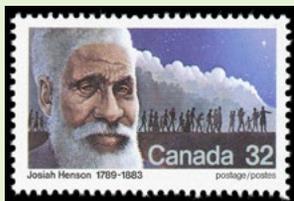


Welcome to the February 2023 newsletter!

Stamp collecting was a hobby in my youth. While decluttering recently, I found a box packed away that held my stamps, pristine as ever. I hadn't realized how much I learned about Canada's peoples, events & celebrations when adding those miniature masterpieces into my albums. Canada Post describes stamps as "Our country's stories, artfully told." Commemorative stamps issued for Black History Month began in 2009. With limited space here, the stamps & only very small snippets of their remarkable stories can be presented. Search their full stories online, maybe Chloe Cooley's, & see why they all were selected for this special series honour. - Rick McCormick

These first 4 stamps were NOT issued under Canada Post's Black History Month series, but their notable stories are unique & fascinating to read.



Josiah Henson (1789 - 1883) Issued: 1983

This is the very 1st Canadian stamp to feature a black person. Escaping US slavery in 1830, Josiah & his 2 youngest kids found freedom in Canada. An author, abolitionist & minister, he co-founded the settlement & school in Dawn (near Dresden, ON). His autobiography is thought to have inspired the title character in the Beecher novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin".



Portia White (1911-1968) "One of the greatest voices in Canadian history" **Issued: 1999**

Oscar Peterson (1925-2007) jazz pianist, 1st living Canadian featured on our stamps **Issued: 2005**

Salome Bey (1933-2020) "Canada's First Lady of the Blues" **Issued: 2022**

Images / Bios: Canada Post & other sources

Issued: 2009 Abraham Doras Shadd (1801-1882) & Rosemary Brown (1930-2003)



An Underground Railroad conductor, he was the 1st Black person to serve in Canadian public office (Council of Raleigh, ON, in 1859.

Rosemary was the 1st Black woman elected to public office as a MLA in BC in 1972 & was the 1st woman to run for the leadership of a Canadian federal political party (NDP).

Issued: 2010 William Hall V.C. (1825-1904)



William became the 1st Black person, the 1st Nova Scotian, & the 1st Canadian sailor to receive the Victoria Cross, on October 28, 1859.

Hall received the medal for his actions in the Siege of Lucknow during the Indian Rebellion 2 years earlier.

Issued: 2011 Dr. Carrie Best (1903-2001) & Ferguson (Fergie) Arthur Jenkins (1942)



Dr. Best was a Black Canadian journalist, human rights activist, author, poet, publisher & broadcaster. She is known as the 1st Black owner & publisher of Nova Scotia's 1st newspaper for Black Canadians, *The Clarion*, published 1946-1956. One of her biggest stories was Viola Desmond's racial segregation of the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.



Born in Chatham, ON, Fergie's pitching abilities led him to the Philadelphia Phillies in 1962. Throughout his career, he pitched for the Phillies, Cubs Rangers & the Red Sox. To stay in shape, he played basketball with the Harlem Globetrotters in the off season. He is the only Canadian honoured in the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY (1991).

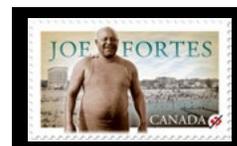
Issued: 2012 John Ware (1845-1905) & Viola Irene Desmond (1914-1965)



John was born into slavery in the US, but made his way to Calgary after the Civil War. With his great stature, abilities & sense of adventure, he had all the makings of a folk hero. Skilled with the lariat, he pioneered steer-wrestling & won his 1st competition at the Calgary Summer Fair of 1893, setting a precedent for what would become a highlight of the Calgary Stampede.

Sitting in the whites-only section of the Roseland Theatre, Viola was arrested, tried without counsel, convicted & fined \$20 for not paying an additional 1 cent tax due. She paid & when fighting in higher courts, subsequent trials focused on tax-evasion not racism. Invoking 'Royal Prerogative' she was granted a posthumous pardon, the 1st granted in Canada, & a formal apology from Nova Scotia.

