

Vol. 2– February 2018

HEIRS

Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society

newsletter



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Harrow & Colchester South
Community Centre (Arena Bldg.)



Next meeting...

Ohhh Canada... Post-Confederation Stories

Newsletter News!

Welcome to the February newsletter.

Looks like we've weathered the Arctic Vortex of December / January and are back to a regular Canadian winter. I imagine that our ancestors looked forward to Spring like we do, as they did their morning chores without running water, with no ability to simply flip the switch on a gas fireplace or had only to ensure the furnace filter was changed once in a while as the "big chore" to complete over the weekend.

Yes... we have it pretty good by comparison. So if you plan to show your pioneer stock and venture out in the cold this month, why not make our February meeting a go-to destination? We promise that we have indoor plumbing... **See you there?**

Next Meeting

When: Thursday, February 22, 6:30 -7PM, followed by Seamus Gunn talk

Where: Harrow-Colchester Arena Community Meeting Room

Ohhh Canada...

After the rousing success of the October 26 HEIRS evening meeting which featured Doug Robinson (aka Seamus Gunn), who spoke about the Fathers of Confederation, the Essex Heritage Committee has again arranged for Seamus to speak as part of the HEIRS February meeting.

HEIRS will have a short meeting from 6:30 to 7 PM, at which time the floor will be turned over to our guest, to speak about the tumultuous events which followed Confederation. These included a political assassination, rebellions in the West, new provinces joining the Dominion, the development of a national railway system coast to coast, a gold rush westward and a foreign war.

Seamus Gunn will bring these events to life in his unique style, always both entertaining and educational.

Refreshments will be provided and all are most welcome to join us for a great evening.

HEIRS is delighted to team up with the Essex Heritage Committee for this event, and it is hoped that there will be many more collaborations in the future.

As they say...

"We are all on the same team here."



HEIRS met January 25th to hear local author Milo Johnson present the story of blacks in Canada's military, from 1776 through WW 2.

Milo blended the facts of the discrimination they faced in each stage, & how they contributed in spite of roadblocks by the military commanders & politics of the day.

Slavery's role as a cause of the American Civil War, with Canada as a safe haven was explored. In 1812 & 1837 blacks showed their willingness to fight for their beliefs, but were routinely turned away or forced to operate as separate units, always with white commanders. Both world wars included blacks, but usually as construction & support workers. Gradually they blended with white troops, after units like the Tuskegee Airmen proved their value.


Milo pointed out individual blacks, who emerged as heroes in each conflict, and also outlined how large a percentage of blacks enlisted, and were injured or killed. **They struggled for acceptance and equality, and came with a high price. An appreciative audience enjoyed the presentation greatly.**



THE AMHERSTBURG FREEDOM MUSEUM
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE ARTISTS OF COLOUR PRESENT

"Journeys"

FEBRUARY 2 — APRIL 1, 2018
EXHIBIT OPENING
FEBRUARY 2, 2018 from 7-9PM
AMHERSTBURG FREEDOM
MUSEUM

 /AmherstburgFreedom
Amherstburgfreedom.org
519-736-5433

The Amherstburg Freedom Festival and the Artists of Colour are opening their exhibit called "Journeys"

Friday, February 2nd at 7 PM.

It features works of art by 14 local artists. The opening reception includes music and light refreshments, and is free to all, (though donations are appreciated).

The exhibit runs until April 1st, 2018.

For more information...

Visit: amherstburgfreedom.com

Phone: 519-736-5433

Visit the Artists of Colour website for even more details.

*Maidstone and Area Historical Society
presents*

Quill Work Exhibit

by the late Yvonne Morrisseau

February 10th through April 2018

Please visit our website for hours of operation

www.maidstonemuseum.com

*We welcome schools & organizations to register
their groups for a private showing of this beautiful & amazing
art form depicting Native Culture.*

***To register, email or call Victoria at
proudacres@gmail.com or call 519 819-5318.***



The following information reached HEIRS after one of our newsletters was assembled, and the event itself was then overlooked. Belatedly, here are the details...

Last October 14th, the Canadian government recognized the national historic importance of the First Baptist Church in Amherstburg. A special ceremony was held and a plaque placed, designating the site as “a principal underground railroad-related black church in Upper Canada”.

Built in 1849, under the leadership of Pastor Anthony Binga, Sr., it offered sanctuary to many Afro-Americans fleeing slavery. Since then, it has played an important role in the development of black communities and black culture in Ontario.



