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This Tract of Land: North Buxton, Ontario, 1873-1914

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Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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THIS TRACT OF LAND:
NORTH BUXTON, ONTARIO, 1873-1914

(Spine title: North Buxton, Ontario, 1873-1914)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Claudine Y. Bonner

Graduate Program in Educational Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

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entitled:

This Tract of Land: North Buxton, Ontario, 1873-1914

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Acknowledging the continued concerns and calls for the education system to improve how it addresses the changing face of Canada in terms of race, gender, class, language and culture, this thesis focuses on the history and narratives of a single African-Canadian community as a starting point for educators who wish to learn about and make use of marginalized histories in their classroom practice. The information would also prove helpful to those educators who often have difficulty in finding material relating to African-Canadian history and as a result fail to add the stories of black Canadians to the national narrative shared in their classrooms.

There is a wealth of knowledge that can be drawn from the material in each section of the thesis, beginning with an exploration of the theoretical frame, which introduces readers to the concepts underlying African-Canadian studies, and provides them with a means of better comprehending the lived experiences of people of African descent in the New World Diaspora. The study also provides a concise history of the first and second generations of the Buxton community, providing access to the evolution of the community from that of a planned refugee settlement, to becoming an active Canadian community. Additionally, the study explores the American South that awaited those who chose to return "home" after the American Civil War. The narratives and the process of restorying provide teachers with concrete examples of how to access and work with historical documents, or take single lives and events and discover connections, as they make sense of the experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Coulter for rescuing me from a project I hated, and allowing me to do something I really cared about. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Drs. Jack Blocker and Goli Rezai-Rashti, both of whom always offered kind words of support.

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No daughter has felt more loved and supported than I have by my mother, Hilma Beecher, throughout this process. The sacrifices you have made to get me to this point and your unwavering optimism have always made me know no mountain is insurmountable. Thank you, and I love you. My brother Kareem has never stopped believing in me has supported me in every possible way on this journey. I am eternally grateful. Thank you Catherine, for providing a home and also a place to which I could escape. To my sistahs, Cam, Cristine, Hanna, Hedia, Julie, add another mountain climbed to our list. Colleen, Vanessa, Stephanie and Terry King, I am forever grateful that I came to know you, you opened your home to me and always made me welcome, thank you again. Thank you as well, Bob and Craig, for always being there; Fabiola and Karin for all the good times we shared together.

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Introduction

> In the underground of our unwritten history, much of that which is ignored defies our inattention by continuing to grow and have consequences[1]

In an article in *MacLean's* magazine in 1999, journalist Sue Ferguson looked at the community of North Buxton as it celebrated its 150th anniversary. She spoke with a number of community residents, including then 18-year-old Christopher Prince, whose ancestors were among the community's early settlers. Prince voiced concern about the ignorance of Black Canadiana at his school and elsewhere in Ontario. He believed very little interest in this history was shown by Canadians, as the majority of the visitors to his community are African Americans. He also noted, "I've taken about every history class I could, and the teachers mention it once in a while. They say, 'We live near North Buxton. There were a lot of slaves there. That's about as far as it goes."[2] As it had for Christopher, for me this seemingly pervasive lack of knowledge and interest raises the question of what Ontario students are being taught about the role of African Canadians in forging the nation.

As the population of Ontario has become more diverse, one growing concern has been the ability of the formal education system to address the changing factors of race, gender, age, language and culture within the constraints of the modern bureaucratic

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[1] Ralph Ellison, *Going to the Territory* (New York: Random House, 1986), 12.
[2] Sue Ferguson, "Letter from North Buxton: Underground to Freedom," *MacLean's: Canada's Weekly Newsmagazine,* November 29, 1999, p. 32.

schooling structures as we know them.[3] A glaring example to illustrate this reality is the continuing debate as to how and why schools are failing black youth and what should be done to address the issue.[4] The reality is that the processes of education continue to provide unequal opportunities and create negative outcomes, especially for minority students and students from low socio-economic family backgrounds.[5] Governments in Canada have made attempts to address some of these issues by developing more inclusive curricula, addressing teacher training issues, creating culturally-based schools, and putting forward policy initiatives geared at meeting minority concerns.[6] However, there continue to be suggestions that black youth experience a curriculum that does not provide culturally relevant material.[7] The attempts to address the issues notwithstanding, it is still important to recognize the damaging character of Eurocentrism, which negates black history and valorizes the historical experiences and heritage of Euro-Canadians. What African-Canadians end up with is a total loss of any sense of our own history, and

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[3] James Ryan, *Race and Ethnicity in Multi-ethnic Schools: A Critical Case Study* (Clevedon, England Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1999)
[4] See, for example George J. Sefa Dei, Josephine Mazzuca, Elizabeth MacIssac, and Jasmine Zine, *Reconstructing 'Drop-out': A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement from School* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1997); Rovell Patrick Solomon, *Black Resistance in High School: Forging a Separatist Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); George J. Sefa Dei, "Schooling as Community: Race, Schooling and the Education of African Youth," *Journal of Black Studies* 38 no. 3 (2008): 346-366.
[5] George J. Sefa Dei and Leeno L. Karumanchery, "School Reforms in Ontario: The Marketization of Education and the Resulting Silence on Equity." *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 25 no. 2 (1999): 111-131.
[6] Jasmine Zine, "'Negotiating Equity': The Dynamics of Minority Community Engagement in Constructing Inclusive Educational Policy," *Cambridge Journal of Education* 31 no. 2 (2001): 239-269; George J. Sefa Dei, "The Role of Afrocentricity in the Inclusive Curriculum in Canadian Schools," *Canadian Journal of Education* 21 no. 2 (1996): 170-186.
[7] Henry M. Codjoe, "Fighting a 'Public Enemy' of Black Academic Achievement – the Persistence of Racism and the Schooling Experiences of Black Students in Canada," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 4 no. 4 (2001): 343-375; George J. Sefa Dei, "The Role of Afrocentricity in the Inclusive Curriculum in Canadian Schools," *Canadian Journal of Education* 21 no. 2 (1996): 170-186.

hence, identity.[8] This dissertation focuses on this imbalance in curriculum, and asks if a historical and theoretical look at the history and evolution of one particular African-Canadian community can be used to provide a resource for educators who wish to engage students like Christopher Prince.

As educators Schick and St. Denis point out, "this [curriculum] is one of the significant discourses through which white privilege and 'difference' are normalized."[9] Addressing curricular concerns is one way of moving whiteness from the centre of the discourse, and minority issues from the margins. Without engaging ourselves in a process of critical race analysis, we simply allow a process of re-inscription of the relations of domination within the educational system.

It is important for all students to hear about the contributions people of African descent have made to Canada. However, it is even more important for African-Canadian youth to learn about their history in Canada as a means of affirming their worth, identity and connection to the greater history of Canada.

The outcome of the influx of American blacks to Canada, the way it changed many communities, and the low profile all of this has in our textbooks is definitely a Canadian tale. It is my contention that it is definitely a tale worth telling. The gathering of the histories and stories of the communities which make up the nation is vital to an individual's self-understanding and identity, and should not be left to an annual celebration of black heritage, but rather be part of an inclusive curriculum that values all

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[8] Tunde Adeleke, "Black Americans, Africans Africa and History: A Reassessment of the Pan-African and Identity Paradigms," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 22(1998): 182-194.

aspects of the history of the nation. American historian, Bernard Bailyn pointed out the importance of recognizing education as being more than formal pedagogy, and seeing it also as "the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across the generations."[10] The sharing of the community tales, the family stories, the celebration of the histories, the act of communing at Sunday service or at the community store all contribute to the passing on of cultural values and belief systems. With this serving as a reminder, in addition to my exhortation of the curricular importance of this research, this dissertation also adds to a growing body of work providing concrete examples of cultural transmission within the Canadian black community. It allows students like Christopher to see that the civic memories their communities pass down are integral parts of Canadian history and not necessarily separate and unrelated to the nation's grand narrative. As well, it allows insight into how these communities have worked at maintaining and passing on their understandings of the role they have played in nation-building and the struggles for equality and democratic values.

With this as a starting point, I selected the community of North Buxton, Ontario.[11] Today's Buxton is a very different place from the historical settlement. Vast farms continue to exist in the area, and speak of at least a few remaining families who

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[9] Carol Schick and Verna St. Denis, "Troubling National Discourses in Anti-Racist Curricular Planning," *Canadian Journal of Education* 28 no. 3 (2005): 295-317.

[10] Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Formation of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972).

[11] Referred to as "North Buxton," the "Elgin Settlement," the "Buxton Mission" and "Buxton" interchangeably throughout this paper. The community was established by the Elgin Association, with both named for James Bruce, Earl of Elgin and Governor-General of the Province of Canada, as well as Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton. I will return to the founding and naming of the community in Chapter 3. The community was known by the latter three names during its first generation, while North Buxton and Buxton have been used interchangeably post-1873. As well, unless specified otherwise, the terms Upper Canada, Canada West and Ontario are used interchangeably to designate what is now southern Ontario.

work the land, but for the most part, the community is quiet, except for a few days in early September when there is an influx of people who still remember this place as home. Buxton is one of the few remaining black[12] communities which arose from an influx of refugees across the border from the United States into Upper Canada in the nineteenth century. Much of the history of these communities has been lost, and it is absent from the grand narrative of Canadian history.

The goal of the rest of my research was to uncover often-forgotten stories and voices from African-Canadian history, and specifically from the community of North Buxton, possibly the most successful[13] of the black communities in Southwestern Ontario, and in so doing, provide access to more information on this aspect of our Nation's heritage. The fact that the history of communities such as North Buxton pre-dates Confederation and that descendants from these communities continue to live in the region provides ample justification for an exploration of this missing link in our history. This work builds on a limited but growing body of research into African-Canadian history[14] by exploring the ways in which people of African descent in this region reacted to key issues of community and cultural survival, focusing on the period from 1873 to 1914.

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[12] Throughout the dissertation I use the terms black, African American/Canadian interchangeably to refer to people of African descent, specifying American or Canadian as indicative of nationality.
[13] For purposes of this project, "success" is defined by the community's persistence into the 21st century.
[14] See for example, *'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History,* coord., Peggy Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Jason Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1865* (New York: Associated Faculty Press, 1985); Colin McFarquhar, "A Difference of Perspective: The Black Minority, White Majority, and Life in Ontario, 1870-1919" (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 1998).

In this chapter I begin by introducing my research questions and their relationship to the historical literature. I provide a rationale for undertaking the project, and outline why I chose to conduct it. A brief review of the literature is used to allow for a sense of the scope of background material explored for this project. I then outline the methodology and research methods followed, after which I provide the reader with a definition of community as it relates to this context. I close the chapter with an outline of the dissertation.

Research Questions

Once I focused my goal on the creation of a resource document for those interested in African-Canadian studies, and selected a community on which to focus, I began asking questions specific to the history and evolution of the community: What contributed to the evolution of North Buxton from 1873 to 1914 to make it a successful community? I wanted to gain an understanding of the lives of the Buxtonites themselves – asking the usual questions of what, why, when and how. Why did a number of the community members choose to remain in Buxton after the dissolution of the original settlement? Who from the original community chose to remain? What kinds of educational and subsistence systems were developed? In the period after the American Civil War, when some blacks made the decision to stay in North Buxton and began taking on new identities as Canadians, how did their ideas of citizenship and their contributions to the community develop? I wanted to understand how these early Ontarians experienced life, how this made an impact on their visions of a future for

themselves, and how this formed a part of the evolution of their community. I was also interested in discovering if schooling and education, broadly defined, played a role in identity formation and community development and whether education served to pull young people into the black community or push them out into the wider world.

My interrogation of the sources broadened to include questions about family history, religious values, living skills, education and inter/intra family socialization methods, cultural and other forms of identity, as well as the degree to which cross-cultural contact with other groups occurred. The intention was to paint as clear a picture of time and place as possible in order to add to our understanding of how one particular black community in Southwestern Ontario grew and evolved in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Rationale for study

According to Aldrich, "many people of the past, including women and children, have been neglected because their lives have been held to be of little interest and account."[15] This seems to be the reality of the treatment of African-Canadian life stories as there is very little that is commonly known about the role of blacks in Canadian history prior to the arrival of more recent immigrants from other parts of the world in the 20th century.

I learned about the existence of black communities in Southern Ontario only a few years ago. At that time I developed a passing interest, but this interest has steadily

grown as I have come to recognize how little is commonly known about Canadian black history. Indeed, it has been my experience that many people express surprise upon first hearing stories about the current and former black communities in Southwestern Ontario, often wondering why this history was never mentioned throughout their schooling. They may have learned about the Underground Railroad, and have an understanding that this involved the movement of fugitive slaves and free people of colour into this region, but beyond this, people seem to know very little. The story of the black communities in southwestern Ontario is not my personal history, but it is the history of a people with whom I share a common history of slavery and colonization. As such, I feel a sense of community and a responsibility to participate in the work toward filling some of the gaps in the telling of this history, and in the process of providing a means for educators to gain access to the stories, the theoretical perspectives that may be used to explain and understand the lives and experiences of African-Canadians, and finally, suggest approaches to classroom practice.

For this study, the choice of time-frame is deliberate. The beginning point, 1873, is approximately ten years after the close of the American Civil War, giving those fugitives from American slavery wishing to return to America ample time to do so, and allowing those who would choose Buxton as their home time to decide they would remain there. More importantly, it was also, the year that the Elgin Association, originally responsible for the creation of the community of Buxton, "closed their

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[15] R. Aldrich, "The three duties of the historian of education," *History of Education* 32, no. 2 (2003): 135.

books."[16] The Association decided the need for the community had passed – the war was over and many families had chosen to return home. Their sojourn in Canada was over.

Review of the Literature

While there is an extensive collection of historical studies of African American history, and of the history of the founding of African American freedom villages, there is a dearth of work within the Canadian context that can be used to inform knowledge of African-Canadian history. In this section I provide a select chronological overview of African-Canadian history. I begin by looking at the national experience and follow that with an exploration of the history from an Ontario perspective. I end this review of the literature with a look at the specific studies that served to inform my approach to the research.

Only two publications prior to the last twenty years provided an overarching look at the history of blacks in Canada. In 1930 Ida Greaves published *The Negro in Canada*,[17] in which she provided a chronological history as well as initiated the discourse around whether or not Canada had always been welcoming to African-Americans. She pointed out that while the Negro had equal rights under the law in Canada, this was not always true in practice, countering the then prevailing belief in the egalitarian nature of Canadian society.[18]After its publication in 1971, *The Blacks in*

[16] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 191.
[17] Ida C. Greaves, *The Negro in Canada* (Orillia: Pocket-Times Press for the Dept. of Economics and Political Science, McGill University, Montreal, 1930).
[18] McFarquhar points out, with this publication, "the groundwork for a debate as to whether Canada was truly a 'promised land' for Africans had been laid." McFarquhar, "A Difference of Perspective," p. 12.

Canada by Robin Winks was touted as the definitive text on Canadian black history. [19] It provided the most extensive look at the history of blacks in Canada, and was the only study of its kind since the publication by Greaves. Winks discussed the realities of racism, poverty and segregation as experienced by blacks in Canada and the strengths and weaknesses of black community organizations, looking at black education, the black church and the black press. He also challenged the black community in Canada for not coming together as a cohesive cultural group, in the same way as the African American community.

Beyond these two publications, other explorations of the history of blacks in Canada have tended to focus on provincial histories. Starting in 1918, Fred Landon began a career of publication in newspaper and journal articles, exploring the black history of Ontario. Landon is perhaps the most well-known Canadian to write about African-Canadian history. As the lone chronicler and collector of information about this history during this period, his work has served to provide the researcher with vital information. He was a believer in the redemptive status of Canada in the lives of African Americans seeking sanctuary from slavery, and perhaps as a result of the rhetoric popular at the time, he depicted blacks as having little agency and the abolitionists as their saviours. Landon published dozens of newspaper and journal articles. In his article, “The Negro Migration to Canada after the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act,” he

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[19] Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

provides a detailed look at the migration and settlement of the southwestern Ontario region by African Americans from the middle of the nineteenth century.[20]

Donald G. Simpson's *Under the North Star: Black Communities in Upper Canada before Confederation (1867)*,[21] based on his 1971 Ph.D. dissertation, looks at black settlements throughout southwestern Ontario and provides an excellent place from which to begin an exploration of African-Canadian history in this region. While providing mainly general descriptions and background information on each community, which does not necessarily allow for a close look at the subjects of his study, Simpson's work is relevant in that it delineates the timeline and rationale behind the formation and survival or demise of each community. This is a study that provides a rich background for the time-frame considered in this thesis – the period between Confederation and the First World War.

Fugitive slaves and free people of colour fled to Canada, many after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850,[22] seeking escape from the racism and injustices of slavery. *Under the North Star* looks at the migration of these people into Upper Canada, examines the relationship of the black community to the Christian churches, takes a look at societies which aided blacks in their escape north and in their subsequent lives in Canada, discusses the education of blacks in Upper Canada, and pays close attention to the

[20] Landon, Fred. "The Negro Migration to Canada After the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act," *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1920): 22-26.
[21] Donald G. Simpson, *Under the North Star: Black Communities in Upper Canada before Confederation (1867)* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2005).
[22] This law entitled slave owners to hunt down escaped slaves in any American jurisdiction, ending the period during which escaped slaves from the South found refuge in the Northern states. For more detailed accounts, see Jason Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive*

development of the black communities in the region, including Buxton. Simpson adopts one of the popular endings to the story of this period by concluding his study at the point when many blacks returned to America after the Civil War and Emancipation. Simpson's study provides the backdrop and serves as a beginning to understanding what happened when the Civil War ended and individuals and families chose to settle into their lives in Canada, not to escape the oppression of slavery, but for other reasons this thesis will explore.

Both of James Walker's books, *A History of Blacks in Canada,*[23] and *Identity: The Black Experience in Canada*[24] present detailed explorations of black Canadian history, and, contrary to Winks, Walker argues that a definitive Canadian black community has evolved, emerging out of the coming together of a people marginalized. The divergent perspectives of Winks and Walker and the evidence each used to argue his perspective have greatly shaped my understandings and perspective on the history of black Canada, and serve as major influences and references for this project.

Daniel Hill's *Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada*,[25] also traces the chronological history of African-Canadians, taking a redemptive perspective by celebrating the hard work, achievements and successes of former slaves and people of colour in Canada, and choosing to downplay the experiences of marginalization. Hill

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Slaves, 1800-1865 (New York: Associated Faculty Press, 1985) and Brown-Kubisch, *The Queen's Bush Settlement*, pp. 131-132.

[23] James W. St. G. Walker, *A History of Blacks in Canada: A Study Guide for Teachers and Students* (Hull, Quebec: Minister of State, Multiculturalism, 1980).

[24] James W. St. G. Walker, *Identity: The Black Experience in Canada* (Toronto: Ontario Educational Communications Authority, 1979).

[25] Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* (Agincourt, Canada: Book Society of Canada, 1981).

provides an overview of the history of blacks in Canada, outlining not just a presence but also the contributions of blacks to their adopted country. He also provides a look at the communities representing black Canada, and ends his exploration with eighteen profiles representing the success stories from within these communities.

Jason Silverman provides a critical approach to the writing of African-Canadian history. In his book, *Unwelcome Guests,* Silverman follows in the tradition of Greaves in challenging the popularly held notions that Canada's history was one of having welcomed fugitive slaves and free people of colour with open arms.[26] He questions the idea that the lives of these people were mostly idyllic once they escaped the persecution they experienced in America and arrived in Canada. He looks at the experiences of blacks in Canada from the arrival of Oliver Le Jeune in 1628[27] to the arrival of American fugitive slaves, speaks of racial tensions not often acknowledged in Canada's written history and provides a detailed and critical analysis of issues of race and class in Canadian history.

Since the publications in the 1980s, there has been growing interest from within the black community for staking a claim in Canadian history, evidenced, for example, by the publication of the collection of essays, *We're Rooted Here But They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History.*[28] This collection of historical essays by and about African-Canadian women is well documented and provides valuable

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[26] Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests*

[27] Oliver le Jeune, believed to have been brought to Canada as a child in 1628 from the east coast of Africa, is the first black slave of whom we have detailed records (Winks, *Blacks in Canada*; Brown-Kubisch, *Queen's Bush*; Sadlier, "Black History Month").

[28] Peggy Bristow et al. *'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

insights into research resources as well as pointing out the silences around African-Canadian history in the literature. It describes aspects of the institution of slavery as experienced in Canada by black women, and provides different perspectives and analyses by attempting to uncover and make real the interrelationships between biography and history within the wider social, political and economic contexts over a 300-year period in Canada. Within these essays, there is also valuable insight into the experiences of women in some of the communities in southwestern Ontario.

Dionne Brand's *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario 1914s – 1950s* (1991) recounts the lives of black women in Ontario through oral-history narratives, examining some of the "peculiarities" of their lives in order to give the reader an idea of who these particular women were in all their complexity.[29] She examines the everyday and how that contributed to the social construction of their lives and their identities. The women's stories paint vivid pictures, creating a desire to hear more and to know more about their lives and those of their families. This is a part of Canadian history that is rarely shared. For my purposes it served to inform method, provide ideas of context and people, and show the salience of oral histories that are family histories instead of first-person primary resources. The narratives allow us to hear the voices of the women as they recount a period and subject area that has not been given much scholarly attention. An interesting finding in this collection was the narrative of Cleata Morris, who also provided one of the narratives I used for this project. I was able to compare the stories she told to Brand with those she shared with

me in our interview. In addition to providing a chronology, Brand is able to situate herself by critiquing the historic invisibility of African-Canadians (and African-Canadian women in particular), a stance that greatly informed my approach to this research.

Over a twelve-year study, Linda Brown-Kubisch created a historical picture of the Queen's Bush settlement, a black settlement which existed where Waterloo and Wellington counties in Ontario now meet.[30] Her book chronicles the arrival and settlement of blacks in Upper Canada, the formation of the settlement and also provides biographical sketches of the pioneers of this settlement. It serves as an invaluable resource in terms of providing insight into her research methodology. However, while providing a detailed history of the movement and settlement of people into the community, Brown-Kubisch's study does not go beyond the provision of a chronological history, and would have been better served by including a critical look at the social context of this period.

As another study of an individual black community in Southwestern Ontario, a work by historian Nikki Taylor explores the factors behind the emigration of a group of free persons of colour from Cincinnati, Ohio to Wilberforce, Ontario (now Lucan, Ontario), *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868,* is a rare find. It discusses the factors leading to the emigration and subsequent community formation as well as the forces leading to the demise of the settlement. Her study

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[29] Dionne Brand, *No Burden To Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991).
[30] Brown-Kubisch, *The Queen's Bush Settlement*.

provides a very detailed history of Wilberforce, in addition to looking at relationships between blacks and whites in the region. This allows some degree of understanding of inter-group relations as both groups encountered each other and shared communities for the first time outside of slavery. This book combines the historical re-telling with a critical, analytical framework that tends to be missing from much of the African-Canadian historical literature.

Jonathan Walton's exploration of the history of blacks in the communities of Buxton and Chatham[31] takes a very close look at both communities, making use of census documents, government reports, church and other organization records, community records, family histories and other documents, providing a template for this project, mainly in terms of sources sought. Among his conclusions was an assertion, similar to those of other writers (such as Pease and Pease for example),[32] that the Buxton experiment failed, a conclusion I contend remains unfounded without greater clarification.

Colin McFarquhar's thesis, "A Difference of Perspective: The Black Minority, White Majority, and Life in Ontario, 1870-1919," explores race relations in the same period I chose to study. This is a well-written project, providing broad context from the examination of census documents, archival material and newspapers from this period, as well as a detailed historiography of black Canada. McFarquhar traces the experiences of

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[31] Jonathan Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario, 1830-1890: Did the 49th Parallel Make a Difference?" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1979).

[32] Pease and Pease argued that Canada was not the haven it was thought to be, and that the Buxton experiment had failed because the blacks there lived in isolation from their white neighbours and had not learned to live in the real world. William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Opposition to the Founding of the Elgin Settlement," *Canadian Historical Review* 38 no. 3 (Sept. 1957).

early white residents as British Loyalists arrived with their slaves, acknowledging the interesting contradiction of legislation being sought against slavery in Canada at the same time. He also examines the dissatisfaction of slaves with their positions of servitude. Slave and other black labour was a positive force in the settlement of Upper Canada, but McFarquhar points out that "the late settlement of Ontario meant that slavery never played as large a role in the province as it did even in other parts of Canada."[33] Exploring the numbers of blacks resident in the province, McFarquhar outlines recent scholarship from Michael Wayne refuting commonly held ideas of how many refugees entered Canada via the Underground Railroad, and how many subsequently left after the close of the Civil War.[34] This finding is of vital importance as it addresses the ongoing debate as to the numbers of blacks crossing the borders into and out of Canada as part of the refugee movement. Many questions still remain as to whether or not as many individuals and families left the region after the Civil War as the historical record indicated.

The most recent concise scholarly look at the Buxton settlement to date is the work by Sharon Hepburn.[35] In her study, Hepburn provides an "analytical cultural and comparative" look at the community, including a look at the relationship between the black and white communities. She outlines the origin of the community, examines and refutes the common notion that there was a "mass exodus" from Buxton during and after the Civil War, and chronicles the movement of Buxton from a planned settlement/refuge

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[33] McFarquhar, "A Difference of Perspective" 28.
[34] Michael Wayne, "The Black Population of Canada West on the Eve of the American Civil War," *Social History* 28 no. 56 (November, 1995).

into a community. Hepburn highlights the period up to the 1880's and concludes with an acknowledgement of the persistence of Buxton up to the present. She does point out toward the end of her study that by the 1880's many black community members were no longer land-owners but renters, and many of the lots had been purchased by white migrants into the community. She discusses the many economic difficulties experienced by the townspeople in the 1870's and 80's. The end of her study leaves the unanswered question, since many Buxtonites chose not to leave the community, what was life like for those living in the resulting community during these years? If life was so difficult and there were few opportunities, why did they choose to stay there? Was it just a question of life being difficult for blacks everywhere at that time so it was simply easier to remain rather than to start over elsewhere? How did the community evolve between then and now? Building on the questions left by Hepburn, this project seeks to begin the process of filling in, as it were, some of this missing information.

Arlie Robbins, born and raised in Buxton, wrote and privately published a history of the community from 1849 to 1982.[36] This book, while not a scholarly work, is perhaps the only compiled history of the community beyond the nineteenth century. It provides an "insider" perspective of Buxton, with Robbins relating personal stories of what it felt like to grow up in Buxton, how members of the community saw themselves and imagined that the rest of the world saw them. Many of the same stories appearing in Robbins's book also appear in the narratives I explored for this project. Regarded in the Buxton community as one of their best researchers and resident historians, Robbins

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[35] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border.*

served as a "guide" for where to look for answers to some of the questions which framed this study, as well as the resource to which I turned whenever I had more questions.

Several studies of African American communities also informed my research and serve as examples of research into the black freedom movement in North America. A study by Flora Price, "Forgotten Spaces and Resident Places: New Mexico Black Towns & Communities (1897-1930)," looks at the cultural and pioneer experiences in the settlement of three towns in the American West by African Americans after the Civil War.[37] While asking similar questions to this study, Price's work serves more importantly as an example of an interdisciplinary study into community formation and evolution. Unfortunately, Price becomes caught more in the process of proving the existence of the towns she researches than in looking at community evolution and persistence. This study also serves as a reminder of the possibilities inherent in research, and of the reality that not everything one sets out to find always materializes during the research process.

Elizabeth Rauh Bethel's social history of the community of Promiseland, South Carolina provides a detailed chronology of the rural black community, exploring how three generations of its inhabitants experienced life from the years immediately following emancipation into the 1960s.[38] When I encountered this study I had already completed my data collection, and was pleasantly surprised to find an almost identical study of an almost identical community in the South. Bethel provided validation for my

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[36] A.C. Robbins, Legacy *to Buxton* (Chatham, ON: n.p., 1983).
[37] Flora Price, "Forgotten Spaces and Resident Places: New Mexico Black Towns & Communities (1897-1930)" (PhD diss., The University of New Mexico, 2003).

methodology, as well as corroborated experiencing many of the difficulties I had faced throughout my process. The similarities between Buxton and Promiseland continue to astound me, and raise interesting questions in terms of future comparative research of African Diaspora communities.

Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua's examination of the history of "America's first black town,"[39] makes use of analyses of census documents, newspapers, town records and other sources, and traces the evolution of the village from its roots as part of the American black community movement to a modern suburb. In addition to providing a chronological history, the book allows a look at the political history of the community, outlining how the black population took control of the leadership of Brooklyn. Cha-Jua's research was also informative in terms of shaping my approach to the research and my understanding of community and of the literature and politics around the American black-town movement.

Methodology and Research Methods

Using a conceptual framework in which historical research can be construed as a personal journey toward the solving of a mystery story (following on the concept of the historian as detective), and working within the historian's craft, I conducted a close analysis of the town as a site of Canadian black community life, asking whether or not

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[38] Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1981).
[39] Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *America's First Black Town, Brooklyn Illinois, 1830-1915* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

schools were an integral part of that life.[40] In order to investigate the underlying causes of the movement of blacks to and from the settlement during this period, I collected evidence through the analysis of census data, government reports, church records, personal and official correspondence, diaries, newspaper accounts and secondary sources, including oral and family narratives and artifacts. My goal was to discover and outline the factors which brought new people to Buxton and caused others to leave the community. As well, I was interested in any factors which would have made them wish to remain once there. I set out to track and analyze such factors as access to education and employment and other personal circumstances, including the need or desire to reunite with loved ones who might have settled elsewhere. I was interested in the everyday question, what did life look like in this community during this period, and what factors shaped the lives of its inhabitants?

The construction of meaning and interpretation of experiences from the past is one way in which social scientists are able to develop an understanding of social life. It is an attempt to understand the nature of the world (and in the case of this research, its past nature) and to discover how people construct meaning in their natural settings.[41] This study follows the traditions of interpretive social sciences and their applications as

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[40] To further explore this concept, see Robin Winks, *The Historian As Detective*; *Essays on Evidence* ed., Robin Winks (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Robert C. Williams, *The Historian's Toolbox: A Student's Guide to the Theory and Craft of History* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003); Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997, 1999); K. Kaestle, "Standards of Evidence in Historical Research: How Do We Know When We Know?" *History of Education Quarterly* 32 no., 3 (1992): 361-366.

[41] G. Burrell and G. Morgan, *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis* (London: Heinemann, 1979); A. Schutz, "Concept and theory formation in the social sciences," in eds., F. Dallmayr and T. McCarthy *Understanding and social Inquiry* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 225-239.

developed by certain philosophers, anthropologists and historians.[42] It is an interdisciplinary project, which borrows from several of the interpretive social science traditions as sense-making aids.

An understanding of the nature of the world of people of African descent living within a Euro-American (Canadian) paradigm could (and should not) be arrived at without employing a critical frame capable of recognizing and interrogating race. Therefore, the study was framed methodologically by critical race methodology and ethnohistory, taking into consideration the assertion that racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies are necessary to "challenge the hegemonic structures (and symbols) that keep injustice and inequity in place."[43] Ethnohistory, in this context, is taken to describe "the use of historical and ethnological methods and materials to gain knowledge of the nature and causes of change in a culture defined by ethnological concepts and categories."[44]

An ethnohistorical approach to research contextualizes events and contemplates "the complex interplay of hegemonic and subaltern cultural stances."[45] I therefore chose to employ critical race methodology, a race-based methodology, taking into consideration the suggestion that existing theoretical and methodological discourses

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[42] Such as C. Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); P. Rabinow and W. Sullivan, "The interpretive turn: Emergence of an approach," in eds., P. Rabinow and W. Sullivan *Interpretive social science: A reader* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 1-21 and Paul Ricoeur, *Main trends in philosophy* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979).

[43] Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Racialized Discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies," in eds., Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln *Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd Edition)* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 271.

[44] James Axtell, "Ethnohistory: An Historian's Viewpoint," *Ethnohistory* 26 no. 1 (Winter, 1979): 2.

[45] F. Harrison, "The persistent power of 'race' in the cultural and political economy of racism," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 47-74.

often fail to take the realities of non-European histories into account.[46] Education researcher Wanda Pillow describes this kind of work as "way[s] for the 'raced' academic to think about our unique roles as researchers and theorists."[47]

My investigation of the community of Buxton employed a model of critical race methodology, specifically a lens defined by critical race theorists Daniel G. Solórzano and Tara J. Yosso as "a theoretically grounded approach, meant to give voice and turn the margins into places of transformative resistance."[48] As previously mentioned, the most important part of this methodology is the use of the "counter-story," the sharing of narratives from those whose experiences are not often told, by collecting them directly from those who have lived the experience.[49] According to education researcher Cynthia Tyson, "counter stories and storytelling function[ed] as a type of counter discourse, as a means of analysis to examine the epistemologies of racially oppressed people."[50] This perspective of the 'Other' provides an alternative way of viewing reality that is diametrically opposed to the dominant world-view. Tyson also reminds us of the reality that slavery's end (1834 in Canada and 1865 in America) was not an end to "racism and the disposition to enslave," so we need to be able to interrogate the laws and policies

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[46] Peter McLaren, "Collisions with Otherness: 'Traveling' theory, postcolonial criticism, and the politics of ethnographic practice – the mission of the wounded ethnographer," in eds., P. McLaren & J. Giarelli, *Critical theory and educational research* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 271-300.
[47] Wanda Pillow, "Race-based methodologies: Multicultural methods or epistemological shifts?" in eds., G. Lopez and L. Parker, *Interrogating racism in qualitative research methodology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 186.
[48] D. Solórzano and T. Yosso, "Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for educational research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 8 no., 1 (2002): 37.
[49] Pillow, "Race-based methodologies: Multicultural methods or epistemological shifts?"; Solórzano and Yosso, "Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for educational research," and C. Tyson, "Research, race, and an epistemology of emancipation," in eds., G. Lopez and L. Parker, *Interrogating racism in qualitative research methodology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 19-28.
[50] Tyson, "Research, race, and an epistemology of emancipation," 20.

that existed at that time, including how they were being interpreted and followed, since they would most likely have continued restricting people from full participation and citizenship in Canada.[51]

Pillow contends that race-based methodologies and epistemologies are "experienced from within" and as such, speak to a notion I have already raised in providing justification for why I feel driven to do this research – this is not my personal history, but it is the history of a people with whom I share "a specificity of oppression, one not based solely on victimization, but also on struggle and survival."[52] As Solórzano and Yasso point out,

> Although social scientists tell stories under the guise of 'objective' research, these stories actually uphold deficit, racialized notions about people of colour…a critical race methodology provides a tool to 'counter' deficit storytelling. Specifically, a critical race methodology offers space to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledges of people of colour.[53]

This countering of the dominant narratives also means the privileging or prioritization of the counter-narratives we encounter in our research, accepting the versions told by the people who have lived the histories directly. In so doing, we recognize that in allowing our actors' lives to be historicized, we are setting them in a framework in which their

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[51] Tyson, "Research, race, and an epistemology of emancipation," 19.
[52] Pillow, "Race-based methodologies: Multicultural methods or epistemological shifts?", 196; C. Tyson, "Colouring epistemologies: A response," *Educational Researcher*, 27 no. 9 (1998): 22.
[53] Solórzano and Yosso, "Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for educational research," 23.

previously submerged personal narratives can be seen and analyzed in relation to the collective events and temporal moments of which they were a part.[54]

Research Methods

The nature of this study required the collection of data from multiple sources (as depicted in Figure 1), and hence different treatment of data, from the use of historical document analysis, narrative analysis and participant observation to demographic analysis. In the following section I revisit this process aimed at recovering the stories of this African-Canadian community.

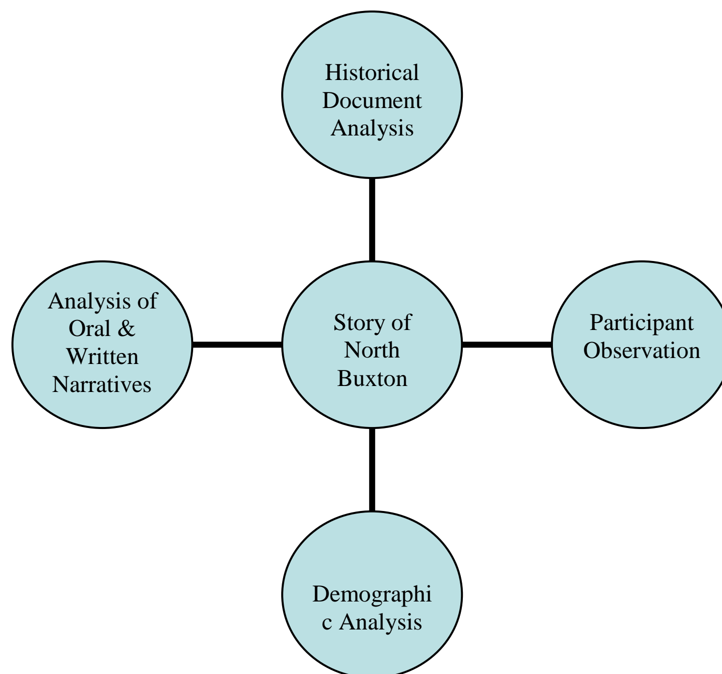

Figure 1.1
Multiple research methods employed by project

[54] Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce and Barbara Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008).

- Historical Document Analysis

The main method this study employed was the analysis of primary- and secondary- source historical documents from various locations, mainly archival, beginning with the archives at the University of Western Ontario and the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum archives. I also accessed documentary resources at the National Archives, held in Ottawa at Library and Archives Canada, and the Provincial Archives, held in the Archives of Ontario, in Toronto, Ontario. The private collections of Spencer Alexander and Bryan Prince, both from long-standing Buxton families, also provided substantial contributions to the research.

According to Williams,

> Primary and secondary sources are the crucial tools of the historian. A primary source is a document, image or artifact that provides evidence about the past. It is an original document created contemporaneously with the event under discussion. A direct quote from such a document is classified as a primary source. A secondary source is a book, article, film, or museum that displays primary sources selectively in order to interpret the past.[55]

Data collection for this project involved content analysis of census information, tax collectors' rolls, government reports, birth, marriage and death records, church records, minutes of meetings, personal and official correspondence, diaries, newspaper accounts, and interviews. These "several points of sources for the data" were incorporated to provide a clearer picture of the community and its residents as well as to allow for

triangulation.[56] The reviewing of documents is an unobtrusive method which allows insight into the context of a particular setting without disturbing the site itself.[57]

By collecting land records and demographic data (census, school, and ecclesiastical records; minutes of meetings), I was able to ascertain the names of heads of households, who owned or rented property, occupations, marital status, and places of births, deaths and baptisms. Using tax collectors' assessment rolls from 1861 to 1914, I was able to determine land ownership and rental throughout this period, allowing for a better understanding of black land ownership over time in this part of Raleigh Township.

Newspapers provided another valuable resource on local issues as well as providing context in terms of societal sentiment regarding such things as race, racism, and attitudes toward "difference" in terms of immigration. While all archival document searches can prove laborious, examining newspapers, especially on microfilm, can be a daunting process. For this project I limited my major examination to two Canadian newspapers, the *Chatham Planet*, and *Toronto Globe*. I additionally accessed individual articles from a number of other regional newspapers, including the *Detroit Plaindealer,* an African American paper from the border city of Detroit, but geographically close enough to serve as a regional source. Many hours were invested to find a small amount of data, as these white-run newspapers devoted little space to this minority population of blacks.[58] For the *Globe* searches I relied on their online archive, searching decade by decade, taking counts of textual elements (e.g. references to Buxton, North Buxton,

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[55] Williams, *The Historian's Toolbox,* 58

[56] N.K. Denzin, *The Research Act (3rd Edition)* (New York:McGraw Hill, 1989).

Elgin, Reverend/Rev. (William) King, black, Negro, nigger, coloured, darkie) and how these elements were used in particular contexts. The *Chatham Planet* searches were not as straight-forward, and for these I began by reading issues published around major dates and events in the community's life (for example, in 1873 when the Elgin Association ceased its operation), and then expanded my search by reading the weekly and sometimes tri-weekly editions of the paper. Of course, by reading only select issues, I am aware that there are articles or bits of information that I may have missed. However, since a look at media treatment of people of African descent could be its own research project, I saw this as an acceptable limitation which could be addressed in later research.[59]

- Collection of Narratives

For this project I accessed three types of narratives. First, as part of its genealogical records of Buxton families, the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum archive holds a number of oral history recordings of seniors who grew up or lived for a number of years in Buxton. The majority of these recordings date back to the 1970's, and as such provide access to voices of individuals who lived during the time period under investigation. Since these recordings are all part of a public record, no permission

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[57] E. Johnson, "A history of black schooling in Franklin County, Ohio 1870-1913," (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2002).
[58] Something also noted by McFarquhar. McFarquhar, "A Difference of Perspective"
[59] McFarquhar discusses these and other issues in his study of African-Canadian history, including subjectivity, the fact that most newspapers were written by whites for a white audience, and the fact that many issues from this period are scarce and difficult to find. McFarquhar, "A Difference of Perspective: The Black Minority, White Majority, and Life in Ontario, 1870-1919."

was required to use them. I did, however, seek out and obtain the permission of the Museum curator. While limited by not being able to ask direct questions of the respondents, and therefore not being guaranteed to have narratives speaking directly to the larger research questions, it was my hope that this would provide a rich repository of information.