Issued: 2013 Joseph (Joe) S. Fortes (1863-1922) & Oliver T. Jones (1934)



Arriving in Vancouver in 1885, Joe became the English Bay beach's 1st official lifeguard / swimming teacher 9 years later. Joe saved over 100 people from drowning; thousands attended his funeral in 1922. Citizens raised money to install a fountain in his honour at English Bay in 1927, the inscription reads "Little children love him."



Canadian jazz pianist, organist & composer, Oliver started his career as a pianist at 5 years of age. He released his first jazz album, *The Oliver-Jones Trio* in 1980. Oliver Jones has received numerous accolades including five Junos, four honorary doctorates, & the Ordre National du Québec, and an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Canada Post commemorative stamps (cont'd)

Issued: 2014 **Africville, NS & Hogan's Alley, BC**



Never receiving proper roads, health services, water, street lamps or electricity, Africville was razed in the 1960s to build a bridge, with the City of Halifax evicting residents & destroying dwellings. This community is an enduring symbol of the need for vigilance in defence of African-Canadian communities and institutions.

Hogan's Alley, the unofficial name of a four block long alleyway in Vancouver, was a vibrant destination for food, jazz, & a centre of the city's Black community. The origin of its name is obscure. It too was razed in the 1960s to make way for new development. The stamp features actual photos of area residents on a background image of the alley. Shown are Fielding Spotts, a cooper & the 1st Baptist minister in Western Canada, & Nora (Zenora) Hendrix, grandmother to rock legend, Jimi Hendrix.

Issued: 2015 **Nelson R. Mandela (1918-2013)**



Imprisoned for 27 years in South Africa, Nelson was an activist, author, and leader of the African National Congress.

He became the 1st President of South Africa elected in a free vote by persons of every race. In 2001 Nelson Mandela was the 1st living person bestowed with an honorary Canadian Citizenship.

Issued: 2016 **No. 2 Construction Battalion**



The 1st & only Black battalion in Canadian military history. Wanting to contribute in our WW1 effort despite discrimination, a special unit was created in Pictou, Nova Scotia so The Battalion served with the Canadian Forestry Corps to support front lines by building roads, bridges, defusing land mines & brought out the wounded. This Battalion was officially disbanded on September 15, 1920.

Issued: 2017 **Mathieu DaCosta (1589-1619)**



Believed to be the 1st named Black person to reach Canada. Working as a free man, he was an explorer, pioneer, translator & interpreter travelling as a member of the expedition party of French explorers Pierre Dugua & Samuel de Champlain in 1607. Mathieu spoke 5 languages: Dutch, English, French, Portuguese & pidgin Basque, the dialect Aboriginals used for trading purposes.

Issued: 2018 **Lincoln Alexander (1922-2012) & Kay Livingstone (1919-1975)**



The 1st Black Canadian elected to Parliament (1968) & the 1st Black cabinet minister (1979). In 1985, he became the 1st Black Canadian, Lieutenant-Governor (Ontario).

A broadcaster & actor, Kay founded the Canadian Negro Women's Association (1951) & National Congress of Black Women of Canada, connecting Black women across Canada.

Issued: 2019 **Albert Jackson (1857-1918)**



Believed to be the first Black letter carrier in Canada, Albert Jackson faced significant racial barriers in his workplace. Initially barred from working as a letter carrier, he won the right to do the job. Delivering mail in the Harbord Village of Toronto for 36 years, he & his family lived in the area. In 2023, a new Canada Post leading-edge, zero-carbon parcel sorting facility opens in Toronto, the Albert Jackson Processing Centre. It's intended to honour & preserve Jackson's legacy, serving as a reminder of the importance of equality and respect in the workplace.

Issued: 2020 **Colored Hockey Championship**



The 1st record of an all-Black hockey game in the Halifax area was in March 1895 between the Dartmouth Jubilees & the Halifax Stanleys. An actual league didn't really exist at first, as teams from various communities would challenge each other to meet via telegraph or adverts in local newspapers. While little known, 2 innovations came from the Black league, created almost 2 decades before the NHL: the concept of a goalie dropping down on the ice to stop the puck, and an early version of the slapshot. Stamps show the Halifax Eurekas, Champions 1904.