Pictured from Left to Right— Eric Nielson (National Historic Sites Manager for Parks Canada's Southwestern Ontario), AFM Board Member Dr. Barbara Hughes Smith, Claudia Rae White, MK Whelan and Julie Dompierre a representative from Parks Canada.

Upcoming Events

February 21st

The Essex Heritage Committee has also arranged for HEIRS member Bill Brundage to present the story of the rescue of the Bois Blanc (Boblo Island) blockhouse, built in 1839, but falling into oblivion by 2011.

At the Essex Train Station just off Talbot Street in Essex, Bill will begin at 1 PM on with his video presentation. Learn what he went through in order to gather support & volunteer help, and the steps taken to dismantle, repair and replace parts, to then rebuild it to what it was over 150 years ago.

*The drive and dedication of just one person can make a difference, and Bill Brundage was the right person at the right place in time. **All are invited to come out, enjoy the refreshments and hear this unique story of our own Essex County history.***

February 24

*A pasta dinner fund-raiser will be held for the Maidstone Museum, held at the Essex Legion on Talbot Street North. Music provided by 'Close Enough from 5-6:30, followed by dinner at 6:30PM. A live auction follows, as well as door prizes given out. For information or tickets, call Victoria at 519-819-5318. **A great opportunity to combine this with the following event into one, fun-filled day!***

February 24 & 25

*The Leamington Mersea Historical Society will again be part of the Essex Train Show, to be held at the Essex Public School at 71 Brien Avenue East, on both Saturday and Sunday. The show runs from 9 AM to 4 PM, and offers a display of all things train-related, as well as historical photos of Leamington, and the MCR train station, with a multitude of books and articles for sale. **Anyone with an interest in “the good old days” will enjoy this show.***

New Canaan: Freedom-Land

The Blacks of Colchester Township

- by Edward Milo Johnson

The latest addition to the HEIRS library is a book written by HEIRS member Milo Johnson.

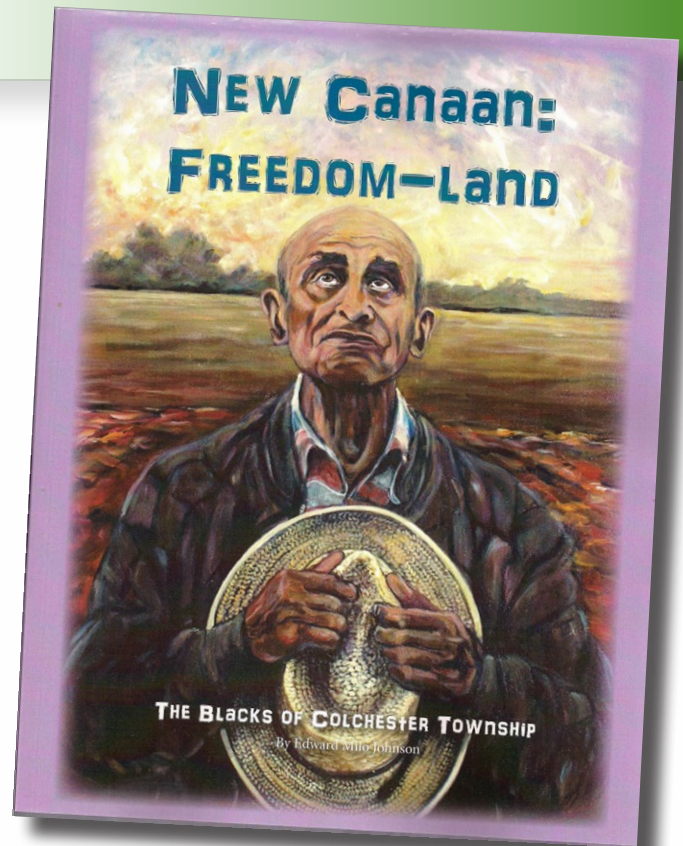
I always enjoy sharing stories & information that history has overlooked, forgotten about or just ignored, & this book certainly addresses one of these oversights. It is a soft cover edition, 8-1/2 x 11 inches, & runs 340 pages. It is, however, especially designed for older eyes, as lines are spaced well, letters are of good size, not crowded or difficult to read. It includes a good index of names as well.

