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Hear, Here Tours

Hear, Here London

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Escape to London

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Escape to London
Katrina Bjornstad (for Lauren Luchenski)

Story #1: Margaret Henderson (Story #14, near 198 Clarence)

Story #2: Francis Henderson (Story #13, near 248 Grey)

Story #3: John D. Moore (Story #16, near 176 Wellington)



Introduction

Please pull out your mobile phones and put in the Hear, Here London phone number:
1.519.672.4327

~~I will be introducing the tour while we walk to the first stop.~~

The area of southwest Ontario has a significant association with Black heritage in North America. London was once known as one of the terminus points of the Underground Railroad and led to an increase in population of formerly enslaved persons in the early 19th century. This tour, "Escaping to London," highlights three locations of where formerly enslaved persons lived. Their stories were documented and published in 1856 in *The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* by Benjamin Drew. This tour will begin in the US and end in Canada with

much in between and will feature the stories of Margaret Henderson, Francis Henderson, and John D. Moore.

Slavery in the United States began in 1619 when the first Africans were forcibly brought to Jamestown, Virginia. Colonial settlers increasingly used slave labor as an alternative to European indentured servants. At the time of the American Revolution, slavery was still legal in the 13 colonies and at the ratification of the Constitution in 1789, slavery in the new country was legal. The northern and southern states' economies were vastly different. The North industrialized and depended on ~~free~~ market labor resulting in the abolishment of slavery in the early 1800s. However, the South relied more on agricultural products and consequently led to an increase in demand for slave labor. Northern and Southern states fought to keep their political power by trying to control whether new territories were slave or free states. This led the US to become polarized over slavery and led to the Civil War.

To escape slavery, many enslaved Black people would use the Underground Railroad. It operated from the late 18th century until the end of the Civil War. The Underground Railroad was a network of people from many backgrounds who would offer shelter and aid to people escaping slavery. People known as "conductors" would guide enslaved people to what were known as "stations." These included private homes, churches, and schoolhouses. There were routes that went to western territories and north to Canada.

not free states

Many escapees headed to Canada because of the Fugitive Slave Acts. These laws allowed local governments to apprehend and extradite escaped enslaved people from free states and return them to their point of origin. Anyone helping a fugitive would be punished. For those escaping slavery, northern states were still a risk.

Southwest Ontario became a haven for many formerly enslaved people. There were many who settled in Wilberforce, Dresden, and Buxton. In addition to these settlements, London was also a destination. The first African Methodist Episcopal Church, now known as the Fugitive Slave Chapel, was constructed on Thames Street to serve a congregation of Black refugees who lived near the river, the neighbourhood in which we stand.

As you visit each *Hear, Here* story in this tour, consider these questions:

- where they were*
1. ~~What comes to mind when you think of slavery?~~
 - What sort of reasons do you think enslaved Blacks had for staying or escaping slavery?
 - ~~How do you think you would feel leaving everything you knew in search of an entirely new life?~~
 - ~~How do you think Black fugitives perceived Canada?~~
 - What do you think it was like for them to live here?
 - Do you think prejudice still exists in Canada?

(4-minute walk from Goodwill to first stop)

Story #1: Margaret Henderson (Story #14, near 198 Clarence)

By law, enslaved people were considered property and as such could be treated accordingly. Punishment resulted in response to disobedience or perceived offence. This included beating whipping, shackling, sexual abuse and a number of other violent methods.

Margaret Henderson's former residence at 198 Clarence is the first stop on this tour. In her story, Margaret outlines the situation leading up to her decision to run away to Canada. She recounts the violence that her owner inflicted on another enslaved man.

Please call the Hear Here phone number and enter 14 as the story number.

(Story)

DIRECTIONS: Now we are going to walk down Clarence Street and turn left on to Grey Street.

(3-minute walk from first stop to second stop)

Story #2: Francis Henderson (Story # 13, near 248 Grey)

It is a common belief that the Underground Railroad operated in the South. However, it wasn't until an enslaved person reached a free state that they received help. Because of this, most enslaved people who escaped were from bordering slave states like Kentucky and Virginia as it was difficult to travel on foot from the Deep South without getting caught.

Francis Henderson, originally from Washington DC, lived on this block and is the second stop on this tour. In his story, Francis tells us about the disappearance of enslaved men and eventually his. He also relays his experience once he arrived in Canada.

Please call the Hear Here phone number and enter 13 as the story number.

(Story)

DIRECTIONS: We are going to continue walking up Grey Street and cross Wellington Street.

(2-minute walk from second stop to third stop)

Story #3: John D. Moore (Story #16, near 176 Wellington)

Canada was perceived as the Promised Land to both free and enslaved African Americans. Many free Blacks migrated to Canada because of the discrimination they faced. However, newly-arrived Blacks still faced difficult situations on account of their colour. In the last story we heard, Francis Henderson mentioned how he was treated when he came to Canada. John D. Moore, in his story, agrees that Canada had prejudice, but that it was different than in the States. When he moved to London, he settled near this intersection at Grey and Wellington Streets.

Please call the Hear Here phone number and enter 16 as the story number.

What do you think it was like for escaped slaves to live in Canada?
~~What sorts of reasons do you think enslaved Blacks had for staying where they were or escaping slavery?~~

(Story)

DIRECTIONS: To head back to Goodwill, we are going to walk up Wellington towards Horton and cross the street.

(4-minute walk from third stop to Goodwill)

Does ~~prejudice~~ ^{prejudices} still exist in Canada?

Conclusion

This tour highlighted three Black voices that help tell the story of slavery, the Underground Railroad, and the Black experience in Canada. The tour began in the United States when Margaret Henderson explained the violent treatment that enslaved Blacks endured which led many of them to escape. At the next stop, Francis Henderson discussed his experience as an enslaved person and his escape. And finally, we reach Canada as both Mr. Henderson and John D. Holmes describe their experience when they arrived.

To conclude the tour, let's return to the questions we began with and discuss:

- What comes to mind when you think of slavery?
- What sort of reasons do you think enslaved Blacks had for staying or escaping slavery?
- How do you think you would feel leaving everything you knew in search of an entirely new life?
- How do you think Black fugitives perceived Canada?
- What do you think it was like for them to live here?
- Do you think prejudice still exists in Canada?

OPTIONAL:

(While walking back to Goodwill, you can talk about the Fugitive Slave Chapel)

In the introduction of the tour, I mentioned the Fugitive Slave Chapel. Its original location was at 275 Thames. In an effort to preserve the chapel, it was moved to 432 Grey Street—next to its daughter church. While we won't be walking to see the chapel or its original site, there are stories from both locations.

If you want to hear stories from the original site of the chapel, you can dial in and enter 11 as the story number.

If you want to hear stories from the chapel's current site, you can dial in and enter 17 as the story number.