The goal of the oral history project since its inception had been to ask respondents about their families, e.g. who their parents and grandparents were and where they were born, as well as about their lives in Buxton. Respondents were asked to describe their childhood, e.g., living conditions, schooling, neighborhood, and social lives. They were asked to discuss issues such as whether they had experienced any discrimination or prejudice in their lives, as well as any major events they could recall happening around them during their lifetime, including political changes, natural disasters and anything else they thought could be of interest. In accessing these interviews, it was my hope that they would provide enough information to paint a picture of their lives which could then be added to the documentary evidence I have about the community. In terms of the legitimacy of using interviews conducted for other research, Ritchie points out that,

> As researchers' periods of study move further into the past and survivors are no longer available to interview, they have to rely more on "second-generation" use

> of oral history, reexamining interviews that were conducted for other publications.[60]

Of the more than twenty archived oral histories, only ten were usable in terms of providing enough data to allow for re-storying their narratives. The rest only allowed access to bits and pieces, owing to the poor quality of the original analog tape recordings. As anticipated, these archived narratives proved to be the most challenging, since I did not have access to the respondents themselves, or to their interviewers. As historian Barry Godfrey and communications specialist Jane Richardson point out, however, this is not an issue unique to using this type of data – documentary sources such as memoirs and diaries also have similar limitations as the researcher is distant from her or his subjects and does not have the ability to direct questions in the manner of a typical interview.[61] In listening to these recordings, I quickly recognized the difficulties inherent in interviewing elderly respondents. At the time of their interviews, the majority were in their late eighties or early nineties, and the vagaries of old age were apparent in almost all cases. I listened to their interviews with the understanding that, while there might be errors in certain aspects of their telling, this oral memory was not memory as it really was, as things really happened, but part of an active process of meaning-making on the part of the teller.[62] As well, I understood that the seeming slips in memory, with stories retold differently than before, could also be a setting straight of

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[60] Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford, New York Oxford University Press, 2003), 125. For more on the use of previously recorded and or transcripted oral histories, see also, Barry S. Godfrey and Jane C. Richardson, "Loss, Collective Memory and Transcripted Oral Histories," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 7 no. 2 (2004): 143-155.

[61] Godfrey and Richardson, "Loss, Collective Memory and Transcripted Oral Histories."

the record, now that respondents were older and perhaps felt freer in their telling. Many of the stories they would tell were of others who had passed on, so they could also have felt there were less chances for repercussions, or at this point in their lives, it no longer mattered.

The interviewers in several instances were family members who often failed to collect biographical information (presumably because they already had access to this knowledge), leaving me to search for clues throughout the recording in order to figure out much of the information I needed. Oftentimes they did not indicate the date of their interview, leaving me then to speculate about the timelines, based on events and incidents discussed. Another common problem I faced was that of the interviewers either leading the respondent because they were insiders and were seeking specific answers, ones I have no way of determining they would have given were they not prompted. There were also several times when the respondents volunteered information which I would have loved to have had follow-up on, but the interviewers would change the subject or simply move on to their next question.

The fact that the motives of the interviewers differed from mine also meant that I found myself with narratives that most of the time provided me with little in terms of my specific research questions. To rectify some of this, whenever possible for this project, the information from the interviews was followed-up with community historians as well as triangulated with available archival and other data. Another issue I had to address in the use of these oral history testimonies is the question of nostalgia; how does the

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[62] See Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*

researcher deal with the fact that many reminiscences may be the respondents looking back fondly at a past that in their telling, almost always compares favourably to their present lives? There continues to be debate as to whether or not nostalgia is a positive or negative factor in the research process, but as Godfrey and Richardson point out, in the process of listening to interview data,

> …crude interview biases can usually be distinguished, and their impact on the testimony identified (similarly, the biases in memoirs and autobiographies have long been negotiated by researchers). Secondly, they would only be problematic if they inhibited an understanding of the life-history, if they were external filters rather than integral factors.[63]

In other words, it is incumbent upon the researcher to pay close attention to the telling, in order to recognize the clues that would suggest nostalgic storytelling versus a direct telling. Nostalgia can therefore be seen and treated as another aspect of the telling. Oral histories need to be treated with the interpretive methods of the social sciences, taking into account all the different forms of evidence the historian has at her or his disposal, as well as the socio-cultural context framing the narratives.

As previously mentioned, use of narrative is fundamental to critical race theory as method. As well, even without the imperative of critical race theory, the inclusion of the voices of people from the community was of particular importance to me as a researcher since I recognized the unique opportunity hearing some of these voices presented. There are very few stories based on actual experiential knowledge of life in

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(Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

African-Canadian communities, and the information collected through this process is therefore a welcome addition to the literature. There is a dearth of qualitative research on the settlement history of African-American immigrants to Ontario at the turn of the 20th century. A wealth of literature is possibly being lost almost daily as the number of resident historians, those who lived this experience, diminishes with time. This fueled my desire to include their narratives in my work.

Several issues can be raised about the use of oral history or narrative insofar as being able to account for its veracity and reliability. However, we should attend to Gardner's reminder that narratives are not to be challenged as distortions of the past, but rather, they should be seen as mediations of it. They should be seen as stories of how these particular people experienced and understood the periods about which they speak, and my re-telling is my understanding of what I have heard. The collection of oral and family histories is one way of providing access or voice to some undocumented experiences, offering rich evidence about subjective and often personal meanings of past events. As Gardner goes on to point out, this method of research is a definite way of widening the evidential base for historical research, providing access to previously marginalized voices.[64] Smith suggests that,

> For many indigenous writers stories are ways of passing down beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the story teller both serve to connect the past

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[63] Godfrey and Richardson, "Loss, Collective Memory and Transcripted Oral Histories."
[64] P. Gardener, "Oral history in education: Teacher's memory and teachers' history," *History of education* 32 no. 2 (2003): 175-188.

> with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story.[65]

Many would suggest that the use of family stories told second- or third-hand might be a major limitation of this study; that these cannot be taken as "fact" and representative of this time. In truth, this depends on how these stories are read and understood. They are not to be seen as stories of how things necessarily really were, but rather, how they have been understood in the greater narratives of the individual's lives. Frisch speaks of this in his essay on Stud Terkel's book *Hard Times,*

> By seeing people turn history into biographical memory, general into particular, we see how they tried to retain a deeper validation of their life and society, and how they deferred the deeper cultural judgment implied by the Depression crisis.[66]

Working with family histories that look back on stories shared by previous generations allows us to take a look at how people have made meaning of the things that have happened to and in their families, and how they see these events as shaping their lives and their own identities. As a researcher it was important to recognize this, and also to be aware that it may be seen as a limitation of the study. In addition, the use of oral and family histories as data sources raises issues of the possibility of there being, for

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[65] Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London & New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1999), 144.
[66] M. Frisch, "Oral history and Hard Times: a review essay," in eds., R. Perks and A. Thompson, *The oral history reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 35.

example, omissions or errors in timelines. Once again, the use of multiple points of data, if such exist, should allay any concerns here.

Another point in terms of the majority of the interviewers being community insiders is the fact that it allowed me to “witness” intergenerational community interactions as these community researchers interviewed “aunts” and “uncles.” They provide an intimate look at the sharing of stories within families and within the community. As such, this quality makes these interviews somewhat of a unique resource.

In addition to accessing and transcribing the oral history collection, I made arrangements to conduct semi-structured interviews with four residents of the North Buxton community, all of them born and raised in the village, and selected based on their families having lived in Buxton since before the Civil War. These interviews were geared toward filling in gaps in the narratives collected from the oral history repository in addition to providing more stories of community life. I relied on the staff at the Buxton Museum to assist me in locating these individuals. I told my respondents from our initial contact that I was mainly interested in family histories, the stories their parents and grandparents might have told them about life in the community. I also probed their childhood memories, asking questions about how long their families had been in Buxton, where their families had lived, who their neighbours had been, where they went to school, and similar questions.

Of the four respondents contacted, only three were interviewed, as the fourth neither showed up for her session nor responded to subsequent requests. I met two of the

remaining three respondents at the Buxton Museum, as they agreed that this was a convenient location for them. The third individual is resident in a retirement home in Chatham, ON and I travelled there with a member of the Buxton community who is also a Museum employee, and "visited" with her while asking questions I had prepared. Because of her advanced age and poor hearing, her son was also present at our interview to provide assistance if needed. In my interviews I asked questions similar to those asked in the original oral history interviews. I kept the general interview format for consistency, although I did include additional questions so I would not end up with the same omissions I had found in the previously recorded interviews. My interviews were under an hour in length, as I was cognizant of the ages of the respondents and of the fact that they might tire.

The two new narratives I subsequently used for my analysis (one of which I ended up using only to corroborate earlier interviews that had been done with her) were very informative and provided valuable information about the community and about the respondents' families. The third respondent appeared to believe he had nothing to share – he said he could not recall any stories, and gave vague responses to my questions, often claiming he had forgotten. I recognize that I experienced outsider status in this case and believe I probably needed more time to build a relationship and trust with him before he would have been willing to share more. The time constraints and perhaps a lack of interest from him hindered my ability to gather information. As the final part of the narrative history data collection, I accessed two diaries from the period in question,

both from the Buxton Museum archive, one of which I transcribed, providing yet another type of historical narrative for my analysis.

Table 1.1
Narrative sources used in the re-storying project

Narrator	**Year of Birth**	**Age at Interview**	**Source of Narrative**
Marrion Shadd Griffith	1896	93	Archived interview Written narrative
Garrison Shadd	1900	73	Archived interview
Phillip Livingston Shadd	1894	79	Archived interview
Dorothy Shadd Shreve Segee	1909	Varied, 100 when I interviewed her.	Archived interview Newspaper interview Interview by researcher
Francis Henry Parker	1891	82	Archived interview
Fred Robbins	1892	81	Archived interview
Frank L. Morris	1889	Unclear	Archived interview
Grace Shreve	1896	77	Archived interview
Cleata Morris	1924	85	Interview by researcher
Arthur Alexander Ethel Alexander	1886 1894	Unclear	2 Archived interviews
William Shadd Charles Shadd	1864 1868	n/a	Shared diary

In the process of researching a people whose history has been marginalized and omitted from the traditional record, it is of vital importance to recognize, acknowledge

and act upon the needs of one's research subjects; otherwise this could quickly become another limitation of the study. As Edwards and Ribbens state in their article on public knowledge, private lives and personal experience, "in listening to and representing such subjugated and obscure 'voices' there are issues around data collection methods and techniques of analysis."[67] If we are to respect our subjects and their lives as we make what is private public, we must pay attention to addressing these issues.

To this end, Lincoln has written an excellent article in which she discusses the issues inherent in researching marginalized groups.[68] Who are the "silent" to whom we make reference? Generally this label has been given to those belonging to non-dominant gender, classes and races – women, racial minorities, the poor, gay and lesbian persons, and Aboriginal peoples.[69] These are people who are generally described in terms of what they are not – not male, not white, and not heterosexual. In her article, Lincoln suggests that in a society in which the dominant world-view is white, androcentric and heterosexual, in the interest of social justice, there is a need to provide alternate considerations of the roles of research, the researcher, and the researched. By looking more closely at these roles and the outcomes of shifting relationships and various possibilities, she suggests alternative outcomes to the research process – ones which would allow the silenced voices of the researched to be heard. What happens when and

[67] R. Edwards and J. Ribbens, "Living on the edges: Public knowledge, private lives, personal experience," in eds. R. Edwards and J. Ribbens, *Feminist dilemmas in qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 15.
[68] Yvonna Lincoln, "I and thou: Method, voice and role in research with the silenced," in eds. D. McLaughlin & W. Tierney, *Naming silenced lives (*New York: Routledge, 1993)
[69] Henry Giroux, *Postmoderism, feminism, and cultural politics: Redrawing educational boundaries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991); L. Weiss, *Class, race and gender in American education* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988).

if the researcher relinquishes control in the interest of social justice? How might stories truly look, coming directly from the perspectives of the silenced, instead of mediated through the researcher as interpreter, with all the issues of power and dominance inherent to this dynamic? These are difficult, yet fascinating perspectives to take into consideration while involved in this kind of process.

Anthropological work with Aboriginal populations in Canada (and elsewhere) has suggested that the legacy of colonization has left many groups with feelings of distrust and unease toward external agencies.[70] Recognizing a shared history of colonization and marginalization, I entered the process with an awareness that this may also be a reality in the black community. Because of this, I was careful to build relationships of trust whenever possible, assuring respondents of my agenda so as to build meaningful and respectful relationships. I tried to ensure that my participants were aware of my goals for the project and that they recognized that I would not knowingly abuse the privilege they provided me by giving me access to their lives.[71] I also tried to remain cognizant of my own status as a gendered and racialized subject throughout the process, trying to ensure that these identities did not affect my ability to counter the prevailing narratives.

- ***Participant Observation***

For the past five years I have attended the community's annual genealogical conference, gaining insight into the importance of memory, identity, and kinship to the

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[70] C. Menzies, "Putting words into action: Negotiating collaborative research in Gitxaala," *Canadian Journal of Native Education,* 28 no.,1/2 (2004): 15-32; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*

community. These ideals are reinforced at many of the other events to which I have been privy, especially during the annual Homecoming events which take place over the Labour Day weekend in September. Families and friends return to the community from all over to revisit their shared history.

Participant observation was not officially a part of my research proposal, but as I found myself visiting Buxton many times over the course of this project, both for data collection and as a guest at various community events, I took note of the relationships among community members, listened to the jokes and stories they shared, and the things they seemed to take for granted as being part of the community identity. I also, as mentioned above, paid close attention to the same kinds of interactions in the audio interviews. By paying attention to these things, I gained a deeper understanding of community relationships, things shared, some of the things valued by the people of Buxton.

- ***Geographic Analysis and Definition of Community***

In approaching the census data for this study, an issue which continued to plague me was the physical determination/definition of the Buxton community, and subsequently, the community making up North Buxton in the post-Civil War years and into the twentieth century. The Elgin Settlement, based on its geographic description, encompassed the land bounded from Concession A to the North, to the rear of the Lake Erie shore lots to the south, beginning and including Lot 6 to the west and ending and

[71] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*

including Lot 12 at the east (see Figure 2).[72] From the start of the settlement, however, there had been families living outside these boundaries whose names appear in records related to Buxton, providing evidence of an ongoing relationship with and even membership in the community. In fact, some of the family names appearing outside these boundaries represent some of the best-known and most active members of the Buxton community.[73] As a researcher, this presented a dilemma as far as who would and would not be included in a listing of Buxton families, and raised the question of how others had approached this issue.

Previous studies appeared to include not just those families within the boundaries of Elgin, but also those who participated actively in the life of the community.[74] This raised the question of how one would determine "active participation in community life," as well as the question of the methodological soundness of including or excluding individuals within the geographic boundaries who were, based on this, not considered active members of the community. I settled on use of the original geographic boundaries for any demographic analyses where I have not specified otherwise.[75] I found I often had to go plus or minus one concession or lot in each direction, as well as including any families outside the boundaries whose names I found constantly appearing in church and

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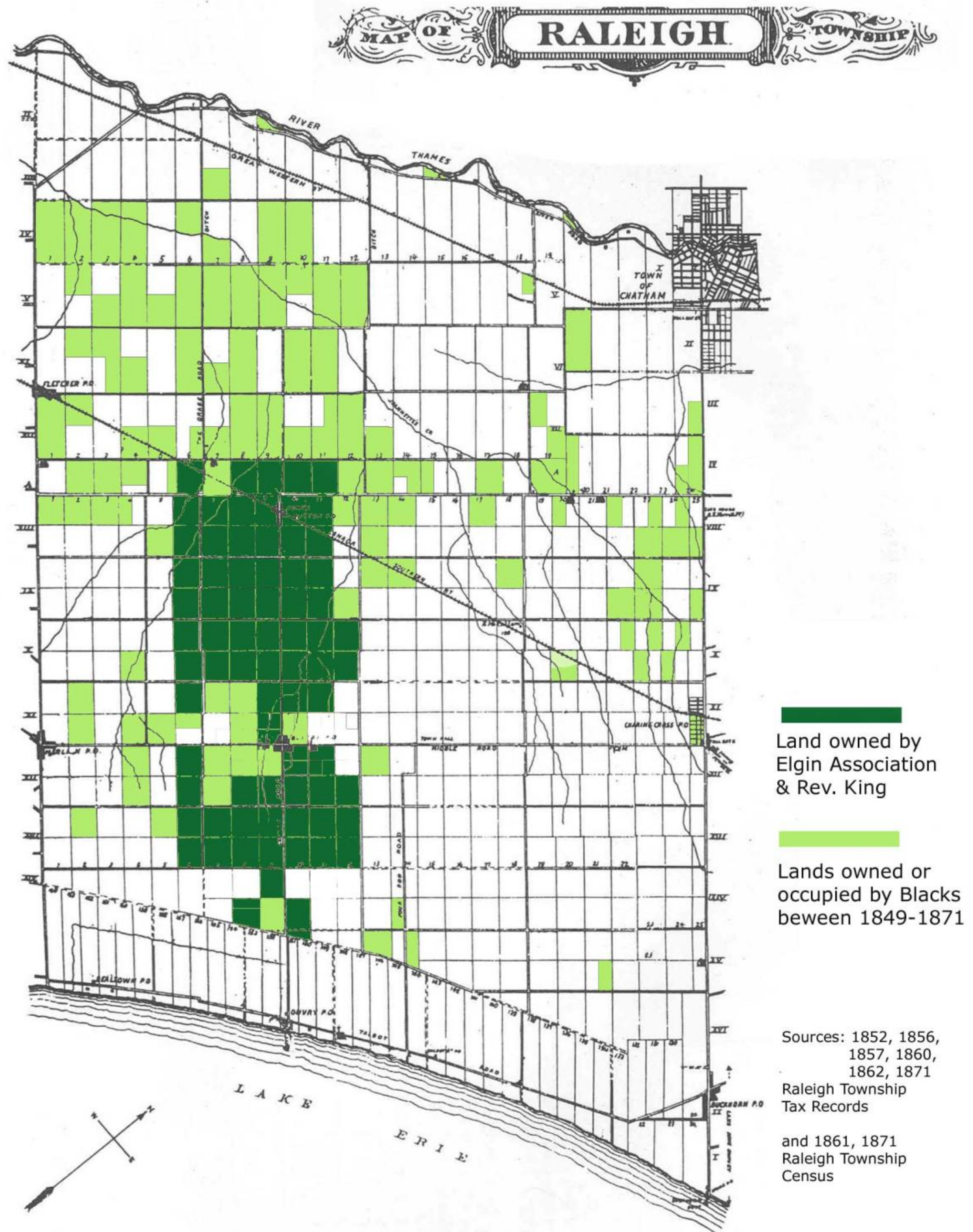
[72] Bryan Prince, "The Lands of the Elgin Settlement" (Buxton, ON: n.p., 2003).
[73] The most obvious example here is the family of A.D. Shadd, who had settled outside Buxton, on the 6th Concession from they first arrived.
[74] See for example, Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*; Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario, 1830-1890."
[75] When making use of census documents, I focused on Division C of the Raleigh Township Census, all the while being conscious of the fact that this omitted individuals who were and are considered Buxtonites.

civil documents, diaries, letters, newspaper articles and any other sources of information I used for this project.

The map of black land ownership for the Township from 1849 to 1871 (see Figure 1.2, p. 44)[76] shows that using the numbers from within the community boundaries provides just a very rough estimation of the community demographics, when we consider the number of black land owners outside the boundary lines who may or may not have been active community members. I have come to the conclusion that there is no definitive way of determining this information precisely. The fact that there was a stable black community within the township perhaps provided a center with which the black residents could choose to identify, and people chose to "belong" to the communities for varied reasons, some of which have been lost to history.

[76] Prince, "The Lands of the Elgin Settlement."

Figure 1.2: Raleigh Township Black Land Ownership 1849-1871



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77 Prince, "The Lands of the Elgin Settlement."

In terms of community make-up, I also found myself returning to the question, "what about the white families?" Hepburn appears to be the only researcher to have given attention to whites living within the boundaries of the community, counting them as actual Buxtonites, albeit only in passing.[78] The Buxton Museum maintains listings of names taken from census documents over the years (their official records of community members). These records list only black community members, with the only exception being whites who were married to black Buxtonites. Any questions as to black-white relations within the community remain to be addressed.

Both ways of determining who was a Buxtonite was to plague me for over a year as I compiled my data, and in many ways continues to do so, as I think dismissing the white members of the community is problematic. For example, saying that whites who moved into (or remained in) the area were simply willing to live close to or among blacks because of the opportunity of attaining less expensive high-quality land is limited in scope.[79] Perhaps we may never have answers beyond conjecture as to why some white families chose to move into the community, or to remain there once Buxton became established, but I would hasten to suggest that making this kind of choice in this period of rampant and overt racism could not have been straight-forward and would be worth further examination.

There has also always been question as to the "race" of some of the Buxton settlers themselves, questions which allude to the mixed heritage of some settlers.

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[78] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*
[79] Walton poses this as an explanation for whites being willing to live in the area among black families. Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario, 1830-1890." 160.

Photographs of threshing parties and other gatherings in the community offer up what may appear to some to be white faces, but one is quickly reminded of:

> the [perhaps] bewilderment of the Census taker as he sought to categorize the 'Race' of the newly arrived people he questioned, especially if they were of light complexion and not living within a recognized Negro Settlement. Depending upon the man himself, the answers ranged from light to dark mulatto, negro, coloured, Indian extraction or the catch-all 'African', no doubt feeling that one word would cover any situation.[80]

In truth, Buxton was a place where people of multiple origins settled. Many who settled in the region were the product of illicit sexual relations between slaver and slave. Some were couples not permitted by law to marry in the United States, but free to cross colour lines in Canada. Not all of the inhabitants came from the United States. People were drawn there over the years from other locales, including other black communities both in and outside of Canada. It was a village built on notions of self-reliance and community, of re-birth after a miserable beginning in another place. This is not to suggest that there were no racial problems, as Rev. King was wont to do, but simply to remind the reader that Buxton was never solely a black settlement, and after the Civil War, while it managed to retain its label as such, it was perhaps best described as a rural farming community with a predominantly black population.

However, with the issues of race or ethnic origin and the confusion around geography, just where was I studying when I said I was studying Buxton? The old

[80] A.C. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* (Chatham, ON: n.p., 1983), 107.

community had come together from various places to create a settlement united because of the realities of racism, a desire for freedom, and a desire to live in a society which provided them the rights of full citizenship. Under these realities and expectations, they had arrived in a common space (whether we limit that space to the Elgin tract of land or to Raleigh Township and beyond) formed their social networks, and built their institutions. Buxton exhibited most of the markers of a traditional rural community, where everyone was dependent on the community for the majority of their needs. They lived in that place, worked on their farms and in other trades there, attended the community churches, sent their children to the community schools, shopped and traded there or close by, and socialized within this same community.[81] In combing through the literature, it became quickly evident that a multiplicity of definitions of "community" abounded. I have come to understand "community" in this context, based on the definition used and expanded on by Cha-Jua in his study of Brooklyn, Illinois.[82] In this definition he states:

> [Community can be described] as a pattern of social organization and as a culturally defined way of life, depending on a fairly high degree of stability. The bonds of community are indeed bonds: they tie social actors to each other and their own pasts.[83]

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[81] Cornelia Butler Flora & Jan L. Flora, *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change, 3rd Ed.* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), 12-14.
[82] Cha-Jua, *America's First Black Town,* 48-9.
[83] Craig Calhoun, "Community: Toward a Variable Conceptualization for Comparative Research," in *History and Class: Essential Readings in Theory and Interpretation*, ed. R.S. Neale (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 86-110.

Cha-Jua goes on to expand on the idea of these bonds, exploring three properties at the foundation of community, as initially defined by sociologist Craig Calhoun. Taken together, these properties clarify how a group becomes socially organized and develops a common identity, seeing themselves in the end as a community. Calhoun's first notion of *density*, describes the extent to which there are opportunities for direct interaction for individuals in a region. Blacks in Raleigh Township, and even into nearby Chatham, always had opportunities for direct interaction, from church services and events, membership in clubs and mutual-aid associations, to attending school or participating in shared events like the occasional barn-raising. The "web of relationships" necessitated by density is termed *multiplicity*, and in this case, means blacks living in close proximity to each other having to rely mainly on each other in contexts such as, in Cha-Jua's case, pre-Civil War Illinois and in my context, Ontario, where racism abounded. Of course, these webs came into being as a result of the close physical and familial circumstances created in communities like Brooklyn and Buxton. It is a forced closeness that leads to the formation of bonds as a result of shared experiences, ideals, and goals. The final property of community, that of *systematicity,* looks at how groups become stratified. Cha-Jua points out that this exists in the African American context as a result of "race/racism and Black nationalism." He goes on to say that:

> …[because] all African Americans, even "mulattoes," were subject to the racial control system, including its structures of domination and ideologies of racial

> inferiority, all African Americans were forced to unite for protection, companionship, mutual aid and development.[84]

African Americans seeking refuge in Canada West were faced with many of these same issues, although not necessarily as much for protection/safety in the years after the abolition of slavery, as for companionship, mutual aid and development.

It is easy to imagine that within this small township, coming into regular contact and being on a first-name basis with each other would be the norm. Their experiences of slavery and racial discrimination in its many forms, the accepted dominant societal belief in their inferiority as a people, the fact that the overriding majority had come to the region from the United States, and their choice to live relatively separate from the rest of society would have served as bases for a common identity and solidarity as a group. Therefore, this combination of properties has come to be fundamental to an understanding of what defines the community of Buxton: it is a physical site of interaction based on proximity, and a community defined by social interactions, a sense of shared identity and "home." The stability, persistence and longevity of what is Buxton cement my understandings of what it has always been and has continued to be into the present. My interest is in the people who self-identified as Buxtonites, and for whom this place is of vital importance by virtue of its role in the celebration and commemoration of their personal history.

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[84] Cha-Jua, *America's First Black Town,* 49.

Exploring insider/outsider status

Being a woman of African descent likely made it easier to establish trust and gain acceptance throughout the research process. As sociologist Frances Winddance Twine suggests, the shared experience of 'race' can allow for the creation of spaces of trust.[85] However, there were occasions where I was made to feel like an outsider, including being ignored by community members from whom I sought to solicit interviews or request artifacts related to their families. A legacy of misuse of trust by others created uncomfortable situations for my process. I was told of other academics who had gone into the community, collected their data, published, and were never again in contact with their informants. One woman told me directly that she believed the community had "given enough away" to outsiders, making me decide not to solicit further help from her. I was afraid to misuse the trust I was being given.

I recognized what I was experiencing as it happened, recalling Narayan's comment that she had to, in her own process, "learn to belong to and operate within, two different contexts at the same time, retaining [my] concerns with private ways of being while also making [my] voice heard within public ways of being."[86] Therefore, while I have come to have a personal relationship with the community and many of its members, I recognize that I am an outsider and a researcher. This is a community to which I do not belong and I have remained cognizant of that throughout my process. At

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[85] Frances Winddance Twine "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies," in eds., Frances Winddance Twine and Jonathan W. Warren, *Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 1-34; see also Juanita Johnson-Bailey, "The Ties That Bind and the Shackles That Separate: Race, Gender, Class and Color in a Research Process," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 12 no. 6 (Nov/Dec. 1999): 659-670.

the same time, because I face many of the same issues as the people whose lives I have examined, in my visits to Buxton I have had to straddle multiple contexts. In this regard, I keep in mind Smith's warning that

> Insider research has to be ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research. It also needs to be humble. It needs to be humble because the researcher belongs to that community as a member with a different set of roles and relationships, status and position.[87]

In this context, the "belonging" of course, is in reference to our shared histories of being raced and marginalized. Never before had I been as conscious of my multiple identities as I had throughout this experience. So many of these identities were implicated in the process that I had no choice but to recognize and acknowledge this as a part of the research process. In many instances my "insider" status made members of the community speak to me as if I were "in the know" about particular events and histories. Historian Carol B. Duncan underscores these issues and the resultant need to address the "mistaken identity" problems as they arise, pointing out her belief that this could be "counteractive" to the aims of the research in question.[88] These are things that I recognize may have affected some of what was and was not shared with me by community informants. For example, one woman invited me into her home for dinner as an "adopted member of the community." She shared photographs and stories, and was willing to talk about anything I wished throughout my visit. However, as soon as I

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[86] K. Narayan, quoted in eds. R. Edwards and J. Ribbens, *Feminist dilemmas in qualitative research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 5.
[87] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 139.

attempted to formalize our relationship and make arrangements to pay a return visit with my "official questions," she ended our newly formed relationship. As a perceived insider, I was welcome to be a part of the unfolding narrative of her family, but as a researcher I was not welcome.

Outline of Dissertation

In this interdisciplinary project, I borrow from many theoretical traditions (e.g. cultural geography, history, education, sociology, ethnic studies and anthropology) in order to take a close look at this community and its people. In chapter two I explore some of the scholarly literature and theoretical discourses guiding the study. I expand on the concept of diaspora by exploring the scholarly literature, with specific attention to how it is being understood and used in different contexts. I discuss how it relates to the study at hand and in terms of how it was used as a framing mechanism in my exploration of North Buxton and the experiences of people of African descent in the United States and Canada in the years after the Civil War.

In chapter three I provide a broad overview of the biographical background of Reverend William King, founder of the Elgin Settlement as well as recount the chronological history of the community over its first twenty-three years. Beginning with the creation of the Elgin Association and the subsequent purchase of land in Raleigh Township, I reconstruct some experiences of the first generation of Buxtonites, including the establishment of the community's schools and churches. During this

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[88] Carol B. Duncan, *This Spot of Ground: Spiritual Baptists in Toronto* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier

period the settlers worked to fulfill their dreams of a self-sufficient black community, under King's leadership. I then explore how the Civil War affected the community, the circumstances leading to the end of the Elgin Settlement, and the beginnings of the Village of North Buxton.

Chapter four provides a concise comparative overview of African-American and African-Canadian history, detailing the experiences of the newly emancipated blacks in the American South, as the Reconstruction project got underway, leading to the anti-black backlash which created a racially-based hierarchy. How this period was experienced in the Ontario context is then briefly explored, after which I take a close look at how the years unfolded for the community of Buxton. I explore the laying out and incorporation of the Village of North Buxton, introducing some of its original inhabitants and their role in the community. Once I have provided an overview of the new Buxton community, I address the question which served as my point of entry into the research - "what happened to this community after the Civil War," by turning to the unfolding of life within North Buxton during the decades from the 1870s to the 1910s, ending with life in the settlement as Canada prepared to enter WWI.

Chapter five introduces the thirteen narratives I re-storied for this project, beginning with narratives from nine Buxtonites, seven previously recorded and transcribed, and two narratives obtained from individuals belonging to old Buxton families. I then explore the thematic re-story of Garrison Shadd's family from the perspective of his two sons, William and Charles, during the 1880s. Each story

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University Press, 2008).

presented in the narratives, while seemingly generic and representative of almost any rural farm family, is a small part of the larger story one can tell of the region, but more specifically, of the community of North Buxton.

In chapter six I interrogate the narratives by exploring the overriding emergent themes of race and identity, community solidarity, work, poverty and class, as well as a fifth theme, that of the silence and omissions noted within the narratives.

In chapter seven I revisit the research questions as well as those posed by diaspora theory, outlining how my process worked insofar as it allowed me to arrive at answers to these questions. I explore the understandings I have gained throughout this process, as well as how the main themes relate to community persistence and the concept of diaspora. Finally, I discuss how the thesis might be used as a resource for educators.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Underpinnings

In this interdisciplinary project, I borrow from many theoretical traditions, bringing together key concepts from different theoretical perspectives (e.g. cultural geography, history, diaspora studies, education, sociology and anthropology) in order to take a close look at this community and its people. Critical Race Theory, Diaspora Theory, cultural geography and scholarly work on race and identity provide lenses through which to examine the themes found in this project. This theoretical frame provides a location from which educators can explore the discourses around issues such as race and racism, as well as African-Canadian and African-American history, in order to come to a better understanding of the history and needs of their students. In choosing a historical interpretive frame from which to proceed, I follow on the assertion that all the social sciences exist as historical disciplines, and therefore I will be able to examine sociocultural factors and issues of migration, settlement and community formation through the use of the materials of history.[1]

Critical Race Theory

The limited presence of voice for or written history of the lives of the people of the community of Buxton within the greater history of Canada presented a need to examine the reasons for this omission. Why is the history of black communities in Canada marginalized? While I recognized that there could be some difficulty in invoking racialized discourse, I entered into the process with an understanding that the use of a critical theory which places race at the centre, while still considering the other factors of

societal organization, was definitely warranted. Critical race theory (CRT) is certainly such a theory. According to Kincheloe and McLaren,

> A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class and gender; ideologies; discourses; education; religion and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system.[2]

CRT is foremost a legal movement linked to African-American history in the post civil rights era.[3] It arose as a critique of an earlier movement, Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which sought to challenge the US legal system's perpetuation of injustice, borrowing from Gramsci's concept of hegemony.[4] While acknowledging that CLS openly challenged the ways in which legal ideology was continuing to maintain the social structure in America, critics of CLS argue that it did not analyze racial power, oppression and politics as part of the injustices it challenged. To remove these oversights, CRT begins with the notion that racism is normal, not aberrant, in US society.[5] CRT holds that racism is so enmeshed in the fabric of American society's social order that it appears both natural and normal to people in that society.[6] Critical race theory challenges much of the

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[1] E.H. Carr. *What is History?* (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1962); C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination.* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

[2] Joe Kincheloe and Peter McLaren, "Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research," in eds., Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln *Handbook of Qualitative Research (3rd Edition)* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 306.

[3] William F. Tate VI, "Critical Race Theory and Education: History, Theory, and Implications," *Review of Research in Education* 22 (1997): 195-247.

[4] Gramsci's explanation of the concept of hegemony suggests that the working class in a society develops a consensus culture in which they define what is good for them in terms of what is good for the upper classes. By accepting this idea, the people maintain the status quo instead of working toward the revolution predicted by Marx.

[5] R. Delgado, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia Temple University Press, 1995).

[6] A. Bell, *And we were not saved: The elusive quest for racial justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, and K. Thomas, *Critical race theory: The Key Writings That Formed the*

dominant discourse on race and racism and examines how legal doctrine is used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups.

Since its initial focus on legal doctrine, CRT has evolved to spawn other related perspectives,[7] all of which hold to the belief that racism is much more than the isolated single cases we hear about and is rooted in American institutions, culture, and concepts of self and group identity.[8] I am not suggesting that Canadian institutions, culture etc. are identical to American ones, and can thereby be examined interchangeably using the same assumptions. However, the realities of racialized discourse, of race and racism in this country, and the similarities in terms of social history and racial/ethnic make-up are enough to warrant the use of this theoretical perspective in an examination of this single Canadian community and its socio-historical political context.

Central to the application of CRT is the notion of "voice" or story-telling. This use of narrative is of great importance to the project, as it provides a rationale for seeking out stories from those living within the Buxton community. Pedagogical theorist and teacher educator, Gloria Ladson-Billings talks about the importance of scholars of colour "writing new texts from the lives and experiences of people much like themselves." She argues for the importance of this storytelling or re-storying, in addition to the critique of the dominant paradigms by scholars of colour:

> The return of researchers of color to communities of colour and the casting of a critical eye on the Euro-American paradigm are not calls to a romantic, "noble

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Movement (New York: The New Press, 1995); Delgado, *Critical race theory*; Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln *Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd Edition)* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000).

[7] E.g. critical white studies – with a focus on white privilege; LatCrit – looking at the racial formation of Latina/os among others.

[8] S. Vargas, "Critical Race Theory in Education: Theory, Praxis, and Recommendations," in eds., G. Lopez and L. Parker *Interrogating Racism in Qualitative Research Methodology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 1-18.

> savage" notion of otherness. Rather, this work is about uncovering the complexities of difference – race, class and gender.[9]

In this way, racialized persons and research that addresses issues of race and ethnicity can provide us with the opportunity to tell the untold stories and counterstories in order to challenge dominant perceptions and conceptions of racialized and subjected individuals.[10] Therefore, theorizing about race from a critical perspective is something which should connect us to the daily realities and struggles about race and other areas of discrimination.

Human Migration

Since this study involved an exploration of a community created from the migration of people from the American Colonies to Upper Canada in the 19th century, a look at theoretical perspectives on human migration is warranted. In his paper on historical geography and ethnic communities in North America, geographer Aidan McQuillan points out that popular studies of historical and cultural geography have traditionally centered on European encounters with new environments and their subsequent settlement of rural areas. He also points out that "the study of Afro-Americans and Native Americans has not attracted much attention from historical

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[9] Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Racialized Discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies," in eds., Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln *Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd Edition)* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 257-278.

[10] Wanda Pillow, "Race-based Methodologies: Multicultural Methods or Epistemological Shifts?" in eds., G. Lopez and L. Parker *Interrogating Racism in Qualitative Research Methodology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 181-202.

geographers," indicating that a need still exists in the literature for a move away from a purely Eurocentric gaze.[11]

Human migration is embedded deeply in the history and in the present functions of modern societies.[12] What is migration? Whom do we speak of when we discuss migrant populations? Traditional migration scholars define a migrant as "an individual who, at the end of a given interval no longer inhabits the same community of residence as at the start of the interval,"[13] and have approached migration research from a positivistic behaviourist perspective. However, in his critical review of contemporary explanations of migration, sociologist Joaquin Arango suggests that "migration is too diverse and multifaceted to be explained by a single theory."[14] A cursory look at the migration literature quickly tells you that there is a plethora of approaches and theoretical stances within the field.

Migration theorists K. Halfacre and P. Boyle point out the existence of a definite philosophical fragmentation in migration research, creating the binary of macro and micro approaches.[15] Sociologist Stephen Castles breaks these down into four main approaches. The first, neo-classical economics, looks to the hope of better job opportunities and other economic benefits as the rationale for migration. The second is another economically-based model, "the new 'economics of migration' [which] puts

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[11] A. McQuillan, "Historical Geography and Ethnic Communities in North America," *Progress in Human Geography* 17 no. 3 (1993): 364.
[12] P.E. Ogden, *Migration and geographical change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
[13] A. Rogers and L. Castro, "Migration," in eds. A. Rogers and F. Willekens *Migration and settlement: A multi-regional comparative study*, (Boston: Dordrecht, 1986), 159. .
[14] J. Arango, "Explaining migration: A critical view," *International Social Science Journal* 165 (2000): 283.
[15] K. Halfacre and P. Boyle, "The challenge facing migration research: The case for a biographical approach." *Progress in Human Geography,* 17 no. 3, (1993): 333-348.

more weight on collective elements in migration decision-making."[16] The third approach, historical-institutional, emphasizes the role of institutions such as corporations and states in initiating migration. The fourth contemporary approach considers a sociological perspective, focusing on cultural and social capital.[17]

In exploring reasons behind the movement of black families into and out of North Buxton in the late 1800's, an inter-disciplinary approach has to be taken since explanations fall within multiple frames - the historical-institutional (changes in American legislation regarding slaves, i.e. recent Emancipation laws); the possession of cultural and social capital (social networks) by the black population in America; and neo-classical economics arising out of the possession of this capital. An example of such an inter-disciplinary approach is provided by Kleiner, Sorenson, Dalgard, Moum and Drews in their use of a theory of voluntaristic behaviour to explain the issues that shape the decision to move to another locale. They rely on notions of "pushes" (the factors that could cause an individual to leave home) and "pulls" (factors which would lead to them choosing to remain in that place) as causal explanations in the decision to move or not to move, and as a way of examining the complexity of the decision-making process, in a model based on approach-avoidance conflict situations.[18]

Migrants will often follow paths already taken to new places, and will go to where family and friends (or countrymen/women) have established a community. These trusted sources can then provide information about things like the availability of jobs or living accommodations. Historically, migration studies referred to this concept as "chain

[16] S. Castles, "Migration and community formation under conditions of globalization." *The International Migration Review* 36 no. 4 (2002): 1146.
[17] Castles, "Migration and community formation under conditions of globalization."

migration."[19] Recent years however have seen the shift to a notion of "migration networks" or "social networks," which serve to develop links between communities at home and in the new places of residence. While not explicitly mentioned in the theoretical framework employed by Kleiner *et al.*, many of the pushes and pulls they discuss would rely on the existence of and participation in various social networks and institutions within both origin and destination communities. These networks, "based on kinship, friendships and community ties mediate between individual actors and larger structural forces."[20] Social networks provide material and physical assistance; serve as channels of communication from individuals to communities and vice versa. They guide and shape the behaviour of individuals, often leading to a decision to migrate.[21]

Social networks are important in providing the initial information about the destination community, often transmitting second-hand knowledge through letters, books, newspapers, and verbal accounts. In the period under examination, the history of the Underground Railroad and several decades of movement into Southwestern Ontario by blacks from the United States would have provided the necessary information regarding the availability of social networks, jobs and welcoming communities for the new (and returning) migrants.

Studies examining other ethnic groups and challenging a non-gendered approach to the field continue to be needed. This absence of voices also suggests a need for the application of critical race theory to the field of historical and cultural geography, calling

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[18] R. Kleiner, T. Sorenson, O. Dalgard, T, Moum and D. Drews, "International migration and internal migration: A comprehensive theoretical approach" in eds. I. Glazier and L. De Rosa *Migration across time and nation* (New York: Homes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1986), 305-317.
[19] S. Castles, "Migration and community formation under conditions of globalization."
[20] J. Marshall and N. Foster, "'Between belonging': Habitus and the migration experience" *Canadian Geographer* 46 no. 1 (2002): 63-83.

for an examination of the dynamics of race, and racism, and an escape from, as Tyner puts it, a "chronology of the lives of white, male aristocratic heroes."[22] A field with a history of Euro-centric bias should have a great deal to tell us when approached with a different lens. The purpose of this type of historical analysis is not to return to the past, but to allow ourselves an opportunity to critique and comprehend the geography of today. This study examines the pushes and pulls bringing people to, and taking them away from, the community of Buxton in the second generation of this community, allowing the community to remain in existence.