Issued: 2021 **Amber Valley, AB & Willow Grove, NB**



Dozens of settlements founded by Black newcomers between the 1700s & early 1900s saw small waves of Black Americans who came north in search of land, opportunity & freedom. Amber Valley was one of several in Alberta. Between 1,000-1,500 Blacks came to Canada's west, attracted by the image of 'free lands' and everyone having the right to vote & be free.

During the War of 1812, the call went out... anyone living in the US were welcomed in the British Empire. Thousands departed the eastern states in 1815, many escaping slavery, to travel to New Brunswick for a better life.

Outside of Saint John, 371 settled in Willow Grove. They quickly found what they were promised, good land for farming, wasn't what they received. Plots were half the size given to white settlers & the land was not good for growing crops. Eventually after much struggle, laws were enacted to allow the Black residents to actually own their lands.

Issued: 2022 **Eleanor Collins (1919)**



Collins was a trailblazer – becoming the first female Canadian jazz artist & one of the 1st Black performers in North America to host a national television series, *The Eleanor Show*, in 1955. A second namesake TV series, *Eleanor*, appeared in 1964. She has confronted racial prejudice by cultivating the principles of equality & acceptance through her professional & volunteer work. Appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 2014, she is now in her 104th year.



Still waters run deep...

- by Lorrie Stephenson, President, HEIRS

We previously indicated that ‘change is a comin’, well, it’s here. The winter months will be the backdrop for many positive changes at HEIRS, as we reconstruct how we function & connect with our members & community. January’s meeting was even set aside to focus on these improvements.

Our website revamp has begun! Jenny Obermock of Media Addict met with directors on January 12th. It’s a full-service marketing team based in Harrow (lucky us!). Check them out at mediaaddict.ca. Everyone enjoyed the meeting & Jenny has started the 21st century redesign with a better looking & functioning website. Keep your eyes peeled, as we grow our site.

HEIRS board welcomed 2 new interim directors on January 18th! They will be officially voted in, at the May AGM. You shouldn’t be surprised to see director Shelby Wye in the HEIRS office, as she’s been researching stories & covering HEIRS meetings for years as a Harrow News reporter. Welcome aboard Shelby.

Marta Leardi Anderson has joined us as a director. A history lover, she’s currently restoring the old Oddfellows building, corner of King & Queen. Her deep interest in local history & extensive business background, are welcomed by the group.

HEIRS Research Committee welcomes 2 new volunteers. Former director Pauline Baldwin, has generously continued to train our growing team, on evenings at the office.

Two Youth Volunteers have also joined us in the evenings, assisting with research, scanning & clipping newspaper articles for our local history files.

Member Surveys in February! Working towards better member experiences. Two surveys will be sent to members. The 1st one focuses on our newsletters & our email newsletter recipients will see this important survey in early February.

The 2nd survey focuses on our meetings. This anonymous response survey will help us better plan when, topics of most interest, and how frequent meetings should be held in order to maximize attendance. This one will be sent to Essex County members by mail in February. We’re looking forward to reading your ideas through these surveys. Please ‘tell us like it is’.

No HEIRS Meetings in February & March!

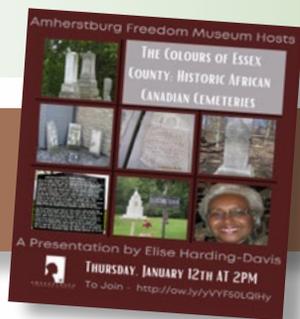
Our goal is to make a fresh start after reviewing our survey trends to make HEIRS meetings even better. We’re open at the Resource Centre, as usual.

April 27th Meeting (more info coming in our March NL)

We’re excited to present author Laurie Brett, speaking about her research, experience and decision-making behind the writing of her new book, ‘The Rising Village - An Early History of Essex, Ontario’. Her book is available for purchase at the HEIRS Resource Centre now. (See page 6 for more info about this book.)

ERCA John R. Park Award! We’re proud to announce that HEIRS received this preservation award, on January 19th. It honours our team of committed directors & volunteers. And, it’s a reflection of over 50 years of dedicated volunteers, directors & members. We look forward to closely collaborating with the Homestead team.