Milo sets out to tell the factual story of the Blacks of Essex County, beginning with those given land following the American Revolution, and others who fled slavery seeking freedom in British territory.

Milo weaves the story to show the interactions between the whites & blacks, not always complimentary to the white settlers. As more slaves fled north, slave catchers entered the Essex County scene. We are told of the inhumane treatment of blacks & laws passed to enforce servitude.

Josiah Henson of Uncle Tom's Cabin fame is discussed in detail, as are other local families whose descendants are still here today. Maps show where various long-gone settlements were, & he tells of the involvement of black settlers in communities like Pot Lake, Harrow, Hopetown & Colchester.

An easy read, full of information, it clarifies the issues dividing the races at that time. It can easily be handled in small "sittings" as none of the chapters individually are long or complex.



The role of churches as the center of a community is brought out, as faith in God aided, as it always has, patience & strength to deal with injustice & hard lives. As early as 1820, the African First Baptist Church was established in Colchester, & others followed. They became the focus of social events, religious services, schools & cultural development.

Photos are sprinkled throughout, as are place maps & visual charts, making this the story of real people in our own local history. The focus is usually on the relationships between the families struggling to set down roots, & neighbours who, at least sometimes, were of the "not in my back yard" mentality.

Though not a textbook in any sense of the word, it definitely could be used as one, as it provides an educated look at attitudes & why they developed as they did. The latter part of the book discusses the genealogy of many of the black families of Essex County & outlines the many diverse contributions they have made to make our region better.

The Amherstburg Echo.

THE OFFICIAL PAPER OF THE COUNTY

Tue. Feb. 15

AMHERSTBURG, ONTARIO, FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 1904.

Week No. 2476

100 ACRES FOR SALE.

In full possession, Amherst Township, good crops of wheat, clover, etc. in full, some well drained. For further particulars see page 10.

FALLS BROS., Agts.
Amherstburg.

LIME FOR SALE
IN
CARLOAD LOTS.

THE SOVEREIGN BANK OF CANADA.

HEAD OFFICE, TORONTO, ONT.

SAVINGS BANK DEPARTMENT.

HARROW BRANCH. AMHERSTBURG BRANCH.
C. A. WILSON, Manager. M. J. LAKE, Manager.

PROCESSED BY AMHERSTBURG

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February 1

Richard H. Tofflemire is retiring as librarian. The new librarian is Eva Thompson. Executive: President Captain Bassett, Vice President Rev. J. E. Russ, Sec. Treas. Miss Daisy Brookland.

F. J. Clark, manager of the branch of the Dominion Cannery at Blenheim for the past 2 seasons, has accepted a similar position for the Harrow branch of Quality Cannery Ltd.

William Brookland, who went to Collingwood a few months ago to conduct a gent's furnishing store, has rented the Klie store, Darby block, and taken possession March 1. He is only one of many who are arranging for their return to the locality where the tomato and cucumber come to perfection.

February 8

Mrs. Whitson Baldwin, nee Georgia Ferriss, has died. Her line descended as follows: Thomas Ferriss, Joseph Ferriss, John Ferriss & Matthew Ferriss, her father. She was educated at the Detroit Female Seminary and taught in the Arner School in Malden.

February 15

Real estate trade: Frank Herdman traded the Gordon Her farm of 50 acres which he received in exchange for his present shop, for Silas Brush's blacksmith shop & 16 acres of land in Marshfield, receiving substantial consideration to boot. It is likely that Wright will continue to run the shop, at present occupied by Mr. Herdman.

A car of anthracite coal has no chance in Harrow. A car of 50 tonnes arrived & next morning it was cleared out in 1.75 hours, every pound of it in bags. At one time, 45 men were counted in the car, shovelling as if their lives depended on it. Most of the fuel went to the villagers.

February 22

Charles Quick recently sold his farm and bought Mrs. C. T. Arner's 16 acres, house and barn in the village.

Property is gradually increasing in value due to the demand made by local canning factories for products easy to grow & for which good prices are paid.

The Treasures of HEIRS ...

- by Ted Steele, HEIRS Director

About 18 months ago, we acquired scrapbook pages kept during the years of WW2. One page interviewed 2 of the last stagecoach drivers of Essex County, Mr. Fox and Mr. Wigle.

Part two of an abridged version of their remarkable stories follows...