Diaspora Theory

My scholarly exploration of the community of North Buxton began with a foray into the available literature on black communities in Canada and the United States. As I read, I noticed a correlation between this literature and much of the theoretical literature on notions of diaspora, as many of the discussions of community were premised around an understanding of the various groups being part of an African Diaspora. In his foreword to Simpson's 2005 publication which examines black communities in Upper Canada before Confederation, historian Paul Lovejoy points out that "In a very real sense, Simpson's study is a 'document,' virtually ignored in the field of scholarship on the African Diaspora since its completion as a Ph.D. thesis."[23] In a similar vein, many articles, especially those looking at slavery, black identity and culture, raised the concept

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[21] A. Pohjola, "Social networks – Help or hindrance to the migrant?" *International Migration* 29 (1991): 435-444.
[22] J. Tyner, "Geography, ground-level reality, and the epistemology of Malcolm X." *The Journal of Geography* 102 no. 4 (2003): 167.
[23] Paul Lovejoy, "Foreword," in Donald George Simpson, *Under the North Star: Black Communities in Upper Canada before Confederation (1867)* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2005), 3.

of diaspora, and alluded to "African Diasporic Studies," but very few included discussions of Canada in their discourse. Considering the reality that people of African descent had been resident in Canada since the 1600s and reading the assertion that "The idea of the Black Diaspora has become central to the ways in which scholars conceptualize Africa-descended communities,"[24] it seemed more than problematic that Canada should be absent in much of this discourse. Outside of Canada, it seemed that scholars of black history had paid cursory attention to our black history.[25] However, the international literature did clarify that I needed to come to an understanding of diaspora before I could delve into the history of an African-Canadian community such as North Buxton.

Since the 1980's, in areas such as literature, sociology, history, anthropology, geography, and ethnic studies there has been an explosion in the work about diaspora as a general concept.[26] While the particular interest that brought me to the term is specifically the African Diaspora (and further, the sub-set, the African-American Diaspora in Canada), it is important to acknowledge that the proliferation of literature on this subject is but one aspect of a general interest in the notion of diaspora writ large.[27]

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[24] Leslie Sanders et al, Editorial [Black Diaspora]. *Canadian Woman Studies* 23 no.2 (2004): 3.
[25] Rachel Adams and Sarah Phillips Casteel, "Introduction: Canada and the Americas," *Comparative American Studies* 3, no. 1: 5-13; Donald Harman Akenson, "The Historiography of English-Speaking Canada and the Concept of Diaspora: A Sceptical Appreciation," *The Canadian Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (September 1995): 377-409.
[26] For explorations of the African Diaspora, see for example, John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1 (Spring 1991): 83-84; Colin Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora," *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 35 no. 6 (1998): 22-27; Michael Coniff and Thomas J. Davis, *Africans in the Americas: A History of the Black Diaspora* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); R. Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 28 no. 1 (2005): 1-19.
[27] Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43 no. 1, Special Issues on the Diaspora (Apr., 2000): 11-45.

Historian Thomas C. Holt has pointed out, "invoking a frame of 'a diaspora' presupposes that through a comparative analysis there is something to be learned from experiences that unfolded for *different* black peoples in *different* places and times."[28] Holt's point is valuable as it highlights an essentialist aspect of diaspora theorization – the tendency to conflate the historical experiences of different people of African descent, assuming sameness based solely on a shared "blackness." The shared experiences of marginalization, racism, and slavery, of people descended from different geographic locales on the continent of Africa and drawn together through the migratory geographies of slavery and colonialism provide the rationale for comparison.[29] While this dissertation is not a conceptual analysis of diaspora, nor is it a look at the process of diasporization of a particular group over time, it does outline and shed light on how the community of Buxton fits into a diaspora framework and why comparisons to other communities in diaspora can be made in the process of exploring this particular community.

Understanding Diaspora

Scholarly papers and popular articles frequently begin by outlining the recent (and rapid) growth in the popularity of Diaspora Studies, followed by a look at what it is we make reference to when we speak of this concept.[30] In its prolific usage, diaspora appears to be a highly contested term, with meanings and characteristics constantly being debated

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[28] Thomas C. Holt, "Slavery and Freedom in the Atlantic World: Reflections on the Diasporan Framework," in Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 36.
[29] Maggi Morehouse, "The African Diaspora: Using the Multivalent Theory to Understand Slave Autobiographies," *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education* 1, no. 3 (2007): 199-216.
[30] See, for example, Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora;" Colin Palmer, "The African Diaspora," *The Black Scholar,* 30 no.3/4 (2000): 56-60; Colin Palmer, "Defining and studying the modern African Diaspora," *The Journal of Negro History*. 85 no. 1/2 (2000): 27-32; Patterson and Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations."

and updated.[31] In addition to changes in how the term is used and what it is used to define, there is a suggestion that there is a lack of clarity around use of the word in general, as evidenced in this comment:

> In many cases, the term 'Diaspora' is used in a fuzzy, ahistorical and uncritical way in which all manner of movements and migrations between, and even within, countries are embraced in its generous conceptual bosom, and no adequate attention is paid to the historical conditions and experiences that produce diasporic communities and consciousness, or the lack thereof.[32]

Therefore, it seems prudent to take a closer look at how the term is being used in the literature, in order to arrive at a better understanding of its meaning.

The word diaspora comes from the Greek, referencing the dispersal or a scattering of seeds, and has tended to be most commonly used in discussions denoting a single ideal case, that of the historical exodus of the Jewish people from the Biblical Israel.[33] The definition has since evolved, and recent scholarship has given the word salience on a wider scale, seeing diaspora as a way of describing the mass movement and dispersal of many other communities beyond this initial case. Sociologist Barnor Hesse suggests an addition to the definition of diaspora in terms of how we should come to see the concept. According to his definition, diaspora includes bidirectional movement – a movement of

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[31] Something that makes sense once there is an understanding of its relationship to issues of identity, a concept which is never fixed and is forever changing.

[32] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs* 104 no. 414 (2005): 39

[33] According to Alpers, prior to the 1960s, its use was confined to Jewish and Christian writing and the term was first used by George Shepperson in 1965 in response to the parallels he saw existing between the Jewish Diaspora and the dispersal of Africans during the slave trade. Edward A. Alpers, "Defining the African Diaspora," paper presented to the Center for Comparative Social Analysis Workshop, October 25, 2001.

dispersal or scattering from the homeland, along with a second, that of germination, or settlement in the hostland(s).[34]

Some theorists believe it is the natural tendency for racial or ethnic groups to form separate communities. In fact, there are those who say that this tendency is a universal characteristic of human beings. These scholars suggest that adoption of diaspora as a description of their condition may be a way of coming to terms with that condition for those who find themselves placed on the margins of the nation-state.[35] They survive by creating community, and hence finding a place of belonging. The early and common belief in the dispersion being forced (related, of course to the Jewish case of a forced exodus) no longer appears to be considered necessary to the definition as groups may choose to leave or be somehow drawn to their new destinations.[36]

The most widespread approach to defining the term diaspora is to provide the reader with a checklist of commonalities of communities which are considered to be diasporic. Many scholars will then also attach their own additional criterion, which, depending on how strict is their approach, determine which groups they may or may not choose to include in this particular grouping. In seeing the Jewish Diaspora as the ideal case, Akenson points out the impossibility of any other group "fitting" the criteria of diaspora membership, when the word is based on a very specific set of criteria which no other group could ever realistically meet. Recognizing the impossibility of changing the direction recent scholarship has taken, he argues for seeing the concept as:

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[34] Barnor Hesse, *Unsettled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions* (London: Zed Books, 2000).
[35] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993); Stuart Hall, "Cultural identity and Diaspora," in Identity: Community, culture, difference, ed. J. Rutherford (London: London & Wishart, 1990), 222-37; A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization,* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

> …a fresh use of tools we already have to hand – concepts of ethnicity, population movement, in- and out-migration, social mobility, multiple cultural identities, popular culture, religious affiliations, ideological constructs – nothing new, but applied in a much broader context.[37]

However one approaches its definition, diaspora seems to offer ways of thinking about issues of origins, belonging and identity while bringing in notions of race, ethnicity and nation.

The understanding of constructs encompassed in this particular discourse comes with an acknowledgement that the term diaspora can also be highly political. With the spread of the use of and discourse around diaspora, more and more groups are seeking or using this identity for themselves,[38] many failing to apply necessary analytical criteria to the assignment of diaspora status. Most scholars appear to agree on at least three features being common to all diasporas: 1) dispersal from the homeland to two or more destinations; 2) a relationship to an actual (or imagined) homeland; and 3) an awareness of a common group or diasporic identity.[39] However, I do agree with Alpers that creation of such a list can be problematic, causing one to focus on these characteristics alone and thus limiting one's ability to see other, perhaps novel experiences of diasporization for a given group.[40] Palmer speaks to this when he points out that:

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[36] For discussion around whether or not diasporas must include an initial involuntary removal from the homeland, see Akenson, "The Historiography of English-Speaking Canada and the Concept of Diaspora.

[37] Akenson, "The Historiography of English-Speaking Canada and the Concept of Diaspora," 385.

[38] James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9 no. 3, Further Inflections: Toward Ethnographies of the Future (1994): 310; Alpers, "Defining the African Diaspora"

[39] See, for example, Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies;" James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Patterson and Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations;" Kim D. Butler, "From Black History to Diasporan History: Brazilian Abolition in Afro-Atlantic Context," *African Studies Review* 43 no. 1, Special Issues on the Diaspora (Apr., 2000): 125-139.

[40] Alpers, "Defining the African Diaspora."

> No diasporic community manifests all of these characteristics or shares with the same intensity an identity with its scattered ancestral kin. In many respects, diasporas are not actual but imaginary and symbolic communities and political constructs; it is we who often call them into being.[41]

In so saying, Palmer acknowledges the fluid nature of the identities inherent in our communities of interest, our understandings of diasporas and the struggles in trying to establish a definitive analytical stance.

Studying the African Diaspora

People of African descent, at varying times in history, have migrated either voluntarily or under duress to a vast number of countries and territories worldwide, in addition to engaging in contact through trade with as many cultures. It is therefore important before we continue to examine to what we make reference when we conceptualize the African Diaspora.[42] From the previous discussion, it should be clear that an understanding of what constitutes the African Diaspora is "limited by conceptual difficulties of defining what we mean by diaspora in general, and the African Diaspora in particular."[43] Scholars of Diaspora Studies appear to vary greatly in their understanding of what constitutes the African Diaspora either geographically, temporally, or both. In addition, regardless of the particular rendering, each appears to somehow omit an aspect included by another approach to the subject. Most explorations of the African Diaspora

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[41] Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora."
[42] With there having been several temporal movements of Africans from the continent as well as movements within continental Africa, there has been some suggestion that we might be better served by making reference to African Diaspora**s** See, for example, Alpers, "Defining the African Diaspora;" Ibrahim Sundiata, "Africanity, Identity and Culture," *Issue,* 24, no. 2 (1996): 13-17.
[43] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs* 104 no. 414 (2005): 35.

appear to privilege the Black Atlantic and more often than not (knowingly) omit discussion of the movement of African peoples to other regions, e.g., around the Indian Ocean, or they focus on what is now seen as the "modern" diaspora, neglecting to widen their scope to include major movements (e.g. within the continent) in the distant past.[44] For the purpose of this study therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge that my focus will be on the modern Black Atlantic or New World Diaspora, looking at the movements of people of African descent to the Americas by means of the Atlantic slave trade, and then to Canada via the Underground Railroad and by other means, in order to examine whether or not the group at the focus of my study is diasporan in nature.

While coming to an understanding of what we mean by the "African Diaspora" is a necessity of this project, also important is recognizing the history of the study of the field, as it provides the reader with a better understanding of the goals of the scholarship around African Diaspora Studies. A look at the evolution of the study and use of the term African Diaspora indicates that it is related to a period in history when many African-American writers and thinkers were beginning to articulate a need for black nationality or a collective identity, with some taking this as far as voicing an idea of repatriation to Africa. This discourse arose in response to the political climate of the late 1800s and early 1900s, which evidenced blatant racism and a belief in the inferiority of people of African descent. The discourse was timely in that it also met with the thinking of scholars within the African context at that time, and a Pan-Africanist movement centered in the Americas was the result of the coming together of the African and American schools of thought.

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[44] Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora;"; Alpers, "Defining the African Diaspora;" Morehouse, "The African Diaspora."

The establishment of this movement suggests that African Americans and other people of African descent living outside the continent hoped to discover opportunities for nationality and dignity away from places where they believed they were still not being treated as full citizens, and were excluded from any meaningful participation. Therefore, proponents of the nationalist ideals of Pan-Africanism were suggesting the creation of a nation for blacks, one transcending geographic boundaries.[45] This is in keeping with Clifford's assertion that

> Diaspora cultures are, to varying degrees, produced by regimes of political domination and economic inequality. But these violent processes of displacement do not strip people of their ability to sustain distinctive political communities and cultures of resistance.[46]

In its quest for a "nation for blacks" or a "return to Africa," nationalist discourse was evidence of assertions of agency and continued identity struggles. The study of the African Diaspora began with its centre in the American discourses of racial and ethnocultural equity for people of African descent, led by the young public intellectuals from within this New World Diaspora.

In the next stage of the evolution of the field, a popular re-conceptualization of the African Diaspora relied on Gilroy's book, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-consciousness,* which expanded on W.E.B. Du Bois' theories of race and double-

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[45] A detailed exploration of the history of the Black Nationalist Movement is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it is important to note that this history and the Pan-Africanist perspective are of vital importance to the evolution of studies of the African Diaspora, and speak to the notion of a historic search for an "African homeland." For an interesting discussion of Afro-Modern politics around the concept of non-territorial nationalisms recognizing the stateless subject status of many blacks, see Michael Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora," *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 245 - 268.
[46] Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translations*, 265.

consciousness.[47] Employing the Atlantic as a system of cultural exchanges, Gilroy explored the relationships between race, culture, nationality and ethnicity. A vital addition to the discourse was his look at the reflexive cultures and consciousness of the groups which were in constant contact – Europeans, blacks, natives, Asians – in the triangular systems of Africa, the Americas, and Europe which make up the Atlantic world. Gilroy recognized that these groups were not hermetically sealed off from each other and thus he began the work leading to theories of creolization and hybridization. For Gilroy, the Black Atlantic provides an opportunity to look at the migrations, continuities (and discontinuities) that tie the black communities outside Africa to each other and to the continent. Drawing on Gilroy's analysis, scholars have come to an understanding that diasporic membership entails the recognition of multiple roots and routes (exploring notions of biology and geography) in understandings of belonging. Gilroy's invocation was the concept of the interrelatedness of the geographies, cultures and peoples throughout these transnational and intercultural regions, and of the hybridized and syncretic products of this history of contact.[48]

More recent scholarship argues against and focuses less on the essentialist biological notions of identity and more on the fluid, ever-changing notions of identity and culture. Scholars suggest and rely on the idea that "diasporic identities are socially and historically constituted, reconstituted, and reproduced; and that any sense of a collective identity among black peoples in the New World, Europe, and Africa is contingent and

[47] For more on the notion of double consciousness, see Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* where he posits his ideas about the colour line in America and the sense of self he refers to as double consciousness. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903).
[48] Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora"

constantly shifting," as are the linkages among them.[49] In addition to the discourses of identity, more recent scholarship explores new ways of conceiving the relationship between Africa and the African Diaspora, for example in terms of shifting from scholarship centred on the Americas to beginning with a look to Africa as the point of origin in the discourse. Members of the Nigerian Hinterland Project have taken an approach that recognizes the fact that Africans going to the Americas brought their culture and histories with them, and these need to be understood before one can fully explore how they helped shape New World identities and cultures.[50]

When I initially thought about my study of the community of Buxton and how it might or might not connect to the rest of the African Diaspora, I had no language for articulating my thoughts. I knew, or thought intuitively, that there was "something" that connected colonial blacks to one another, and subsequently back to continental Africa.[51] However, I had no sense of the scope or type of the connection, or if I was falling into the trap of employing essentialist notions to guide my study. Was this village too small a unit to even include in such considerations, I wondered. Was the fact of belonging to a community of people descended from the Atlantic slave trade enough to determine membership in this diasporic group? Could the people who had settled in Canada, while still being part of the African Diaspora, also belong to a newer African-American

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[49] Patterson and Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations," 19.
[50] For a more on the work of the Nigerian Hinterland Project, see Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (London; New York: Continuum, 2000); Paul E. Lovejoy, "The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Slavery," *Studies in the World History of Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* 2, no. 1 (1997): 1-23; Kristin Mann, "Shifting Paradigms in the Study of the African Diaspora and of Atlantic History and Culture," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 1 (2001): 3-21.

Diaspora, or were they simply, as I had always heard them described, migrants, or refugees? If they were truly a group in the process of diasporization,[52] were there any characteristics of the community that could be explained by this status? To guide my process, I needed to locate some kind of theoretical frame which would allow for a look at the movement of African-Americans into Canada; the social and political climates they experienced; their connections to other communities in diaspora; and the evolution of their communities, including individual and community identities.[53] I looked to Critical Theory, but it was inadequate in its consideration of identity and race. However Critical Race Theory (CRT), began with the understanding of the place race held in the social and political contexts of the Americas and proved more helpful, a realization I share with Kim Butler, who in her own work concludes that the experiences within the Black Atlantic[54] were unique enough to warrant a particular theoretical perspective. Indeed, the experiences of people of African descent in the many post-abolition contexts of the nineteenth century underlined a need for a particular set of conceptual constructs to be developed.[55] As Butler further points out, "The purpose of frameworks is to help identify patterns. In this case, the diasporan framework reveal[s] new possibilities for interpreting the post abolition history of African descendents…."[56] Following on this I recognized

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[51] For further exploration of the notion that the post-slave cultures of the Atlantic world are in some significant way related to one another and to the African cultures from which they partly derive, see Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Morehouse, "The African Diaspora;" Hesse, *Un/settled multiculturalisms.*
[52] Butler, "From Black History to Diasporan History."
[53] From my readings I was unable to understand what held the discipline of Diaspora Studies together beyond the study of people "abroad" who were descendents of Africans.
[54] The term Black Atlantic has become one which is used to denote the modern African Diaspora and was made popular by Paul Gilroy. Colin Palmer describes this modern Diaspora as "millions of people of African descent living in various societies who are united by a past based significantly …upon "racial" oppression and the struggles against it and who,…share an emotional bond with one another and with their ancestral continent…" Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora," 28; Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
[55] Butler, "From Black History to Diasporan History;" Patterson and Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations."
[56] Butler, "From Black History to Diasporan History," 134.

that while I was already approaching the study with a critical eye by placing race at the centre of the discourse, Diaspora theory would also allow me another way of looking at this community in light of its experiences of the postbellum years.

Butler suggests that the types of research questions explored in a diaspora study indicate that the methodology the researcher is following is diasporan in origin. She goes on to divide these questions into five dimensions of study: "(1) reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal; (2) relationship with homeland; (3) relationship (s) with hostland (s); (4) interrelationships within diasporan group; (5) comparative studies of different diasporas."[57] Taking into consideration that dimensions 1-4 were original aspects of the study, I was left with no doubt that the application of a diasporan framework was more than justified in this particular context.

Contemplating the African-American Diaspora in Canada

The African-descended population of Canada is extremely diverse, echoing multiple migrations and directions of movement from the continent and eventually to settlement in Canada. This group consists of individuals born in Canada, the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, and other parts of the world. In terms of diaspora membership, people may belong to various diasporic groups as part of their multiple identities, "the salience of any of which at any given time [will be] conditioned by socio-political exigencies."[58] Within the institution of slavery throughout the Americas, experiences differed according to geography and the particular needs of the industry

[57] Butler, "From Black History to Diasporan History," 127.
[58] Kim D. Butler, Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 no. 2 (2001): 193.

being served by the slave labour force.[59] Therefore, the differences in the actual experiences of slavery would have been instrumental in shaping the development of the African Diaspora and its various groupings. The focus of this thesis is on the descendants of those who sought refuge in what is now southwestern Ontario from chattel slavery and from racism in the United States.

Prior to the arrival of these African-Americans however, there were already people of African descent resident in Canada. Both French and English Canada had been slave-holding colonies, with the first known black resident of Canada having been a slave child from Madagascar, arriving in New France in 1628. Furthermore, Mattieu da Costa, a free black man, was said to have travelled with Pierre du Gua on his expedition to the Atlantic region from 1604-1606. Da Costa served as an interpreter between the French and Micmac, but it is unclear whether he was ever resident in Canada. French Canada continued its slave practice throughout the 17th century. The British continued the practice upon conquering New France in 1760, and many British residents in the colony were slave-owners.

The American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) brought many individuals and families loyal to Britain's King George III north into British territory. These "Loyalists" were welcomed by the British government and a number of them were given land, as well as several high-ranking positions. Many arrived in the colony with their slaves; the "Act for encouraging new settlers in His Majesty's Colonies and Plantations in America," quoted in Hill, allowed that settlers could bring with them any Blacks, household

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[59] Mann, "Shifting Paradigms;" Phillip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

furniture and other personal property.[60] In addition to these arrivals, soon after the outbreak of the war, Britain capitalized on the reality of many slaves already showing resistance by escaping bondage and offered freedom to any American slaves who would join their forces. Thus, by the close of the war, several slaves had escaped north to Canada, or had joined the British forces and had subsequently been taken to British colonies as promised.[61]

In 1793 the Upper Canada Legislature passed an act repealing the Imperial Statute of 1790, the law which had allowed new settlers to the region to bring their slaves with them, with the new act allowing for the gradual abolition of slavery in that province.[62] Based on the provisions of this act, children born in Upper Canada after July 9, 1793 would gain their freedom at the age of twenty-five. Adult slaves, however, did not gain their freedom at this time, with the exception of those who arrived in the province after this date, who were free on arrival. The new act also prohibited the further importation of slaves into Upper Canada.

Since the institution of slavery continued in the United States, and the first Fugitive Slave Act[63] was passed by Congress in 1793, a number of American slaves

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[60] Hill goes on to point out that some of the most influential families in Canada owned slaves. Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* (Agincourt, Canada: The Book Society of Canada Ltd., 1981).

[61] At least 30,000 British Loyalists were resettled in what are now Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, many with their slaves, and approximately 500 Black Loyalists were given land grants in Nova Scotia. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers*.

[62] Under the direction of Lieutenant Governor Simcoe, Attorney General White introduced a bill in the House of Assembly, geared toward the gradual abolishment of slavery. The Bill stated 'no Negro or other person who shall come or be brought to this province…shall be subject to the condition of a slave or to bounden involuntary service for life." For further details, see J. Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1865* (New York: Associated Faculty Press, 1985); James S.G. Walker, "African Canadians," in ed. P. Magocsi, *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 139-176.

[63] This law allowed slave owners to apprehend their slaves from any US state, as well as allowing the state's authorities to apprehend fugitives from the law. Fred Landon, "The Negro Migration to Canada

migrated to the safety and now legal freedom of Upper Canada. By the War of 1812, it was well known and advertised that Upper Canada was a British refuge for blacks. In addition to information being provided by abolitionists as well as by other blacks, the Cochrane Proclamation had also spread word of the availability of refuge for individuals wishing to emigrate by joining the British military.[64] Veteran Black Loyalists who were coming to Upper Canada after the War petitioned the then Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland, for land on which to settle. He provided them with land grants in a region between Lakes Simcoe and Huron, an area later known as Oro Township.[65] British colonies to the north as the lands of freedom had become mythologized in the stories the slaves and others told from the final years of the 18th century. The information that made its way south transmitted not just the availability of freedom, but also routes to travel, opportunities to find work once there, and the kind of life that awaited anyone able to make their way to Canada.[66]

By the mid-eighteenth century, the majority of slaves resident in the United States had been born in that country, and many lived in contexts under which they were able to establish families and maintain kinship relations.[67] In spite of this however, they remained enslaved, and for many, their major hope was for a life of freedom, both for themselves and for their families. For many hearing tales of freedom in Canada, the

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After the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act," *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1920): 22-26; Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

[64] The Cochrane Proclamation was issued by Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane on April 2, 1814 while the British naval forces were under his command in American waters. Frank A. Cassell, "Slaves of the Chesapeake Bay Area and the War of 1812," *The Journal of Negro History* 57 no. 2 (Apr., 1972): 144-155. See also, Walker, "African Canadians," 144.

[65] The settlers were granted 1,100 acres from the government and an additional 900 over the next 6 years. The community was in existence until about 1860 at which time many blacks moved away as more white settlers moved into the region. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*.

[66] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*.

[67] Walker, "African Canadians."

possibility of finding this freedom on British soil was too great an opportunity to ignore. According to Hill:

> Slaves sold from northern states to the deep South carried stories of Canada. Slaves from the South sold into Kentucky, Maryland and Missouri learned that they could find their way to freedom by following the North Star beyond the American border…Their determination to win liberty for themselves and their children, a growing awareness of Canada's small, free, Black population, and the urgent need of a sanctuary for escaped slaves, gave birth to the Underground Railroad (UGR) movement.[68]

Beginning some time after the end of the War of 1812 and well established by 1830, the Underground Railroad was reference to a series of routes and safe havens used by blacks as they escaped through the northern states and into Upper Canada. The most travelled and best known routes began in Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York, with the individuals making their final entry into Upper Canada by crossing the Detroit River or Lake Erie.[69]

The (second) Fugitive Slave Act passed by the American Congress in 1850 was more punitive to the slaves than its predecessor, and provided greater freedoms to their owners as they allowed slave owners directly or indirectly (through agents) to track down and arrest fugitive slaves anywhere in America. This law expanded federal judicial authority and allowed for the apprehension and repatriation of fugitives. No longer were these runaways safe once they entered northern, non-slave-holding states. In practice, this law made all blacks in the North targets for capture unless they could prove their free

[68] Hill, *The Freedom Seekers*, 25.
[69] Linda Brown-Kubisch, *The Queen's Bush Settlement: Black Pioneers 1839-1865* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2004). William J. Switala, *Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2001).

status. The law left no provision for legal counsel for those taken into custody, and the free men and women of colour in the northern states became vulnerable to being forced into slavery.[70] As a result of this, passage of this act was a watershed in the movement of people of African descent from America into Upper Canada seeking refuge. In all likelihood, the fear this law and its consequences engendered in them would have made many feel they had little recourse but to flee. While it is still impossible to determine actual numbers, the assumption is that tens of thousands of fugitive slaves and free people of colour flooded into Upper Canada.[71] Adding to the earlier migrations of people of African descent into the country in earlier years, these refugees represented a new group within the New World Diaspora.

Among those who crossed into Canada were fugitive slaves from the Upper South, with a few also coming from the Lower South. Others among them were former slaves who had been emancipated by their owners, as well as those who had made their way into the free states over time. Contrary to common belief, the majority of those who arrived after 1850 were free Negroes.[72] The condition of these newly arrived blacks was often poor; they had left with little more than the clothing on their backs, and once in Upper Canada they were forced to rely on relief organizations for survival. Many settled in the border towns, in places such as Amherstburg, which became a flourishing tobacco community by the 1820s, St. Catherines, Colborne (near Hamilton), and Windsor. In

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[70] Afua Cooper, A. Shadd, "The Lord Seemed to Say 'Go': Women and the Underground Railroad Movement," in …; J. Richardson, "Buffalo's Antebellum African-American Community and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850." *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 29-36.

[71] Numbers vary greatly, but according to Walker, modern researchers assume somewhere between thirty and forty thousand blacks sought refuge in Canada. Walker, "African Canadians," 144.

[72] William H. Pease & Jane H. Pease, *Black Utopia: Negro Communal Experiments in America* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963).

these places they were initially able to find work, cheap housing and the help of kind souls.

With the passage of time, however, more and more refugees settled in communities further away from the border, especially as they came to realize that slave catchers would cross the border in pursuit of a fugitive. People moved to established towns such as Chatham and London or established their own communities, intent on being self-sufficient, but more often than not, encountering unexpected obstacles, such as an inability to purchase land.

As the newly arrived blacks discovered, crossing the border to a country where their freedom was legislated did not mean their experiences of racism and marginalization came to an end. This led some settlers, as well as white abolitionists and other white sympathizers, to formulate plans to purchase land for separate black communities. Four communal experiments were undertaken in Upper Canada starting in 1829, each aimed at providing blacks with opportunities for land ownership, access to an education, and some degree of protection from the racist attitudes that pervaded at that time.[73]

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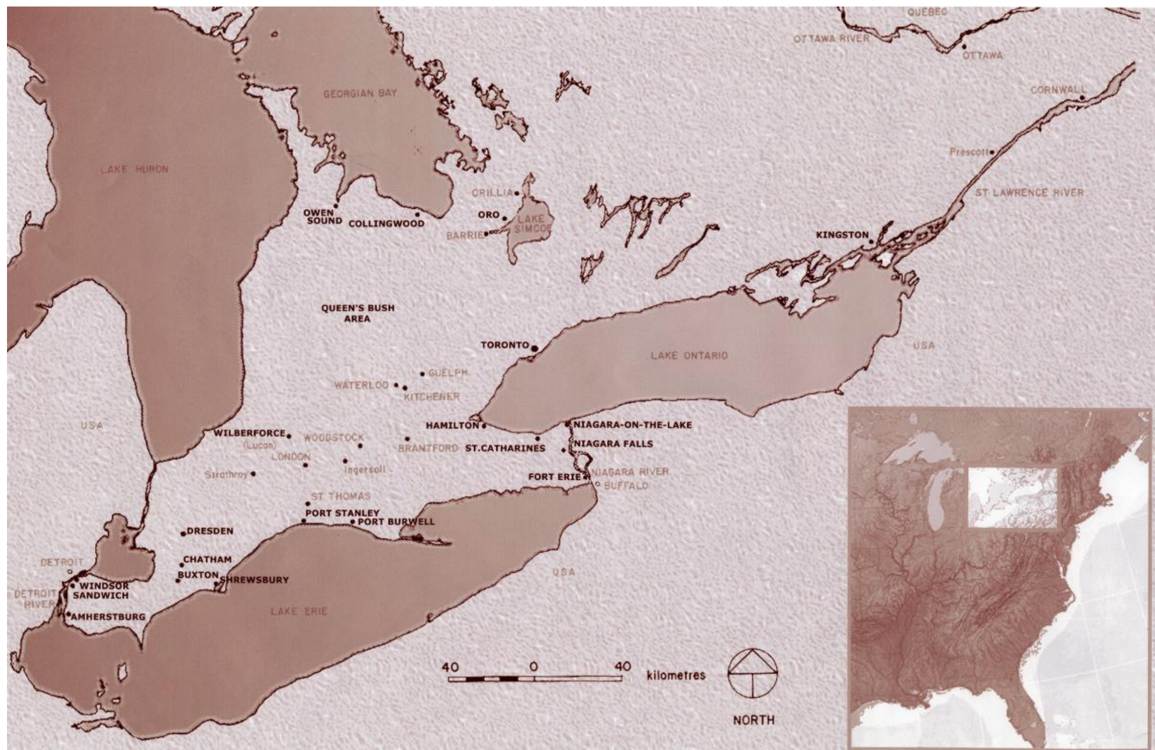
[73] Walker, "African Canadians."

Black "communal experiments" in southwestern Ontario

Figure 2.1



Early Fugitive Settlements, courtesy of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

1) Wilberforce

Starting in 1829, Cincinnati began preparations aimed at the enforcing of Ohio's Black Codes which had been in place since the early 1800s but scarcely followed. While Ohio remained still a free state, under these laws blacks lost many of the freedoms they had previously taken for granted. In order to obtain employment, blacks would be required to furnish a certificate of freedom. Blacks also became ineligible for military service, lost the right to bear arms, and could not perform jury duty. In addition, every Negro was required to pay a $500 bond to the city, and newcomers were expected to become bonded within twenty days of their arrival in the city. These restrictions were officially put into place in 1830, with the blacks in the city being given sixty days to

become bonded. Members of the community got together and decided that their best option was to seek land in Canada on which they could settle. Eight hundred acres of land were purchased from the Canada Land Co. by the Quakers of Ohio and Indiana, and the small community of Wilberforce (just outside London in the area that is now Lucan) came into being.[74] While the initial interest in the community was great, and expectations were that upwards of three thousand would move to the community, numbers never rose above 200. In 1832, abolitionist Benjamin Lundy visited the community, providing publicity for Wilberforce and for the notion of resettlement in Canada. According to Taylor, within six years of settlement, assessment rolls noted that, "forty-three families owned land in the township. In fact, every head of household listed owned no less than twenty acres of land; twenty-nine owned over one hundred acres of land."[75] However, the community was short-lived, and Wilberforce has been considered to have been a failure by 1836, when Irish settlers began moving onto the farms of former black residents who had returned to Cincinnati or some other part of America, while others may have moved to other Canadian locales.[76]

2) Dawn

Many who worked for the abolition of slavery held firmly to the belief that they needed to prepare slaves for life in a white world. The belief was that blacks needed to learn not just how to read and write and perhaps a particular trade, but they also needed to

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[74] For a more detailed history of the community of Wilberforce, see Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*; Pease & Pease, *Black Utopia*; Hill, *The Freedom Seekers*; Marilyn Baily, "From Cincinnati, Ohio to Wilberforce Canada: A Note on Antebellum Colonization" *The Journal of Negro History* 58, no. 4 (Oct. 1973): 427-440; Nikki Taylor, "Reconsidering the 'Forced' Exodus of 1829: Free Black Emigration from Cincinnati, Ohio to Wilberforce, Canada," *The Journal of African American History* 87 (Summer, 2002): 283-302.
[75] Taylor, "Reconsidering the 'Forced' Exodus," 293.

be their own masters. With an education in the moral and religious values of their community, they could then be expected to fulfill their roles as citizens. Hiram Wilson, a well-known abolitionist, had worked tirelessly toward educating those who had fled slavery in America. He and his colleagues established schools in communities in Upper Canada with the aid of the American Anti-Slavery Society, by forming the Canada Mission, geared at the establishment and running of these institutions. Dawn, also known as the British-American Institute of Science and Industry, a school for the "Education Mental Moral and physical of the Colored inhabitants of Canada not excluding white persons and Indians," was one of these institutions.[77] The Institute was opened in an area in what is now Dresden, ON, with twelve students in 1842, and was run by a mixed board of three blacks and three whites.

A community grew up around the school, as its presence alone brought black families to the area. Like Wilberforce before it, Dawn was a rural agrarian community, segregated from the white world in order to allow the Negro an opportunity to gain an education and to become his own master. In the first years of the community, Dawn was a prosperous settlement.[78]

> In time, the population rose to five hundred or more, and the community was served by its own saw- and gristmills, a brickyard and a rope walk. Lumbering proved modestly rewarding, and in 1850 a cargo of black walnut wood was sold

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[76] There is some dispute as to the reasons behind the demise of this community. For discussion of this, see Taylor, "Reconsidering the 'Forced' Exodus."
[77] Pease and Pease, *Black Utopia,* 64.
[78] For a more detailed history of the community of Dawn, see Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*; Pease & Pease, *Black Utopia*; Hill, *The Freedom Seekers*.

> in Boston. In all, the Negro settlers increased the value of their land by a dollar an acre in five years.[79]

From all appearances, the community was thriving. However, according to Pease and Pease, this outwardly visible success only served to hide the fact that the community and its school were in trouble in terms of leadership and debt. Although a number of community dwellers (including Josiah Henson, Dawn's best-known son, and a major character in the history of slavery and abolition) made attempts at raising funds to rescue the settlement, before 1870 the Institute had been abandoned and the land sold. The funds from this sale were used to endow the Wilberforce Educational Institute in the nearby town of Chatham. Started with the best of intentions, supported by a great number, Dawn still ended in failure, leaving some dissenters to conclude that it was not possible for the Negro to govern himself.

3) Buxton

In 1849, Reverend William King founded the Elgin Settlement, or Buxton.[80] As the lone successful and long-lasting community, Buxton serves as an excellent source for an investigation of the evolution of the African-American diaspora in Canada.

4) Refugee Home Society

Crossing the border from Detroit and into Windsor or Amherstburg, Ontario in the years of the Underground Railroad, one would have been able to find the greatest

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[79] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 180.

[80] The rest of the chapters are dedicated to the history of the community, therefore I will not provide details here. For further information on the Buxton community, see Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*; Pease & Pease,

concentration of blacks relative to any of the other communities in which they chose to settle.[81] While initially not a large problem to the resident whites, the vast numbers would soon become overwhelming. The thousands of Negroes who settled in the region were beginning to experience increasing prejudice, causing a large number of them to come together in Windsor at a Negro convention in 1846 in order to address the problems they were facing. The establishment of the Sandwich Mission was its outcome. The principal goal of the Mission was the development of a new settlement geared to providing shelter for new arrivals and seeing to their moral and religious education. The Mission planned to secure "a 10,000 acre tract of wooded land about ten miles north of Amherstburg, costing $1.50 to $2.00 an acre,"[82] with the intent to portion this land into lots to be sold to Negro settlers over a two-year period. The proposed community was to be run under very strict rules, with temperance being a major concern.[83] The plan did not bear fruit, and in 1850 at a new convention in Sandwich, a new group, the Fugitives' Union Society (the replacement of the Sandwich Mission), put together a new plan for a settlement to be named the Refugee Home Society.[84] This settlement managed the purchase of two thousand acres, of which half was sold to new settlers. According to Winks, "one hundred and fifty Negroes moved onto the land, although not always contiguously, thus destroying any semblance of a true community."[85] This settlement was also doomed to failure as a result of mismanagement and divisiveness within the community, as well as

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Black Utopia; Hill, *The Freedom Seekers*; Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black community in Canada* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

[81] Pease & Pease, *Black Utopia.*

[82] Pease & Pease, *Black Utopia,* 110.

[83] The community planners had taken note of the success of the Buxton Mission and attempted to institute a similar structure to ensure the success of their community. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada.*

[84] For a more detailed history of the Refugee Home Society, see Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*; Pease & Pease, *Black Utopia*; Hill, *The Freedom Seekers.*

[85] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 205.

by the fact that the settlers were set too far apart geographically to build a true community. While there were approximately sixty families living in the region in 1861, many returned home with the start of the Civil War.

The African-American refugees living in exile in Canada endured a number of compounded difficulties as they established their settlements, difficulties in terms of financial hardships, isolation, racial discrimination, and sometimes even violence (often stemming from the resentment of locals). The majority were unable to find work on a regular basis, and, until the end of the Civil War, they were unable to return home without fear of re-enslavement and reprisal for escaping. For them, their period in exile was likely full of dreams of return to the place of their birth and a life of freedom once there. For some who escaped singly, separation from their families would have fueled the hopes and dreams of a return home and of reuniting with family. They probably remained connected to their homes and families spiritually, culturally, economically and politically, leaving them interested and invested in their return home.

Butler suggests that groups meeting the above criteria- dispersal, relationship to homeland and a common identity- but failing to exist beyond two generations (because they are able to return within a single generation), should be seen as temporary exiles and not diasporan groupings.[86] This serves to divide the group of refugees to Canada into two separate entities following the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation, as some chose to remain, while others returned to the country of their birth.

For those who did choose Canada as a home, how can diaspora theory shed light on their experiences? By taking a look at the Elgin Settlement over time, it should be

possible to see in greater detail how the community does or does not conform to the characteristics of a diasporic group as laid out in this chapter. Butler's dimensions of study for the exploration of diaspora groups were used to frame this look at the Settlement. The reasons behind the initial exodus of people of African descent into Upper Canada are clear, as are the conditions under which they arrived, and both have been widely discussed in the literature.[87] The relationship of the fugitives to their American homeland is something to which I paid close attention in my exploration, although only in terms of contact between families and friends. Whether or not there was an official American government stance on the Negroes in Canada was beyond the scope of this project, and will have to be left for future study. The American authorities were well aware of the presence of African-Americans escaping to Canadian soil. However, little could be done to elicit their return, and throughout much of the 19th century legal battles ensued around the rights of American slaveholders to seek the extradition of fugitives. The number of fugitives extradited to the United States during these years was few. Instead, Canada offered the refugees its hospitality by not seeking their removal, and in some instances, even actively seeking to prevent attempts at extradition.[88] In subsequent chapters I will examine the experiences of African-Americans who chose to make Canada home, in an attempt to further clarify the third dimension, that of the relationship between the refugees and their hostland. The fourth dimension, that of interrelationships within the diasporan groups, is also explored in the telling of the history of the Buxton

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[86] Butler, "From Black History to Diasporan History."
[87] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*); Hill, *The Freedom Seekers*; see Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests*; Switala, *Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania*. Shadd, Adrienne Lynn, Cooper, Afua and Karolyn Smardz Frost, *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop, Toronto!* (Toronto, Canada: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 2002).

settlement, as it is possible to trace the movement of individuals and families between the various black communities in southwestern Ontario, as well as being able to note other links such as those brought about by the coming together of religious congregations. In addition to the interrelationships between the communities within Canada, the experience of new migrations to the United States and elsewhere in the years immediately following the Civil War opened up new channels of communication for the diasporic communities. Throughout this project I encountered multiple examples of the transborder communication that continued between friends and acquaintances over the years. Exploring the community of Buxton under a diasporan framework adds to the literature on New World Diaspora communities as well as opens up further discussion of the meaning of African-Canadian communities in the social and intellectual history of the Americas as well as the rest of the African Diaspora.

[88] For a more detailed look at the history surrounding British and Canadian laws regarding the extradition of American fugitives, see Roman J. Zorn, "Criminal Extradition Menaces the Canadian Haven for Fugitive Slaves, 1841-1861," *The Canadian Historical Review* 38, no. 4 (1957): 284-294.