Membership Reminder New members are paid up until May 2024. We were pleased to have welcomed 14 new members in 2022.



Presentation Report...

- by Esther Meerschaut, HEIRS Director

For many years, Elise Harding-Davis, well-known historian, was the curator administrator of the North American Black Historical Museum, now called the Amherstburg Freedom Museum.

Throughout her life, Elise worked hard to prove that the Blacks were an important part of Ontario's history and are not to be ignored or forgotten. She won numerous awards for her work in educating people, as well as, correcting and adding facts to the history of Ontario. In November 2022, she received the Order of Ontario.

On January 12th, 2023, Elise made a Zoom presentation sponsored by The Amherstburg Freedom Museum. She titled it 'The Colour of Essex County - Historic African Canadian Cemeteries' and included the Indigenous, on whose land we all live.

Elise acknowledged the significance of Mother Africa where many Blacks originated. From the early 1800s many, after living as slaves in the United States, used the Underground Railroad to reach Ontario and freedom. There have been several Black settlements in the Colchester Township since 1792, including Hopetown on the Third Concession near Drummond Road west of Harrow.

Many Blacks fought in the War of 1812 and by 1912, the population included 4,000 Blacks living in Essex County.

Essex County has 13 known Black cemeteries. If each one contains 500 burials, that means 6,500 Blacks are buried here.

Central Grove Cemetery, on Walker Road north of Harrow, was an important site for the local Black community. Although burials have taken place there from the 1860s, the church itself was not established until 1911.

One of the first Black lawyers in Canada was buried in New Canaan Cemetery in 1882.

The BME Cemetery on Walnut St. in Harrow showed serious signs of neglect until Elise Harding-Davis took note & convinced Harrow to improve it. In the 1990s, they restored the site and planted native flowers and shrubs. This cemetery is one of the prettiest in the area & The Town of Essex continues to maintain it.

A plaque in Puce states, 'Here ended the Underground Railroad.' The Puce River Cemetery is the only place Elise knows of that has a tombstone inscribed with "born a slave in Kentucky".

St. Mark's Cemetery on Dunn Road has dating back to 1840. This cemetery is still being used today.

Every cemetery is sacred to the Black community. Without the inscriptions on these tombstones, we would have no record that any of these people ever existed. Some Blacks today live in or on their original land grants, although some have moved to other places.

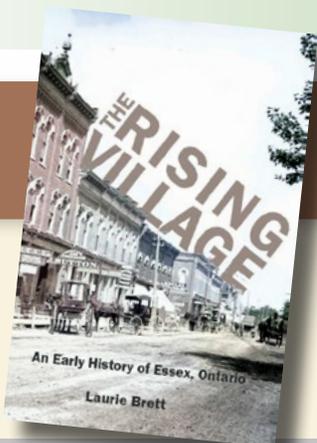
Blacks continue to live successful lives & are proud of their heritage. They are aware of their many accomplishments & important roles they played in the development of Ontario.

You can view Elise's entire presentation on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFAaOoZuMbQ>

A few minutes with the author...

- by Lorrie Stephenson, President, HEIRS

Laurie Brett recently launched her new book 'The Rising Village - An Early History of Essex, Ontario', & we were intrigued. We selected a few Q & A's from our recent contact with the author, for our members.



Laurie is the former editor & publisher of the Essex Free Press. More recently, she managed corporate communications for the Town of Essex & is a founding member of the Essex & Community Historical Research Society, & author of Colchester 225: 150 Historical Facts.

Q. It's an interesting title, how did it come about?

It came from a quote I found in a small booklet I refer to as the "Brief Sketch". The author said that John Milne (widely considered to be the father of the town) decided to "cast his lot with the people of the **rising village**."

Q. How long did you take to research the content?

I've been interested in local history for as long as I can remember, but I specifically directed all my attention to this project starting in the Fall of 2018. So I guess it took me 4 years of concentrated effort to research and write the book. I found that I was most successful when I treated it like a full-time job and made it an immersive experience.

