

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## KING HERITAGE & CULTURAL CENTRE

FEBRUARY 1, 2021



### WHY BLACK HISTORY MONTH?

The origins of Black History Month stem back to 1926 when African American historian, Carter G. Woodson proposed "Negro History Week" to celebrate the accomplishments of African Americans. A week in February was chosen because it corresponded with both the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and famous abolitionist, Frederick Douglass.

In the 1970s black rights advocates expanded the week to a month, and changed the name to "Black History Month." The government of Canada first recognized Black History Month in 1995 after a motion introduced by the first black woman elected to the Canadian House of Commons, the Honourable Jean Augustine.

*Image: The Honourable Jean Augustine, jeanaugustine.ca*



### BLACK HISTORY IN KING TOWNSHIP

Black history has a long legacy in King Township. As early as 1836 black Canadians have called King home. The effect these early black settlers have had on our community continues to this day. They have been labourers, post masters, teachers and homemakers.

Learn more about black history in Canada and King Township:

- From the KHCC:
  - **Walter Rolling Online**, [kinglibrary.ca](http://kinglibrary.ca)
  - **Railroad to Freedom**, launching on February 8 as part of a new online exhibit, *Stories of King*, hosted on [treasured.ca](http://treasured.ca)
- From other sources:
  - **Ontario Black History Society**
  - **Archives of Ontario**  
[http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/black\\_history.aspx](http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/access/black_history.aspx)

*Image: Nellie Barnhart Smith, one of King Township's earliest black settlers, in front of her home in Laskay, c. 1900.*

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FEBRUARY 8, 2021



### EARLY BLACK SETTLERS OF KING TOWNSHIP

Staff and volunteers at the King Heritage & Cultural Centre have begun to research some of the early Black families in King. If you recognize a name from your family, contact us at [kingmuseum@king.ca](mailto:kingmuseum@king.ca) and we will be happy to share our research with you:

- Rolling family
  - Walter Rolling
  - Benjamin Rolling Jr.
  - Benjamin Rolling Sr.
- Barnhart (or Barnhard) family
  - Richard Barnhart
  - Charlotte Barnhart
  - Ellen Barnhart Smith
- Cox family
- Jackson family

*Image: Walter Rolling on Walter Rolling Day, June 19, 1937*

Colored Persons, Mulatto or Indian.	RESIDENTS.				Members of Family		Deaf and Dumb.	Blind.	Lunatics or Idiots.
	Members of Family.		Not Members.		Absent.				
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.			
18	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22

### FINDING BLACK HISTORY IN THE CENSUS RECORDS

Due to the horrors of the slave trade, early Black history in Canada can be difficult to trace. However, because slavery was abolished in Canada in 1833, we are able to use the Canadian Census records to start our research. Records are available online for 1851 to 1921.

Please note that many of the terms used to refer to people of colour historically are considered derogatory today. Historical census records had a column for identifying people of colour (white was considered the default). The wording varies from year to year. See the above image from the 1861 Canadian Census that asked if the resident was "Colored Persons, Mulatto or Indian."

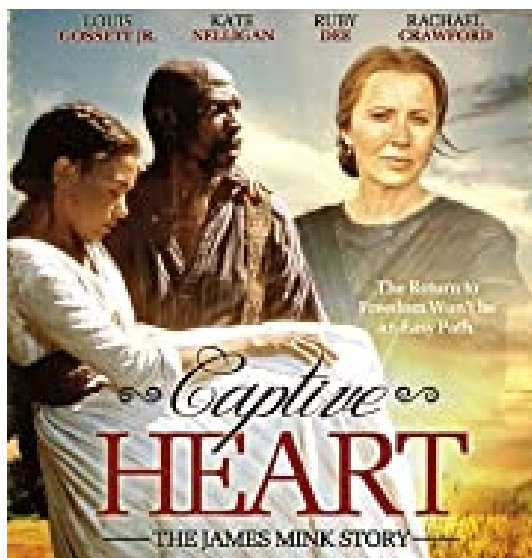
Want to learn more about tracking your family tree? Check out our video *How to Grow Your Family Tree*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7xLKO Bhdyo&t=1s>

*Image: 1861 Canadian Census*

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FEBRUARY 15, 2021



### WATCH & READ TO LEARN MORE:

While movies and novels are not always historically accurate, they are still a great way to get people interested in a topic. Here are a few books and movies on Black history you might enjoy this month:

- *Captive Heart: The James Mink Story* - a movie about Toronto's first black millionaire
- *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe - a novel written during the American Civil War. Thought to be based on Josiah Henson, an escaped slave who came to Canada via the Underground Railway
- *Ice Breakers* by Sandamini Rankaduwa - a short documentary on the history of Black hockey players in Canada. From the National Film Board of Canada

Image: *Captive Heart: The James Mink Story*, from [IMDB.com](https://www.imdb.com)



### SPARKING CHANGE: CHLOE COOLEY

Did you know that the first piece of anti-slavery legislation passed in the British Empire was right here in Ontario? It was put forth in 1793 by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe and was inspired by a young woman named Chloe Cooley.

Cooley was a Black woman who was held as a slave in Queenston, Upper Canada by Adam Vrooman, a loyalist who had come to Canada after the American Revolution. In March 1793 Vrooman arranged to sell Cooley to an American across the Niagara River. Cooley refused to be sold and would not co-operate. In order to make her comply, Vrooman and two other men beat her, tied her up and forced her into a boat to take her across the river. As they did this Cooley struggled and screamed so loudly many passersby witness the incident in disgust.

Unfortunately, Cooley was taken across the river and her fate remains unknown. However, when Simcoe heard the story he was outraged. It led him to write the *Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada*.



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FEBRUARY 22, 2021



### BHM 2021

THIS YEAR'S THEME, *THE FUTURE IS NOW*, IS A CALL TO ACTION FOR US ALL TO BUILD ON THE LEGACY OF THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE US, AND TO RECOGNIZE THE TRANSFORMATIVE WORK THAT BLACK CANADIANS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES ARE DOING NOW. IT REMINDS US TO CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO COMBAT SYSTEMIC RACISM IN ALL OF ITS FORMS TO BUILD LASTING EQUITY THAT IS INFORMED BY BLACK LIVED EXPERIENCES.

MINISTER CHAGGER,  
CANADIAN HERITAGE



### UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

This image from the collection at the King Heritage & Cultural Centre was taken locally, reportedly on a Kinghorn farm, but the people are unidentified. When first used for an exhibit in our schoolhouse gallery, the Black family was not noticed. It was not until staff used an app to colourize old photos, that their identities came to light.

For staff at the KHCC, this image is a call to action. It represents how people of colour can, not only be deliberately left out, but also, slip through the cracks of history. This year, staff will concentrate on identifying histories in King that may have been overlooked.

### CONFRONTING RACISM IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Museum collections, including that of the KHCC, contain objects or images that are racist and hurtful - but may not have been considered so in the past. The challenge is to discuss the issue without highlighting the inherent racism. Museums must reach out to the Black Community for expertise on how to exhibit these objects with empathy.