Chapter 3: King, Settlement and the First Generation

When visiting Buxton, the story one most often hears from residents is that of the first generation of settlers, many of whom came as part of the Underground Railroad, others as free people of colour, all of them individuals whose stories of adversity add to the mythos of the period. Very little is widely known or told of the community beyond those years. Because of this, a major question framing this study is what happened to Buxton after the end of the American Civil War and the subsequent migration of large numbers of people out of the community? Those who remained at the end of this period formed a second generation of community dwellers, people who may have genuinely chosen Buxton as their home, or who stayed there by happenstance. These people are the forbears of the small farming community which exists today. However, in order to understand the stories and lives of this second generation, it is important to know their family histories and how they came to be in this place. Consequently, in this chapter I provide a broad overview of the settlement of the community by its first generation. I begin by introducing the individual responsible for the creation of the community, the Reverend William King. Next I outline the process leading to the purchase of land in Raleigh Township solely for black ownership and reconstruct some experiences in Buxton for the first generation, including the establishment of the community's schools and the beginnings of their religious life. I then explore how the Civil War affected the community, the circumstances leading to the end of the Elgin Settlement, and the beginnings of the Village of North Buxton, the focus of this study.

Buxton, Ontario – 1849-1873

King's dream

The community of Buxton is over a century and a half old. Its establishment was the brainchild of the Reverend William King, an Irish immigrant who had first settled in Louisiana. Although he had begun developing abolitionist beliefs in his college years, once in Louisiana King found himself caught up in the culture and practice of Southern slavery. While describing his role as rector at Mathews Academy, King mentions both his "coloured servant...kept to take care of my room and horses,"[1] and the fact that he lived in an area where he often had occasion to encounter "the patrol visiting the Negro quarters to see that they were all in their right place"[2] on many nights as he rode throughout the countryside. From this we gain insight into the world he inhabited, one of slave ownership, surveillance and strict punishment if the slaves stepped out of their "place."[3] Yet, he also speaks of having attended a sermon during this period which "had a powerful effect on my whole life…I resolved that I should never allow myself to be entangled with the world [of slavery]."[4] So, having professed distinct beliefs against the institution of slavery whilst living in its midst and partaking somewhat in the benefits, King seemed to experience a great deal of ambivalence in terms of its practice.[5] By marrying Mary Phares, a young woman from a slave-holding family, King further confused the issue of whether or not he was actually opposed to the practices of slavery

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[1] This tells us he was not necessarily averse to the practice of having a manservant slave. William King, *The Autobiography of Rev. William King*," Unpublished autobiography, 30-35. William King collection, Buxton Museum

[2] Ibid.

[3] For a detailed description of life for William King in the South during this period, see Victor Ullman, *Look to the North Star: A Life of William King* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1969).

[4] King, "*Autobiography*"

[5] Ullman, *Look to the North Star*; Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

in the South. Mary brought two slaves into the marriage with her – Amelia, the woman who had raised her, and Eliza, the young woman who had been her companion since childhood.[6]

According to King, the trade in human beings and worse, the ways in which the Southern slaves were treated "bored as heavily on the white families as on the black,"[7] hinting at some of the moral struggles with which he and others may have dealt. He voiced a realization that he did not want his children raised in the South (by this point the Kings already had one son) with these values, and knew he would have to escape as soon as cost would allow:

> My boy was now nearly two years and I wished to remove him from the South before he was incapable of knowing between right and wrong. . . To raise a family of boys under such corrupting influences was almost sure to corrupt their moral principles and to ruin them for the life that now is and that which is to come. This danger I could not conceal from my wife who saw it as well as I did.[8]

A decision on the part of the Trustees of Mathews Academy to change its governance in a manner with which he was not in agreement allowed King to resign. His brother James succeeded him in his role as rector. Before he was able to put his plan further in motion, however, he was to acquire another five slaves. King had planned on purchasing a new home for his wife Mary and his son Theophilus in which to live while he was away studying at a theological seminary in Edinburgh. Four slaves were acquired as part of the

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[6] Ullman suggests that this was when King became a slave owner, and when he began making compromises with the system of slavery. However, his having a coloured manservant while at Mathews Academy is already an indication of compromise on his part. He may have hated the system, but he lived well inside it and was accepting of its privileges. For further discussion of King's moral dilemma, see Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 29-32; Ullman, *Look to the North Star.*
[7] King, "*Autobiography*," 36.
[8] William King, "*Diary*," quoted in Ullman, *Look to the North Star*, 49.

land purchase: two adult women, Fanny and Mollie; and two children, Sarah and Peter. Not long after, King purchased a fifth slave, Jacob, whose role was to assist Talbert (his former manservant) in farming the land on the new property.

In December 1843, King left his young family and proceeded to Edinburgh to undergo theological training. While at theological college, King worked as a volunteer in the Edinburgh slums, and quickly recognized that there were many similarities between the poor in Scotland and the slaves he had seen in America. Both groups evidenced a hopelessness and lack of agency as a result of illiteracy and their different forms of servitude within the dominant culture. This was an experience that would determine the course of his life; he recognized the importance of taking an ecclesiastic approach when ministering to people in need.[9] For King, the establishment of his own "City of God," a place that would address the ills of the black people in America, became his dream. He knew he would someday create a place where these people could seek moral and social improvement.

During his time in Edinburgh, King lost his entire family to illnesses – first, his son Theophilus in 1844, then his wife Mary in February 1846, and finally, his young daughter Johanna, three months later, in May, 1846. He also lost parts of his extended family, as Mary's brother died during this period, as well as her father, John Ebenezer Phares, willing to Mary (and hence to King), an additional six slaves – Ben, Emeline, Harriet, Isaiah, Robin, and Stephen. This series of events did not alter his religious and

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[9] King worked under Dr. Thomas W. Chalmers, who was an ardent believer in social reform, and from him developed the notion of recreating a "City of God," a ministry combining religious and secular education, geared at uplifting the poor inhabitants of the Edinburgh slums, as a means of addressing the ills of blacks in America. Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 53-57; Jacqueline Tobin, *From Midnight to Dawn: The last tracks of the Underground Railroad* (NY: Doubleday, 2007), 118.

academic path. King had completed his studies in April 1846, and proceeded to obtain his license.

Later that year he became a minister in the Presbyterian Church, and was granted a missionary placement in Canada West. While there he came to know the region and its people well, including the black fugitives who poured into the various communities to which he ministered. In his missionary role he was faced with the quandary of concurrently being a church minister and slave owner against his better judgment. Since Louisiana laws made freeing slaves a complicated and lengthy process, King arranged to first take his slaves out of the state in order to free them. He also waived the rights to his Louisiana plantation (in order to escape any obligations to the Phares family, perhaps) and made his way back to Canada with the fourteen slaves previously mentioned, as well as a fifteenth, Solomon, Harriet's son. He felt obliged to purchase Solomon since Harriet could not see her way to being separated from him when they left the South, and from King's perspective, this was the only way they could take the child.[10]

King believed that in order to succeed, the black community needed to live their lives separate from the dominant white caste.[11] From his experience as a missionary in Canada West, he had learned that the prejudice blacks experienced within the general populace, including a lack of access to the common schools and to jobs, would only serve to keep them in the same social class they had inhabited as slaves. From his perspective, creating a separate community would shelter this group from racism and allow the opportunity for moral and social advancement. He pointed out:

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[10] King, "*Autobiography*," 66 & 116.
[11] King, "*Autobiography* 69," Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 62-3.

> The black man still remains in the community the same degraded being that slavery has left him. It is evident that any plan proposed to ameliorate the condition of the coloured population in this province must meet this practical difficulty.[12]

King was not alone in these sentiments. For many, it was important that blacks were afforded opportunities where they could be protected or at least made to feel safe from the threats of hostility and hatred often expressed by white society. Black leaders varied in their belief as to whether or not this was the right approach to the issue of racism, but those who believed separation to be the best solution sought out or supported communities which adhered to this philosophy.[13] In much the same way the American Black-town movement also evidenced an adherence to racial segregation and community empowerment as responses to oppression.[14]

In 1849, King set out to fulfill this dream of a separate black community to prove that "the coloured men when placed in favourable circumstances were capable of supporting themselves and improving socially and morally the same as the white race."[15] Under the guidance of the Presbyterian Synod, King and other investors formed a corporation (the Elgin Association), its membership spanning Europe and North America, in order to raise funds to purchase the land they needed to create the community. With the assistance of the Elgin Association, the Church, and other supporters of his proposal, King was able to acquire the funds, and subsequently founded a small settlement

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[12] William King, "Scheme for Improving the Coloured People of Canada," Unpublished letter, 1848. William King Papers, Buxton Museum.

[13] Shirley J. Yee, Gender Ideology and Black Women as Community-Builders in Ontario, 1850-70," *Canadian Historical Review* 75, 1 (1994): 54

[14] Sundiata K. Cha-Jua, *America's First Black Town: Brooklyn, Illinois-1830-1915* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 3; Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 7.

comprising the Elgin Settlement and Buxton Mission, in Raleigh Township, Kent County, Ontario. In addition to its wide geographic berth in terms of membership, it is interesting to note that at least forty-four of the initial one hundred and ninety-three stockholders in the Elgin Association were black.[16] Blacks were to be active participants in every stage of the founding and operation of this community.[17]The Elgin Association and settlement were both named in honour of James Bruce, Earl of Elgin, then Governor-General of Canada, who had pledged to the group that he would support their efforts in founding the community.[18] The mission name honoured Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, who laboured to get an emancipation act passed through the British Parliament. In his early years as a student of the emancipation movement, King had been greatly influenced by Buxton.[19]

The Elgin Association, later incorporated by an Act of Parliament,[20] with support from the Presbyterian Synod found and purchased a tract of Crown Land. The deed was recorded on October 22, 1849. The tract was close to 6,400 acres running up from the shores of Lake Erie, 10 kilometres south of Chatham.[21] This land was to be held in trust by the Elgin Association, and managed by King, as its agent in Buxton, who would ensure that it was parceled and sold only to black settlers.

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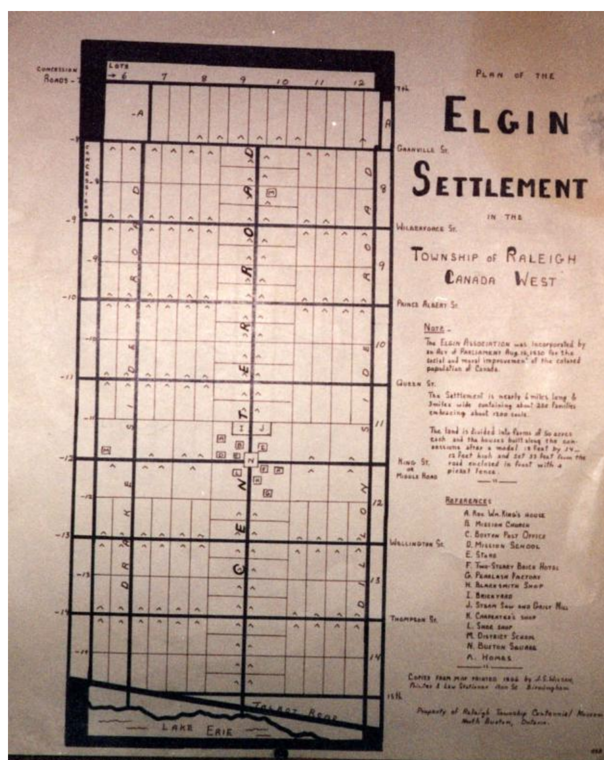
[15] King, "*Autobiography*," 123.
[16] Not all the stockholders have been identified by race, but of the 193 identified, 44 were black men, see Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 48
[17] There are many concerns and questions raised in terms of the amount of agency the community members had in light of the power held by King and the Elgin Association, who appeared to have final authority in the major community decisions. Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*, 65-76.
[18] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 48.
[19] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 20, 30, 99
[20] The Association was not incorporated until more than a year later, in September, 1850. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*, 50; Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 95
[21] The number 9,000 which is typically the figure published in connection to the story of the settlement, appears more anecdotal than an exact measurement of the Church and Crown lands which made up the settlement. See Bryan Prince, "The Lands of the Elgin Settlement" for a detailed discussion of the

Figure 3.1



Plan of the Elgin Settlement, courtesy of the Buxton Museum and Archives

Before being allowed to purchase lots in this tract, potential buyers had to be deemed of the correct moral character.[22] Lots were only available for purchase, not for rent or sharecropping. It is impossible to determine whether or not this requirement was always met, but according to the rules set out by the Elgin Association, settlers could only take possession of a lot if they had made an initial down payment and signed a contract agreeing to all the requirements of ownership. Of course, not all new arrivals to

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confusion around the number of acres in the settlement. Bryan Prince, "The Lands of the Elgin Settlement" (Buxton, ON: n.p., 2003).

[22]For more detail on the settlement of this community, see Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 59-96; J.W. Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario, 1830-1890: Did the 49th Parallel Make a Difference?" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1979), Donald G. Simpson, *Under the North Star: Black Communities in Upper Canada before Confederation (1867)* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); John K.A. Farrell, *The History of the Negro Community in Chatham, Ontario, 1787-1865* (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 1955); Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* Tobin, *From Midnight to Dawn*.

Buxton had the resources which would allow them to immediately purchase lots. Perhaps knowledge of this requirement prevented some from moving to the area, but not all new arrivals to the community were turned away if they were unable to afford this initial down payment. Instead, they entered a different kind of agreement by which they would go to work (for example by finding a job with the railroads which were at the time being built) and earn the first installment on their land, after which they would enter into the standard Elgin agreement in order to pay their outstanding balance.[23]

Purchasers were required to commit to ten years of ownership, during which they were expected to pay off the cost of their lot in equal annual installments. During this period, if they sold their lot, it had to be to another black purchaser. They had to meet very strict requirements once the purchase had been made – at least six acres of land had to be cleared within the first year of occupancy; a house, 18 feet long by 24 feet deep by 12 feet high (at minimum), had to be built, and it had to sit 33 feet from the road, with a fence around it.[24]

King's research into the demise of previous black communities such as those at Dawn and Wilberforce had suggested that the separation of civil and religious matters was critical to ensuring the success of the community. Therefore, the Elgin Association was charged with the secular administrative duties of the settlement, overseeing the availability of homes for settlers and the improving of their social condition after they arrived, by securing funds, as well as interceding between the settlement and the outside world. The Buxton Mission oversaw the settlers' religious and scholastic endeavors.[25]

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[23] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*, 62.
[24] King, *Autobiography*," 78.
[25] The fact that King headed up both ventures appeared to have not been seen as a conflict of interest for King, the community members or for the Presbyterian Synod. Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*, 49.

This included the running of the churches, the operating of the schools and the Christian work of the community members. This work was supported by the Buxton Mission Fund, which was administered by the Presbyterian Synod, which financed its ventures by collecting monies from the churches across Canada.

Opposition

King's planned settlement was not without its detractors, especially those espousing anti-black sentiment. In 1849, Edwin Larwill, a Chatham tinsmith and Raleigh Township Councillor who opposed the influx of Negroes into the region,[26] circulated a petition aimed at stopping the proposed settlement. He eventually sent this document to the Crown Commissioner, Governor, Presbyterian Synod, and Provincial Parliament. As a result of opposition to the Elgin settlement, a town meeting was held at the Royal Exchange Hotel horse shed in Chatham on August 8, 1849. King attended the meeting, in order to determine its purpose. When told by Magistrate George Young that the meeting was being held to prevent blacks from purchasing land in Raleigh Township, King questioned whether or not Negroes were legally entitled to purchase land in Raleigh. He was told they were. He then suggested that the meeting was therefore not valid, as the creation of a settlement was not illegal. Despite Larwill's attempts to remove King's right to speak at the meeting, King addressed the crowd and managed to persuade some of them that the setting up of the Buxton settlement could result in much of the surrounding land being cleared, and hence its value would increase, to the betterment of the

[26] Larwill also held a position in the Western District Council, the Legislature, served as district school commissioner, and edited the Chatham Journal, Hill. He not only opposed the influx of blacks into the region. In October 1849, Larwill attempted to have the Ohio Black Laws, which had been passed to limit

Township. In attendance was Walter McCrae, who would later become Mayor of Chatham. He spoke to the crowd, and voiced what may have been the dominant sentiment of the period: “Let the slaves of the United States be free, but let it be in their own country; let us not countenance their further introduction among us, in a word, let the people of the United States bear the burden of their own sins.”[27] While the meeting was unable to prevent the creation of the settlement, it did result in the creation of a “Committee of Vigilance,” the duty of which was to prevent the settlement through whatever means.[28] The press in Chatham also continued the voicing of disapproval for the settlement, playing on the fears of the region’s whites and echoing the sentiments of McRae:

> . . . would such men submit to have 1,000 colored paupers introduced into their community, to have the whole township government controlled and its officers selected by them, to have their sons and daughters educated under the same roof, with a black man for a teacher. . . Let Walpole Island be purchased from or an exchange made with the Indians, and let the African be as nearly by himself as possible.[29]

The article screams of the xenophobic attitudes in the community. The suggestion of purchase and inhabitation of Walpole Island, perhaps written tongue-in-cheek, provides evidence of the sentiments held. However, the Elgin community also held supporters, and with the knowledge that he had the backing of very important supporters like Lord Elgin,

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migration to that state by effectively denying blacks their civil rights, passed by the Western District Council. His attempt was unsuccessful. Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 83-99.

[27] *Toronto Globe*, August 30, 1849.

[28] A Friend to British Liberty, Letter to the Editor, *Toronto Globe,*August 30, 1849; Editorial, *Toronto Globe*, on November 13, 184 Both papers reported on the Chatham meeting and refuted claims made by Larwill that citizens of the Western District did not want the settlement by posting the names of 106 prominent citizens that approved and supported it.

King ignored the negative press and attempts to thwart the new community, and set about his plans for the future.

Settlement

Among the settlement's first inhabitants were King's fifteen former slaves he had manumitted en route to Canada. Other blacks made their way to the settlement having heard of its formation by word of mouth, or perhaps as a result of having seen reference to the community in a newspaper, or heard of it through some other means.[30] Isaac Riley had arrived in Buxton before King and his manumitted slaves, having read of the community on a handbill distributed in St. Catharines, Ontario. This handbill told of a proposed black community in Raleigh Township, and gave Riley hope of an education for his family and an opportunity to purchase land of his own. Riley and his family were in the area of the proposed settlement, waiting for King when he arrived to found the community.[31] E.C. Cooper, who was raised in Buxton, spoke of how his family made their way to the community during its third year in existence:

> My father went to Buxton in the Spring of 1851. We went from North Hampton Massachusetts. My father learned that a large tract of land had been secured from the government on which to settle colored people through the efforts of Mr. King and other philanthropist (sic) – thought he would go and settle there.[32]

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[29] *The Chatham Journal,* December 5, 1859, p.2
[30] For example, opposition to the settlement might have fueled the spread of information as the debates around whether or not blacks should be allowed to settle the region were waged in the press. Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 50-58.
[31] King, *Autobiography*," 81.
[32] E.C. Cooper to Annie Jamieson, undated correspondence, Jamieson Papers, Canadian Black Studies Project, University of Western Ontario Archives, London, ON.

Whether manumitted by their owners as the King slaves had been, enslaved and fleeing that institution (as Riley had been when he first arrived in St. Catharines), or living as free people in the Northern States (as the Shadd family, who will be discussed later, had been), families and individuals flocked to the small community.

The two things which drew Isaac Riley and his family to Buxton, education and land ownership, had been denied enslaved black people in the antebellum years in the South. Although it varied by state, the general attitude held by whites in the antebellum period was that blacks were not to be educated, for fear of their gaining access to the knowledge that freedom was their right.[33] Therefore, the settlers sought any opportunity to send their children to school. Education was seen as a tool in the black community – it helped combat feelings and accusations of inferiority based on ignorance, and it provided a means of advancement or racial uplift.[34] Common schools existed in Ontario, but the accepted reading of the legislation regarding the schooling of black children was that they were to be educated in separate schools from white children. That added to already existing prejudices which were evidenced by incidents of white children being pulled out of school if they were forced to mix with black children.[35] This provides more evidence of the kinds of prejudice blacks faced in Upper Canada. Similar to the sentiments voiced by Walter McCrae, and those in the Chatham press, blacks were free to come to Canada. Whites just did not wish to mix with them.

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[33] "Unlike the classical system of slavery wherein Greek scholars were the teachers of Roman families, the American system rarely permitted Negro slaves to become literate…Gabriel's slave rebellion in Virginia in 1800, and Vesey's plot in Charleston in 1822, however, caused both States to forbid the education of slaves. North Carolina followed suit in 1831. Georgia in 1829 forbade the teaching of any Negro, free or slave, under penalty of a $500 fine and imprisonment. Delaware passed a similar law in 1831; Florida and Alabama in 1832; Missouri in 1847; Connecticut in 1833; while other Northern States discouraged Negro education."Farrell, *The History of the Negro Community in Chatham, Ontario*, 13

[34] Yee, "Gender Ideology and Black Women as Community-Builders in Ontario, 1850-70," 53-73.

[35] Robin Winks, "Negro School Segregation," *Canadian Historical Review* 50, no. 2 (1969): 164-191.

The fugitives continued coming north, however. The desire for land, as it is in every new region, was something that fuelled the dreams of many new settlers. Like blacks elsewhere, newcomers to Buxton perhaps equated land ownership with tangible evidence of freedom, and the opportunity for land ownership would have been a major attraction to the community.[36] By the end of 1851, there were reports of forty-five families having settled on farms in Buxton.[37]

Blacks represented only one group of people seeking land in southwestern Ontario during this period. In King's travels throughout the region, he noted the Scotch and Irish settlers who had recently immigrated to Canada and were settling the "forested Crown and Clergy reserves," in much the same way that his own family had experienced their settlement in Ohio.[38] Descriptions of the region where King subsequently settled, at the southern end of the tract, told of a vast, heavily timbered forest, not well drained and containing a wide variety of species, oak, hickory, and beech to name a few.[39] Needing to labour long hours clearing and draining the virgin land, in addition to building their requisite homes, life for the newcomers would not have been easy. However, under King's guidance, the community quickly took shape.

In addition to those within the community, twenty-five black families are reported to have settled outside the lands of the Elgin settlement by 1852, and although nothing in the extant records suggests why some chose to purchase land outside Buxton whilst still

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[36] The drive on the part of free blacks to own land would be echoed later in the South, during the Reconstruction years. Rauh Bethel's exploration of the community at Promiseland shows how, only recently seen as property themselves, being able to own their own land was something that would continue to drive members of the black community. Bethel, *Promiseland*
[37] *Voice of the Fugitive* – November 5, 1851
[38] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 66. The Scotch and Irish are considered among the pioneers of Raleigh Township, although it is interesting to note that some regional histories do not discuss settlement by native and black settlers who arrived in their communities first. See Victor Lauriston, *Romantic Kent: More Than Three Centuries of History, 1626-1952* (Ontario: Shepherd Print, 1952), 297.

becoming active community members, it may be safe to assume that the strict governance of the Elgin Association could have played a part in the decision-making of some settlers. For some, it may have been preferable to participate in the life of the community without necessarily being subject to the strict rules imposed by King and the Elgin Association. Financial constraints might have also played a role, and families or individuals unable to afford the purchase of a fifty-acre lot could settle on a smaller property within the vicinity. This notion is supported by the fact that there were families of squatters living in the region known as the Raleigh Plains, to the very north of the settlement, who participated in community life, and in time, purchased land either in, or closer to Buxton. So, although not physically part of the settlement, many of these families became Buxtonites through participation in the community's institutions and relationships with individuals and families within the geographic boundaries.

One family in particular, which would prove to be among the community's best known, was that of Abraham Doras (A.D.) Shadd. The Shadd brothers, Abraham and Absalom, and their respective families came to Raleigh Township from Delaware. These brothers had been born to free parents and had never experienced slavery. As well as working as a shoemaker, Abraham had been an active abolitionist in both Delaware and Pennsylvania prior to his arrival in Canada. On their arrival, Abraham and his family settled just outside Buxton, on the 6th concession, while Absalom and his family set up their home just outside Chatham, closer to Dresden. Absalom died in 1857, and as a result, his family returned to Delaware.[40] A.D. and his family became a part of the fabric

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[39] Lauriston, *Romantic Kent,* 294; Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 81.
[40] A.C. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton* (Chatham, ON: n.p.,1983), 37.

of the community,[41] participating in its day-to-day life, and he became a major figure in community politics. In 1858, he became the first black man elected to public office, as a councillor for Raleigh Township.

Schools and Churches

Within a year of its formation, some of Buxton's social institutions were already becoming established. Meeting with King's and the black community's belief that education and moral uplift were vital for citizenship, the establishment of the community churches and schools was preeminent. Both institutions were started before much of the land in the community had even been cleared. Within five months[42] of their arrival in Buxton, King writes of the start of the Mission School:

> When April arrived, the time I had appointed for opening the school, the hard feeling against myself and the coloured people had considerably abated. On the Sabbath before the opening of the school, I had announced that the school would open on Monday, and I expected that all the coloured children in the settlement who were able to attend would be present, and if any white children chose to come, they were welcome; none would be excluded. The teacher, Mr. John Rennie,[43] who was present, I introduced to the congregation. He was tall, fair and

[41] There seems to have been an understanding within this family of the importance of maintaining records of their lives for future generations. Abraham Shadd and a number of his descendants provide narratives of their lives, some of which I have used in this project. Of course, it is important to note that their start in a relatively elite Northern free black community is of importance to the exploration of their family narratives, as it points to the reality that this family was different from the majority of less affluent black families that settled in the Southwestern Ontario region, and would have had privileges and opportunities not afforded all of their neighbours.

[42] King and his former slaves arrived in Buxton in November 1849, see King, "*Autobigraphy*," 285.

[43] John Rennie was born Aug 13, 1830 in New Pitsligo, Scotland. He came to Canada in 1847. While still attending Knox College in Toronto to study for the ministry, he was selected in the spring of 1850 to be the first teacher at the Buxton Mission School at the newly founded Elgin Settlement for fugitive slaves. After

> good looking and he led the singing in the congregation on that day and had made a favourable impression on the people. On Monday morning, ten coloured children appeared and two white children belonging to Joshua Shepley appeared among them.[44]

Evidence suggests that the Buxton Mission School (also later referred to as SS #7) was considered a stellar institution in its time, and families were known to move to Raleigh Township, if not directly to the Elgin settlement, explicitly so their children could attend its school.

> More of the region's white children trickled into the school: The whites became more reconciled to the blacks and began to send their children to the school. Every month one or two white scholars would come in, attracted by the superior teaching.[45]

Further evidence of the caliber of education being received at this school can be inferred from the fact that, as early as 1856, graduates of the Buxton Mission School had been admitted to Knox College in Toronto.[46] This was the year that John R. Riley entered the school. Riley was to become one of the school's best known graduates, and one whose educational experiences, as well as those of his sibling James, provided added testament to the quality of the education received at the Buxton School. The foundation the school provided allowed its graduates to continue their education beyond that of many of their contemporaries during this period:

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completing a term as teacher, he returned to College. Bryan Prince, *John Rennie Diary*, unpublished transcription, Bryan Prince Collection.

[44] King, "*Autobiography*," 85.

[45] King, "*Autobiography*," 86.

[46] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 122.

> After passing through the grades of the Common School at Buxton,[47] I went to Toronto, entered the Grammar School under the Rev. Arthur Wicltson D.D., L.L.D, completing the curriculum, matriculated at Knox College. Took special studies at Toronto University and graduated from Knox College in 1867 with a class of 24.[48]

Six of the graduates from the Buxton School would be prepared to write the entrance examinations to Knox College, and all would be admitted. They were Anderson Abbott, Richard Johnson, Alfred Lafferty, James Rapier, Jerome Riley, and John Riley. These students benefitted from being enrolled in the only school in Canada or the United States to offer a classical education preparing black students for college enrolment.[49] Interestingly, after 1864, the Buxton School curriculum was no longer based on this classical education, returning to the basic teaching of arithmetic, grammar, geography, history and writing only.[50]

By 1854, there was another school just outside the borders of the settlement as well. According to community oral history, A.D. Shadd had built a small school, referred to as the Shadd School[51] (later referred to as SS# 4 South[52]), on his property, and it

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[47] The caliber of the Buxton School was such that the Trustees of the Common School asked King if they could send all their students there, so this school was closed, and the Buxton School became the only common school in the Township, King, "*Autobiography*," 91; Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 119.
[48] John R. Riley to Annie Jamieson, February 25th, 1909, Jamieson papers, Canadian Black Studies Project, University of Western Ontario Archives, London, ON..
[49] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 121.
[50] Ontario Archives School Superintendent Report for year ending December 31, 1864 prepared by Superintendent David Mills and Ontario Archives School Superintendent Report for year ending December 31, 1865 prepared by Superintendent Edmund Harrison.
[51] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 37
[52] An interesting set of contradictions exist regarding this school. According to the Ontario Archives School Superintendent Report for year ending December 31, 1851, prepared by Superintendent Thomas Croft, S.S. #4 was already in existence in 1850 (before the arrival of the Shadd family) and is denoted as Roman Catholic, something not corroborated by subsequent research into the community. According to Ontario Archives School Superintendent Report for year ending December 31, 1855, prepared by Superintendent Philip Andrew, this school was closed by December 31, 1855 as there were no further reports. Sometime in

served those children at the north end of the settlement, who were perhaps too far away from the Buxton School, which was at the south end of the tract. Around the same period, the Shreve School (later, SS#4 North) was reportedly started on the 5th concession by George Shreve, who had settled there with his family. Shreve had married Elizabeth, daughter of Abraham Shadd, and the couple moved to the Buxton area not long after the Shadd brothers arrived in the area.[53] This family would also remain in the region and members became very active participants in Buxton community life.

Religion also formed a major part of community and social life. The first religious service in Buxton was held in December 1849, in a log schoolhouse just outside the Elgin tract. There were twenty-four worshippers in attendance. King's house then served as the location of worship until a permanent location was built in the mid-1850s.[54] The settlers attended King's services as they joined the community. Soon there was a Sunday School for the children, in which congregants were able to establish a children's library.[55] In spite of this, however, there is some suggestion that the Buxton Mission Church was not an overwhelming success with the majority of the settlers. E.C. Cooper, who served as both secretary and as an elder in St. Andrew's, which grew out of the small Mission church, hints at possible issues in the ways of worship:

> The people in Buxton are mainly from the South and the prevailing forms of worship were Methodism and Baptism, and it is hard for them to adopt the Presbyterian form of worship, the Race being naturally emotional excitable yes

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the 1860s, S.S. #4 reappears in the reports. This confusion may be in the actual zoning and numbering of the schools, since the Superintendent Reports do not indicate the specific locations of the schools themselves. The total number of schools in the reports meets with those discussed here and elsewhere, so the confusion is most likely in terms of how they were recorded. The only thing we can be certain of is that there were at least 4 schools in the region by the 1860s.

[53] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 38

[54] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 141, King, "*Autobiography*"

> and gregarious. They naturally seem to be more contented where there are large gatherings.[56]

Prior to this Cooper had alluded to this same Presbyterian question when he suggested that, while the Buxton Mission School had been an unequivocal success, the Church was "almost a failure."[57] His was not the only suggestion there might have been difficulties in attracting the black community to the Presbyterian Church. Concerns were also raised by the school teacher and then missionary student, John Rennie:

> March 12, 1856 – Returned yesterday from Buxton wither I went last week to assist Mr. King at the communion. I preached on Thursday, Saturday and Sabbath afternoon. Mr King served the table – only one. Spiritual things I fear are not improving much at the settlement. Yet there are some exceptions. I was delighted to find E. Peterson one of my scholars a decided (illegible) teacher in the Sabbath School.[58]

These comments suggest that while the Presbyterian Church maintained a major stake in the community, many community members chose not to worship there. This is not to suggest a lack of a spiritual life at Buxton, however. Community members simply chose to direct themselves elsewhere - they chose to form their own churches, evidenced by the fact that the number of religious denominations grew with the community, and by the 1860s there were Methodists, Baptists and Roman Catholics as well as Presbyterians

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[55] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 142
[56] E.C. Cooper to Annie Jamieson, February 24, 1909, Jamieson papers, Canadian Black Studies Project, University of Western Ontario Archives, London, ON.. There is some suggestion that King also felt that the Presbyterian style of worship was not something the black settlers enjoyed, so he fully supported other religious organizations entering the settlement, Robbins, 64
[57] E.C. Cooper to Annie Jamieson, February 15, 1909, Jamieson papers, Canadian Black Studies Project, University of Western Ontario Archives, London, ON.
[58] Bryan Prince, *John Rennie Diary*, unpublished transcription, Bryan Prince Collection, North Buxton, ON.

living in the settlement. Religion and the church have played a central role in the lives of blacks during and since slavery, and have been perhaps the most constant aspects of North American black culture.[59] So as early as 1851, the Baptists in the community began to worship together although they had no permanent home.[60] King assisted the settlers in raising the First Baptist Church on the 12th concession in 1853, suggesting that the other denominations were likely also welcomed by him.[61] The Second Baptist Church was established on the 7th concession at the northern end of the community, on land belonging to William and Catherine Moorehead[62] to serve the needs of those living too far away from the church on the south end of the community. A third Baptist Church, the Macedonian Church of Elgin, or the Anti-slavery Baptist Church, was established in 1854 on the corner of the 7th concession and Centre Road. Community oral history suggests that the land on which this church once stood, now a farm, also holds unmarked graves, the gravestones having been long used as the foundation of the house or barn which replaced the church.[63] Methodism soon followed the Baptists to Buxton, with the Buxton community choosing to follow the other Canadian Methodist churches in the establishment of the British Methodist Episcopal Church,[64] which did not have a permanent home until "sometime between 1866 and 1872."[65]

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[59] For more on the role of the church in African-Canadian life, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994) and Dorothy Shadd-Shreve, *The Africanadian Church: A Stabilizer* (Jordan Station, On: Paideia Press, 1983).
[60] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 64
[61] Ullman, *Look to the North Star*131
[62] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 97
[63] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 97
[64] The individual who presented this resolution to the AME Church conference in Chatham in 1854 was a Buxton resident, Rev. Benjamin Stewart, Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 108
[65] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 148.

The fact that neither the church nor schools in Buxton was ever segregated, contrary to common practice in nineteenth century Canada and the United States, is notable for this period. As mentioned above, the Buxton Mission School was integrated from its inception, as the two Shepley children were among its first registrants.[66] The Separate Schools Act of 1850, despite being legislation for schools in urban areas, solidified the practice of creating separate schools for blacks and whites. Either the caliber of the Buxton School or the sentiments of the community were enough to make this legislation irrelevant in this context. This point is worth stressing, especially in light of the fact that the overturning of the Separate Schools Act was thwarted successfully by groups from Kent County (Raleigh Township is in Kent County) as late as the 1950s.[67] The Buxton School was therefore anomalous in a region where racial prejudice appeared to be entrenched. Perhaps the fact that Buxton was separate from other communities in Raleigh, and the white residents were able to see that the initial sentiments regarding the low moral character of blacks was incorrect, led to less anti-black sentiment. Or maybe the land-owning status of the blacks at Buxton placed them in a different social stratum from that of other black refugees to Canada, making them less threatening to the whites in terms of competition for jobs, but since there is nothing in the extant records to support or refute any of this, it remains open to conjecture. What we do know is that while there were those in Kent County who abhorred the notion of educating blacks and whites together, the Buxton School managed to remain integrated for much of its existence (see, for example, Figure 3.2).

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[66] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 119, Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 155
[67] Winks, *Blacks in Canada,* 189-90.

Figure 3.2

Class of the Buxton School, c. 1909-1910, courtesy of the Buxton Museum and Archives

Making a living

In terms of making a living once they settled in Buxton, this was an agrarian region, and the majority of the community members farmed their land. For the most part, like the other settlers of Raleigh Township, the people of Buxton were poor. In addition to farming, many also supplemented their incomes by working either on other farms within the settlement or for farmers in other parts of Raleigh Township. Some were able

to find work with the railroads which were being built throughout the region.[68] Some were skilled in trades from their lives as enslaved persons; others had worked in skilled trades as free men and women while previously living in the northern free states, and applied some of these skills to the betterment of their families and the community. For example, two members of the community had been brick makers in the US and established a brickyard in 1851, allowing Buxton's first brick building, the Temperance Hotel, run by Alfred West, to be erected the following year. By 1854 the first brick home, belonging to Robert VanRankin, was built.[69] In March 1852, the Canada Mill and Mercantile Company was formed, headed up by William Abbott of Toronto and Henry Thomas of Buffalo, New York, two black businessmen who had sent their children to the community to attend school. They raised the capital to establish a sawmill, gristmill and general store by approaching wealthy blacks in Toronto and Buffalo, and by 1854 their businesses were all up and running. The company boasted a black board of directors, with the exception of two white members, Rev. William King and George Brown, abolitionist, publisher of the *Globe* newspaper, and, later, in 1864 a "Father of Confederation".[70]

So in the first decade, industry came quickly to Buxton, with the establishment of a sawmill, cornmill, lumber mill, siding machine, shingle factory, wagon shop, hotel, grocery, and a number of blacksmith, leather, and carpentry establishments. Under

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[68] The arrival of the Great Western and the Canada Southern Railroads would allow members of the community to pick up work to supplement their incomes when needed. Kent County was greatly affected by the railroad building projects of the 1850s to 70s, Lauriston, *Romantic Kent,* 296-7; John Leverton, "The Development of Chatham and Kent County, Ontario Until 1879: A Study in Urban-Hinterland Inter-Relationships" (MA diss. The University of Western Ontario, 1990), 87-108; Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 117

[69] VanRankin also opened the community's first grocery store, suggesting that he may have been a man of means. Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 118.

[70] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 61; Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada. (*Agincourt, Canada: The Book Society of Canada Ltd., 1981)*,* 83; Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 109-110.

King's direction, the people of Buxton organized themselves into teams and worked together to cut the Centre Road, making a direct path from the 7th concession, down past the 16th and ending at Lake Erie.[71] In poor weather however, this dirt road was mostly impassable, and in order to capitalize on the products from the community, they needed to somehow make the trip less arduous. King and the settlers obtained permission from the township, used timber cut at the settlement's timber mill to make wooden rails, and with these, built a railway line from Buxton down to Lake Erie, so that products could be loaded on wagons, brought down to the docks, and sent on to market in Buffalo and Detroit.[72]

In 1859, a pearl ash factory which had become a major source of income to the community was destroyed by fire. The lumber mill started out well, receiving business from within the community as settlers purchased lumber for building. The Canada Southern Railroad also proved a good client during its construction. By 1857, however, King had brought Peter Straith (a Scotsman) in to run the lumber mill. [73] In many ways, however, the mill struggled to survive, with King even soliciting funds on trips abroad.[74] While this helped to stave off the complete failure of the business by providing export opportunities for Buxton lumber, the fact that the steam, saw and grist mills were up for sale by 1863 suggests that those industries were not as successful as the community had hoped.[75] The difficulties and sometimes subsequent failures of the various business

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[71] King, "*Autobiography*," 111.
[72] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 121
[73] The fact that Straith also purchased land on the 11th concession in the Elgin tract broke with Elgin Association rules, since he was a white man. Either the community's need for his expertise or for the influx of the money he paid for his land determined his being given this access. Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 123.
[74] King visited England in 1860 in order to solicit funds for the mill. Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 123-4
[75] Advertisement of sale, *Toronto Daily Globe*, October 15, 1863. This ad also included mention of a pearl ash factory for sale, but it is unclear if this was the same one built by Abbott and Thomas, or if this is the

enterprises in Buxton meant that the community was forced to rely largely on its agricultural base.[76]

Before the township had begun the process of undertaking a major drainage of the land, King had, with the permission of the Elgin Association, surveyed and drained the Elgin tract and its surrounding watershed.[77] By 1856, the settlers had begun to work together to drain the land, and subsequently built eight-foot by three-foot ditches.[78] This process opened up more land for the settlers to farm, and solved many of the drainage problems that had plagued the area previously. The rich farmland that was reclaimed by this process was now of course much more valuable, something King had foreseen when he first saw the area.[79]

Although the community had been busy since its inception, and people tried to establish small industries and eke out a living, Buxton, like other small communities in the US and Canada, experienced the ebbs and flows of the economy, and the latter part of the 1850s were difficult years, especially when the United States and Canada experienced an economic depression in 1857. As previously mentioned, the reality was that the majority of the community was poor – there were those settlers who came to the settlement with resources, but for the most part, people who settled in Buxton had little in the way of material things. It was similar across Raleigh Township. This was a region that was being peopled by new immigrants from diverse backgrounds, many of whom

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one that succumbed to fire in 1859. There were apparently several such "pearl ash 'factories' throughout the village as families attempted to cash in on the lucrative product. Bryan Prince, private conversation.

[76] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 124.

[77] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 153

[78] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 127

[79] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 81

had come to the area with little but the clothes on their backs.[80] Evidence of the state of the community's finances may be inferred not just from the failure or sale of businesses, but also by changes from strict adherence to the rules in the Elgin Association Constitution. Already mentioned was the sale of land within the settlement to Peter Straith. Another example of this straying from the rules is the fact that in 1857, instead of asking new purchasers to make the usual $2.50 initial down payment followed by equal annual payments, they were being asked to pay half the cost of the land immediately, and the balance at the end of two years.[81]

Going into the 1860s, much of Upper Canada was experiencing massive economic stress, as the provincial government struggled to prevent bankruptcy. The railway companies, in which the government was heavily invested, defaulted on their loans and ceased operations for a time.[82] This had a direct impact on the township, as it meant that many settlers who supplemented their incomes by working on the railway or by providing support to the railroad-building process would lose their income source. It also meant the loss of a major customer for the Buxton lumber mill, the result of which was additional troubled financial times for the community. All this paints the picture of a community rich in ambition and perseverance, but, like many pioneer communities, faced with many struggles in terms of their day-to-day survival.