Q. As a historical research facility, HEIRS has been a source for writers. Is there any advice you would give to someone who is interested in writing a history related book?

Be patient & methodical. Give yourself permission to pursue lines of inquiry as they arise. For example, if you notice that Sir Oliver Mowat is frequently mentioned in sources, go & research Mowat. Find out who he was & try to understand how his government's policies might connect to your story.

Understanding the context of the time period you're writing about is important & can add texture to your writing. It's also important to conduct your research broadly using genealogical resources, library books, atlases, directories, maps, land records, microfilmed or digitized newspapers, & resources found in the Internet Archive.

Q. Is there any of your own family history in the book?

Yes, to a small extent. My great-grandfather, Richard Ruddy Brett, purchased the Essex Free Press in June 1896 with his partner, John Auld. They were both from Amherstburg & had learned the newspaper & printing trades at the Amherstburg Echo. My book primarily deals with the history of Essex Centre up to 1890, when it was incorporated as a town, but I also try to explain what happened to significant buildings & businesses beyond 1890.

So my family comes into the picture when I write about the history of community news in Essex & the buildings that the newspaper operated out of. I also include a photograph of my great-grandparents standing on a wooden-plank sidewalk, for illustration purposes.

Q. Tell us about the great cover photo selection?

The image is a view of the west side of Talbot Street, circa 1904-1908, courtesy of the Windsor Community Museum. It shows a row of 2 & 3-storey buildings, most which don't exist anymore, and also depicts the days of horse & carriage, when Talbot St. was a dirt road.

Laurie passed along this message... I worked closely with Edith Woodbridge when researching the Colchester 225 book. She was indispensable to me and I felt a real kinship at the time.

Laurie's book is available at the HEIRS Resource Centre. The 447-page softcover, contains an extensive set of endnote references & an index. (\$30)

Family history group members at some point, will be asked...

“How do I start my family tree?”

I'm no authority, but here's my own 'Coles Notes'.

SPEAK TO FAMILY * KNOW THE EFFORT * BE SKEPTICAL * JUMP IN

***Speak with your family...**

Start with you! List down your siblings, parents, and grandparents' names. Add any birthdates, marriage or death dates you know. Ask to see birth or death certificates (or funeral cards provided at the services) & add this info onto your page (plus where you got the info). Double-check your own information to ensure it matches what info they provided.

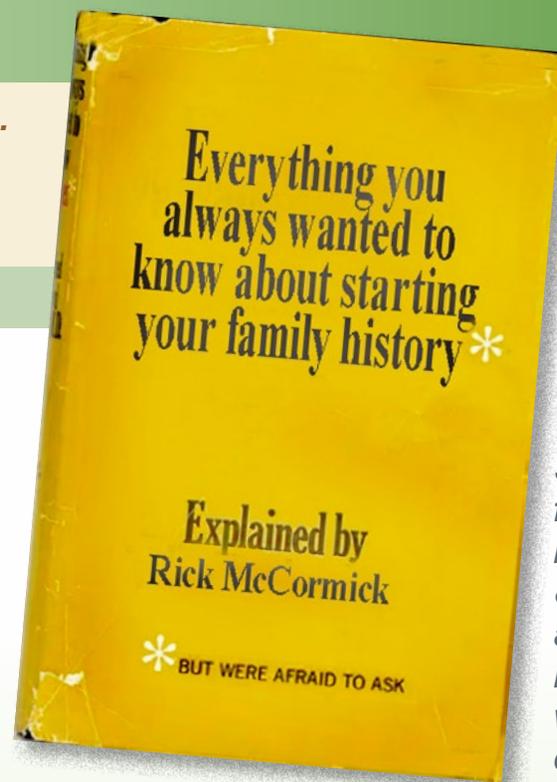
Ask oldest members about their lives first. Conversations work best, rather than confronting them with a long list of questions. No one wants to be given 'interviewed' or given the '3rd degree'. Take your time, they'll be happy to tell stories to flesh out your data. Use the most recent online Canadian census & search one of your grandparents. Once they're found, you may discover who they were living with, citizenship status, & some key dates.

