapel was declared a National Historic Site.

#### **Lundy's Lane Historical Museum** - 5810 Ferry Street

Niagara Falls (905) 358-5082

Site of the Canadian Black History Exhibit "Now Let Me Fly".

### QUEENSTON NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

#### **Coloured Corps Plaque** - Queenston Heights Park

An Ontario Heritage Foundation plaque explains the role of the first Coloured Corps' in the formative years of the province.

#### **Negro Burial Ground** - 494 Mississauga Street

A provincial, historical plaque marks the site of a former Baptist Church and burial ground.

#### **Parliament Oak School** - 325 King Street

In 1793 an anti-slavery act passed by the first Parliament of Upper Canada was signed into law in Niagara-on-the-Lake. A sculpture on the wall of a school now located at the site symbolizes the event. There is also a statuery on the grounds, a tribute to Harriet Tubman famous Underground Railroad conductor.

#### **The William Stewart Homestead** -507 Butler Street

(905) 468-0225

Built in 1835, the William Stewart Homestead has been designated as a heritage building by the Ontario Heritage Foundation. It remains as one of the few surviving examples of houses built by and for Niagara's early black settlers.

### ST. CATHARINES

#### **Welland Canals Centre & St. Catharines Museum, Lock 3, Welland Canal** - (905) 984-8880

Explore the history of the Underground Railroad and the African-Canadian community in St. Catharines. Learn about people such as Harriet Tubman, the "Coloured Corps", and others who helped shape our community.

#### **Anthony Burns Grave Site & Victoria Lawn Cemetery**

- Queenston Street, west of Homer Bridge

A provincial historical plaque honours the memory and grave site of Rev. Anthony Burns, the last person tried under the Fugitive Slave Act in Massachusetts. A verdict which returned him to slavery incited street riots. Boston abolitionists bought his freedom and educated him before he settled in St. Catharines.

#### **Richard Pierpoint Plaque** - Oakdale Avenue behind St. Catharines General Hospital

This Ontario Heritage Foundation Plaque commemorates Richard Pierpoint, a freedom seeker who received a land grant in St. Catharines, in recognition of his military service to the Crown during the American Revolutionary War.

#### **B.M.E Church, Salem Chapel** - 92 Geneva St (905) 682-0993

Founded in 1855, the Chapel was built by slaves seeking freedom in Canada. The Church was also attended by Harriet Tubman, the renowned conductor on the Underground Railroad. The Church was designated a National Historic site in 2000.

### ANCASTER

#### **Griffin House** - 733 Mineral Springs Rd, Ancaster

This four-room frame house was inhabited by Enefers Griffin who was one of the early refugee slaves to find shelter in Upper Canada.

### What was the Underground Railroad?

Neither a railroad nor underground, it was a network of people who hid and guided freedom seekers as they followed the North Star to Canada - to freedom.

Millions of black Africans were shipped as slaves to the United States and the Caribbean in terribly overcrowded boats. Over time, 40,000 of these people fled to Canada; after the civil war half of them returned to the south with the hope of being re-united with family and friends.

### Niagara's Rich History

Following the American Revolution, many British Loyalists left the United States and moved to Upper Canada; many brought slaves with them.

On May 21, 1793, Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe introduced a bill which prevented the introduction of further slavery into Upper Canada.

From the early 1820's those escaping slavery in the United States followed the North Star to find shelter behind Upper Canada's humanitarian policies. Before long the "Underground Railroad" brought the first freedom seekers to Upper Canada and as a result, a substantial population of blacks established itself in the Niagara Region.

This brochure has been produced by Tourism Niagara, a division of Niagara Economic Development Corporation, with funding support from the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Immigration, City of St. Catharines Economic Development and Tourism Services Department and Central Ontario Network for Black History. For more information please contact Tourism Niagara, 2201 St. David's Road, West, P.O. Box 1042, Thorold, ON L2V 4T7, 1-800-263-2988 or visit our Website at [www.tourismniagara.com](http://www.tourismniagara.com)

## Follow the North Star

The guiding light of the  
Underground Railroad





Ancaster, Griffin House  
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← ANCASTER

LAKE ONTARIO

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE ○ 8



The William Stewart Homestead  
7



Parliament Oak School  
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○ ST. CATHARINES

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Congregation of the B.M.E. Church  
St. Catharines, circa 1920's

Courtesy of the St. Catharines Museum  
Marjorie Lawson Collection



Niagara Falls, B.M.E. Church  
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○ NIAGARA FALLS



Lundy's Lane  
Historical Museum  
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# Niagara's Freedom Trail

USA

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Niagara's Freedom Trail Plaque  
"Bertie Hall"  
1

2

○ FORT ERIE

○ BUFFALO



Niagara's Freedom Trail Plaque  
"The Crossing"

CANADA

LAKE ERIE



Harriet Tubman

Courtesy of the St. Catharines Museum N 8969  
from Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman by  
Sarah H. Bradford 1869

## Suggested Tour Itinerary

1. "The Crossing" on the Niagara River Parkway by Historic Fort Erie - Niagara Freedom Trail plaque
2. Bertie Hall - 657 Niagara Parkway, Fort Erie
3. Little Africa/Miller's Bay, Fort Erie - marked by a Niagara Freedom Trail plaque
4. Lundy's Lane Historical Museum - 5810 Ferry Street, Niagara Falls
5. B.M.E. Church, R. Nathaniel Dett Memorial Chapel - 5674 Peer St., Niagara Falls
6. Negro Burial Ground - Mississauga St., Niagara-on-the-Lake
7. Parliament Oak School - 325 King St., Niagara-on-the-Lake
8. Stewart Cottage - 507 Butler St., Niagara-on-the-Lake
9. Anthony Burns Grave Site and Victoria Lawn Cemetery, Queenston St., St. Catharines
10. Richard Pierpoint Plaque - Oakdale Ave., St. Catharines
11. BME Church Salem Chapel & Harriet Tubman - 92 Geneva St. St. Catharines
12. Welland Canals Centre & St. Catharines Museum, Lock 3, Welland Canal
13. Griffin House 733 Mineral Springs Rd, Ancaster

More specific locations and more information on these and other Niagara black heritage sites is given on the overleaf

### ORDER NOW - "Niagara's Freedom Trail"!

This dynamic 72 page book is a guide to African-Canadian history in the Niagara Peninsula. The book highlights Niagara's "Underground Railroad" and can be used as a guidebook for historical excursions.

**ONLY \$9.95!** PLUS TAXES, SHIPPING AND HANDLING

To order your copy of "Niagara's Freedom Trail" please call 1.800.263.2988