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[80] Very few of the early settlers to Raleigh Township had money to spend. Their situations may have improved in time, but even those who became affluent started with very little. Lauriston, *Romantic Kent,* 295. There is some suggestion that the blacks in Buxton and the rest of the Township were even worse off financially than their white counterparts, perhaps because they had been in the region for a shorter time than some of the more established settlers, Walton, *Blacks in Buxton and Chatham* ,151-2; Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 124-37.

[81] Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham," 102

[82] Peter A. Baskerville, *Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario,* (Don Mills, On: Oxford University Press, 2005), 109-10.

Astute Politicians

Because of King's foresight in seeking out the right connections and in following the correct protocols in terms of ensuring the "right" people were consulted in the decision-making process, from its inception the Elgin settlement had always relied on very powerful friends and supporters. The settlement's friends ranged from the sitting Governor General, Lord Elgin, to Earl Spencer, who King sought out on his trip abroad seeking funds for the lumber mill. The previously mentioned George Brown, then publisher of the *Globe* newspaper, who served on the board of directors of the Canada Mill and Mercantile Company, as well as Archibald McKellar, Reeve of Chatham, from 1853 to 1854, candidate for the Reform Party and Member of Parliament in 1857, were also supporters. The members of the community showed their loyalty and their awareness of the politics of the time. For example, in 1856, Buxton's 300 eligible voters are said to have marched en masse into Chatham and cast their votes to remove their old enemy Larwill from office, and were instrumental in voting in McKellar, who had long been "a staunch supporter of Negro rights."[83] There were questions as to whether or not the community simply voted with King's wishes and interests,[84] but from quite early it is obvious that politicians recognized that these were united votes and that they were worth soliciting:

[83] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 151-2.
[84] Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd Ed. (Montreal & Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queens University Press, 1997) 213-15.

> "For nine hours the Coloured People of these two Counties [Kent and Essex] sat in convention to decide as to which of the candidates now in the field should receive the united support of the Coloured Electors."[85]

The newspapers suggested the coloured vote across the board was accepted as being united, possibly on the assumption that the issues within this community were all the same. The papers also carried regular discussion around the courting of the people from Elgin in the 1860s. These discussions indicate the extent to which Ontario was a place in the midst of a great deal of political repositioning, as discussions of the future of the Union abounded. The Buxton community had been known to vote with their friends in the Reform party, so for the conservative politicians in Kent County getting them to switch allegiances would be a major coup. One article talked openly about both the issue of King leading the direction of Elgin votes, and the direct involvement of Elgin's black leaders in the political process.[86] Along with land ownership and the opportunity for an education, it is easy to see how the ability to participate in the political life of the community would also have been an important and valued rite of citizenship. As their community continued to grow and prosper, Buxtonites continued to participate fully in the growth and development of their community and their adopted home, Canada.

[85] "The Colored People for Sir Allan N. McNab, the Loyalist," *The Chatham Weekly Planet,* November 15, 1860.
[86] "The Clear Grit Stronghold Invaded – Sir Allan Victorious! *The Chatham Weekly Planet,* November 15, 1860.

American Civil War.

With the secession of the southern states and the coming of the Civil War, "the fate of four and a half million African-Americans, slave and free, was inextricably tied to the fate of the nation in the 1860s."[87] This was also true for the many blacks who had made the exodus to Canada to escape slavery; the fate of the United States in this war would have a profound impact on their futures. The Civil War would have symbolized a very real possibility: the beginning of an end to exile. It gave them hope that slavery would soon be a memory in America in much the way it had been for them in Canada for over a decade. Even for those who might have had no intention of returning south, there would have been concerns for relatives and friends who could be in harm's way during this war. According to Ullman, many of the blacks interviewed in 1854 by Benjamin Drew and later in 1863 by Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe still saw the United States as home, and could see their way to returning south if the opportunities existed for them to live in freedom and be accepted as full citizens in the way that life in Canada allowed.[88] Dr. Howe's interviews would have given Buxtonites hope, for he came as a researcher from President Lincoln's Freedom Commission, which sought to determine how blacks would or could survive outside of slavery, if they were indeed to be emancipated. Howe came away from visiting Buxton with an understanding that:

> The refugees in Canada earn a living and gather property; they marry and respect women; they build churches, and send their children to schools, they improve in

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[87] David W. Blight, "They Knew What Time It Was: African-Americans and the Coming of the Civil War," in *Why the Civil War Came,* ed. Gabor S. Boritt (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 51.

[88] Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 211; Simpson, *Under the North Star,* 898. For Bethel, African-Canadians retained their American identity and connections to home, saying, "some would return when slavery had been abolished and try, once again, to claim for themselves the promises of American democracy." Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *The Roots of African-American Identity: Memory and History in Free Antebellum Communities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 42.

> manners and morals, not because they are “picked men” but simply because they are *free men*…Most interesting are the inhabitants. Twenty years ago, most of them were slaves who owned nothing, not even their children. Now they own themselves; they own their houses and farms, and they have their wives and children about them. They are enfranchised citizens of a government which protects their rights.[89]

When August 1863 brought with it the creation of coloured infantry regiments, President Lincoln issued a call for coloured troops. King called a meeting of the men of Buxton, and urged them to enter the fight for freedom. Seventy men from the community enlisted not long after this meeting, some taking necessary time to ensure the safety of their families and the security of their land before their departure to the Detroit enlistment office. These seventy men made up what was called the Buxton Company of the 24th Kent Regiment of Militia. At the end of the war, only half of this number returned for mustering out of the services on October 17, 1865. Of these men, twenty-two are known to have received pensions from the United States government for the rest of their lives.[90] There has been some suggestion that the refugees who returned to fight in the Civil War did so because they held a strong connection to the United States as citizens, identified themselves as Americans, and fought for freedom as patriots.[91] The fact that several of these men returned to live out their lives in Canada suggests that the answer may not be

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[89] Samuel Gridley Howe, Report to the Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission, 1864: The Refugees from Slavery in Canada West (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1864; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 70-71.
[90] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*
[91] Ana-Lisa Cox, “*A Stronger Kinship: One Town's Extraordinary Story of Hope and Faith*, (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2006); Walton,”Blacks in Buxton and Chatham,” 173.

as straight-forward as this, however. It raises very definite questions about identity and citizenship.

During the Civil War, life in Buxton would have continued as usual as best it could, no doubt with constant discussion and speculation about the war's outcome, and what it would mean to blacks both free and in bondage. The Canadian press carried ongoing coverage of the events of the war; therefore, with its own post office, the community had ready access to news of what was happening to the south. In addition, the Chatham papers suggest that there was a great deal of activity in the black community during this period, as they held meetings in which they discussed their future. There was talk of resettlement elsewhere – schemes involving Haiti, Jamaica, and parts of Africa, all based on notions of North America's not being a long-term home. On many people's minds was the question of what would happen at the end of the war. For over a decade Canada had been a refuge, but suddenly these refugees found themselves faced with the question, where was "home"?

Buxton South? King says "go"

Beginning in 1865, at the end of the American Civil War, there was a steady trickle of community members out of the region as they returned to join the Reconstruction efforts, rejoined family members, or sought other opportunities for themselves.[92] Initially, as word of emancipation reached Buxton, the hope of community members was a transplanting of their community onto land in the South to "form a colony there, similar to the utopian community of the Elgin Settlement, employ free labor

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[92] CP Ripley, ed. *The Black Abolitionist Papers*, 5 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986-92), 41, Simpson, *Under the North Star,* 903, Winks, *Blacks in Canada,* 289.

and raise cotton and sugar…."[93] Hoping to see this evolve, a delegation of settlers from the community charged King with determining whether or not this move was possible. They presented him with the details of their plan,[94] and King took it on himself to go directly to Washington to investigate the possibilities of success for this scheme. What he learned was that the unstable post-war political climate, sentiments of whites in the South, and most importantly, lack of availability of a tract of land large enough to house a "second Buxton" combined to make this plan an impossible one. According to King, from his experiences in the South he was able to determine that:

> …a state of lawlessness reigned through the slave states that was only kept in check by the strong military force kept in each state since the close of the war. The states in rebellion had to be reconstructed and a civil government appointed and a national policy adopted with regard to the coloured race that had been set free before there could be any security for life and property in the southern states.[95]

In a community meeting on his return to Buxton, King told Buxtonites everything he had learned, from rumours of "free" land in the South to the haphazard situation for Negroes post-emancipation. He made it clear that they would be unable to return to the United States under their resettlement plan. He did believe there was a role for some, however, so King returned to Elgin and urged educated blacks to, 'go and give instruction to their brethren in ignorance,'[96] in the South. Many young people followed his urging, resulting in many Elgin residents returning to the turbulent Reconstruction South to serve black

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[93] Simpson, *Under the North Star,* 901, Walker "*Identity*," 28-9.
[94] King, "*Autobiography*;" Simpson, *Under the North Star,* 901
[95] For greater detail of King's experience, see King, "*Autobiography*," 140-142 and Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 219-222.

communities as teachers, physicians, clergymen, lawyers and political leaders. In all, seven hundred blacks are said to have left Elgin for the United States.[97] By the end of 1866, the majority of these able men and women had gone, and left behind mostly school children, their parents and older Buxtonites.[98] Rev. King's initial dream of educating young blacks to go to Africa as missionaries had not been realized, but in this turbulent period they would provide valuable service. According to King, "At the close of the war when fugitives ceased to come into the settlement and many of the young people were going out, for a few years the exodus was large."[99] Statements such as this one made by Rev. King might have fueled a longstanding belief that the move out of Buxton after the Civil War was a devastating one in terms of numbers, but recent research suggests otherwise.[100] In the years from 1861 to 1871, the population started to take on a different look – more whites bought land in this area, and some of the older families were being replaced by new names on the deeds. This takes into consideration both the departure of Buxtonites to other locales and the movement of other blacks into the community during these years, many from other places inside Canada.[101] However, the number of black residents continued to fall after 1871, and tended not to be replenished. While there were several pulls from communities and people in the south, many Buxtonites also experienced pushes from white Canada. After the war there appeared to be an increase in the mistreatment of blacks in Canada.

> Many white Canadians – fearful that the proclamation, delayed until 1863, would foster a "general irruption" of Negroes into Canada West – renewed their efforts

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[96] King, *Autobiography*, Walton, *Blacks in Buxton and Chatham,* 165, New York Tribune June 2nd, 1863
[97] King, *Autobiography* , Walton, *Blacks in Buxton and Chatham,* Ullman, *Look to the North Star.*
[98] Simpson, *Under the North Star,* 903
[99] King, "*Autobiography*," 138.

> to exclude black children from the common schools, refused work to those few new refugees who did arrive, and encouraged those already present to return to the dis-United States. . .[102]

Buxtonites sold their property "at first to local Negroes, as their non-alienation clauses required, and especially to the Shadd family, and then to whites—in order to move to the South."[103] For many, the fact that civil and political rights they had sought in Canada were now available in the United States, and they could live in the country of their birth as full citizens might have been more than enough to pull them back.

A chapter is closed

After twenty-three years in existence, in 1873 the Elgin Association was dissolved, the stockholders voting that the Association had served its purpose.[104] For all intents and purposes, the experiment that had been Buxton was over. The settlement that had been the home to these refugees from slavery and racially motivated violence would experience a rebirth as the Village of North Buxton. What had started as an American tale, the forced exodus of free and enslaved blacks from a hostile homeland, had now become a Canadian story – the birth, ongoing struggles and persistence of a rural southwestern Ontario village in the first decade of Confederation.

While questions remain as to the ultimate success of the settlement and the criteria by which this could be determined, the settlers had been able for the most part to subsist without outside intervention, and many were able in time to start their own

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[100] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 183-188; Walton, *Blacks in Buxton and Chatham,* 165-172.
[101] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 180-1
[102] Winks, *Blacks in Canada,* 289
[103] Winks, *Blacks in Canada,* 216

businesses. In establishing the community, King and the settlement residents sought a place where blacks could live as free, essentially self-sufficient citizens, be educated, and receive religious instruction. All these factors were in place within the first decade. Taking this fact, along with the reality of the community's persistence into the twenty-first century into consideration, I would argue that Buxton had proven to be a success. Exploration of this question is however beyond the scope of this study. Instead, in the next chapter I turn to the question of how life in the community and in the rest of North America unfolded in the years after the Civil War.

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[104] Minutes of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, June 1847, Buxton Museum Archives.

Chapter 4: A New Beginning for All?

> So who are we—the people of North Buxton? We are the ones who stayed and we are the ones who came later after the Civil War both from the United States and from other areas in Canada. We are the ones who opted for the British Lion rather than the American Eagle. We are the people of North Buxton.[1]

As indicated at the end of chapter three, in the decades after the end of the Civil War, life would continue to change drastically for all Americans, and the reverberations from those changes would continue to be felt for many years by blacks who had settled in various regions of Ontario. The Emancipation Proclamation had enabled many refugees from American slavery to return home to friends and families and to seek opportunities in the New South. This chapter will explore how the years after this period unfolded on both sides of the border, providing a look at the contexts which might have greeted Buxtonites who did choose to migrate back to the United States, and also examining how the Elgin Settlement ceased to exist and came to be replaced by two Buxtons – the predominantly black town of North Buxton, and a mostly white community, Buxton (or South Buxton), a small local story which would have passed quietly and without notice in the history books.

I begin with a close look at the experiences of newly emancipated blacks in the American South, through a discussion of the changes in political climate, from the election of a Republican government to the re-entrenchment of a racially-based hierarchy and creation of two separate cultural Americas, one black and one white. I then comparatively explore the experiences of blacks in the Ontario context during this same

period. Following this, I return to the local context of Raleigh Township, and discuss some of the conjecture regarding the creation of the separate Buxtons, paying particular attention to the arrival of the Canada Southern Railway and the effects it had on the community, including the part it is said to have played in the migration of Buxtonites north within the settlement. As this is a micro-study of one community, I provide an in-depth look as I explore the laying out and incorporation of the Village of North Buxton, introducing some of its original inhabitants and their role in the community. Once I have provided an overview of the new Buxton community, I will address the question which served as my point of entry into the research - "what happened to this community after the Civil War?" I do this by turning to the unfolding of life within North Buxton during the decades from the 1870s to the 1910s, ending with life in the settlement as Canada prepared to enter WWI.

Exploring the Nadir

In this section I provide an overview of the contexts within which blacks in the American South found themselves after the Civil War and into the twentieth century. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an in-depth look at postbellum American life, but it is vital to make some general observations in order to provide context for the period in which the subjects of my study lived. The American context is relevant as this was the context into which many Buxtonites migrated after the War, as well as a context they heard about constantly and had to weigh in order to make decisions as to whether or not they would be better off if they sought out opportunities there. My exploration will show that while these were both oppressive contexts, the situation in the American South

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[1]C. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton* (Chatham, ON: n.p., 1983), 102.

was an extremely violent and dangerous place to choose for relocation. It therefore raises the question of what would have prompted the choice of one set of oppressions over another. Were the bonds of kinship and the possibilities of opportunity so great that blacks in Canada would truly risk death to attain them? For these particular Canadians, what were the struggles they faced as they experienced life in this postbellum North America?

For people of African descent, the end of the Civil War and the process of Reconstruction of the nation's economy and social structure symbolized hope. They had fought to gain their freedom and now awaited opportunities to participate in everyday living and re-building as full citizens. They anticipated the reunion of families and the opening up of social opportunities they had previously been denied. The unfolding of the next decades for these new citizens would prove instrumental in their evolution as Americans. Sadly, the anticipated immediate citizenship was not to be, even after the 1866 Civil Rights Bill gave limited rights of citizenship to African-Americans. Instead, new and sometimes more stringent forms of discrimination and segregation began to appear.[2] White Southerners, having fought alongside black men during the war, now found it difficult to enter a peacetime that included according blacks the same status as white men. For a country used to the *status quo* of white slave owner and black slave, the transition to emancipated blacks integrated into society, would force difficult changes

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[2] For a detailed look at the experiences of African-Americans in the post-Civil War period, see Armstead L. Robinson, "Full of Faith, Full of Hope: The African-American Experience from Emancipation to Segregation," in *Upon These Shores: Themes in African-American Experience 1600 to the Present*, eds. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (New York: Routledge, 2000), 141-166; Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998); Gerald D. Jaynes, "Blacks in the Economy from Reconstruction to World War I," in *Upon These Shores: Themes in African-American Experience 1600 to the Present*, eds. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (New York: Routledge, 2000), 167-181; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

upon the citizenry, not only in lifestyle but even in terms of their basic understandings of the social order.

Yet, the years 1867-68 saw blacks and whites working together to establish public school systems, creating mechanisms for bargaining between planters and labourers, assisting the freedmen in establishing themselves and working to create better and more equitable systems of taxation. In the rewriting of this region's history, southern black communities evidenced high levels of political mobilization, and these new citizens were extremely cognizant of their role in the new history of America.[3]

The 1870s saw the return of white Democrats to power in the majority of the Southern states, oftentimes through intimidation of black voters, outright violence and other actions which prevented blacks from voting. Federal troops and armed militia were in the South to prevent violence and enforce the laws, but for the most part they were unable to protect the black community from the dangers of attack by groups like the Ku Klux Klan, in incidents where the perpetrators were rarely identified, caught or punished.[4] In 1877 the result of a national compromise, mainly geared at increasing southern support in the presidential elections, was the removal of federal troops from the South. This meant the beginning of a complete return of white power to the Southern states. Once this power was in place, state and local governments created a complex system of Jim Crow laws. These laws essentially mandated a physical separation between the races in every imaginable public setting. This was especially true in settings that

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[3] Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 17-40; David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, c.2001), 49.

[4] Bethel, "*Promiseland,*" 17-40. Litwack also discusses the scourge of white violence against blacks and the inability of blacks to make sense of it. He provides examples of the "coming of age" of young blacks, when they first realize their place in the American racial hierarchy. Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 7-14.

mixed the sexes, as there were fears for the safety of white women and girls.[5] The result was the creation of a legal system of segregation by the 1890s. What remained was a fully legislated world of black and white, where whites possessed rights not afforded to blacks and in which discrimination fueled separation, distrust, hatred and in many cases, violence. During the Jim Crow years, violence against blacks became so accepted that it substituted as theatre, with torture, beatings and lynching often drawing voyeuristic crowds. [6]

As time passed, the Democrats passed more laws to make it increasingly difficult for blacks as well as poor whites to vote. As late as the early twentieth century, the former Confederate states continued to pass laws which further and further removed the ability of these marginalized groups from utilizing any agency with regard to their political lives. Some blacks were elected to political offices, but over time fewer and fewer people participated in Southern elections, resulting in their needs and the needs of their communities being overlooked.[7] The southern states gradually regained the rights to determine their own race relations, finally gaining federal sanction for their segregation laws in 1896.[8] As separation became more and more legislated, it also moved into being custom.[9] Even in arenas where Jim Crow laws did not expressly forbid black people to participate, for instance, in sports or recreation or church services, the laws shaped a segregated culture. People came to a position of expecting and anticipating the place blacks held in society to be beneath that of whites. These notions were further entrenched

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[5] Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 132-140.
[6] Leon F. Litwack, *How Free is Free? The Long Death of Jim Crow* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2009), 21.
[7] Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow.*
[8] David Brown and Clive Webb, *American South: From Slavery to Civil Rights* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 189.

with the popularity of the discourses around social Darwinism, lending scientific credence to everyday racist arguments regarding the inferiority of blacks.[10] The social aspects of these years extended well beyond segregation. There were expectations that blacks show deference to whites at all times, "from tipping the hat or taking it off to standing at the end of the line."[11] It was understood that race determined one's place within the social order.

For blacks, while segregation was more than an intolerable system, their exclusion from the larger community and relegation to a life separate in many contexts also led to the creation of a close, nurturing, supportive African-American community in every region. Recognizing that they needed to establish their own strategies to enable their political and social advancement, blacks turned inward and began to develop a cultural system fostered by this isolation and strengthened by their shared experiences of adversity.[12] This world of parallel institutions they created served in many ways to avoid and to overcome the disadvantages of race. There were separate black schools, hospitals, newspapers, fraternal organizations, and churches, peopled by black lawyers, doctors, college professors, and writers.[13] At the heart of it all was the black church. Within the church black people were able to find the support, comfort and cohesive community they were unable to find elsewhere. As it had in the days of slavery, in the post-Reconstruction

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[9] Litwack, *How Free is Free,* 14.
[10] Brown & Webb, *American South,* 190.
[11] Audrey Olsen Faulkner, Marsel A. Heisel, Wendell Holbrook and Shirley Geismar, *When I was Comin' Up: An Oral History of Aged Blacks* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982).
[12] Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 95. For more on African-American responses to segregation, see also Brown & Webb, 225-232; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Linda C. Tillman, *The SAGE Handbook of African American Education* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2009).
[13] James Walker, *Identity: The Black Experience in Canada* (Ontario Educational Communications Authority, 1979), 28-9.

period the church became the backbone of the black community. As historian Evelyn Higgenbotham argues, the church served multiple roles in community life, including being "an agent of social control, forum of discussion and debate, promoter of education and economic cooperation, and arena for the development and assertion of leadership."[14]

Like the church, various mutual aid societies, fraternal orders and their sister organizations worked to shape the African-American identity. According to Trotter, within these organizations, members worked together to ensure the survival of those experiencing economic and other difficulties. They also provided support for,

> movements for social change, including the antislavery movement of the nineteenth century and the modern civil rights and black power movements of the twentieth century. Black secret societies also offered more opportunities for prospective members to join multiclass and gender-integrated orders than did their white counterparts.[15]

Starting with freemasonry, Americans began to establish their own fraternal organizations during the 19th century, breaking away from their European counterparts. Denied access, African Americans formed their own organizations by reversing this process, by seeking out and obtaining charters from these same European groups. The tradition of black Masonry began in North America with the initiation of Prince Hall, a freeborn African American considered the "father" of black freemasonry, along with fourteen other men, into the Irish Constitution Military Lodge in Boston in 1775. The societies and organizations quickly became a major part of the African American experience:

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[14] Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent* 4-6.

> By the late nineteenth century, black secret societies included not only the parallel Euro-American Elks, Masons, Odd Fellows, and Knights of Pythias, but also a variety of independent orders, including the United Brothers of Friendship and Sisters of the Mysterious Ten, the Independent Order of St. Luke, and the Grand United Order of True Reformers.[16]

In spite of the overarching experiences of racial oppression, these black communal organizations and activities managed to survive and to flourish into the present.

The church and other black institutions not only served to protect the black community from the racial exclusivity that pervaded America into the 1900s, but also allowed for the expression and development of a unique African-American culture and identity, which appeared in the public sphere in the language, expressions, celebrations, music and literature of the period, but was otherwise invisible to white society. With this unique identity came a renewal of race consciousness and Black Nationalism, which stressed black unity, self-determination, and independence from white society. These notions would continue to evolve into the present, but for the purposes of this project, I think it sufficient to limit my discussion to the fact that a major outcome of practiced and legislated segregation of American blacks was the creation of a separate society within American society, with its own internal stratification, providing opportunities for blacks within it to be upwardly mobile. Outside this protective cocoon which existed well into the mid-1950s (until the movement of Jim Crow out of the South, the start of the Civil Rights Movement and institution of integration practices), the discourses of race and

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[15] Joe W. Trotter "African American Fraternal Associations in American History: An Introduction" *Social Science History* 28 no. 3 (2004), 356.

[16] Trotter, "African American Fraternal Associations," 356.

racial stratification have continued to pervade into twenty-first century America, discourses which have been heard and felt in other nations, including Canada.

The Canadian Experience

During the Reconstruction years in the South, there were many opportunities available for educated Canadian blacks such as those from the community of Buxton. In fact, with their education they were better equipped to play major roles in governing and educating the New South than were many of the newly emancipated slaves, who had little if any education. Therefore, throughout this period and well into recent years, blacks continued the southward trek, seeking better opportunities than they were perhaps able to find in Canada. The creation of a segregated America in many ways provided greater opportunities for young Canadians. Newly created black societies welcomed ambitious, well educated men and women with boundless world views.[17] This was not the reality for blacks in Canada. In the separate black society in America, an ambitious individual could aspire to the top of her or his social world. In Canada "where discrimination was not normally overt and had no sanction in law, it was nonetheless very difficult to break out of the social role the white majority had – sometimes unconsciously – assigned to blacks."[18] Therefore, it is not surprising to note that even with the failure of Reconstruction in the New South, Canadian blacks continued their migration into American communities, following opportunities in education, employment and social

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[17] Shaw refers to the children of the freedmen's generation as seeing the violence and racism of post-Civil War America as simply other obstacles they had to surmount, but with the knowledge that they had the ability to do it; after all, their parents had been able to survive the even greater obstacle of slavery. Stephanie J. Shaw *What a Woman Ought to Be and Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).
[18] James Walker, *Identity*, 29.

life. Their belief in their ability to surmount anything in their path likely spurred their movement.

This was a period during which more people in general were leaving Ontario in search of jobs. While the agricultural sector was prospering in the late nineteenth century, it simply could not provide sufficient jobs for the province's growing population.[19] The region west of London and along the Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence shores east of Ottawa, traditionally agriculturally strong, did not turn to industrial activity to provide jobs. Farmers unable to purchase the new machinery and hence become more competitive found themselves less and less able to provide for their families. The answer for many was to become mobile, seeking jobs in nearby locales, and oftentimes this meant crossing the border in search of work in places like New York, Boston, Detroit and Chicago. After 1873, a major depression throughout the Atlantic economies added to the reasons why Ontarians were leaving to secure better or more opportunities.[20] The movement across the border was not unidirectional and a small number of American blacks continued coming into Canada during this period, some chasing opportunities, many perhaps escaping the violence and prejudice that had come to signify race relations in certain parts of the country. According to McFarquhar, census records indicate that at least 450 blacks immigrated to the province of Ontario after the Civil War.[21] Many of the men who came north came as porters and others as skilled workers. Their numbers were small, but they helped replace some of the numbers leaving the province. By 1890, black movement into

[19] The Department of Agriculture was expending thousands annually to ensure this prosperity, as farming began making use of technological advancements. Peter A. Baskerville, *Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2005), 134-136.
[20] Peter A. Baskerville, *Sites of Power*, 136.
[21] For a more detailed breakdown of this phenomenon, see Colin Stephan McFarquhar, "A Difference of Perspective: The Black Minority, White Majority, and Life in Ontario, 1870-1919" (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 1998), 59.

Ontario was essentially over, especially into those areas with small black populations (newcomers tended to move into the urban centres like Toronto and Hamilton). With this in- and out-migration, the population change for blacks was large; the number of blacks in Ontario declined by one-half between 1871 and 1911.[22] Figure 4.1 provides an indication of the population changes in Raleigh Township from 1861 to 1881, and shows a particularly large change in the black-white population ratio between 1871 and 1881, a period when a large number of whites moved into the region.

Table 4.1

Group	1861		1871		1881		% Pop. Change from 1861 to 1881
	Number	% Total Population	Number	% Total Population	Number	% Total Population	
Whites	2416	64	2880	71	4295	81	+17
Blacks	1334	36	1201	29	1003	19	-17
Total	3750	100	4081	100	5298	100	---

Population change and racial breakdown in Raleigh Township, 1861 – 1881. Source: Census of Canada, Raleigh Township, 1861, 1871 and 1881.

Dark Days for Blacks in Canada

According to historian Robin Winks, this period from the end of the Civil War to the end of the First World War, much as it was for blacks in the South, was the darkest period in the lives of the people of African descent living in Canada, suggesting that,

> as the study of race was 'scientifically' organized, as stereotypes of the Negro became more widely known in Canada, as the forces gathered under the rubrics of

[22] As with the debates over how many African-Americans came north into Canada over the years, there are differing suggestions as to the numbers to move back, with some suggesting that as many as two-thirds of the African-American population resident in Canada returned south. More recent scholarship tends to agree on a number closer to half of the overall populations. James S.G. Walker, "*African Canadians*," 144.

> nationalism and racism began to have their effect, the Negro in Canada found himself sliding down an inclined plane from mere neglect to active dislike.[23]

Winks' assessment is correct. The Canadian grand narrative espoused a belief that,

> …history proper begins with the arrival of Europeans, whether Lief Ericson and the Vikings, John Cabot and the English, or Jacques Cartier and the French. . . . Grand narrative traces the progress of European resettlement, emphasizing "nation-building" by farseeing politicians, most often "great men."[24]

These ideas were serving to create a national identity,[25] focusing on aspects of the nation's past which met with understandings of what was Canada, and who was (and consequently, who was not) Canadian. With these ideas driving public opinion, once the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in the United States, many Canadians had voiced fears that there would be an influx of American blacks into Canada, upsetting the racial balance.[26] Although these fears proved unfounded, public sentiment appeared to favour a country where there were few if any blacks present, showing a continued lack of knowledge of the reality that blacks, along with other "minorities," had been participants in the settlement of almost every area of Canada.[27] Quickly forgetting the thousands of African American refugees who had resided in Canada for almost a century, the discourse in Canadian society at the end of the century began centering on the unsuitability of

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[23] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 292.
[24] Timothy J. Stanley, "Nationalist Histories and Multiethnic Classrooms," *Education Canada* 42, no. 3 (2002): 12-15. Proquest, www.proquest.umi.com.
[25] Taking the concept of "nation" to mean a"community of memory" which works to protect rememberances of the past, through state education, the media and shared rituals and commemorations. For more on this, see Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989):7-24. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2928520; Barabra A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Philadelphia, Open University Press, 2003), 133-6.
[26] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 289-292.
[27] Walker, "African Canadians*,"* in ed. P. Magocsi, *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 145.

people of African descent for life in the Canadian climate. The concerns were not helped by the influx of American blacks in the late 1890s into the Canadian West. According to Winks, they came in search of work and to escape the life to which they found themselves relegated in the South. Canada's response was made clear in the late 1800s and early 1900s when immigration policies were revisited and rewritten to exclude visible minorities and blacks in particular (races which "could not be assimilated" into the population).[28]

From 1900 to 1920, Canada sought to deal with the problems of race and exclusivity by simply limiting access. There were those Canadians, however, for whom this might not have been enough, as they voiced concerns over the minorities already in the country.[29] The discourses around race and nation were very much on the minds of Canadians in this period.

Right up to the end of the Civil War, the refugees in Canada had been somewhat accepted visitors. They did experience racism and there were groups of people who would have preferred that they not choose Canada as their temporary home. However, there were many whites who had devoted a lot of time and effort to the protection, education, financial assistance and support of the fugitive slave and his/her descendants. Once the war ended however, the blacks in Canada disappeared from the public eye.

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[28] Walker notes that the Immigration Act of 1910 prohibited "immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character." This led to the discouragement of and prohibitions against the immigration of blacks into Canada. A 1953 Act then banned immigrants on the grounds of their ethnicity or place of origin, citing their inability to become assimilated into the country. Indication that Canada was ready to legislate tolerance in immigration did not appear in policies until the Act was revised in the 1960s, and even then there was reticence observed in practice. James S.G. Walker, *A History of Blacks in Canada: A Study Guide for Teachers and Students* (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1980), 94; James S.G. Walker, "African Canadians," 144.

[29] See Agnes C. Laut, *The Canadian Commonwealth* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1915) 112; James W. St. G. Walker, *"Race," Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical*

There were few causes or events relating to the black community that appeared in the Canadian press after this period.[30] When they did appear, it was generally in caricature, and increasingly through the perpetuation of negative stereotypes.[31]

One area in which black Canadians did remain visible, however, was in their struggles for equity. According to Walker, this belief in the equality of black people and an insistence on its recognition was a defining characteristic of the African-Canadian population.[32] Granted almost all the rights of citizenship in legislation, blacks in Canada sought to have their citizenship accepted in practice. Blacks saw citizenship as enabling full participation in Canadian life, in education, employment and society. After Confederation, on the slippery slope of denial of more and more of their rights, blacks found that they were barred from many areas to which they assumed they would have access by virtue of citizenship, or that they had possibly not been barred from in previous years. They were often refused service in establishments such as hotels, taverns, ice-cream parlors and restaurants.[33] They were never chosen for jury duty, did not have equal access to job opportunities, and legislation continued to prevent enrolment in the common schools. They continued to argue for a change in legislation governing the admission of black children to the common schools. In many jurisdictions, blacks challenged this legislation through the courts, in some contexts managing to meet with a

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Case Studies (Toronto: The Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History and Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997), 124-128.

[30] McFarquhar, "A Difference of Perspective," 21 & Donald Simpson, *Under the North Star: Negroes in Ontario from Early Times Until 1870* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005).

[31] Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 292-5.

[32] Walker, *African Canadians,* 170.

[33] Esmeralda M.A. Thornhill, "So Seldom For Us, So Often Against Us: Blacks and Law in Canada," *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 3 (2008): 330; Walker, *African Canadians,* 164. Former Buxtonite Ezekial C. Cooper, then resident in Chatham, ON, corroborated the intolerances and prejudices experienced by blacks in Canada, as well as pointing out the similarities in these experiences between blacks in Canada and blacks south of the border. Ezekial C. Cooper, "Letter to the Editor," *The Christan Recorder,* May 12, 1866, www.accessiblearchives.com. Item #74131 (accessed December 18, 2005).

degree of success. Eventually there were amendments made to the Common School Act, changes which allowed that black children living in residentially integrated areas would not be prevented from attending the common school. Schools were gradually integrated in Ontario throughout the end of the nineteenth century, but the legislation would remain on the books until 1964, with the last segregated school in Colchester remaining open until 1965.[34]

African-Canadians also sought equal job opportunities, but found that while there was no legislated segregation, there was indeed an informal colour line. In the late 1800s in Canada, blacks for the most part remained labourers, train porters, waiters and barbers, and very few were able to raise themselves out of these ranks and into higher status roles.[35] There were the individual cases of black success stories, but these did not translate into other blacks being accorded the same rights when it came to employment. Many of the prejudices arose out of preconceptions the white population held about blacks from stereotypes derived during slavery. The reality was that blacks were initially chosen as slaves because they were an accessible workforce, physically strong, hard-working and resilient. Once they were free, they became maligned as lazy, inferior physical specimens, and intellectually inferior. The result of this was their relegation to labour and service roles.[36] This positioning in the minds of white Canadians, as well as in the realities of the workplace, meant that Canadian blacks remained in a position of subordination, within structures of oppression and domination. As with their experiences in the school system, African-Canadians continued to struggle in pursuit of equal access

[34] Walker, *African Canadians,* 162; Robin Winks, "Negro School Segregation in Ontario and Nova Scotia." *Canadian Historical Review* 50, (1969), 164-191; Constance Backhouse, *Colour-coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 250; Walker, *"Race,"Rights and the Law,"* 128-9.

to job opportunities, while locked in a cycle of oppression which has continued into the present.

In coming to an understanding of how this kind of oppression created a particular set of outcomes for African-Canadians, and helped shape both their identity as a people and their position in this society, it is important to recognize that several kinds of oppression were at work here. The interrelationship between race, class and gender is best delineated when examining these issues of access. The experiences of blacks in Ontario during the period under examination were similar in jurisdictions across Canada, and exposed how these three variables intersected in a society that relegated people of African descent to the margins. In order to provide for their families, black men were forced to take menial jobs (if they were able to find employment at all). In many cases, black women provided the additional income necessary for survival, in addition to the strenuous work many performed at home.[37] Generally, jobs for African-Canadian women were limited, leading to an over-abundance of these women in domestic positions. Some women worked as seamstresses or laundresses, while others made use of their skills in the kitchen, baking and cooking.[38] The result of this combination of variables was a

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[35] Walker, *African Canadians,* 150.
[36] Walker, *African Canadians,* 148-151.
[37] Walker traces African family structure into slavery and subsequently into the Canadian context, pointing out that black women had always worked, and that in the Canadian context, they often had no choice but to work, especially when the organizing forces of racism prevented black men from finding employment. This often resulted in the woman being the chief breadwinner for the family. Walker, *African Canadians,* 153. Contrary to these women, the majority of working-class white women did not work for wages, since according to the cult of domesticity; a "proper woman" ran the home and raised her family. Therefore, the practice of black women in this context was anomalous at least. Baskerville, *Sites of Power,* 142. Yee, "Gender Ideology and Black Women."
[38] Dionne Brand, "We Weren't Allowed to Go into Factory Work Until Hitler Started the War: The 1920s to the 1940s. In *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History,"* eds. P. Bristow, D. Brand, L. Carty, A. Cooper, S. Hamilton, & A. Shadd (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 172-3, 179.

group subordinated by race and socioeconomic status and possessing little in the way of political power.

In the face of the many social and economic boundaries preventing them from ever becoming full Canadian citizens, African-Canadians came together, and their communities turned inward for support. They relied on mutual aid organizations in times of need, and depended on the church for moral and social support.[39] As with black communities elsewhere, the church was at the centre of their world:

> The Black man's pilgrimage in America was made less onerous because of his religion. His religion was the organizing principle around which his life was structured. His church was his school, his forum, his political arena, his social club, his art gallery, his conservatory of music. It was lyceum and gymnasium as well as sanctum sanctorum. His religion was his fellowship with man, his audience with God. It was the peculiar sustaining force that gave him the strength to endure when endurance gave no promise, and the courage to be creative in the face of his own dehumanization.[40]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, most black communities had their own churches which served these roles (note for example the discussion of the early establishment of churches in the Buxton settlement in the previous chapter). For blacks, communion with whites in their churches had often proved difficult. Many believed that the oppression

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[39] Walker likens this turn inward to the accommodationist philosophies of Booker T. Washington, a set of beliefs which lead the black community to avoid attempts at integration into white society, and to set their ambitions within the realistic realms of the colour line. They were not to complain about their lot in life, but rather, wait until white society saw them as equals. The problem with this approach was that with their silence, blacks were telling society that they were accepting of race relations in Canada – "And so, although Accommodationism has lent considerable strength to the black community, for it was presented with the task of satisfying all the non-economic ambitions of its people, its practice has also encouraged white complacency." Walker, *A History of Blacks in Canada,* 156-7.

they experienced outside the church even made its way into the churches themselves, and therefore, they saw it as in their best interests to form their own churches and church associations.[41] In some instances they affiliated with the parent churches, in others with their sister African American churches. Many African-American ministers and church delegates would immigrate to Canada and become active in churches here. Out of these churches, several mutual aid and other types of associations were born, many geared at the protection, uplift, and support of their black brethren. The Civil War had resulted in a depletion of church numbers throughout Ontario, with some churches ceasing to exist or having to merge with others when their numbers could no longer support their operation, or when churches were left without pastors.[42] Across the black communities throughout Canada, the different denominations[43] collaborated and welcomed members from other churches to celebrate with them and to attend their events, a phenomenon I had noticed in the Buxton context as well. By the 1880s, however, the migration of members of the black population out of southwestern Ontario appeared to have drained the strength of the black churches, and many were unable to maintain active participants.[44] Although their numbers were greatly reduced, the African-Canadian churches rallied, and continued to provide their members with solace and support in the face of white oppression and

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[40] C. Eric Lincoln, "Foreword," in *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology*, William R. Jones (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1973), viii.

[41] In a call to the black Baptist churches in Canada West in 1841, the Second Baptist Church of Detroit summed up the feelings of many congregants regarding their experiences in the white church by stating: "many of our fathers have gone down to the grave not enjoying their just privileges and rights in the Christian churches among the whites…" Dorothy Shadd Shreve *Pathfinders of Liberty and Truth: A Century With the Amherstburg Regular Missionary Baptist Association* (Merlin, 1940), 6.

[42] Shadd Shreve, *The Africanadian Church: A Stabilizer* ;Shadd Shreve *Pathfinders*, 20-21.

[43] As in the American context, blacks mainly belonged to Baptist and Methodist denominations, with some memberships in other churches. See Shadd Shreve, *The Africanadian Church*, for more information on the black churches in Canada.

[44] Interestingly, the Convention's Sunday schools in most areas continued to be active, suggesting that while there had been a loss of adult membership, there were still enough youth to keep the schools busy. Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham," 233; Shadd Shreve, *Pathfinders*, 25, 70.

remained at the heart of black life. While a more in-depth look at the African-Canadian church is beyond the scope of this project, its role in shaping the identities and lives of its members should not be discounted.[45]

In addition to the support and social networking of the church, many of the African American mutual aid societies and fraternal orders made their way across the border into Canada, and provided similar services for African Canadians. For example, Prince Hall Freemasonry came to Ontario in the mid-1800s, and many African Canadian men held memberships in their local lodges or fraternal orders. These organizations played important roles in tightly-knit communities, providing assistance in terms of economic and other support for members. They also served the important function of providing their membership with a sense of pride in who they were and a sense of brotherhood among men of similar backgrounds. In a context in which the discourse of scientific racism was accepted as "truth," these were welcomed oases from prejudice.

The turn of the century for black Canada was no better in terms of treatment nor opportunity. Across the nation the signs of a reduction in tolerance were all too prevalent. With the discourse around changes to immigration legislation leading to the limiting of access, many blacks who had lived in Canada now lived in fear of deportation. For those whose families in the American West sought to come north into the now open Canadian West, they quickly recognized that this was not to be – they were unwelcome. Many blacks had moved into the American West beginning in the 1860s, but the new century found them struggling to compete in mainly white communities, so for them, the prospect of a life in Canada was not a good one. In some communities, their unwelcome status was

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[45] Winks discounted the role of the church, and took the leaders to task for not doing their duty in bringing the community together. Winks, *Blacks in Canada.*

made overtly clear.[46] The vitriol of groups like the Klan pervaded the Canadian West, anger stemming from the immigration of blacks into the region. A defined colour line was being created, and African-Americans, recognizing they were not welcome, were forced to settle elsewhere. Many of those blacks already living in the western provinces eventually packed up and left.[47]

With the start of the First World War, Canadian blacks and other visible minorities joined other Canadians who sought to enlist in the armed forces as part of their national duty. Their hopes were not to be easily met. To gain access to the military, they would have to enforce their civil rights through open challenges to the government.[48] While they were eventually successful in these struggles and blacks as well as Indians and Japanese Canadians were allowed to enlist by the summer of 1916,[49] it would not be until the 1960s that blacks saw significant change with respect to access and membership in the Canadian citizenry.