***Understand it still takes some effort...**

Not long ago, family history buffs had to do research in their local courthouse or travel to an archive to even obtain basic information & copies of official documents. Today, many documents are digitized and readily available online. Each region has its own percentage of digital docs completed, but history groups in Ontario have a huge inventory of key documents. But, you still have to dig.

***Be skeptical of what you find...**

Census takers use to go door to door gathering family data using self-provided info given by the homeowner (or whomever answered the door). So know up front, there will be errors.



Tons of documents & family tree subscription services still rely on 'self-provided' info in their 'family trees' from their own paying members. Things can also get tricky quickly, especially when it comes to surnames.

Surname variations occurred for all kinds of reasons – an immigrant's ability to read & write on arrival, and 'thick accents' played a role. Names misheard or mispronounced were often spelled incorrectly on documents or by the clerks.

Long lines of people were processed every day, so immigration officers under pressure, moved them along... recording by hand as best they could. Some folks even hid info from these authority figures hoping to better ensure acceptance into the country. One cannot take info at face value; it requires more detective work.

***Jump in with both feet...**

Few barriers exist for new researchers to get started. Free online research tools plus local libraries or Resource Centres like the one at HEIRS, all have materials to help you, often with some experienced guidance... just ask! City directories are one filter to help differentiate which 'John Smith' you may have found. Knowing occupations, street address in a specific year & place is critical. Use all the free resources you can first, in your quest for details.

Final thought... If the new family history buff loves a good 'who dunnit', they'll do well researching their ancestors. There will be false trails to stumble down, but eventually they will find the right culprit... I mean... ancestor. - Rick McCormick



Life, As It Used to Was...

- presented by Ted Steele, HEIRS Director

Those atypical stereotypes...

I have memories of my childhood that my brothers, older & younger, do not share. Looking back at the 40s & 50s especially, I remember things that barely registered on me back then. Now they jump out glaringly. I'm referring to those horrible stereotypes, promoted every day through early radio and TV shows, plus those movies that most of us watched as we were growing up in the mid-20th century.

Movies & early TV, even music & sports provided us many good memories. But looking back with an eye towards minorities & fairness to all, I am amazed that pigeon-holing visible minorities were not more obvious to me, all of us, sooner.

Across all my school years, there was only one Black student and he was in our Grade 7 and 8 classes with me. We rarely spoke and I didn't ever get to know him.

I remember you Gary; how empty your school days must have seemed. I am ashamed of this fact.

Being a visible minority in the mid 20th century would have been really challenging. Early radio programming was not kind to minorities. Radio shows like Amos & Andy ran for 25 years featuring Black characters who were not bright or not honest. (Kingfish was the lazy con man, Andy was dumb as dirt, & Lightning was slow and always confused.) In sports, both Black & Jewish baseball players (including Detroit's Hank Greenberg) faced nasty prejudice during their careers.

Early radio, then TV had a series on during noon hour called "Beulah", about a Black maid who often saved the day for her white family employers. The 15 minute radio sitcom ran from 1945-54 & was the 1st to feature an African-American actress (Hattie McDaniel). The TV series last 3 years and was controversial for its caricatures of African Americans.



Hattie McDaniel

Charlie Chan, a very clever detective, was Asian/Hawaiian, not 'oriental'. His benevolent & kind character was designed to oppose the post-war stereotypical movie characters that represented the racist threat of the "faceless, nameless hordes of yellow people".

Charlie was famous to movie goers for his one line gems like...

'Door of opportunity swing both ways.'

'Smart fly keep out of gravy.'

'Tongue often hang man quicker than rope.'

The only other Asian character, that I can recall was Hop Sing, in a subservient but memorable role, as the cook on 'Bonanza'.

