

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY IN CHATHAM-KENT

THE CHATHAM COLOURED

ALL-STARS



A group of all-Black men began playing baseball together in 1932 at Stirling Park in the east-side of the city of Chatham. At this time the local baseball leagues across the province and nation were mainly segregated. This meant the team was not allowed to play against the white teams in the city. That was, until a local business man offered his help and signed the team up to join the city league.

By 1934, their second year in the league, the team won the provincial championship. Making them the first all-Black team to win the OBAA title.

The Chatham Coloured All-Stars were awarded the Order of Sport in 2022 when they were inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, the highest sporting honour in our nation.



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MARY ANN SHADD



Born in 1823, Mary Ann Shadd Cary was one of A.D. Shadd's daughters and became the first Black female newspaper editor and publisher in North America. She edited the Provincial Freeman from 1853-1857, the main voice for Canada's Black communities and a forum for abolition strategies.

During the Civil War, she recruited Black volunteers into the Union Army in Indiana.

At age 60 she became the second Black woman to earn her law degree in the U.S. She also became the first Black woman to cast a vote in a national election.

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1861 BUXTON SCHOOLHOUSE



Built in 1861 by the early settlers, S.S. #13 Raleigh represents the heart and soul of the Elgin Settlement.

The Schoolhouse, in its original location, was just one of three schools built in the Buxton settlement. The school provided education to the community up until 1968.

This schoolhouse is the only remaining school in Canada built by formerly enslaved settlers.



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DOCTOR ANDERSON RUFFIN ABBOTT



Anderson Ruffin Abbott was born in Toronto in 1837. He was educated at the Mission School in the Buxton Settlement. Abbott went on to study medicine at the University of Toronto where he received his medical license in 1861, becoming the first Black Canadian doctor.

Dr. Abbott became one of eight Black surgeons to serve in the Union Army during the American Civil War and served with distinction as the surgeon-in-chief at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C. He was also the first African Canadian coroner in Kent County (present day Chatham-Kent).



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CAMPBELL FAMILY ORCHESTRA



The early Black population of Chatham-Kent consisted of various business people, including blacksmiths, farmers, barbers, grocers, restaurant owners and entertainers.

The Campbell Orchestra, from Dresden, supplemented their farm income by operating a dance hall, entertaining passengers on steamboat trips along the Sydenham River, and performing at private parties.

Pictured here with a guitar, banjo and mandolin is John Campbell, born in 1873 in Camden Township. His father Charles escaped to the Dresden area from Kentucky. John would later move to Detroit where he worked as a conductor.

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REVEREND JENNIE JOHNSON



Jennie Johnson, born in 1868 just outside of Dresden, was the first Canadian-born ordained female minister to serve in Canada. At the age of 16 she was baptized in the Sydenham River at Dresden.

She was unable to find work in Africa at a time when women were not supported in the mission field so she decided to focus her service in support of the Baptist congregations in Ontario. Reverend Johnson was educated in the United States and preached on both sides of the border.

Johnson's life and accomplishments are representative of the struggle for gender and racial equality that African-Canadians faced in the years following the Civil War.



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HUGH BURNETT AND THE NATIONAL UNITY ASSOCIATION



Hugh R. Burnett was born in Dresden in 1918. Burnett experienced racial discrimination when he was refused service by a white restaurant owner, prompting him to fight for social reform.

Under his leadership, the National Unity Association (NUA) a coalition of Black members from Chatham, North Buxton and Dresden waged a campaign for racial equality and social justice.

Their efforts led to the passage of Ontario's Fair Employment Practices Act (1951) and Fair Accommodation Practices Act (1954) and laid the groundwork for subsequent human rights legislation in Ontario and across Canada.



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DOCTOR SOPHIA JONES



Sophia Jones was born in Chatham Ontario to a formerly enslaved father, James Monroe Jones, whose own father purchased their family's freedom.

Sophia would attend the University of Toronto to get her nursing degree and when finished she desired to get her medical degree. But at that time Canada did not allow women into their medical programs. She was accepted to the University of Michigan where she obtained her degree, graduating as the first Black female from their program.

One of her greatest accomplishments was starting the first nurses training school at Spelman College in Atlanta where she was the school's first Black faculty member.



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HAROLD LEE JACKSON



Harold Jackson was the first Black licensed radio operator in Canada. He taught radiotechnology at the Woodstock Industrial Institute on King Street East in Chatham. In his spare time one of his favourite hobbies was to send radio signals across North America. He was known to send them further than almost all ham radio operators in the area, at the time.

Harold Jackson became friends with Jack Beardall, and together they created Chatham's first radio station. "Coming From Chatham Ontario" or as we know it, CFCO. It is still on the airwaves across Chatham-Kent today.