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[46] Walker, *"Race," Rights and the Law,"* 124-128; Winks, *Blacks in Canada,* 298-336.
[47] Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 300-13; Walker, *African Canadians.*
[48] Winks, *Blacks in Canada,* 313-336.
[49] James W. St.G. Walker, "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, *The Canadian Historical Review* LXX no. 1 (1989): 1-26; Winks, *Blacks in Canada,* 313-19.

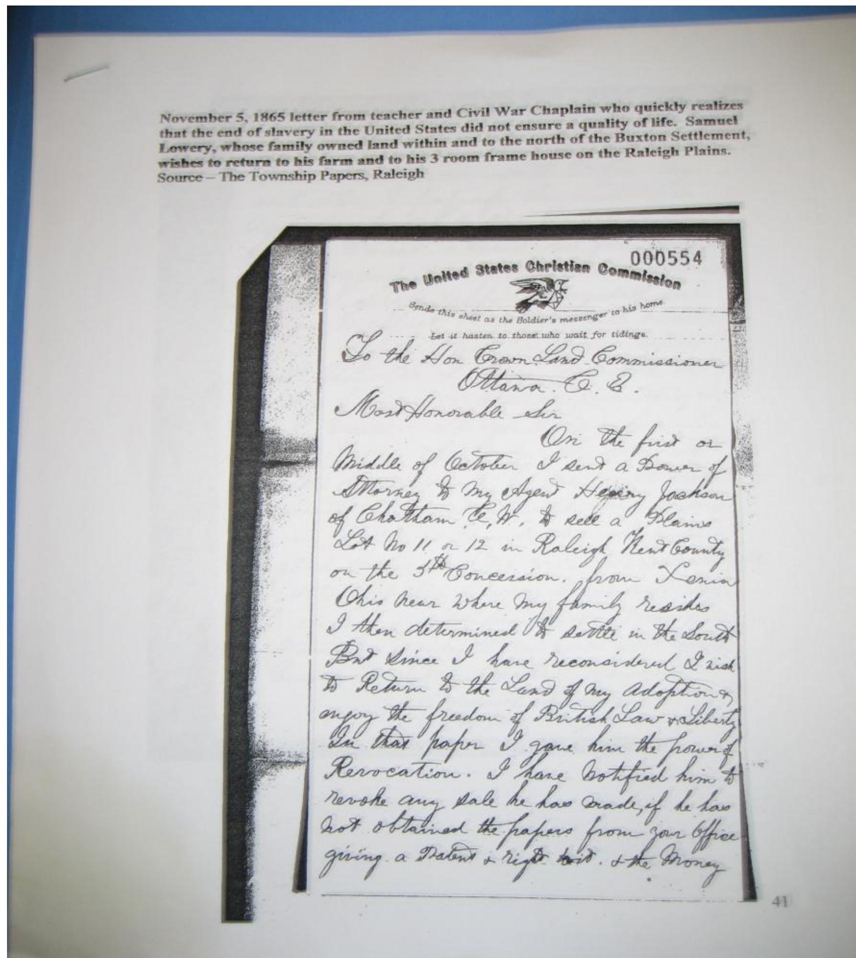
The Buxton Context

With all the forces of change at play throughout North America during the period from the 1870s and into the new century, how did Buxton fare? Did the oppressive forces impinging on black lives affect the people in this tiny enclave? Did contact with their Southern friends and relatives affect how they saw the world, did it impact their decision to remain in Buxton? In this next section I look at the Buxton context during the period just described. By exploring the extant records for this period, I am able to provide some insight into how and in what ways the community did or did not react to the changing world around them, and how it may have been affected.

Two tales stand out in considering the years immediately following the Civil War and how they were experienced by the people of Buxton. In November 1865, former Buxtonite Samuel Lowery wrote a letter to the Crown Land Commission in Ottawa (see Fig. 4.2), outlining his interest in changing his initial bid for reclaiming land in the Raleigh Plains, located on Concession 5, to that of securing land further south in the township to allow settlement in Buxton. Having returned with his family to the United States and serving as a Civil War chaplain, Lowery and family had become resident in Xenia, Ohio. Perhaps they had discovered that the end of slavery did not mean the end to the intolerable experiences of the past, because Lowery stated, "I have reconsidered and wish to return to the land of my adoption and enjoy the freedom of British law and

liberty."[50] Other Buxtonites who left during or after the Civil War also returned to Buxton, including Harriet Rhue and William Hooper.[51]

Figure 4:1



November 5, 1865 letter from teacher and Civil War Chaplain who quickly realizes that the end of slavery in the United States did not ensure a quality of life. Samuel Lowery, whose family owned land within and to the north of the Buxton Settlement, wishes to return to his farm and to his 3 room frame house on the Raleigh Plains.
Source – The Township Papers, Raleigh

000554

The United States Christian Commission

Sends this sheet as the Soldier's messenger to his home

Let it hasten to those who wait for tidings.

To the Hon Crown Land Commissioner
Ottawa C. E.
Most Honorable Sir
On the first or
Middle of October I sent a Power of
Attorney to my Agent Henry Jackson
of Chatham C. W. to sell a Plains
Lot No 11 or 12 in Raleigh Kent County
on the 5th Concession. from Xenia
Ohio near where my family resides
I then determined to settle in the South
But since I have reconsidered & wish
to Return to the Land of my adoption &
enjoy the freedom of British Law & Liberty
In that paper I gave him the power of
Revocation. I have notified him to
revoke any sale he has made, if he has
not obtained the papers from your Office
giving a Patent & right [illegible]. & the Money

41

Letter from Samuel Lowery to the Crown Land Commission, November 5, 1865, Courtesy of Bryan Prince Private Collection.

Others, like Ezekial C. Cooper, left the community, but maintained close ties. It was Cooper (then resident in Chatham) who would write of the intolerances being experienced by blacks in Canada, and his beliefs that,

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[50] Samuel Lowery to the Crown Land Commission, November 5, 1865, Bryan Prince Private Collection, Buxton, ON.
[51] Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 187.

> …you [African Americans] are moving in the right direction towards a full consummation of your most sanguine desires. We have learned an important fact here, viz: our elevation and the removal of prejudice against us, depends greatly upon the status of our countrymen in the United States. But I am happy to state, that prejudice has been less rampant since the close of the United States rebellion.[52]

Thus, while recognizing the equalities blacks and whites shared under the law, Cooper saw that the treatment of blacks in the two societies was closely aligned, and therefore blacks in Canada could not expect better treatment until race relations in the United States had improved. I have not found evidence regarding whether or not other blacks in Canada saw a similar connection. However, the sentiments of some of the black community had been published by Henry Bibb in an editorial in the *Voice of the Fugitive*, years prior.

> Canadian Negro hate is incomparably MEANER than the Yankee article, Canadian Negro hate is not ORIGINAL. Copied, aped, deviltry is always meaner than the original diabolism…A meaner set of negro haters, God in his inexplicable mercy, does not suffer to live, than these poor fools of Canadian second-generation imitations.[53]

This suggests that, from the early days of their settlement in Canada West the black community had seen the similarities between how they were treated in Canada and in America.

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[52] As mentioned at the start of this chapter, Ezekial C. Cooper, "Letter to the Editor," *The Christian Recorder,* May 12, 1866, www.accessiblearchives.com. Item #74131 (accessed December 18, 2005).
[53] Quoted in J. Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1865* (New York: Associated Faculty Press, 1985), 157-158.

Canada Southern Railway Brings Jobs to the Region

In the early 1870s, Buxton residents and their families continued to leave for other locales, and in many instances, the departure of black residents was followed by the arrival of white settlers, eager for land. The racial make-up of the community was changing, leading to a mixed community, albeit with a mainly black population. Buxton was, and would continue to be, predominantly black, but a distinct difference in land ownership was beginning to be seen as the lots held by many blacks began to be smaller than those of their white counterparts, possibly as a result of the subdivision of land within families as children came of age.[54] A number of the whites moving into the region were Irish refugees, many of whom arrived with little in the way of material possessions or skilled trades. In several ways, they resembled the blacks who had arrived in Ontario a generation earlier, themselves refugees from intolerable circumstances. This influx brought with it competition for resources, in jobs, philanthropic aid and government assistance, often putting the Irish into direct competition with the blacks in the community. In this competition, the blacks more often than not found themselves on the losing end.[55]

In 1872, after years of political and legal wrangling, the Canada Southern Railway began building at the north end of the settlement as part of its route from Fort Erie to the Detroit River.[56] The tracks ran right through Lots 6, 7 and 8 of Concession A and Lots 9 – 12 of Concession 8 of the Elgin tract (see Fig. 1.2).[57] While the Railway would not be

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[54] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border*, 187; Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls 1871-1875.
[55] Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 145-7.
[56] For a detailed look at the history behind the establishment of the Canadian Southern Railway, see Walter Neutel, "From 'Southern' Concept to Canadian Southern Railway, 1835-1873" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1968).
[57] Kent County Directory, 1880. J.J. Talman Regional Collection, University of Western Ontario Archives.

officially completed until 1873, and would not open for passenger service until then,[58] its presence brought the opportunity for work, beginning with the actual process of building and laying down tracks. Buxtonite James Travis worked with a team on the railroad, building switches, as well as doing general maintenance.[59] Also working with these men was Buxtonite Millard Hatchett, employed as the first coloured foreman at the station.[60] Once the work of building the railway was completed, some individuals were able to secure jobs as section hands, inspecting and maintaining sections of the railroad. The presence of a railway station in this area also led to the creation of businesses directly related to the railroad industry as well as other industries made possible by its presence. Although the railway ran through the settlement, it was not solely responsible for the buildings in the area, as some structures had already been present within Concessions A and 8. There had been homes built in this region of the settlement in earlier years, including the Bethel Methodist Church, which had been built between 1866 and 1872 on land deeded to the Church by trustees Jacob and Hanna Gunn.[61] The school, SS#13, had been opened on the 8th Concession in 1861, making it the oldest building in the settlement. Mount Carmel # 10 Lodge Hall had also been in the vicinity for a while, having been established before 1866. The new industries augmented the structures that were already there, and provided the community with well-needed jobs.[62]

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[58] Neutel, "From 'Southern' Concept to Canadian Southern…," 128.
[59] James's father John Travis wrote this in his diary in 1872. The diary has been returned to the Travis family since Mrs. Robbins wrote her book and appears lost to researchers at present. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 96.
[60] Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1877; Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 96.
[61] Robbins *Legacy to Buxton,* 95.

Figure 4.2

North Buxton Railway Station, c1900, courtesy of the Buxton Museum and Archives.

Previous studies suggest that people moved closer to these job opportunities, and among these was a movement of Buxtonites from the lots and concessions to the south of the community, leading to increased settlement to the north, around the area of the railroad on Consession 8. This clustering of people is thought to have subsequently led to the creation of a separate community to the north.[63] However, a comparative look at the names appearing on the census documents, in community directories and on assessment

[62] "Historical Sketch of North Buxton" from the North Buxton Labour Day Booklet, September 7, 1964, p. 26, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.
[63] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 94, Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 189-90; Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham."

rolls between 1871 and 1875, does not appear to corroborate this finding.[64] A close look at Concession 8, Lots 9 and 10, which would serve as the location of the village of North Buxton beginning in 1874 and the concessions and lots nearby does show that there were name changes in terms of land ownership between 1870 and 1875, suggesting new owners and inhabitants.[65] However, very few of the names in the latter part of this period represent individuals who had lived to the south of the new community and then moved north. The advent of the railway and the subsequent industries which arose around it created a centre for the new community, a hub for community life, and in all likelihood, also attracted newcomers to the area in search of employment opportunities. But the big movement north toward this area, effectively dividing and repopulating Buxton along a North-South line, did not take place prior to the creation of North Buxton in 1874, as has been suggested. Some individuals rented or purchased smaller lots from a quarter to one or two acres in size within the newly incorporated village on the 8th, while retaining their larger lots on other concessions, effectively separating home from work life, and perhaps providing smaller lots to their children as well.[66]

Laying out the Village of North Buxton

No clear explanation has been found as to what precipitated the giving of this gift, but in 1874 Enos and Sarah Johnson donated some of their land on the 8th Concession, spanning portions of Lots 9 and 10, for the incorporation of the village of North Buxton. This couple was among the longstanding residents of the Elgin Settlement. Enos Johnson

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[64] Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873 and 1874, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

[65] Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873 and 1874, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

had moved to Chatham from Michigan in the mid-1800s (with sons from a previous marriage). Records indicate that while in Chatham, in 1850 he married Sarah Nelson, a widow with two children of her own.[67] In that same year, Enos and Sarah moved to Buxton and settled on the 8th Concession, where they placed a down-payment on the south half of the north half of Lot 9. They obtained the deed to this property on October 4, 1864.[68] By 1873, Enos owned 49.5 acres of land on Concession 8 Lot 9 and Sarah 36 acres on Concession 8 Lot 10.[69] They drew up and registered the first plan for the hamlet of North Buxton in 1874, and, based on this, became the first official residents of the new community. Their household at this point consisted of Enos, 72, and Sarah, 73; their daughter Lizabeth Scott, 26; and her two sons, William Cooper, 10, and James Scott, aged 4.[70] William was the product of Lizabeth's first marriage, which was to George Cooper, while James was the product of her marriage to Daniel Scott. The first streets were Elliott and Johnson running east to west, and Clinton Street running north to south. Enos Johnson died in 1875, after which Sarah continued the job of planning and laying out the village with Elbert Dyke. Together they revised the original map twice in 1876 to include Dyke Avenue, and Garrell, Sarah, and Elizabeth Streets, with additional lots (see Fig. 4.4). A few years later, Charity E. Jones (Fig. 4.3) registered another revision to the map, the original of which was destroyed by fire at the Registry Office in Chatham, and

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[66] Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873 and 1874, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.
[67] Johnson family records, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.
[68] Johnson family records, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.
[69] Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1874, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.
[70] Johnson family records, and Census of Canada, Raleigh Township, 1871, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

later redrawn from memory in approximately 1906. This final map indicates 50 lots within the incorporated community.[71]

The initial lots were intended to be approximately 50 acres, but from the time the first residents moved into the Village, there were individuals who owned smaller lots of a quarter to one or two acres in size.[72] Some of these individuals owned larger lots elsewhere, suggesting they lived in Buxton, and held the other properties for farming or other use.

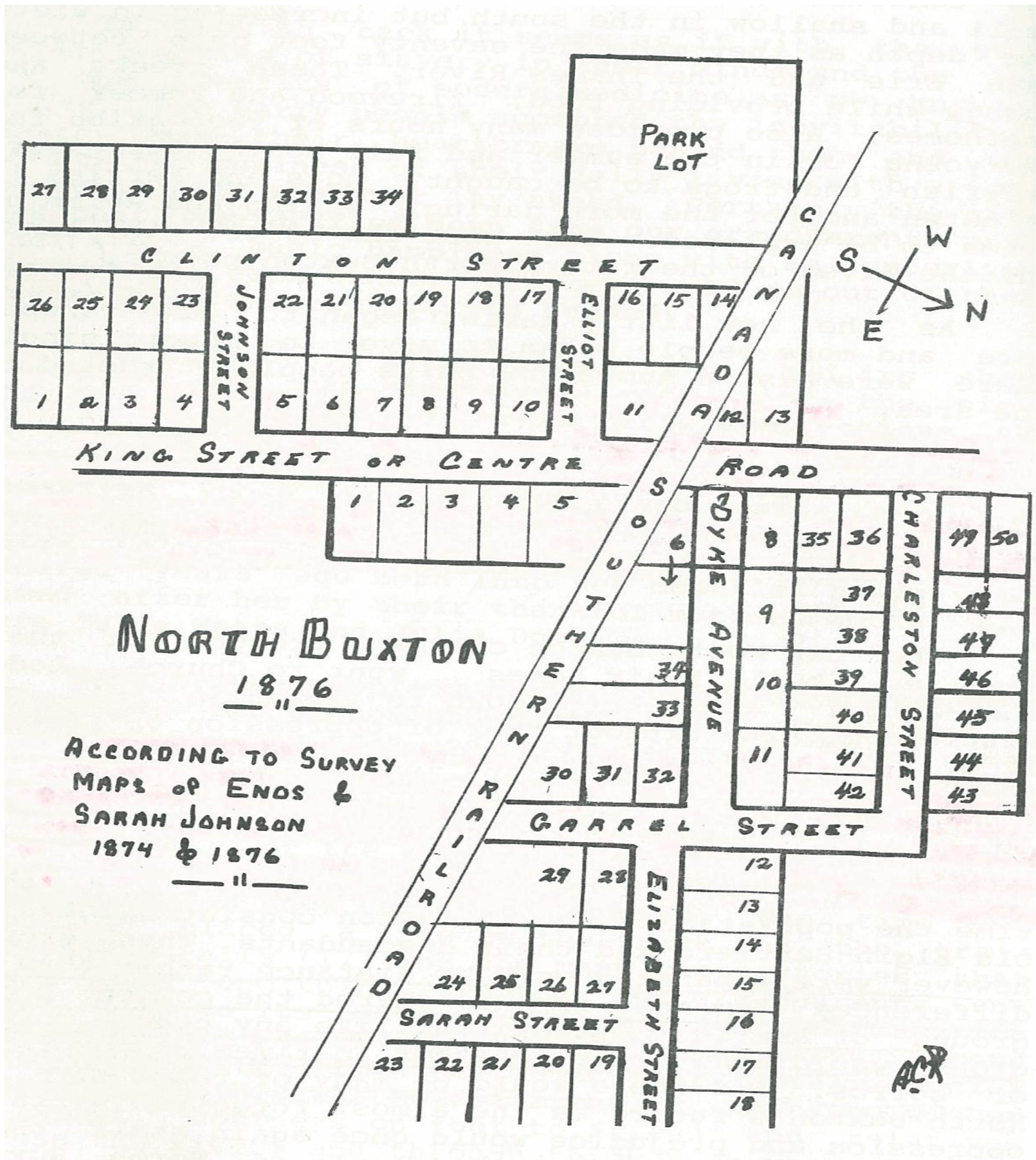
Figure 4.3

Charity E. Jones who registered the final plan of North Buxton, courtesy the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum

[71] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 95.

[72] Only Thomas Brown is listed as owning 50 acres, while Owen Blevens and Samuel Jones are tenants on 50 acres. The other owners and tenants are on lots ranging from ½ acre (Jeremiah Freeman) to 49 ½ acres (Enos Johnson and Green Doo). Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1874, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

Figure 4:4



Plan of North Buxton, ON, 1876

Table 4.2 North Buxton 1874

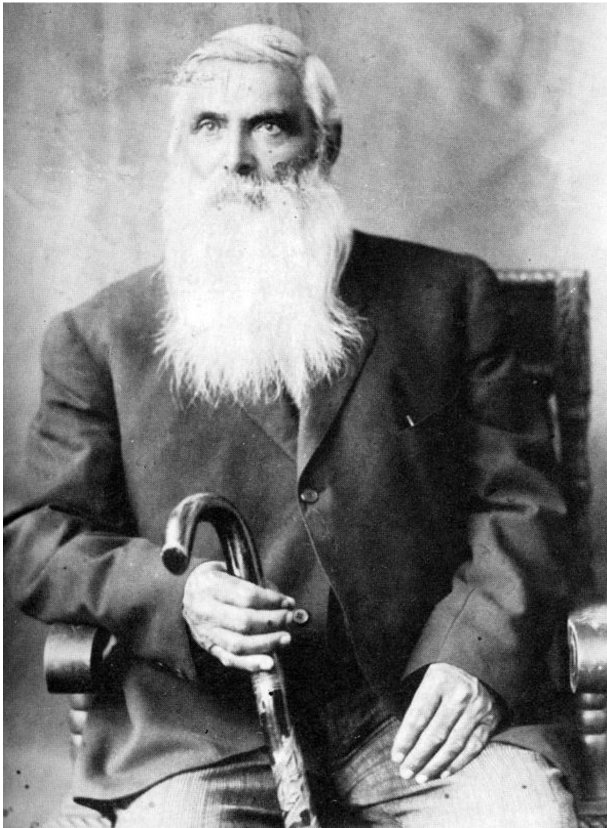
	Name	**Age**	**Occupation**	**Concession, Lot & # Acres**	**Freehold, Householder or Tenant**
1	Freeman, Jeremiah N.	38	Yeoman	8, 10, ½ acre	Tenant
2	Brown, Thomas	60	Yeoman	8, 9, 50 acres	Freehold
3	Smith, Archibald	50	Yeoman/Barber	8, 9, 20 acres	Freehold
4	Walker, George	50	Yeoman	8, 9, 30 acres	Tenant
5	Johnson, Enos	69	Yeoman	8, 9, 49½ acres	Freehold
6	Johnson, Mrs. Sarah			8, 10, 36 acres	Freehold
7	Blevens, Owen	53	Yeoman	8, 10, 50 acres	Tenant
8	Doo, Green	50	Yeoman	8, 10, 49½ acres	Freehold
9	Jones, Samuel	33	Yeoman	8, 10, 50 acres	Tenant

Landowners and tenants in the lots comprising the new village of North Buxton, 1874, compiled from 1874 Raleigh Township Assessors Rolls.

In 1875, Elbert Dyke (see Fig. 4.5) became North Buxton's first Postmaster, opening the first post office in the community. The post office was located on Lot 8 on King Street in North Buxton,[73] and Dyke also operated a small grocery store from this location.[74] He was one of Buxton's "oldtimers," having come to Raleigh Township with his mother Mariah and three siblings, Harriet, Mary and Jennie, in 1848 when, according to oral tradition, their owner (thought to have been the father of Mariah's four children) brought them north from Virginia and settled them in a home on Concession 7.[75]

[73] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 103.
[74] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 96.
[75] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 35.

Figure 4:5

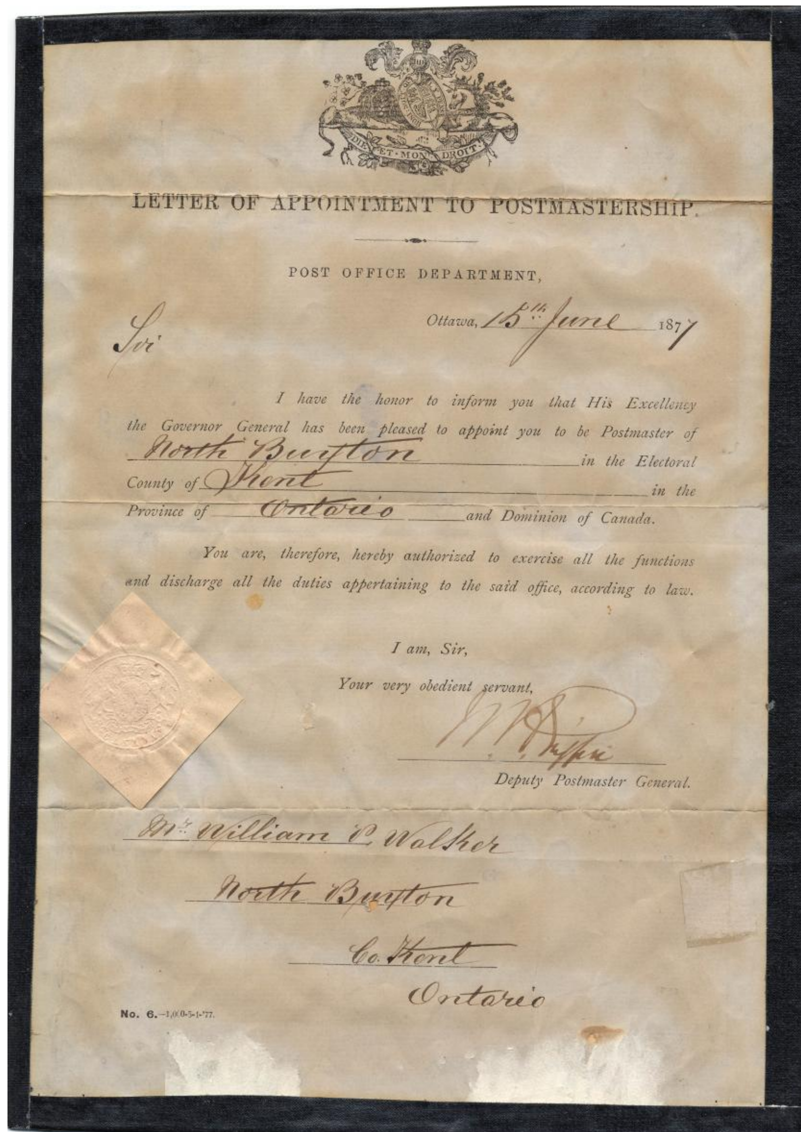


Elbert Dyke, first Postmaster of North Buxton, courtesy of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

The year 1875 also marked the establishment of North Buxton's constabulary, with Isaac Williams becoming the community's first constable. As with many others in the community, Williams held multiple roles. He built a hotel on Lot 12, beside the railroad, which served the needs of travelers, including itinerant railroad workers.[76] The hotel housed a tavern, a new addition to the area, given that Buxton had observed abstinence since the early days of the settlement. From 1877 to 1879, North Buxton's William Parker Walker served as the community's second post master, replacing Dyke (see Fig. 4.6, his letter of appointment to the postmastership; as well as Fig. 4.7, a

photograph of Walker with his wife, Sarah). In 1879 he was also listed as a local constable, along with Isaac Williams.[77]

Figure 4:6



DIEU ET MON DROIT

LETTER OF APPOINTMENT TO POSTMASTERSHIP.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

Ottawa, 15th June 1877

Sir

I have the honor to inform you that His Excellency the Governor General has been pleased to appoint you to be Postmaster of North Buxton *in the Electoral County of* Kent *in the Province of* Ontario *and Dominion of Canada.*

You are, therefore, hereby authorized to exercise all the functions and discharge all the duties appertaining to the said office, according to law.

I am, Sir,

Your very obedient servant,

[illegible]

Deputy Postmaster General.

Mr William P. Walker

North Buxton

Co. Kent

Ontario

No. 6.—1,000-5-1-77.

Notice of appointment of William P. Walker as North Buxton Post Master, courtesy of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

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[76] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 96, 117.
[77] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 103, Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1879.

Figure 4:7

William Parker Walker, 2nd Postmaster at North Buxton and wife Sarah, 1877, courtesy of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

Other businesses in North Buxton in the 1870s included two blacksmith shops, run by John Watkins and James Miller. Watkins opened the first shop in 1877, which was followed by Miller's shop on Lot 13.[78] Tolliver Terrill and Charles Meehan worked as village shoemakers. Archibald Smith opened a barber shop. John W. Kersey owned and operated a saw mill, and there was also a second mill close by, although no evidence has

[78] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 96, 105; Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1877, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

been located as to who owned or operated it.[79] While there were two (official) separate Buxtons after 1873, the racial distinction of a black versus a white Buxton was not overtly visible until well into the 1880s, when the South Buxton community became visibly the opposite of North Buxton – it was by then, a mixed community with a predominantly white population.[80] South Buxton remained the home for community members from the original settlement in addition to the growing clusters of Irish, Scotch, German and English settlers. The Buxton community was made up of several distinct groups:

> the early pre-Elgin Settlement people and the later people both located outside of the Elgin Settlement, the Elgin Settlement people and the two little hamlets of North and South Buxton for at that time the population of South Buxton consisted mainly of old Elgin settlers and their descendants. These groups were separated only by distance …[and] would draw close together in times of adversity or sorrow.[81]

Similar to the reality of the Elgin Settlement having been larger than the official bounded area, in spite of there being an incorporated village on the two lots on the eighth concession, in reality this incorporated area was simply the locus of a number of clusters of groups. There continued to be black families settled across the township, many traveling miles to North Buxton to conduct business, attend church, or visit family as had been the case in the Elgin Settlement.

Within these groups the people of Buxton socialized, and their churches, schools and lodges provided the main venues for entertainment. According to the Travis diary,

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[79] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 96, 97.
[80] Raleigh Township Assessment Rolls, 1874, 1874, 1875, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum

> Morning and evening services, concerts, lodge meeting, socials, bees and even funerals were occasions not to be missed. The old stories tell of sleigh rides, the bands, the parades, the "mourners" whose lamentations increased in volume as they neared the church,…[82]

As human beings have a tendency to divide themselves into various social groupings within a community, it would have been interesting to have greater access to the inner workings of the Buxton community. In the quote above, the fact that Travis, a Buxtonite himself, breaks the community into groupings in terms of their time of arrival in the settlement raises the question as to whether or not this held any particular meaning in terms of status. Who were the community elite, and how were they determined? Was it based on land holdings, length of time in the area, the colour line, or perhaps a combination of several factors? Given the information at hand, it is difficult to answer this question, but it does provide the opportunity for interesting conjecture.

1880s Buxton: The Baptists Unite

The 1880s would bring continued change to the Buxton area. In the years leading up to 1880, the declining population had also resulted in a decline in the strength of the local churches. St. Andrew's Church was struggling, evidencing a decline in membership and a reduction in attendance at prayer meetings. There had been a noticeable shift within the population, with a number of families switching affiliation from the Presbyterian Church to the resident Methodist Church.[83] In 1880, the Presbyterian Church of Canada ceased its Mission Fund to Buxton, since, according to Walton, there no longer appeared

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[81] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 101
[82] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 100

to be a need for its provision, with so many of the residents of the Buxton community leaving for other locales.[84] In this same year, Reverend King resigned his ministry at St. Andrews Church after thirty years of service, and was replaced by Rev. John Cairns, then a recent graduate of Knox College.[85] King's final sermon was heard at the Canada Presbyterian Church on Sunday, the 11th of April, 1880. He said his farewells while voicing the hope that the community dwellers would "continue in the path of righteousness and holiness with a steadfast faith in the promises of God."[86] In his retirement King did not abandon the community. Rather, he continued making missionary calls to the homes in the settlement.[87] On May 3rd, 1880, the people of Buxton surprised him at his home with a special service in honour of his retirement from St. Andrews, where they presented him with a scroll, along with a silver pitcher and drinking cup with thanks for his many years of service to them. The inscription on the vessels read "Presented to Rev. Wm King by the settlers of Buxton, 1880."[88]

On November 6th 1887, Jemima King, Rev. King's second wife, died after many years of rumored poor mental health.[89] His niece, Ann took over the care of his home. Not long after, King moved to Chatham, where he continued his religious duties by occasionally preaching at the First Presbyterian Church. His family life in his new home was rich, with visits from nieces and nephews among other relatives. Ann continued to

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[83] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 188.
[84] Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham," 227
[85] Cairns would only remain at the South Buxton Church for three years, after which the Church once again relied on theological students, as it had in the beginning. Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 189.
[86] Letters from the People, "The Rev. .Wm King's Adieu to Buxton," *Chatham Weekly Planet,* April 22, 1880.
[87] King, *Autobiograpy,* Ullman, *Look to the North Star,* 244; Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 189
[88] Letter to the Editor, *Chatham Weekly Planet,* June 7, 1880.
[89] Hepburn *Crossing the Border*, 189.

care for King until her death in 1891, when she was replaced by his grand-niece Mary M. Straith, who cared for him for the rest of his life.

Issues of race continued in the discourse of the Raleigh Township citizenry into the 1880s. A Chatham newspaper article, in reporting on an incident which took place on the 8th Concession in October 1880 (it does not directly name the community, but indicates the concession, and states "The parties in the trouble are colored, as many of the residents of that portion of the township are.),"[90] the writer also connected several other incidents from the previous months to the same area; the unsubtle subtext connected "coloreds" and crime with a particular community. That there was friction between blacks and whites in the county was obvious, and the discourse around black inferiority continued to be heard in the region.[91] However, King and the people of North Buxton continued to insist that relations between whites and blacks in their community were positive.

Between 1881 and 1882, an outbreak of typhus (typhoid fever) led to the small community losing more than twenty of its members.[92] In a community of this size such a loss must have been difficult to face. The community also lost its most famous adopted son, A.D. Shadd, leaving behind a lasting legacy of service to his fellow man.[93]

On his death, Enos Johnson had willed land for the construction of the North Buxton Baptist Church, his only condition being that the congregations of the previously existing 1st and 2nd Baptist Churches (on the 12th and 7th Concessions respectively) unite

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[90] "Serious Shooting: Chatham Township Its Record of Crime," *Chatham Weekly Planet,* October 21, 1880.
[91] For example, a white person from Chatham had a letter published in a New Orleans paper, where he disparaged the blacks in Canada for their inferiority. He pointed out that the Buxton settlement succeeded only while King was present, and that once he was no longer alive, Buxtonites began losing the lands they owned because of poor character, alcoholism and fickle political leanings. Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham," 235-237.
[92] Kent County Birth & Death Records, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

in this new space.[94] The two churches had seen their populations decline significantly during the post-Civil War years, and this had created the impetus to unite. In 1883, Johnson's gift allowed the congregations finally to come together for worship. The cornerstone for the new church was laid on May 28th, 1883, but the church itself took a number of years to be completed.[95]

Many Buxtonites had stood behind the pulpit in the early years of the First Baptist Church. Included among the names are Samuel Jones, William Moorehead, Isaac Washington, Benjamin Phares (one of King's 15 slaves from Louisiana) and Elizabeth Shreve, as a licentiate, a pioneer of women preaching from the pulpit.[96] A number of organizations arose out of this church, including a new Sunday School presided over by Jordan Harrison and the Women's Home Mission Society, organized by Emeline Simpson, president of the North Buxton Auxiliary, with her sister, Elizabeth Shadd Shreve, serving as the president of the larger Society (both women were daughters of A.D. Shadd). This Society was the women's arm of the Amherstburg Regular Baptist Association.[97] Elizabeth's role as leader of the Society saw her working tirelessly "ministering to the sick, collecting and delivering food and clothing for the needy, and preaching the Gospel…."[98] The North Buxton Baptist Church also saw the formation of

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[93] I will talk more about AD and the Shadd family at length in the following chapter.
[94] According to Robbins, by 1874, perhaps as a result of the exodus from the community, the Union Baptist on the 12th Concession, and the Anti-Slavery Baptist at the corner of Concession 7 had both closed. Robbins, 109. The Union Baptist had ceased to exist in 1871. Shadd Shreve, *Pathfinders,* 62-65; Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton.*.
[95] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 108
[96] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* Shadd Shreve, *Pathfinders*
[97] The Society was established on September 17th, 1882 in response to financial problems being experienced by the Association, and the hope was that its membership would help spread the Gospel, provide aid to the weaker churches and raise funds for the Baptist Missionary Convention of Ontario. Shadd Shreve, *The Africanadian Church*, 52; Shadd Shreve, *Pathfinders*, 63.
[98] E. Alexander, "Biography of Madame E.W. Shreve" in D.S. Shreve *Pathfinders*, 65-66.

its first choir at this time, under the direction of Hattie Rhue, who was also the chief organizer.[99]

The Buxton schools continued to be integrated in spite of the laws in the region allowing for the opening of black schools in regions where blacks were resident, and hence allowing whites to have their own separate schools. The schools in Buxton were not simply populated by black students and taught by black teachers. They also had black board members and trustees, having the responsibility for making decisions as to necessary changes and improvements, hiring and firing of teachers and so on.[100] The North Buxton School, SS #13, Raleigh had three different teachers in the 1800s, James Doston, P.H. Meehan, and Abel Cockfield (see Fig.4.8), followed by a total of six teachers from 1893 to 1914.[101]

Figure 4:8

Abel Cockfield teacher at SS#13 1886-93, courtesy of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

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[99] Hattie Rhue lived in Buxton for much of her life. For further information on the life of Miss Rhue, see Richard George Stewardson, "Hattie Rhue Hatchett (1863-1958): An interdisciplinary study of her life and music in North Buxton, Ontario" (PhD diss., York University, 1994).

[100] Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham," 229. William and Charles Shadd also make mention of their father's role as school trustee and some of the duties that came with this position. Shadd family diary, Shadd Family Collection, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum. As well, it appears that Garrison Shadd served as Treasurer for both the Shadd School, and the Shreve School between 1872 and 1910. First Treasurer's Record Book 1872 to 1910, Shadd School to SS No. 4, North School and South School – Garrison Shadd, File # 1967.18, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

[101] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton;* Ontario Archives School Superintendent Reports 1880-1914.

In terms of employment access in the 1880s, because the majority of Buxtonites were farmers or labourers, it is difficult to provide much in the way of information regarding the availability of or access to employment for its residents. According to census documents and collectors' rolls, the majority of community members were "Yeomen," although this appeared to be a catch-all, as several individuals who made their living by other means often were not indicated on these documents. Within the Buxton area there were those who practiced skilled trades such as carpentry or blacksmithing as previously noted, but if they wanted work beyond farming or skilled trades in the village, most would have had to leave the area and perhaps relocate to the larger centres like Chatham, Windsor, Toronto, or even cross the border into the US, all of which several Buxtonites did do over the years. Some made permanent moves to these places, but others only for as long as work was available, and with an understanding that their departure was not permanent.[102] Within Raleigh there were temporary civil appointments to be had, and some of these were held by Buxtonites.[103] As often is the case in communities, many of the same names appear in the listings of school board memberships, school trustees, and those holding positions during special events. This once again raises the issue of an individual's or family's status within the community and how it was determined. In this case it may be safe to assume that those holding positions of power would likely have belonged to the community's elite. How they initially obtained these positions continues to be open to conjecture. In the case of the Shadd

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[102] Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham," 235.

[103] For example, Garrison Shadd and his sons William and Charles held positions during municipal elections and during the collecting of the national census, serving as census takers, poll counters, Returning Officers, Enumerators etc. Shadd family diary, Shadd Family Collection, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

family, they were long-standing Buxtonites, very well-known, well educated, had arrived in the region with capital and, since they were of mixed-heritage and light-complexioned, they were among those who would have been privileged if the colour line was used as a measure. Therefore, their access does not help us arrive at answers for a family such as theirs would be expected to hold high-ranking positions in the community.

In North Buxton, both black and white individuals appeared to have served equally in various roles (e.g., as postmasters, teachers, school administrators), and there seems to have been more opportunity for interaction here than for those living in the planned, segregated Buxton.[104] This seems to have been true in South Buxton as well. The suggestion has been made that while there might not have been a great deal of socializing between the races, they lived well together in both Buxtons. Perhaps living together in such small communities where most actions and reactions would be visible required civil relations between the groups just to keep life in the community tolerable.

Table 4:3

Name	**Origin (per census)**	**Years as Postmaster**
Elbert S. Dyke	African	1875 – 1877
William P. Walker	African	1877 – 1880
D.H. Taylor	Scotch	1880 – 1882
Angus McPhee	Scotch	1883 – 1885
George J. Charleston	African	1885 – 1886
George B. Shreve	African	1886 – 1910
Harriet Dyke	African	1910 - 1924

North Buxton Postmasters between 1873 and 1914. Compiled from *Legacy to Buxton* and Canadian Population Census, 1881, 1891, 1901.

[104] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 190.

1890s Buxton: A Mighty Man Has Fallen

The 1890s evidenced a renewed interest in King and the settlement he had built. Several journalists interviewed him about the story of the formation of the Buxton settlement, his work as a missionary, and the links between himself and the character Clayton in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*.[105] It had been just over forty years since the founding of the settlement, and conversations with King in his waning years were certain to have been seen as wonderful human-interest stories. In these articles, King continued to be revered for his selfless work. As one writer stated:

> Having served for twenty-five years without fee or reward….His career is a grand exemplification of a set purpose nobly achieved in the interest of our common humanity. Today there are thousands of colored people throughout the world who speak the old abolitionist's name with reverence and whose children and children's children will rise up and call him blessed.[106]

The occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Buxton led many once again to question whether or not the settlement had indeed been successful. In response to the previously mentioned letter from the Chatham dweller who criticized the settlement, A.R. Abbott wrote a series of letters to the *New York Age* in which he defended Buxton and its people, telling in great detail the history of the community, providing readers with a clear understanding of the experiences of the people who moved to the settlement, the

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[105] In a footnote on pages 330-331, Stowe indicated "These statements are all true of the Elgin Settlement founded by Mr. King, a gentleman who removed and settled his slaves in the south of Canada." Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1856)

importance of mutual aid and community to them, and about their accomplishments either individually or as a community. He was openly proud of their accomplishments, using as his measure of their success the fact that there was little visible difference between the colored farmers and their white neighbours once they took their produce to market.[107]

In another examination of King's life and work, one reporter suggested, much along the same lines as Abbott, that the Buxton farmers in the 1890s were a successful group. For him, the community's measure of success was based on economics; they owned 57% of the land, and:

> In 1893, on an assessment of $2,456,788, the Afro-American settlers paid $143,461 in taxes…considering the disadvantages under which Mr. King labored, the remit of his experiment is highly gratifying.[108]

The writer goes on to list nine Buxtonites and the value of their personal property. There is no indication as to whether or not these are the wealthiest community dwellers at this particular time, but based on the fact that the minimum land holdings for any of these men was 200 acres, I would suggest that he was portraying them as most likely Buxton's wealthiest in terms of holdings. Without some sort of comparative look at the holdings of white farmers in the region, however, we cannot discern whether or not these individuals were faring well relative to others outside of their community.