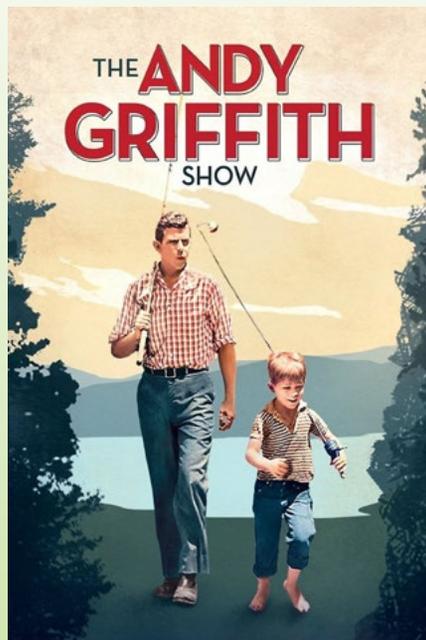
Life, As It Used to Was... cont'd

The “Our Gang” films had Buckwheat, with all the language and stereotypical images intact. The old Bowery Boys series of films had a gang member called Sammy, unusually portrayed as just a ‘one of the gang’ type character. Tarzan was depicted as the white hero in a ‘Black continent’, seemingly full of uncivilized Blacks.

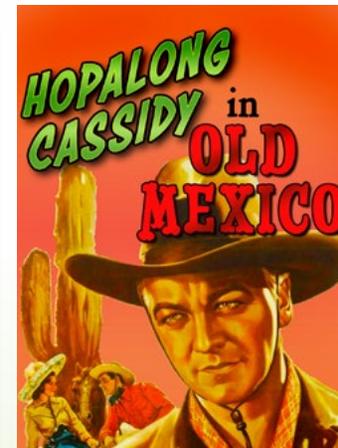
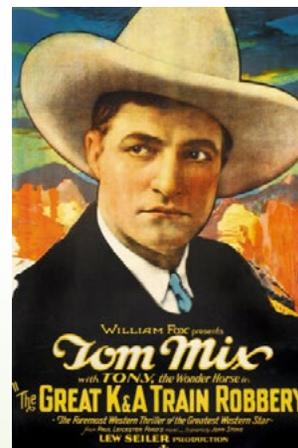
Stereotypes remained well into the ‘60s.

Remember, the Lone Ranger always said “I have a plan”, then sent Tonto into town, where he routinely got beat up by white men.

A beloved TV series, although set in Mayberry, North Carolina, only used a few Black characters in the background over the length of its run. A Black actor named Rockne Tarkington had a speaking role in one of the later episodes (in its 8th year) of *The Andy Griffith Show*.



Just as amazing, the hundreds of Westerns churned out from Tom Mix to Hopalong Cassidy did not have any Black cowboys that I recall. Yet the facts show about 35 % of the real cowboys were Black, or mixed race. Until Mel Brooks’ “Blazing Saddles”, I had never even seen a Black cowboy – at best, a Black actor might play a blacksmith or a poor farmer in a Western movie.



A future HEIRS meeting is planned that will discuss the struggles of Black musicians getting radio play. I do recall Nat King Cole with... wait for it... a whole ‘15 minute’ long TV show, a few nights a week, & I thought he was terrific. Unfortunately, it went off the air as no white company would sponsor him.

Stereotypes are slowly being replaced in entertainment media following many protests & write-in campaigns from the public detailing their disgust to the mainstream broadcasters for such demeaning characterizations. In response, visible minorities have slowly been written as characters of note on shows, like doctors, lawyers, police officers... mirroring real life.

Barriers of all kinds remain, and it is important that each of us help bury them forever – even if it has to be one shovelful at time.

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Membership

\$30 CDN/U.S. per person or couple. Memberships run May 1st - April 30th, annually.
Please provide phone, postal address, email & family names you are researching.

Payments

Make cheques out to: HEIRS, 243 McAfee St., PO Box 53, Harrow ON, Canada N0R 1G0

E-transfer payments or donations to HEIRS? Send to: heirsont@gmail.com

Members research for free. Non-members using research library: \$10 per visit (+ any photocopy fees)

Newsletter / Meetings

Published 9 times / year. Meetings held on 4th Thursday of the month, September to June, (December excepted).
Receive full colour newsletter by email, or a B&W print version by regular post.

Resource Centre:

- New open hours Mondays 5:30-8PM, Tuesdays & Thursdays 10AM-3 PM -

Please contact us at heirsont@gmail.com or (519) 738-3700 to confirm our 'open status' prior to arrival.

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