Like stage coach drivers of the western United States, Mr. Fox carried a gun. However, he had no real occasion to use it. Generally speaking, people then as in all times were honest. This countryside was inhabited by industrious, hard-working people. Mr. Fox told of carrying large sums of money during his career, to and from banks off of railway lines. He never was held up, but believes he came close to it on one occasion.

Near a small settlement known as Gilgall, north of Harrow, he saw 3 rough looking customers sitting on a rail fence. **As the coach approached, they all got to their feet. One of them flagged the coach and asked for a match. Mr. Fox reached into his pocket, pulled out his gun and laid it on the stage coach seat cushion.**

Then he dove into his pocket once more, keeping his eyes peeled, and produced the desired match..... onward once more. It is possible that the men really just wanted a match, but Mr. Fox believes that he brought out the gun and the match in the proper sequence.



Ojibway Post Office

Windsor-Amherstburg stage coach in front.

In 1885, Fox's brother bought the Windsor-Amherstburg stage line from Mr. C. M. Hunt and William was switched to the new route. He travelled to Windsor from Amherstburg and returned daily for 15 years. Altogether, he drove stage coaches a total of 188,232 miles and thought that it would take a good automobile to pile up mileage like that.

When speaking about his experiences, Mr. Fox had a habit of stressing the honesty of "the good old days". There were few hitchhikers then, but occasionally coach drivers would take pity on "lowly pedestrians", who obviously were low on funds.

One day, Fox overtook a man walking. "Come on, Pat. Have a ride. You're invited." Fox knew that this man was headed for Amherstburg hoping to get work at the quarry. The man succeeded, for the quarry was turning out stone for the Sault Ste. Marie canal.

After drawing his first pay cheque, Mr. Fox recalled that the man gave him \$2. Half the amount was for the landlord of the Davenport Hotel for bed and breakfast received while on the way to Amherstburg. This magic sum released the worker's baggage. The other dollar went towards the stagecoach line, including 50 cents for recovering & delivering the baggage.

Driving a stagecoach was interesting work. As Fox described it, "I came into contact with people from all walks of life – judges, priests, ministers, labourers and politicians. It was a continual change of faces and company and I had all the latest news and carrying-ons of the day."

There were no radios in those days but Mr. Fox claimed that the stagecoach served nearly as well. People used to set their clocks by his stage, he boasted. Stage drivers carried the news of world with them to isolated parts of the county, or at least that much of it that was known.

During the Northwest Rebellion in 1885, Mr. Fox sold newspapers along the stage route. With so many Easterners on the expeditions, they were very interested in the news. People would stand at their gates, wait for the coach and grab their newspapers.

Ontario, famed for its highways now, naturally enough did not have them in the era preceding automobiles. Paved roads would have made it easier for coaches, buggies, democrats, wagons and such vehicles of the road, but would have been hard on horses' hooves.

The only pavement, even up to the last few years of stage coaches, was from Ferry

Street to Windsor Avenue and from Sandwich Street to Ouellette Avenue.

In the Spring, Sandwich Street, which the coach used, was a sea of mud from Ferry Street to Crawford Avenue, and the rest of the route was not much better.



James Drummond's Livery Stable

Travellers could rent a horse & carriage to get around the area.



James Drummond's Bus

Tommy Bailey (driver) wearing straw hat, & Thomas D. Clark, Oxley (hotel owner) (Ralph Wright Collection)

Part 3 of this story will follow in the March newsletter as we learn of blizzards, tornados & toll roads, making stagecoach travel just a bit more difficult... *but the mail must go through... and Mr. Fox got it done.*

HEIRS Resource Centre

Open Sept. - June (Dec. excepted)

Tuesday & Thursday: 10AM - 3PM

Wednesday & other appts: Call to confirm.

Newsletter

Published 9 times per year, in conjunction with General Meetings held on the 4th Thursday of the month, from September to June, (Dec. excepted). **Receive full colour newsletters by email, or a B&W printed version by regular post. Simply provide your email or street address to our office.**

Memberships

\$25 CDN/US per person or couple:

Currently May 2017 to April 2018

Send cheque to:

HEIRS PO Box 53, Harrow ON Canada N0R 1G0

Please include phone, postal address, email and the family names you are now researching.

Non-member user fee at HEIRS Research Library:
\$5 per visit (+ photocopy costs).

Kudos... to Greg Harrison at The Computer Centre in Harrow, who provides HEIRS ongoing support for all things technical to help keep our office running smoothly.

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