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[106] Talbot Torrance, "Personal Reminiscences of Rev. Wm. King, an Anti-Slavery Hero", *Detroit Tribune,* Sunday, June 10, 1892, page 6. This was the final in a series of articles by Torrance, who began his report on King's life on Sunday, April 10th.1892.
[107] A.R. Abbott, Letter to the Editor *The New York Age,* February 15th, 1894; A.R. Abbott, Letter to the Editor *The New York Age,* March 8th, 1894.
[108] "Elgin Settlement: Rev. Wm King's Life Work in this District, Interesting Sketch of his Experiences and Progress of the Colored Man in Canada" *The Evening Banner (Chatham)* April 7, 1894.

Table 4:4

Individual & acres owned	**Value**
Robert Ross, 400 acres	$25,000
George Shreeves, 380 acres	$20,000
William Doston	$15,000 (worth in real property)
A. Shreves, 200 acres	$12,000
H. Black, 200 acres	$12,000
Abraham Shadd, 300 acres	$17,000
Andrew Ross, 300 acres	$12,000
George Hatter (in 1873), 300 acres	$12,000
Nelson Robinsin, 200 acres	$12,000

List of farmers said to be the most well-off in Buxton, compiled from article in *The Evening Banner (Chatham)* April 7, 1894.

There is no mention of the race or origin of the farmers in question, but an examination of census and tax assessment reveals that the assessment is of the entire Buxton area, and that the individuals are of “African,” Scotch,” and “English” origin, although, in the cases of Robert and Andrew Ross, it is difficult to determine, as there are 3 such individuals listed in the 1881 census, and none in 1891. Andrew Ross does not appear in either census.

In 1893, racial tensions and hostilities became very visible in the county of Chatham-Kent with the publicity surrounding what became known as the Raleigh Murder. Several members of the Freeman family in Raleigh Township were arrested and charged with the murder of a white police officer. The Freemans had been long-standing Raleigh Township community members. They had come to the area from Wilmington in

the early 1850s and settled near Lake Erie, just outside the southeastern fringe of the Elgin Settlement. On the day of the infamous incident, the officer in question had gone to the home of George Freeman on Lot 14 of Concession 15 in the Township in order to arrest him for having carnal knowledge of a girl under the age of consent. For a number of years, a young white woman named Ida Jane Lizzart had been resident in the home of George and Hanna Freeman after allegedly having been abandoned by her parents. Sometime in 1892, she gave birth to a "colored child," and the doctor who was present at the time reported this fact to authorities. The suspicion was that the child had been fathered by George, and therefore the doctor insisted that charges be brought against him. While it is beyond the scope of this study to provide intimate details of the incident and subsequent trial and outcome, a brief discussion should provide a better understanding of race relations in the Township during the period.

There were no laws preventing a sexual relationship between George Freeman and Ida Jane Lizzart (that is even if there had been any such relationship, which to date has never been proven) other than those perhaps of morality since he was a married man. However, the regional discourse centred on the notion that the only way they could have been in such a relationship was if Freeman had forced himself on her.[109] In their attempt to arrest George for this alleged crime, Robert Rankin, one of the constables, was shot to death by one of the Freeman men, as George, his father, and brothers had attempted to protect George, thinking the constables were just angry men from the community there to lynch him. A melee ensued on the farm and several other Freemans became involved. In

[109] According to Barrington Walker, "Widely circulated gossip held that not only did Ida Jane bear George Freeman's child, but, even more horribly and unforgivably, she had been forced to do so." Barrington Walker "The Tale of Ida Jane and George: Murder, Miscegenation, and Bastardy in 1893 Raleigh, Ontario" *Canadian Review of American Studies* 30 no. 2 (2000), 214.

the end, six members of the family were arrested – Jeremiah Freeman (George's father, who died before the trial could take place), Celia Freeman (George's mother), Jesse Freeman (a cousin), Lemuel Freeman (another cousin), and George's two brothers, William Henry and Alexander. Still fearful for his life, George had left the farm and stayed overnight at a relative's house just outside North Buxton. The next morning he surrendered to the Buxton constable, John Travis.

Immediately after his arrest and throughout the subsequent trial, George insisted that he had no idea that these men had been constables since they had not identified themselves as such and he was therefore in fear for his life. What surfaced over the next months in media, the courts and in public opinion, were questions of race, gender and social class, all seen in the language and understandings of difference which operated at that time. Was Ida Jane a "fallen woman" who deserved her fate, was George simply a violent and sexually driven Negro, or was he a hard working, servile Negro who was being maligned by the power of the white community simply because he was black? Within the white community, there were those who were intent on lynching the men regarded as the guilty parties. The tensions were so high in Chatham that the Mounties were brought in to keep the peace. The trial itself was moved to London, Ontario at the behest of the prosecution for the same reasons. Being tried were George, cousin Lemuel, and brothers William Henry and Alexander. The other Freemans had been released and their charges had been dropped.

As the trial unfolded, Canada was once again being brought face-to-face with the question of race, and with the need to acknowledge who was and was not truly

Canadian.[110] From the antebellum years, the treatment of blacks in Canada had become a part of the discourse of difference between Canadians and Americans. The Freeman trial came under close scrutiny for many reasons, among them its role in reinforcing how people saw and understood their Canadian identity, as well as the place and treatment of blacks within the Canadian populace. The idea of a mob of whites threatening to lynch black men did not sit well with their understanding of self, and the media made repeated reference to the un-Canadianness of the notion and the assumption that this was something that would happen in America, but not in Canada.[111] In the ensuing trial, issues of race, gender and nation were brought to the fore even to the very end, when the judge reminded the jury that while the defendants may be "of a different race" they were to be treated as equal citizens, an acknowledgement of the realities of race relations, belief systems and the other prejudices that he was aware could be constraints in the determination of guilt or innocence. The outcome of the trial would be of vital importance to all citizens – not just in terms of race relations, but also in terms of civil liberties. Did representatives of the law have the right to enter someone's property without first identifying themselves; and what rights did individuals have to protect themselves from someone who did intrude on their home?

The three Freeman brothers, George, William Henry, and Alexander, were found guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to life imprisonment, while cousin Lemuel was

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[110] "During the 1850s concerned Canadians had warned against the dangers posed by indigent black fugitives, and in 1899 the House of Commons debated placing restrictions on Galicians and Doukhobors." Winks, *The Blacks in Canada,* 299; in the mid to late 1800s, Canada dealt with the growing concerns of the Metis and others settling the Western territories. The Métis resistance escalated into a military confrontation known as the North-West Rebellion of 1885, lead by Louis Riel, who was later arrested, tried and executed as a traitor to Canada. For more details on this aspect of Canadian history, see A.I Silver & Marie-France Valleur, *The North-West Rebellion* (Vancouver: C. Clarke Pub. Co., 1967).
[111] "Guilty," *Chatham Daily Planet*, October 9, 1893, 2-3; Barrington Walker "The Tale of Ida Jane and George, 220.

acquitted and released. The Freemans were thought by some to have gotten off easily, and one newspaper headline read "The Debt Cast on Whites by Centuries of Oppression of the Blacks" suggesting the sentence given was lighter than it should have been because of white guilt as well as the continuing state of race relations in the region. As Walker points out quite clearly, the verdict was a reminder of the unequal status of blacks and whites. And, as Walker argues, "The verdict and the disavowal of the lynching ritual and mob violence so prominent in this case also reified notions of (white) Canadian civility and sympathetic justice."[112] Echoing the discourse at play in the regions outside the township during this period of imperialism and the subjugation of the imagined "other," issues of difference were being explored across the Americas, and within even this enclave. They would continue to trouble the relations between blacks and whites in Canada, and to be dealt with by the people of Buxton directly.

On January 5th, 1895, after a year of being bedridden, the Rev. William King died in his home in Chatham. He was buried in the Chatham Cemetery beside his wife Jemima. As at the time of his retirement, a great deal of interest accompanied the passing of this gentleman. He was touted as having been a visionary, a great friend to the colored man, and a model citizen.[113] The colored citizens of the County of Kent passed a resolution which was sent to the King family as well as to various publications, in which they voiced their condolences and their gratitude to their friend and brother:

> And resolved that in the death of Rev. William King the colored citizens of the county and of the whole country have lost a friend whose place would be difficult

[112] Barrington Walker "The Tale of Ida Jane and George," 223.

[113] "The Friend of Freedmen – Death of Wm. King, founder of Elgin Settlement," *Chatham Daily Planet*, January 7, 1895; "Honoring the Memory of the Late Rev. William King, Philanthropist," *Chatham Daily Planet*, January 14, 1895; Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border,* 189.

> indeed to fill, and the Dominion a citizen who, divinely inspired with a high and holy purpose and divinely sustained until that purpose was accomplished in spite of the treachery of false friends and the contumely of vindictive foes, will be rated by future historians as Canada's most distinguished son.[114]

King had, in every way, proven himself a champion of the colored people, and by the standards of that time had seen and treated those he encountered throughout his life with the utmost respect and dignity. Viewed through the lens of race and class, King's life supplied a kind of "narrative of redemption," that of the white, middle-class preacher working to rescue the former American slaves, bringing them to God, education, and viable citizenship.[115] Underlying this work as a champion of the people was a paternalism that cannot be ignored. Although King challenged the dominant ideologies regarding race throughout much of his life, in many ways it may be argued that in "taking care" of the people of Buxton, he denied the community agency. However, throughout his ministry, King strove to correct or reduce the inequalities he saw, through education and Christianity, and hence may have acted out of real missionary zeal, relative to the time and the understanding of issues of racial equality.

20th Century Buxton

At the turn of the century, issues of race continued to plague the people of the community. In 1900, G.C. Porter, a university student from Hamilton, compiled a report which examined the lives of blacks in Buxton, focusing on their lack of progress in the 50

[114] "Honoring the Memory of the Late Rev. William King, Philanthropist," *Chatham Daily Planet*, January 14, 1895.

[115] Nina Reid-Maroney, personal correspondence. In discussion about this period, Dr. Reid-Maroney raised the idea of a redemptive narrative of King's life as well as the parallels between the end of his life and the

years of the community's existence. Citing responses from blacks and whites in the region,[116] Porter concluded that blacks were not well-suited to farm management – the reason that they made good labourers was the fact that they were good at following instruction, but in reality, they lacked the capacity to run their own businesses. This report fueled the already negative attitude some whites in the region held towards blacks and re-inscribed prevalent notions of inferiority. With this report was further evidence to corroborate their belief in the innate inferiority of their black neighbours, evidence that proved that "blacks were incapable of being responsible citizens or equals."[117] Of course, all of these beliefs existed in spite of all the evidence people had to the contrary, as there were still successful, able citizens living in the community. The response in Buxton was swift – people once again pulled together, insulating themselves from more negativity being aimed in their direction. They were also well aware of the changes to immigration policies which would directly affect them as they went back and forth between Canada and the US, and as mentioned, other issues of race continued to impact their lives. Thus, as with many similar communities such as this,

> The boundaries – geographic, social and economic—forced the residents inward to rely on each other for moral, financial, and social support. This reliance forged

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experiences of increased racial hostilities against blacks in the region, as well as a cloak of silence falling over the Buxton community, leading to years of ignorance about their past.

[116] It is unclear who Porter's respondents were. According to Robbins, he talked "to one school teacher, one woman who had moved [there] after the Settlement had closed and only one man who had been a slave" while according to Walton, "he canvassed the population, black and white, in both Buxtons and in the surrounding countryside… and the white store-keeper." Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 114; Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham," 238 & 239.

[117] Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham," 240.

> a "sense of solidarity" and a "sense of significance" not easily found in less-bounded communities.[118]

In addition to the community's insulating itself from the judgment of outsiders, Robbins goes on to say that blacks all over Canada and in her community of Buxton retreated into a period of silence. They essentially stopped talking about who they were, they were neither talked about nor did they themselves tell the stories of their communities, in public, the classroom setting or even at home within the families. She suggests that while fifty years earlier the Elgin settlement had been widely known and talked about, by the turn of the century it was "ignored by the history books, 'forgotten' by the old folks and unknown by its grandchildren."[119]

Within the community however, life continued in terms of its religious and social growth. While the Mount Carmel Lodge had disappeared by 1900 and its remaining membership had been transferred to St. John's #9 Lodge in Chatham as previously mentioned, another Lodge was incorporated in the early 1900s, the Washington Lodge #6397 of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows.[120] The Helen Household of Ruth #3000, the ladies auxiliary of the Lodge, was later chartered on April 20th, 1907. The group planned and held fundraising socials (oyster suppers, lawn socials, strawberry socials, and other forms of evening entertainment). They also paid sick dues to members,

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[118] Adrienne Lucas Sehatzadeh, "A Retrospective on the Strengths of African Nova Scotian Communities: Closing Ranks to Survive," *Journal of Black Studies* 38 no. 3 (2008), 410.

[119] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 113. Bryan Prince corroborates this suggestion by pointing out that when he attempted to learn about what would have been his grandparents and their contemporaries' history, he found that the majority of older Buxtonites he spoke with said their parents had never spoken with them about the past. Bryan Prince, private conversation.

[120] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 126; For more on the origins and role of friendly African-American societies especially the Odd Fellows, see Charles H. Brooks, *The Official History and Manual of the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows in America* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971).

studied together and served as supports to each other and to other members of the community. For example, according to minutes from Nov. 29, 1913,

> …M. Freeman reported Sister E. Toyer sick. She was taken sick on Nov. 21. Several of the Sisters had been to see her and found her rite [sic] sick. The M.N G Sister S. Chase told the Sisters that they knew their duty and for each one to do it.[121]

There are several entries listing illness or financial distresses with which the members acknowledged they had a duty to assist. It is obvious that this organization was very active as a resource to help families in the community, and continued, along with the various church groups, to ensure the survival of this community. Many of the same names from the other community organizations appear on the membership lists of the Lodge and the ladies auxiliary – Chase, Collins, Crummwell, Freeman, Givens, Malone, Prince, Shadd, Steele, Toyer, to name a few. The two organizations continued their service roles until 1955.[122]

There was still no secondary schooling in Buxton itself, so for the young people completing their years in one of the four schools serving the area, if they were fortunate enough to be from families who could afford to send them to secondary school, there was the added concern of the cost of getting them to Chatham. Families had three options. If they had a horse to spare, their child could go by buggy into town. Some students with relatives or friends living in Chatham boarded there during the week, while still others made the daily trek by taking the train to Charing Cross, from which they then took the

[121] The Household of Ruth no. 3000 Minute Book, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.
[122] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 126.

streetcar into Chatham.[123] The expenses attached to the sending of children to school in Chatham meant that a secondary school education was a luxury that only a few families could afford.

Work continued to be limited within the community. There was a handful of skilled tradesmen (blacksmiths and millers), but the majority of the men worked as farmers and labourers, and a few as maintenance men on the railroad.[124] Several men in the region had their own threshing machines, and they would employ other men from the community to assist in the movement from farm to farm as they threshed wheat, oats, buckwheat and rye in community "threshing parties."[125]

While there has been no direct mention in any of the documents I have encountered in my research, I have long wondered, with the proximity to Windsor and Detroit, and the fact that Buxtonites moved back and forth across the border from the initial settlement of the community, how much of an impact did the 1903 opening of the Ford Motor Company in Detroit have on the community? In addition, in 1904, Ford transferred its patent to the Walkerville Wagon Company in what is now Windsor, Ontario, to allow for the production and sale of Ford vehicles in Canada and other parts of the British Empire. Buxtonites had helped to build and then worked on the railroads, so why not in the car manufacturing industry as well? The answers to these questions remain a mystery but provide yet another avenue of this community's history for later exploration.

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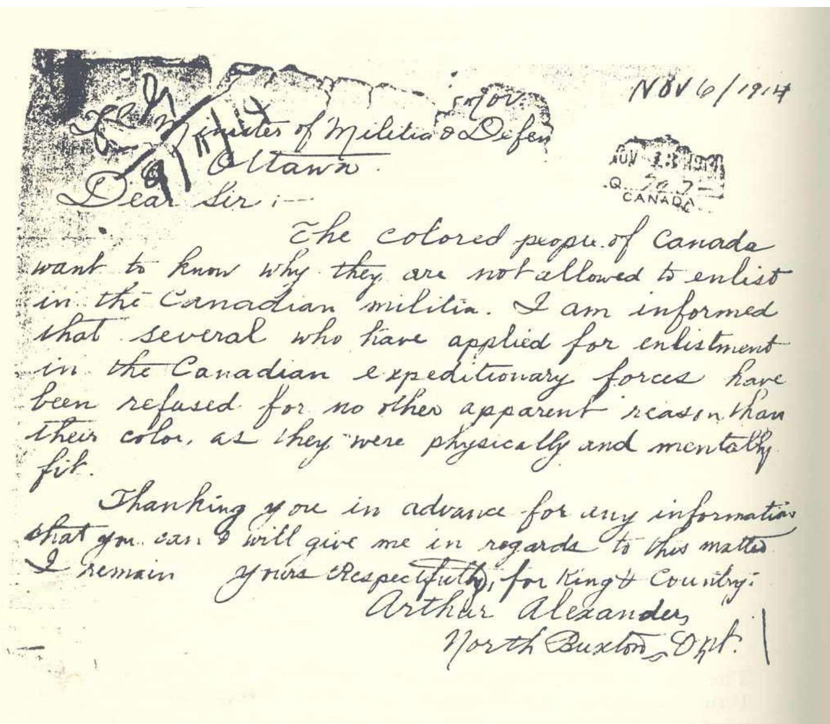
[123] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 118.
[124] Raleigh Township Tax Assessment Rolls, 1901; Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 116.
[125] Buxton Scrapbook, Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

1910s Buxton

I have managed to find little documentation of life in Buxton at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Perhaps one of the most important and influential events in this period was the arrival of Mr. Arthur Alexander[126] in Raleigh Township. In 1911 he began teaching at the S.S. #4 school, where he taught for two years before transferring to S.S. #13, the Buxton School. He was to have a great impact, not just on the Buxton community, but on the lives of African Canadians in general. For example, in the struggle to remove the barriers in practice with regard to visible minorities being allowed to enlist in the Canadian armed forces, Alexander was very vocal, and wrote a letter to then Minister of Militia and Defense, Sir Sam Hughes:

Figure 4:9



NOV 6/1914

Minister of Militia & Defen
Ottawa

Dear Sir :—

The colored peopl. of Canada want to know why they are not allowed to enlist in the Canadian militia. I am informed that several who have applied for enlistment in the Canadian expeditionary forces have been refused for no other apparent reason than their color, as they were physically and mentally fit.

Thanking you in advance for any information that you can & will give me in regards to this matter

I remain Yours Respectfully, for King & Country:

Arthur Alexander,
North Buxton, Ont.

Arthur Alexander Letter to Minister of Militia and Defense, Sir Sam Hughes, from the private collection of his grandson, Spencer Alexander.

[126] Greater detail about the life of Mr. Alexander will be provided in the next chapter.

Hughes in response put into writing the reality that there was no legislation preventing the enlistment of “coloured people” into the military. The reality that enlistment was at the discretion of the individual militia officer meant that there was still a chance that they could gain access. Across Canada, blacks continued their attempts at enlisting. These continued attempts finally ended in the creation of an all-black corps in 1916, as was previously mentioned. Alexander led by this kind of example throughout his life. This was not the first (or the last) letter that he wrote in search of fair practices in the treatment of blacks in Canada, and I would suggest that there is a great deal to be written about this influential man and his role in advancing equity and human rights.

Figure 4:10

George Shreve, WWI, courtesy of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

All indications suggest that as the world edged toward its first great war, life in Buxton, as in other small rural communities, continued as always. The economy tightened and certain items became over-priced or impossible to find. Some members of the community in response to this formed The Farmers Club in February of 1914, another organization geared at community support in the face of difficulty. They "sold soft coal to the community for their fuel and bought farm needs such as fertilizer, nitrate, lime, fence posts and clover seed."[127] Nineteen fourteen also saw the formation of the Busy Bee Club, a ladies' organization geared at fundraising for the Baptist Church. The Busy Bees was to become a long-lived organization which would provide a lasting example of community help and responsibility to the younger generations of Buxtonites. This small community continued to hold on to its strong sense of connectedness, to be strengthened by its religious and secular organizations, and to be proud of their participation in Canadian life. Their focus on mutual aid and self-help did not appear to lessen, and all evidence points to a very active social life because of the presence of some of the community organizations.

The onset of World War I closes my period of exploration of the Buxton community. What I have provided here is a broad overview of just over fifty years in the lives of blacks in the United States and Canada, seeking to provide insight into some of the similarities and differences as far as community and individual experiences of life. In so doing I also sought to explore how this period looked within the small community of Buxton. As I arrive at the end, I turn to the question of how individual Buxtonites experienced the period at which I have just looked. To answer this question, the

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[127] Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton,* 127.

following chapter examines narratives I encountered in my search as I sought to come to a more intimate understanding of this community and its people.

Chapter 5: Buxton Tales

Preamble: The 1960s recovery project

In anticipation of year-long Canadian Centennial celebrations in 1967, communities and groups across the country were urged by the federal and provincial governments to work on "centennial projects." In 1964, the community of North Buxton, following the recommendation of Township Reeve Albert Wellwood,[1] lobbied the Raleigh Township Council for financial support in erecting a log cabin museum that would preserve the historic artifacts and documents of the Elgin Settlement. While not a completely smooth process,[2] since no other community in the Township had sought to participate in the centennial celebrations, the Council approved the proposal for establishing the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

Beginning with this centennial project as the impetus for multiple historical explorations, Buxton residents began clearing out their attics, looking for family scrapbooks, photograph albums, diaries, letters and other documents and, in doing so, began collecting re-memberings of Buxton. Among numerous undertakings was the Oral History Project which focused on the stories of North Buxton's most elderly citizens, many of whom were born in the last decades of the 19th century. This chapter explores eleven of these North Buxton narratives, both oral and written, seeking to gain more intimate insight into the lives of the people of this small community. The narratives provide more than insight into the history of a black community. They paint portraits of a rural Canadian society rarely appearing in the literature, portraits that challenge the commonly held notions of rural identity by offering a new source for educators, a look at

[1] A.C. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton* (Chatham, ON, 1983), 185-190.

the lived experiences of the region's African-Canadian farm families. In addition to race and rurality, the narratives enable readers to explore an additional dimension of this region - that of the routine movement of people to and from the American side of the border. For the black community, the transborder movement in the 19th century had resulted in the creation of Canadian settlements, and in the subsequent years allowed continued contact with relatives and friends on either side of the border. Each story told here is a small part of the larger story that one can tell of the region, but more specifically, of the community of Buxton, and must therefore be told through the voices of Buxtonites.[3]

What did I seek to learn from these different sets of narratives? Each is somewhat of a snapshot in time, open to interpretation, and serves to tell us something about the particular historical moments from which it emerges, and how this period was experienced and affected by the individual narrator.[4] As experiences and tales from the lives of members of a community only previously studied in terms of its settlement, these narratives provide insight into the families of some of the mostly faceless fugitives and leaders on the Underground Railroad, and allow us to pose questions about community members' experiences and perspectives. The tales point to the close relationship between the black abolitionist communities in the southern United States and the southwestern Ontario region, suggesting the need for an exploration of these familial legacies and their impact on the communities in which the individuals resided. Narratives such as these

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[2] For more in-depth details of the lobbying process and the village's actions, see Robbins, *Legacy,* 185-190.

[3] David Flynn, "Community as Story: A Comparative Study of Community in Canada, England and the Netherlands," *The Rural Sociologist*, Vol. 11 No. 2 (Spring 1991): 25.

[4] As Maynes et al point out, narratives explore the interplay between the subjective experiences of the narrators and the particular historical period in which their experiences take place. Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 45-56.

represent the many community and individual tales which tend to be swallowed up by a nation or region's grand narrative. As well, annual events like the Buxton Homecoming and others which re-enact scenes from the community's history serve to "confirm and re-confirm"[5] that this community still remembers its connection to the movements for the abolition of slavery, its origin story, and the importance of freedom and citizenship for all people.

In the process of making sense of the data I had in front of me once I began my analysis, I quickly realized that, for the re-storying and thematic analyses, I was working with a diary from the 1880s, and then a collection of transcribed interviews from the 1970s and 1980s as well as two contemporary interviews which I had conducted. Treating these different experiences of living in the community over such a vast time period as static might not be methodologically sound. Each would provide different kinds of access to my narrators as well as to their stories, and hence have direct impact on my interpretation and understanding of the community from the narrators' perspectives. As well, a closer look at the data pointed to the fact that the themes immediately evident in the diary differed from those arising out of the oral history interviews. Perhaps, as I mention later in this chapter, the fact that the diary served as a recording of activity on the farm and in the community, in contrast to the interviews, which were geared specifically at asking more personal questions about individual experiences and families in a dialogical exchange, created two completely different types of narratives. In addition, the use of data from interviews which had been conducted in the past resulted in a reduction in control over the questions asked as well as any possibility for follow-up. This use of interviews carried out by others, transcribed and then re-storied by me, was taking me a

[5] Flynn, "Community as Story," 30.

great distance from the initial narrative source. How much meaning had been lost? I struggled with the "how" of presenting these narratives to the reader, and decided that the diary had to stand on its own, as a snapshot of life in the 1880s, both of the diarists and of the rest of the community as it appeared in their renderings. The narratives, on the other hand, are to be seen simply as my retelling of community narratives, all checked against a vast array of documentary evidence and re-checked with community members where possible.

The Shadd Family of Buxton

The impact of individual family members on the abolitionist project, and on the struggles for equity and human rights on the part of people of African descent resident in the Americas, has resulted in the Shadd family being perhaps the best-known of all of Buxton's families. Because so much is known and has been written about this family, it was important to me at the outset to focus on other voices from the community. However, two things became clear to me throughout this process. First was the fact that researchers are limited to the available evidence, and second, in this community, this is the lone family I have found to have been consistent in recording and maintaining both their own and their community's legacy. To my knowledge, at least three generations of Shadd men kept records of their lives, and these documents have been invaluable in terms of coming to a better understanding of life in the region.[6] A.D. Shadd, who was a prominent figure in his time and is now a celebrated part of Canadian history, kept a diary, which has now

[6] Of course, this raises the question of why the women were not heard from, since the women of this family, beginning with the most famous, abolitionist Mary Ann Shadd, were well educated, and several were school teachers. Perhaps they too kept diaries, but to my knowledge nothing has been found in the extant records to support this possibility.

faded and is almost illegible; his son Garrison Shadd was the next to follow this practice, and his grandsons William and Charles provided the data used in this project. In addition, there are Shadd family letters, ledgers and other documents which provide valuable resources, and feature some of the voices of the women of the family as well. The presence of these records highlights the intellectual legacy of this family. The active presence of the Shadd family in the remembering of their history (for example, in addition to the diary of the Shadd boys, of the 10 oral history interviews I used here, 4 of the individuals were Shadds) points to how much is and has been valued by them throughout the years. Therefore, it would be almost foolish to ignore this rich collection. In examining their experiences however, it is important to bear in mind once again that this was a very well-known and respected family, the majority of them were well educated, they were light-complexioned (in contexts where this was valued capital), and at least some of them at various times were financially well off. Therefore, their experiences cannot readily be seen as reflective of "black life in Southwestern Ontario." However, through their eyes we are able to witness experiences in the community and be privy to aspects of African-Canadian life we may otherwise not have known. Their presence and participation in the Township has had a profound and lasting effect that cannot be discounted.

The following narratives have been written from transcribed oral interviews with Buxtonites who at their time of interview were in their 80s and 90s. Each narrative provides a snapshot of the narrator's life, or something else they felt relevant and therefore chose to share as they explored their history and identity.

Narrative 1

Marion Shadd Griffith – From slow child to educator

Marion Hope Shadd Griffiths provided two different narratives which I combined for this project: one a written, undated narrative which recalls what she refers to as "The Little Red School" and the other an interview (it is actually less of an interview and more of a conversation across generations within a family, recalling stories and filling in gaps) done in 1989, when she was 93 years old. Marion is the daughter of William, the young diarist below, and in addition to learning about Marion herself, her narrative gives insight into some of the later years of her father's life, as well as giving the reader a look at some experiences outside the Buxton community, as she makes mention of her own studies and experiences as a teacher, taking us into the early twentieth century. As with her father's generation, Marion's experience would have differed from that of the average African-Canadian woman, by virtue of her family's status in their community, even though, according to her telling, the family's socioeconomic standing had changed by the time she was in school.[7]

She begins her oral narrative from when she was six years of age, telling the interviewer that her mother, Ada Simpson Shadd, had died when she Marion was seventeen months old, leaving behind four children of her own, as well as her husband William's younger brother Jeremiah and younger sister Clara whom she and William had been raising since their parents' deaths. Marion says that her father had initially decided he would not remarry until his children were older, so when his daughters were aged six

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[7] In her written narrative she states: "Some of the city kids could do better, but most of us country kids were in the same boat – poor. Marion Hope Shadd Griffiths, "*The Little Red School*," Undated memoir.

(Marion), eight (Constance) and ten (Clara), he thought he needed a wife to help raise them. She remembers that he "had been going to Windsor from Buxton on his bicycle," and then one May,

> Marion: He rode a bicycle to Windsor ***** railroad and how, how, and…
>
> Interviewer: And he went right down there and asked what's her name, Ina, to marry him?
>
> Marion: Yea, he did that, on the, on the Michigan Central Railroad and, and they, and then they came back. I don't know how he got back, but…

Her father simply came home and said "this is your new mother, call her mom." She was a good mother to them, and Marion says this was really the only mother she ever really knew. Her father and Ida went on to have, "on top of the first 6 kids, about 12 kids, 10 or 12 kids, one kid right after another, every 18 or 20 months." We will have to take the vagaries of age into consideration here, and accept that Marion was close to correct in her recollection. In reality, Ida Thomas and William Shadd had a total of thirteen children, including a set of twins that died as infants. Marion began her formal schooling at age eight, prior to which "the other children would bring my work home for [me]." The overriding themes in Marion's narratives are issues of race, family and community ties, schooling, youth activities and work.

At 93, Marion had outlived all her brothers and sisters from the earlier marriage. She mentions the sadness she feels because of this and spends much of the interview attempting to make genealogical connections for various individuals from the community, pointing out who had married whom, who was whose child, and so on, as can be seen from this exchange:

Marion: And of course, he was, she was a Harding, wasn't she?

Interviewer: Yea.

Marion: Of course, she married a Steele.

Interviewer: She had kids by who all? Fred Chase didn't she?

Marion: **** Myrtle, I think there was a Travis.

Interviewer: Ben.

Marion: Ben was a Harding…

She shares another tale which tells a bit about some of her father's experiences in business. According to her, someone from the Parks family, a white family that had lived and worked in and near Buxton for several generations, purchased a patent from William and went on to set up a business. She suggests that the member of the Parks family made a lot of money as a result of this, while this person gave William "next to nothing," clearly stating that "they cheated him on it."

Harriett Poindexter was Marion's grandmother. She had been married to Garrison Shadd. She lived with Marion's family for a while, and appeared to have had a caretaking role for the children. According to Marion, she had cooked meals for them, and once she had gone, the family then relied on housekeepers. She had owned a hundred-acre farm, which she eventually lost through mismanagement and frivolous overspending (not on her part, but on the part of someone named "Ed," who "she let buy fancy buggies and fancy horses"). She spent her latter years moving from relative to relative.

Marion attended S.S. No. 4 in Raleigh Township, also called the Shadd School. "The little red brick school" as Marion referred to it, was established on Shadd property in the early 1850s to serve those children at the north end of the settlement, who were perhaps too far away from the Buxton School, which was at the south end of the tract.

According to Marion, "We, the Shadd's, crossed the Lacoq farm, M.C.R. track, McFadden farm, over the fence and into the school yard about one mile in the distance." She provides a detailed description of the schoolhouse, a picture familiar to all who have seen a one-room school:

> There were two cloak rooms, one large class room with rows of double seats, a tall pot bellied stove in the centre, plenty of blackboards in front and side of [the] room, a low platform, with teacher's desk in the middle, pictures of Kings and Queens, maps, old and new decorated the walls.

The teacher, Miss Minnie Bagnell,

> …wore a long sleeved white waist (no short sleeves then), a grey or beige skirt which came down to her ankles, a starched long white apron with wide strings tied in a big bow at the back, high shoes, sandy hair, done high on her head with comb in the back.

Marion began school at age eight. According to her, the other children brought her work home for her as she stayed home for "most of the winter." She describes herself as "not a smart child – slow." In spite of this, she was one of the lucky children from the community who was able to secure a spot in high school, something she attributed to the arrival of a teacher who put an end to a series of inefficient teachers coming and going from the school. Once she had completed her schooling at S.S. No. 4, travel from Buxton to Chatham for school was not a simple undertaking. Marion describes walking two miles along the M.C.R. track to get to Fletcher, where she would get the 8AM train to Charing Cross, from which she took the trolley into Chatham. She must have found the travel difficult; she describes the trips in the early morning and late evening along the tracks as

filled with fear for her. Emphasizing the importance access to an education held for this family (or at least for Marion), there were days when she made this trip although she had nothing to take with her for lunch. She was not able to complete high school, presumably due to cost.

Marion chose to attend normal school in London, Ontario, and through her discussion of this experience we get a glimpse into issues of race at this time. She notes "Being black we had to walk 3 miles across London, because we couldn't get a boarding place near the school." She received her 2nd Class teaching certificate and returned to teach at the Buxton School in 1919.

Narrative 2

Garrison Shadd – Remembering the Socials

Garrison is Marion's cousin. His parents are Flavious Garrison Shadd and Mary Francis Doo. Like Marion, the older Garrison and his wife Harriett Poindexter were his grandparents. He was born in Buxton on September 8th, 1900,[8] and provides a narrative which tells us some more of what life was like in the community in the early part of the century. From Garrison we learn about how he experienced schooling in Buxton, the work-school relationship experiences of some farm children, about social life in Buxton while he was young, and more about the Shadd family.

Garrison was seventy-three when he was interviewed in 1973. He begins his narrative by talking about his schooling experiences. Similar to his cousin's experience, he had to walk to school, in his case, it was two and a quarter miles to the school at North

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[8] Archives of Ontario, Registrations of Births & Stillbirths - 1869-1909 Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Archives of Ontario.

Buxton from the family home on the 10th concession. He started at this school when he was 13 years old and had previously attended another school where he had only been taught by female teachers. Garrison went as far as the 8th grade, but because he had to be home in order to help on the family farm, he never got the opportunity for further schooling, except for the occasional attendance in the winter months when there was less work required on the farm.

He was from a family of five children, 3 girls and 2 boys, he being the second eldest. The family attended the BME church in Buxton, where they would walk to Sunday school, stay for church, and then hope for a ride home in a car or horse and buggy. There were organized dances and concerts, but in the winter there would be many impromptu house parties in which people would go from house to house with an orchestra that was in the region. These parties usually started out as conversational gatherings, but since most houses had a piano, this would evolve into someone playing the piano and others joining in, for example Charlie and Bob Harding would play guitar and Frankie Parker the violin. The concerts they attended were mostly organized by the church, but, according to Garrison, the biggest entertainment for them was their evening walks to Buxton, where they would find other farmers gathered: "…we'd meet a lot of the farmers, that was their usual gathering place, they'd go there and tell stories and joke and laugh, the store always had soft drinks to sell."

In his narrative, Garrison described some of the work on the farms in the region, indicating that the typical farm was about 50 acres, but the more ambitious men would farm up to 100 acres at a time. All the work back then was done with horses (sometime 3 or 4 on a disc), and the family did not have their first tractor until 1918. He described the

practice of one family who, instead of shipping their hogs to market, would have a hog slaughter in the winter:

> …all the neighbours would come in, maybe 6 or 8 men, maybe a dozen, and we'd slaughter hogs all day. Maybe 30-40, tie a big rail, hang them up on it, they'd freeze, and then load them on the wagon and the next morning take them to Chatham to sell them.

In terms of the family farm, he suggests without saying, that it was difficult work, as "the land was in the poor part of the township…There was a lot better land in the township he [his father] could have got."

Narrative 3

Phillip Livingston Shadd – Early Morning Milking

Phillip is Marion Shadd's older brother, another child of William Shadd and Ada Simpson, who was raised by William and his second wife, Ida Thomas. He was born in 1894 and was 79 at the time of his interview in 1973.[9] From Phillip's short narrative we learn more about the kinds of chores children did on the farms and how early they were expected to undertake them. We also get further insight into the lives of these Shadd families within the Buxton environment.

He started school when he was seven, attending the Shadd School on the 6th concession with many of his cousins and siblings in addition to a number of neighbour children. He had not known his mother, who had died not long after he was born, and before he went to school he had been cared for by housekeepers, some good, others

[9] Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Births and Stillbirths – 1869-1909.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Archives of Ontario.

"cranky." Sometime before he turned seven, Phillip's main chore was the milking of three of his father William's fourteen or so cows. This chore had to be completed before school. He also had to ensure that the chickens did not get into the garden.

Narrative 4

Dorothy Shadd Shreve – Shadd Family Lineage

Figure 5.1
Dorothy Shadd c. 23years of age, courtesy of the Buxton Museum

At the time of my writing Dorothy Shadd is past her 100th year and is one of the revered elders of the Buxton community. I had the pleasure of interviewing her once during this project, and although her memory comes and goes, she holds invaluable insights into what is and was Buxton, in addition to being able to share much about her own experiences. For the purpose of this project, I have relied on interviews conducted with her in the 1970s, including a 1979 interview published in the *Los Angeles Times*, as these contained more information and were better in terms of clarity – in the interview I conducted in her 100th year, there were obvious moments of confusion around detail, and she was relying greatly on her son for prompts. However, in many ways the 21st century interview also served to corroborate much of what I had read from the archived interviews.

Dorothy Jane Myrtle Shadd is another of William Shadd's children, one of those born to him and Ida Thomas, the woman he "brought back" from Windsor. She was born on August 7th, 1909,[10] and is the sister of Philip and Marion, whose narratives I have already presented. Dorothy was unable to provide direct detail about life during the period under discussion as only her first five years were within the timeframe. However, as her parents and grandparents lived in Buxton at that time, I was interested to see what stories they may have shared over the years that she would be willing to share as well.

One thing became very obvious as I explored the life of Dorothy Shadd. Perhaps it was the fact that she was heavily involved in the process of rediscovery in the 1960s, and was from a family which had access to much of their history, but there was little doubt that she was, and continues to be, very much concerned with who the Shadds were

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[10] Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Births and Stillbirths – 1869-1909.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Archives of Ontario.

and what they meant in the Buxton community. In her narratives she provided great detail about the origins of her family on both sides, relating the story of a Hessian soldier, Hans Schadt, who was wounded in battle and "placed in the home with a free colored woman in Pennsylvania and he married that daughter and had two sons with that daughter and one of those sons was my great, great, grandfather." Here she refers to the marriage between Hans Schadt and Elizabeth Jackson. In explaining her immediate family, Dorothy went on to say:

> …the grandfather this road was named after, A.D. Shadd, he was the, he was the grandson of the Hessian soldier. His father was Jeremiah Shadd, and the youngest daughter [of A.D.] Mary Ann came to Toronto when the black history society was being organized in Toronto. That's when Mary Ann was persuaded to stay and teach children at [a] school in Windsor, after that he [A.D.] went back to Pennsylvania to get the rest of the family to move to Canada and that's when they moved into the farm about three and a half miles from here. A.D. purchased 107 acres. That's the farm that's by the Sunday school.

Dorothy also recounted the story of how her mother's family came to be resident in Windsor:

> …her grandfather was born in the States, and they came into Detroit and changed their name, and changed from Poindexter, their name was Poindexter, and Poindexter is still a big name over there in the States now…they changed their name to Thomas after they got there and the slave owner came right into that area of Windsor trying to find the slave that had run away…but nobody knew anybody there named Poindexter, so they weren't able to contact them of course…

Her childhood memories of Buxton involved the walk into and out of town along the railroad tracks for Sunday school. She remembered an embarrassing episode after arriving late once for a program at which she was to present a verse she had memorized. The verse was from a poem which had been published in "the Family Harrow, a paper that used to be printed weekly." The situation was embarrassing because, having arrived late, she did not know that an older boy had just recited the rather long poem in its entirety, and so she "was called on, and [I] went back and did one verse, and didn't know about him doing that poem, and everybody just roared laughing and I was completely, ha, I didn't know what they were laughing about." Another aspect of her childhood in relation to Buxton was visiting her father's store:

> …my older sister was working there and I used to go there and spend the day with her sometimes and I liked that because when I was there she usually be making me a dress in the back room during the time there weren't any customers in buying. So I'd always get a new dress and candy that was available so that was one of my pleasant memories of Buxton.

When asked about community feelings where issues of race were concerned, Dorothy suggested that,

> At the time of the troubles in the American South, Canadians here were very smug, feeling it couldn't happen here. I think they sort of boasted a little. Naturally, they had some things to boast about. They had no one in jail because of the color of his skin. But there was a lot of undercover prejudice…It used to be

> that you couldn't get anything but menial tasks. So you went to the United States where you got menial jobs too, but for more money.[11]

Narrative 5

Francis Henry Parker – Long-haired Boy

Francis Henry Parker provides a short oral narrative which offers another portrait of schooling and youth activity in the community at the turn of the nineteenth century. He was eighty-two years old at the time of his interview in 1973 and therefore experienced a life in both the late 1800s and early 1900s Buxton. Like the Shadds, he was also descendent from a family with an extensive abolitionist history. His grandparents, William and Eliza Parker, were runaway slaves from Maryland who had settled in Christiana, Pennsylvania. While there they worked as part of an abolitionist network, helping slaves and free people of colour make their way to the northern states and eventually into Canada on the Underground Railroad. After being implicated in a foiled escape which led to the death of a slave-holder and the arrest of Eliza and others who had to stand trial for treason, both eventually made their way to Buxton, where they, like the Shadds and others, continued their work in the abolitionist movement. Both are believed to have been involved in the planning of the infamous 1859 raid on the armory at Harper's Ferry, thought to have been a catalyst for the American Civil War.[12]

Francis begins his narrative by recalling his first day at school at age five. The thing that strikes him most is how long his hair had been at the time, and that he did not have it cut until he was 15 or 16 years old. He tells the interviewer that the family at that

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[11] Stanley Meisler, "Black Canada: Liberty, Bigotry," *Los Angeles Times,* September 1, 1979, p. 26.
[12] Robbins, *Legacy,* 67-9.

time lived on the 10th concession, and he attended school in South Buxton. He mentions that his teacher at that school, Jessie Heel, who taught there for approximately 40 years, had been "about six feet tall" and "she would take her hair down and her hair would fall behind her on the floor."

