

State University of New York College at Buffalo - Buffalo State University

## Digital Commons at Buffalo State

---

Underground Railroad Research

Buffalo Quarters Historical Society Papers |  
Batchelor, Lillion

---

1993

## The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre

The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/ur-research>

---

### Recommended Citation

"The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre." Batchelor, Lillion | Buffalo Quarters Historical Society Papers. Digital Collections. Monroe Fordham Regional History Center, Archives & Special Collections Department, E. H. Butler Library, SUNY Buffalo State.  
<https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/ur-research/13>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Buffalo Quarters Historical Society Papers | Batchelor, Lillion at Digital Commons at Buffalo State. It has been accepted for inclusion in Underground Railroad Research by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Buffalo State. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@buffalostate.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@buffalostate.edu).

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 sym-  
bols 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  
OUTSTRETCHED 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 some-  
thing 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 pro-  
blems could be addressed more effective-  
ly 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 con-  
ducted to gather information and to  
establish contacts so that appropriate  
sources of resources could be approach-  
ed 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 civiliza-  
tions in Africa, the period of slavery,  
followed by freedom and development in  
the Western Hemisphere have been in-  
corporated 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 believ-  
ing 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 Sun-  
day, September 20, 1981.

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

Dedicated members of the communi-  
ty 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 \_\_\_\_\_