He recounts many of the activities the young people of the region participated in, saying, "we played ball, in the winter time we played hockey in the sand and we called it shinny." He remembered that the community had a good ball team when he was a child, and both his father and Uncle Al played on it. According to Francis, everyone in the community also attended church. He said his father was 90 years old and had grown up in the church, singing in the choir. They attended church on the 10th concession.

Narrative 6

Fred Robbins – Southern Discomfort

The Robbins name is another well-known name in Buxton. Family history suggests that a woman named Jane had been a slave on the Robbins plantation in Tennessee, and had given birth to children fathered by her slave master. Wanting to ensure the safety of this illegitimate family, Robbins promised a male slave by the name of Dennis Calico his freedom if he married and took care of Jane and her children and also changed his name to Robbins. Dennis and Jane Robbins then settled on a farm in the Dawn Settlement at Dresden with their family. Sometime in the 1870s, four brothers from this family moved into the Buxton area, and James, Joseph, John, and Archibald

Robbins all settled in Buxton.[13] Fred Robbins is the son of John B. Robbins and Elizabeth A. Stone.

At the time of his interview in 1973, Fred was approximately eighty-one years old. He was married to Beulah Shreve, who was also from a long-time Buxton family.[14] While Fred begins his narrative by focusing on his schooling, we learn little from him about his experiences in both North and South Buxton schools. His narrative serves to corroborate teacher timelines, as well as to provide a picture of some of the experiences of blacks south of the US-Canadian border in the early 20th century.

Fred tells a story about a group of young Buxtonites on a road trip through the American South. He begins by pointing out how "fortunate" blacks in Canada are, in light of "this race business." The group of them (it is unclear how many were present, but it may have been two couples) drove to Miami and around the west coast before heading back through the South. They passed through Kentucky and through the mountains, and then one evening they stopped in Montgomery, Alabama, where they checked into a motel. Hungry, they went down the street to a restaurant where the hotel clerk had told them they could get whatever they wanted. The waitress there told them "I'm awful sorry, but we can't serve colored people here...the boss says we can't serve no colored people here." In the retelling, Fred's laughter and tone indicate the incredulity with which he experienced this event. He recounts telling the woman that he hoped she would get the same treatment if she were ever in Canada, and then jokingly asking "parlez-vous français?" a question which apparently lightened the mood at the time and led to the waitress serving them while laughingly calling them French Canadians. In their rooms

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[13] Robbins, *Legacy,* 106.

that night, however, Fred recalls his travelling companion Garrison (he does not provide surnames in his narrative) suggesting that they leave as "Them people are going to bust our car up, they are going to do something!" which made them all pack up and leave and drive straight through until they had crossed the border back into Canada.

Narrative 7

Frank L. Morris – Buxton Poet

Franklin Lewis Morris was the grandson of George Hatter, an escaped slave who went to the Elgin Settlement in 1850, having first settled in the Niagara Region in 1837.[15] Both his parents, Barbara Hatter and James Morris, were born in Ontario, and Frank was born on August 27th, 1889.[16] He was raised in South Buxton, eventually moving with his family to Detroit in 1908 at age 18, when his father James decided to seek greater opportunities for himself and his family. His narrative comes from an extended undated interview[17] in which he speaks at length about the Rev. William King, the history of the Elgin Settlement and subsequent formation of the two Buxton communities, his own academic history, infamous Buxtonites, including his grandfather Hatter, and the story of John Brown's connection to the community, among other things.

In his later years, Frank had dabbled in poetry writing, and he begins his narrative with a poem he had written about the settlement. This poem recounts the story of King and the creation of the Elgin Settlement. Frank continues by reviewing King's life in

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[14] The Shreve family had settled on the 5th Concession not long after the Shadd family arrived in the 1850s. As a result of intermarriage between the two families they have remained close.
[15] Robbins, *Legacy*, 82.
[16] Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Births and Stillbirths – 1869-1909.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Archives of Ontario.

Ireland and the Americas. He provides a chronological history of the settlement, by telling his version of the formation of the North Buxton community, discussing the role played by the railway and new commercial centre around the station.

In his discussion of famous and talented Buxtonites, Frank mentions singers Rosie Hooper and Sheldon Brooks, as well as Susy Drake and Libby Shreve. He mentions politician and community leader, Elbert Dyke who he suggests was once Reeve of Raleigh Township. He too alludes to the Park brothers having taken an invention of William Shadd's and giving him just a threshing machine in return. According to Morris, William had invented a "traction engine." With the threshing machine he received in return, "he was the only one that had that engine for many, many years and he went about from place to place…he went about threshing people's grain, beans in particular." In his telling of the story of William's brother Alfred Shadd's life, Frank raises the issue of race, and the limitations in terms of expectations of achievements that blacks faced. Alfred Shadd had become a teacher in Buxton, but received an opportunity to attend medical school in Edinburgh. He left the Buxton area and settled in Saskatchewan in 1897.[18] In his time there, Frank recounts, Alfred ran for Member of Parliament, and in the initial count of votes, it was believed he had won the seat. The people of Buxton were astounded and "there was a great clamor made about a Negro being elected by a white constituency to be the member of the Dominion Parliament." A subsequent recount indicated that Shadd had not won the vote, but for Frank, it was still a story worth telling.

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[17] As he makes mention of his retirement and subsequent work writing poetry and volunteering for environmental causes, I believe it is safe to assume this interview was part of the oral history project in the 1970s.

[18] Robbins, *Legacy*, 110-11.

While living in South Buxton, Frank had attended SS#7. He completed his studies there, "up to the fifth book," and was one of the lucky ones who then had the opportunity to attend high school in Chatham because his parents "sacrificed because they…saw something in me and sent me to the Chatham Collegiate Institute." However, the family's move to Detroit interrupted his studies. He recounted, "I didn't quite graduate, because I was in the highest grade when my father determined to leave South Buxton." He does point out, however, that he "[had] tried to develop along educational lines by reading, very extensive reading and because of that I have recently been selected to tutor students in the International Institute in Detroit." The value he places on education and its relationship to status are obvious as he recounts his Grandfather Hatter's "knowledge of history…knowledge of government and his knowledge of economics," which he believed was the reason he "had a certain national recognition by the celebrants of Canada." Another of George Hatter's legacies Frank shares is the fact that he had donated a piece of land at the corner of his farm for the building of a Baptist Church. This was the 12th concession Baptist Church which later united with the 7th concession church to form the North Buxton church. What remained on this small patch of land which adjoined the Presbyterian Church was a joint cemetery:

> …a corner of Rev. King's farm and a strip of my grandfather's farm made up that cemetery plot. And half the plot was showing how these people were working together, how amicably they were working together, how nicely and in the way of integration, that was the beginning of integration in that part of the world, because all the congregations were mixed, black and white together…and so those great

> gladiators of progress, my grandfather and Rev. William King were responsible for that cemetery.

Another story Frank tells in his narrative is that of a visit made by John Brown to Buxton. He describes an unsuccessful meeting between Brown and Frederick Douglass and a subsequent visit Brown then paid to Chatham. While in Chatham he paid a visit to Buxton, and to the home of Grandfather George Hatter:

> …in South Buxton and dangled my mother on his knee at that time when she was only about five or six years of age. She remembers that experience and she related it many times and got quite a thrill out of the fact that she sat on the knee of the great abolitionist, John Brown, who actually gave his life, in his way, to bring about the freedom of slaves.

Morris ends his narrative by talking more about his family, singing his sister's praises as a woman of great religious conviction, who "was the leader of the young people of [that locality] and she, also, travelled three miles to North Buxton Church and was the leader of the First Baptist Church of North Buxton." He also spoke of his brother John, who he referred to as "the business head of the family."

Narrative 8

Grace Shreve[19] – We had to work

Grace Shreve was born Grace Dyke, on September 23rd, 1892 in Raleigh Township.[20] Her parents were longstanding resident and very involved Buxtonite Elbert Dyke and his wife Adelaide Watts, also from an old Buxton family. On both sides, Grace

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[19] In some instances her name is spelled "Grayce" by members of the family.

held the legacy of her family having been in Buxton prior to 1850. An interesting note regarding her parents is that both were the offspring of slave women and their slave owners.[21]

In her narrative, Grace talks mostly about her experiences of working on the farm. She tells the interviewer "you kids don't know what work is" and relates having to be "up at 6:00 every morning, I was up at 6:00, the only time I didn't get up and that one time he caught me, when I woke up [he took a] wooden spoon and paddled my bottom!" That was not the only time she was punished. According to her, "we worked all day long, and if we didn't work, we got whipped. I got horse whipped once with a horse whip, not with no switch…that's when I learned to run…and I jumped over that fence!"

She attended the Shreve School on the 5th concession, and walked to school each day. However, she was not always able to attend school, because she "had to stay home and do the work." Throughout the interview she continued stressing just how much work coloured her life. There was no time to "sit around and be pretty." She pumped water, took care of the pigs and sheep. According to Grace, her family had 57 sheep, and she once lost 27 of them! She told the interviewer that it had been her job to take the sheep out all day long, and get them to settle down at night. On this particular night, "when I got home and he counted the sheep, he said, 'where's the sheep?' I said they're all there. 'No they're not, well where's the black sheep…you go get that sheep and don't you come back here without them!'" She was 13 when this incident took place and she just remembered going out into the night trying to find the missing sheep. At no point during

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[20] Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Births and Stillbirths – 1869-1909.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Archives of Ontario.

her interview does the interviewer ask who the "he" is that she refers to, suggesting that they knew who "he" was.

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[21] This is noted in family oral history and Grace's birth records (see Fig. 2), list her father as "German & Negro" and her mother as "Irish & Negro." Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Births and Stillbirths – 1869-1909.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Archives of Ontario.

Figure 5.2

Form 2

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO
THE VITAL STATISTICS ACT
STATEMENT OF BIRTH

502075

1. PLACE OF BIRTH: City, Town or Village of FLETCHER

Township of Raleigh County or Territorial District of Kent Ont.

2. PRINT NAME OF CHILD IN FULL: DYKE (Surname) GRACE (Given names)

3. SEX FEMALE

4. (1) Single ☒ Twin ☐ Triplet ☐ Other ☐

5. DATE OF BIRTH SEMPTEMBER 23rd 1892

6. THE MOTHER OF THE CHILD IS: Single ■ Married ☒ Widowed ■ Divorced ■

7. WEIGHT OF CHILD AT BIRTH

8. LENGTH OF PREGNANCY IN COMPLETED WEEKS NORMAL

PARTICULARS OF ~~HUSBAND~~ FATHER

9. PRINT NAME IN FULL: DYKE ELBERT SMERLYN

10. PERMANENT ADDRESS FLETCHER RALEIGH TOWNSHIP

11. CITIZENSHIP CANADIAN

12. RACIAL ORIGIN GERMAN & NEGRO

13. AGE 51 14. PLACE OF BIRTH U.S.A.

15. OCCUPATION (1) TRADE, PROFESSION OR KIND OF WORK FARMER (2) TYPE OF INDUSTRY OR BUSINESS

MOTHER

16. PRINT MAIDEN NAME IN FULL: KATTS ADELAIDE

17. PERMANENT ADDRESS FLETCHER RALEIGH TOWNSHIP

18. CITIZENSHIP CANADIAN

19. RACIAL ORIGIN IRISH & NEGRO.

20. AGE 49 21. PLACE OF BIRTH RALEIGH T.P.

22. OCCUPATION (1) TRADE, PROFESSION OR KIND OF WORK HOUSEWIFE (2) TYPE OF INDUSTRY OR BUSINESS

23. HOW MANY CHILDREN BORN TO THIS MOTHER BEFORE THIS BIRTH: (a) were born alive? 7 (b) are now living? 5 (c) were born dead after the mother was pregnant at least 28 weeks? 0

24. MEDICAL PRACTITIONER OR NURSE IN ATTENDANCE AT THIS BIRTH

I CERTIFY THAT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF ITEMS 1 TO 24, BOTH INCLUSIVE, ARE TRUE AND CORRECT.

JANUARY 16 1957

NORTH BUXTON ONT. Mrs Grace Shreve

(This space for use of division registrar only)

REGISTRATION NUMBER

I am satisfied as to the correctness and sufficiency of this statement and register the birth by signing the statement this JAN 29 1957

DATE JAN 29 1957

000213

Copy of Statement of Birth for Grace Dyke, courtesy of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

Narrative 9

Cleata Morris – Family Working in Detroit

Born in 1924, Cleata is outside of the 1873-1914 period I examined in my research. However, as one of the present community elders, I interviewed her to gain insight into what stories had been passed on to her by her parents and grandparents, who had lived during that time. Cleata's parents were Louisa Ida Travis and Gordon Morris, married in Raleigh Township in 1923.[22] The Morris family was another Buxton family living on the 10th concession, where they have farmed for generations.

In her narrative, Cleata talked most about her "Grandma Robbins," who spent her time visiting with her various children in Detroit, Windsor, and in Buxton. Her most fond recollections revolved around walks from the Drake Road with Grandma Robbins, who "looked like an Egyptian, with long black hair." She told of Grandma having helped to carry water during the building of the church. She also recalled that "she would take her pipe to the john at night for a smoke." She apparently served the community as somewhat of a healer, receiving word that she was needed, sometimes in the middle of the night, whenever someone was sick. She laughingly told of a remedy her grandmother made that contained goose grease. In addition to her role as a healer, Grandma Robbins was another Buxtonite active in the church. Whenever the church had a function, especially over Labour Day, they would "drive to Merlin by buggy and return with a load of donations."

According to Cleata, her Grandma and Grandpa Robbins moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan for work. "She would iron and cook, he was a gardener." They lived there for more than 30 years. "We were poor; they were trying to help the family. They wanted all

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[22] Ontario, Canada. *Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1926*. Archives of Ontario, Toronto.

of us to get an education; that was their goal." Helping their children and grandchildren was therefore the impetus behind the Robbinses moving to Michigan.

On the farm where Cleata grew up on the 10th, her mother Ida "stayed at home and cared for the children." Typical of women on the farm, Ida also worked, and spent a great deal of time "churning, making butter" and, according to Cleata, they had enough to "take some to market in Chatham," and that was how they made money. In the meantime, "Daddy worked the farm and also was a ditcher with the horses." He had several jobs in the Township. He scraped the roads on the 10th concession in the township. He was also very good with horses and would train them for neighbours, along with other types of jobs on neighbouring farms. When there wasn't enough money in the winter months, her father Gordon also sought work in Ann Arbor.

In terms of her parents' experiences regarding issues of race, Cleata said her mother Ida was born in Chatham Township, and "they didn't go outside the boundary of the colored section." Her father, she said "was quite fair and that kind of made a difference," she thought, in terms of his experiences relative to issues of race. She said that in Buxton people talked about people in the nearby town of Merlin being prejudiced, but she herself had no direct experience and could not recall any stories shared by her parents or grandparents regarding this issue.

Narrative 10

Art Alexander & Ethel Shreve – Active Couple

Figure 5.3
Arthur H. Alexander and wife, Ethel Alexander, courtesy of grandson Spencer Alexander

Arthur Harding Alexander was the third of six children born to parents John H. Alexander and Annie Crawford on November 2nd, 1886, in Essex County, Ontario.[23] His father John H. had been a teacher at the King Street School in Amherstburg during the late 1800s and early 1900s. His grandfather Thomas Alexander, according to family lore, had been a slave in Kentucky and escaped from a plantation there, eventually settling in Anderdon Township near Amherstburg in the mid 1800's.

Arthur H. Alexander began his teaching career at S.S. No. 13 Harwich, Shrewsbury and taught there from 1907 to 1911. From there he taught at S.S. No. 4 Raleigh for a year before transferring to S.S. No.13 in North Buxton. He was at the Buxton School for three years before moving to the Six Nations Indian Reservation, Brant County, where he taught at S.S. No.7 Tuscarora Twp. from 1916 to 1920. He returned to S.S. No.13 in North Buxton in 1920 and served as principal and teacher there until 1954.

In 1907 Arthur Alexander married Ethel May Shreve, daughter of Charles Shreve and Elizabeth Dyke, another of Elbert's daughters. Ethel May had been born in Raleigh Township in 1894 and was a very active member of the Buxton community. In their adult lives within the Buxton community, the couple was extremely active in all of Buxton's clubs and associations. They were interviewed together for the oral history project, and in what follows, I use each person's voice separately as her or his own narrative. They had four children, and according to Art, Buxton "was a good place [for me] to raise my children." The members of the community "weren't too far apart with regards to property and financial matters. I was, what group would I be in? I'd be one of the poor, we were

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[23] Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Births and Stillbirths – 1869-1909.* Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Archives of Ontario; Ancestry.com. *1891 Census of Canada* [database on-line].

school teachers you know, (laughing) a poor schoolteacher." The interviewer pointed out that they may have been poor, but they were still able to afford hired help with the children, to which Ethel says "that only cost me a dollar and a half, well a dollar a day and she came regularly."[24] She pointed out that there were several wealthy farmers in the community, and while there were poor community members, she believed "the poorest people were, oh, the white people who came to this community." Art pointed out that he "eked out [his] livelihood to raise a family and all by working." He spoke of having to "pick up farming" in the summer months, presumably to supplement his income. According to him, "mixed farming [was done in Buxton]. I used to build straw stacks, that was one of my specialties…If you want a straw stack, call on the teacher."

Art described the Buxton he encountered on his arrival in 1912, as "the average rural place about that time, that one would run into anywhere in Ontario." According to him, "we, the people of the village when you would ask them how many [lived there], what was the population of North Buxton, they would say 'Oh, maybe 2-300' and that would be about as good, as close as you come to it." At that time there were blacksmith shops and farms for industry. The young people of the community had active social lives – "they had a good time both in sports and in fellowship, like social events, social occasions, square dancing, ball games." In addition to these leisure activities, Art recalled:

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[24] For more on women and wages in Canada at this time see Margaret E. McCallum Keeping Women in Their Place: The Minimum Wage in Canada, 1910-25, *Labour / Le Travail*, Vol. 17, (Spring, 1986), pp. 29-56.

> There was a race track right next door to my wife's home in Raleigh Township, and that developed some race horses, not Dan Patch or Dancer or anything like that, but horses that became well-known in the neighbourhood.[25]

Both Ethel and Art agree that while the big day in the community in recent years had become Labour Day, in the early years of the community it had been the celebration of May 24th that was "special." According to Art, "they were mostly patriotic, and they'd have a 24th of May celebration…we were very loyal to Queen Victoria." He suggests that this had changed simply because "generations change as some move away, some die, and gradually the whole picture changes."

When asked about the connectedness of the people in Buxton with life in Chatham, Art asks for clarification – "the white people or the coloured people or just…" suggesting a difference existed. Ethel clears it up by explaining "they didn't mix very well back in those days with Chatham." The picture she paints is that Buxtonites stayed to themselves at this time in their history.

There was also agreement that the church was an important institution within the community. Ethel pointed out "everybody went to church, young people and all, the church would be full on Sunday nights…[now] you don't see the young people and not many of the old people, you know, they start falling way from the church." People attended church for more than just the sermon, according to Art, "people would come and enjoy the musical part as well as the sermon, probably more so than the, the music may have been better enjoyed than the, than the sermon."

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[25] Dan Patch was a famous racehorse in the late 1890s and early 1900s. For more on his fame, see Fred A. Sasse, *The Dan Patch Story* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1957). The "Dancer" reference, whilst obviously being the name of another famous horse, is less clear as there were several well-known horses during this period which sported the name. The point is not lost however.

When asked about any stories passed down to them by the community elders, both Art and Ethel agreed that they had not sought out these tales. They had been too "busy doing other things" and really had not developed an interest in learning about the history until later in life.

Art discussed teaching in the one-room Buxton School, and what that meant to him. He taught six or seven grades, and even up to nine at one time, in that schoolhouse. A number of the students who passed through his class went on to become famous. A part of the narrative is spent recalling these individuals and where they went when they left Buxton. He tells the interviewer: "I considered myself having had a pretty good living here, I'd do it over again…I had opportunities to go other places, but I couldn't see any advantage and so here I am yet. And I've enjoyed it really."

In the next section I explore the diary of William and Charles Shadd. The re-storying is done thematically in order to provide the reader with a sense of the types of entries predominating over the five-year period of the diary.

Narrative 11

Young Men on the farm - William and Charles Shadd, 1881 to 1886

Figure 5.4
Photograph of brothers, William, Alfred and Charles Shadd, courtesy of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum.

By 1881, it has been a generation since the descendants of A.D. Shadd had begun to put down roots in Raleigh Township. While many of his children and relatives chose to return to the US immediately following the Civil War, as well as in subsequent years, others remained in the region. Among the remaining members of the Shadd family, A.D.'s son Garrison Shadd, his wife Harriet Curtis, and their 7 children lived on 96.5 acres of land on Concession 7, Lot 5. Their two sons William and Charles provide a record spanning the period from March 1881 to June 1886 as they chronicle their daily lives in a shared diary. Because of its scope, this diary[26] forms the largest of my narratives. Older brother William, born in 1864, serves as the chief diarist, writing for the first three and a half years, beginning when he is seventeen years old.

There is little difference in the style of writing between the two brothers, with Charles perhaps simply continuing to write in his predecessor's style upon assuming the duty of keeping the diary in 1885 when he too was seventeen.[27] Perhaps the biggest difference is in the fact that William appeared to have paid greater attention to detail. Where Charles would state "we cut down 5 trees today," William would tell his reader, "we cut down 5 trees today, 2 hickory, 1 birch, 2 maple." He also provided the detailed returns from the elections, while Charles would simply tell the reader that an election had been held. Beyond this difference, because of the otherwise clear similarities in style I have not spent a great deal of time in exploring these two narrators separately and treat their diary as a single source.

[26] Some might argue that this record is less of a diary and more a journal, but the Shadd family has used the term "diary" in describing this document, and in their definitions of "journal" Smith & Watson point out that "Some critics distinguish diary from journal by characterizing the journal as a chronicle of public record that is less intimate than the diary. Lejeune, however, does not distinguish between diary and journal, but uses the term interchangeably." Sidonie Smith & Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for InterpretingLife Narratives.* (Minneapoliis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 196.

Neither brother provided very much in the way of personal information[28], with the exception of William's mention that he sometimes took music lessons in town (he sometimes simply stated "had a lesson" without specifying whether or not it was music, but since he did not mention studying anything else, I believe it is safe to assume that these are the lessons in question), the payments for which appear to have come from his own labour. Otherwise, the diary mainly consists of general information, echoing the perhaps familiar day-to-day routines of family and community – what they did from one day to the next; who was involved; the cost of items they bought and sold; the comings and goings of family members; and marriages and deaths of family, friends and neighbours. The diary is therefore also filled with a myriad of characters from the community.

With weekly and bi-weekly entries for the entire period, both brothers provide us with a close look at their day-to-day experiences, from record of the state of the day's weather, their duties of clearing and plowing, ditching, and threshing, selling of the family's produce, to the slaughter and sale of pigs, and the upkeep of machinery. In addition, they tell us about the work they do on the farms of family and friends where they sometimes provide assistance.

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[27] Both William and Charles write in the same style as their father Garrison, who also kept a diary, almost a decade earlier, beginning in 1873.

[28] In his look at Mennonite diarists, Loewen noted an absence of expressed emotions or personal analyses, perhaps suggesting not only a trait of stoicism on the part of the writers, but perhaps a practice of the time? He found that the diaries were more "household journals" than recordings of personal experience or hopes and dreams. Royden Loewen, ed., *From the Inside Out: The Rural Worlds of Mennonite Diarists, 1863-1929* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: The University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 2 & 11.

Vagaries of weather

Every entry in the diary begins with the noting of the day's weather. Some days it is a simple descriptive matter, for example: "Blustry and stormy," "Clear mostly," or "Clear and warm…" On other days, particularly in the middle of summer or winter when the weather approaches its most extreme, they provide the day's temperature and a descriptor: "Clear, calm, thermometer 16° below zero," "Cloudy, blustery, snowed about 3 inches. Thermometer 14°," or "Clear, very warm. Thermometer reached 88° and 90°." The focus on climate highlights its importance in an agrarian household as there were several days when the weather determined their ability to get outside in order to complete necessary work, something which could have affected their ability to provide for the family. For example, on Saturday, February 4th, 1883, William states: "Temperature 34°, rained all day. Mother came home last night. I took Grandmother home. **Rained so that we could not do much** (my emphasis)."[29] By paying attention to seasonal changes, the reader is able to gain a deeper understanding of how the weather determined what happened on a farm in the region. Both brothers described animals giving birth in the springtime; the preparation of the fields and planting of crops as the days got warmer; and the harvesting of crops in the fall, among many other events.

[29] In his look at the diaries of Mennonite farmers, Loewen points to the importance of this focus on climate held, as the extremes of weather in the life of a farm family could mean limitations or changes in the family work routine, and could seriously affect their financial well-being. Royden Loewen, *Hidden Worlds: Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: The University of Manitoba Press, 2001), 13.

Work on the family farm

William and Charles's days were spent working the family farm. Several people came to the farm as hired help, as in the case of William Brannum who did farm labour for a few months in 1881 ("Wm Brannum commenced work at $1 per month…"), chopping wood, splitting rails, skidding logs and helping the boys make rail logs which they would then haul and sell to the railroad. Will talked about socializing with William Brannum as well, for example mentioning that the two of them attended a concert together.

Both William and Charles mentioned instances of "bringing a girl" or transporting a female relative to the farm to do the washing, or to sew for their mother, or to perform other household tasks. Beyond hired help or assistance from individual family members, there were also several occasions when groups came together on the farm to complete particular jobs, for example, on Monday, October 8th, Will writes:

> "Clear [today], we threshed with Johnson and Dune's machine. John Brown, Robert Harden, Norman Cooper, Grandfather Poindexter, Americus Cooper, Horace Bond and John Cribbs helped us. We had 57 bu of scott wheat, 40 bu of buckwheat and 260 bu of oats."

Similar gatherings also took place on other farms, with the boys and sometimes their father joining in to help in the completion of a particular task. These kinds of communal working arrangements were typical on farms during this period, where farmers not only made use of paid seasonal help as the Shadd family did, but where they also "invited

friends and relations to work bees, where they would help out with some large job in return for large quantities of food and drink."[30]

Among the places they mention visiting to provide assistance, the boys regularly visited their grandparents' farm, to help with the duties of plowing and planting among other heavy farm chores. As well, they did a great deal of work on the farm of their Aunt Emmaline Simpson.[31] Aunt Emmaline appeared to play a large role in the life of this family, as she is frequently mentioned, both as the recipient of their assistance and as providing help to them in return, loaning her team to them for work on their farm when needed, for example. She also appeared to spend a great deal of time at their farm. Their grandmother also visited their farm on a regular basis, as did several aunts, all seemingly to help their mother with the indoor tasks, as well as caring for her when she was ill ("…took Grandmother home, been tending on Mother."). All this suggests a tightly-knit family that relied on each other in times of need.

Perhaps because the boys did all their work outdoors, this is the only aspect of the family's life to which we are exposed. In reality, beyond learning that William and Charles' mother got help with sewing and washing, we saw very little of the family's women, or of "women's work" in this context. The farm and the work of the farmer and others on the land is the focus both narrators provide, giving us insight into the type of farm the family owns and the work they do daily.

From the brothers' descriptions, the type of farming the family did was typical of the region and time. In keeping with a trend that started in the 1850s in Ontario, the Shadd farm and those of their neighbours appeared to practice a style of mixed farming,

[30] Peter Baskerville, *Ontario: Image, Identity and Power* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2002), 78.

producing wheat, barley, corn, beets, squash, potatoes, and pumpkins among other crops.[32]

In 1881, William made mention of the cost of butter when he visited the market, pointing to the concerns of Ontario farmers during this period as they watched the export market for butter decline.[33] Also typical of the region, William and his family supplemented their income by selling forestry products, most likely from the clearing of parts of their own land not under cultivation. Some of this work was done by one or both boys on their own time, and the sale of those products provided them with their own money.

Family involvement in politics, education and entrepreneurship

William and Charles make constant reference to their father, telling the reader he is at the centre of this household. In fact, he is the principal character in their narrative, appearing more than all the others, and it becomes quickly apparent that he is not "just a farmer." Like his father before him, he is very active in the community, for example, acting as a census taker during the collection of the 1881 census. He also serves as a returning officer and Deputy Returning Officer for their division during the municipal and Dominion elections. In both instances, William is also involved, working as a census taker and as a poll clerk, although there is no mention as to whether or not these are duties he has sought on his own as he follows his family legacy, or if the arrangement is

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[31] She is a sister of their father Garrison, married to Rev. Henry Simpson, and living on Concession A of Raleigh Township. Ancestry.com. Ontario, Canada Voter Lists, 1867-1900 [database on-line].
[32] Baskerville notes that while this had been precipitated by the prices of wheat and barley going down, the trend had already been apparent from the 1850s. Baskerville, *Ontario,* 134.
[33] While the domestic market for butter increased from the 1870s to the 1880s, there was a distinct decline in export needs which some attributed either to a difference in taste between local consumers and the

his father's doing. Charles also makes mention of posting election bills in May 1885, suggesting that by then he is also part of this enterprise. The Shadd family had always been involved in Raleigh Township politics, so it is not difficult to see that there might have been some expectation on the part of the elder Shadd that his children would also become involved. Members of the family had been very active in the abolitionist movement prior to the Civil War, and patriarch Abraham Shadd served as a Councillor in Raleigh Township. As well, his daughter Mary Ann Shadd Cary, William and Charles' aunt (and sister to Garrison), was an abolitionist, a women's advocate, a very outspoken and well-known journalist, and in her later years, one of the first African-American female lawyers.[34] Of course, she enters the diary only as "Aunt Mary Ann Cary."

From the inception of the settlement, the Buxton community members had exercised their rights as citizens by participating in the electoral process[35], similar to blacks in other communities across North America post-Emancipation.[36] In much the same way as the ability to own land was closely tied to freedom, for blacks new to Canada, citizenship was embodied in one's ability to participate in the democratic process. There were also benefits attached to political involvement as certain individuals and families were able to enjoy a level of prestige and recognition, something which might be inferred in this context by the continuing recognition of the Shadd legacy into contemporary times.

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primary export recipients, the British or a response to the poor quality of Canadian butter. Baskerville, *Sites of Power* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2005), 139.

[34] Shirley J. Yee, "Finding a Place: Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the Dilemas of Black Migration to Canada, 1850-1870," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 18, no. 3 (1997): 1-16; Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the 19th Century* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).

[35] Victor Ullman, *Look to the North Star: A Life of William King* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 151-2.

Garrison Shadd was elected as a school trustee in the community in 1881, and again in 1885. A.D. Shadd had built a school on his property by 1854, the school which was most commonly referred to as the Shadd School[37]. Throughout the diary there is mention of the different kinds of work William, Charles and their father do for the school, from posting school notices to general upkeep ("Father pumped out the schoolhouse well"), administrative work (filling out report cards) to paid work, when Garrison Shadd bought the contract for putting in the wood at the school, and building a bridge. This speaks to the continued importance of education in the lives of members of this branch of the family, and their close relationship to the educational process in the community.

In addition to his community work, three of the diary entries outline ways in which Garrison was able to earn extra money, each suggesting a sense of entrepreneurship on his part. On Friday, October 5th, 1883, William noted, "Father bought the county right to the steam washing machine." Steam washers were used commercially in the nineteenth century by many households.[38] Since Buxton was one of several small centres in the region, it is safe to assume that these hamlets did not have their own commercial laundry enterprises, and Garrison had recognized a niche market

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[36] For more detail, see Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, *Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 17-37; Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *America's First Black Town: Brooklyn, Illinois, 1830-1915* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 77-143.

[37] A.C. Robbins, *Legacy,* 37.

[38] Much of today's individual household work was once done collectively, including the doing of laundry. In Canada, commercial laundries were used by many individuals, while many families also hired laundresses. With modernization the design and manufacturing of commercial washing machines became a thriving business in many regions, although this happened much more slowly in Canada than in the United States. With the development of steam-powered trains and other large machines, some creative inventors came up with steam-powered washing machines and then, as times changed, progressed to gas-powered and electrical machines. For more on the development and use of modern changes in household technology, see Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 98-9 and Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The*

into which he brought his machine. This theory is supported by William's March 18th, 1884 entry, which reads: "…Father and Henry Parsons went over in Tilbury with the washing machine." In addition to this enterprise, on December 26th, Garrison Shadd had secured the previously mentioned "contract for putting in the wood" at the school, as well as "putting in a bridge across the ditch, $13.50 to be done right off." The job of building the schoolhouse bridge was done by Garrison, William and Charles together. In April 1886, Charles noted, "Father sold all of the Elm and Basswood on [the] upper place[39] to P.F. Barry for $300 to be taken off within 3 years from date April 30th, 1886." Since Garrison had just purchased the family homestead a month prior, for $5500, I am certain this amount would have come to the family at a good time.

Illness and death

Over the five-year period of the diary, the Shadd family experienced the loss of several close family members as well as friends and valuable members of the community. A.D. Shadd, the family patriarch, is one of the early losses to which we are privy, and William's noting of this passing seems very pointed, as if it is something he wishes to remember in great detail: "Saturday, February 11th, 1882…A.D. Shadd (my grandfather) died this evg. At 5:55 o'clock aged 81 years, 11 mos and 9 dys." A year and a half later, on November 3rd, 1883, his grandmother Shadd also passed away, after a long illness. She died in Xenia, Ohio and her body was brought back for her funeral, held in Chatham.

Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years (Toronto, Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 25.

[39] The "upper place" appears to be a reference to the Shadd family homestead where family patriarch A.D. Shadd had lived.

Five months later, their mother's father, Grandfather Poindexter, also dies, on April 19th, 1884.

On Sunday, June 17th, 1883, William notes: "Father went to town for the Dr. for Mother she is very sick." For the next six months she appears to be extremely ill, with the doctor making an additional four trips to the family home to attend to her. There is little mention of her or of her illness for over a year after this period of serious illness, until Charles mentions on May 16th, 1885, "…took Grandmother home, been tending on Mother," suggesting she may once again be ill. The next day he indicates that his father went to town for medicine both for her and for his brother Joe, and there seems to be a rapid decline, as by June 14th, less than a month later, Charles stated: "…Dear Mother passed from this life at 15min to 5 o'clock A.M." It was indeed a great loss for the family, yet, as with the other losses, it was stated as a matter of fact, with no change in tone or style, except for the similar increase in detail as his brother had used at the time of Grandfather Shadd's passing.

The illnesses, deaths and funerals of a number of individuals from the community are also noted throughout this record. A notable entry is William's on May 8th, 1883: "Cloudy. Father went to Dresden to attend Josiah Henson's funeral…" On the surface this may appear to be a minor entry with little meaning beyond the recognition of someone's passing. However, Garrison's attendance at the funeral of this well-known abolitionist and conductor on the Underground Railroad speaks to the close network and relationships between the leaders and residents in the Underground Railroad communities. Many Buxtonites, including the Shadd family, were related to families and individuals in Dresden. There were also Buxton families that had come to Buxton directly

from the Dawn community. Therefore, it is very likely that in Buxton, the passing of Rev. Henson would have been a major incident, and many would have travelled to his funeral.

Transborder movement

On Saturday, April 23rd, 1881, William mentioned that his brother Joe, who would have been fifteen at the time, "came up from Detroit" and that "Grandmother brought him out home from town." There are several mentions of his coming and going to and from Detroit throughout the diary. In addition, both of their parents appeared regularly to have made their way to and from Michigan whether for work or other reasons, never staying more than a day or two at most. A few of the visits we are told were for visits to the doctor, or "to get medicine." In light of the poor state of medical care in Canada at this time, it would make sense that a family with close access to the border would make use of available doctors in the larger centres in Michigan.[40]

In her look at Ontarioans who crossed the border into Michigan and subsequently, through job losses or other difficulties, found themselves having to turn to private charities for aid, Nora Faires suggests that: "in the nineteenth century, thousands of immigrants arrived in Detroit from Canada by catching a ferry across the Saint Clair or Detroit rivers or a steamer across Lake Erie or Huron."[41] Perhaps individuals making the return journeys between Canadian and American border communities were part of these numbers. William and Charles also tell of numerous family members of individuals from

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[40] Until the reforms of the late 1870s (US) and well into the 1910s (Canada), there was little general access to physicians, and almost no organized public health in Upper Canada or in the United States. Jay Cassel, "Public Health in Canada," in *The History of Public Health and the Modern State*, ed., Dorothy Porter (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Editions Rodopi, 1994), 276-312.

[41] Nora Faires, "Poor Women, Proximate Border: Migrants from Ontario to Detroit in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 20 No. 3, Migration and the Making of North America (2001), 88-109.

the community who lived on the American side of the border, providing a source for examining the question of whether the lives of residents of these communities close to the border should be explored using a transborder perspective, as the idea of the nation-state (Canada or the US) may prove inadequate as an analytical category in this context. After all, "people left from farms, small towns, and industrial districts—not from a nation."[42]

Nebraska

On Saturday, April 22nd, 1882, William noted: "…Father and Mother went to town. Bought a draft for $71 15/100 to send to Omaha as payment on the Jr. section of land in Dawson Co." Garrison made a further 2 annual payments according to diary entries, after which he took a trip to Nebraska himself: "Saturday, October 11th, 1884. Clear. Father went to town in the Buggie. Got his ticket to Columbus Neb and return for $34…" The great movement west was very much alive during this period[43]:

> The southern papers tell of the exodus of whole colonies of both colored and white people from the coast states into Kansas, Arkansas, Texas and New Mexico; from the New England states and sweeping across New York and Ontario, there is a steady stream moving towards Nebraska and Colorado;[44]

While there was no explanation given, or discussion of the reasons behind the land purchase in Nebraska in the diary, the fact that long-standing Buxtonite (and one of its

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[42] Bruno Ramirez, with the assistance of Yves Otis, *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900-1930* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 33.

[43] After passage of the 1862 Homestead Act in the US, the state of Kansas and the territory of Nebraska set up large recruiting campaigns designed to attract settlers from the east. Migration to these regions allowed individuals the opportunity to own and farm their own land, a major draw for blacks and poor whites previously unable to own land. For more on this, see Lawrence Bacon Lee, *Kansas and the Homestead Act, 1862-1905* (New York: Arno Press, 1979); Lisa M. Frehill-Rowe, "Postbellum Race Relations and Rural Land Tenure: Migration of Blacks and Whites to Kansas and Nebraska, 1870-1890," *Social Forces* 72, no. 1 (1993): 77-92.

first settlers) Isaac Riley and his family had left Buxton in March 1880[45] to settle in that state, and that the Meehans, Emmanuels[46] and perhaps others had also moved to the same area may have provided a significant motive for the Shadds to consider such a move or investment.

The Shadd diary comes to a close in the summer of 1886, in much the same manner as it began, with little ceremony, and simply a sense of life on the farm continuing as it had over the previous years. As previously mentioned, one major change had taken place, and that was the purchase of the Shadd family homestead by Garrison on March 27th. There was a gradual inclusion of work on land at the upper place into their daily practice, until the entry on May 24th: "Clear. We began to move *** of things to upper place. All but Willie and Flave moved up…" This entry raises the question of inheritance. Was this a passing on of land from father Garrison to his oldest (he is 21 in 1886) and then youngest (Flave is 12 when the rest of the family moves) son? As with many pieces of primary documentation, while this diary provides a great many answers to questions about life in Buxton in the 1880s, it also opens up new areas of interest and poses questions we may or may not be able to answer at this time.

In these pages, I have presented some of the larger biographical fragments that I discovered in my exploration of the community of North Buxton. By retelling the stories of particular individuals, I provide an intimate look at each person and what they chose to share with their particular interviewer. Each narrative stands as its own story descriptive

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[44] *Chatham Planet*, March 18th, 1880.
[45] Robbins, *Legacy,* 74.
[46] These families from Buxton were all resident in Dawson County by 1880. 1880 United States Federal Census, Dawson County Museum, Lexington, NE.

of one aspect of a person's life. When taken together, these stories provide a particular image of a certain time in the history of Buxton. What do I make of these narratives I have presented? The source of these biographical fragments was a look back, a century after the formation of North Buxton. What can they tell us today about the community back then? In the next chapter, I provide a thematic analysis, emerging from several readings of the narratives. Although I looked at the diary separately from the oral history narratives in my first readings, once I had determined the overarching themes present in the oral history transcriptions, I returned to the diary to see if these were also represented. Therefore, the thematic analyses in chapter six take into consideration all of the narratives explored.

Chapter 6 – Narrative Themes

The narratives in chapter five provide personal memories and experiences of thirteen individuals, covering the eighteen eighties to the early nineteen twenties. All lived in Raleigh Township, either within the formerly bounded Elgin Settlement, the region later incorporated as North Buxton, or within its immediate vicinity. Wherever they lived, they were included as part of the oral history collection because they understood themselves to be Buxtonites. These re-storied narratives represent "community narratives," that is,

> …descriptive and historical accounts of life in a particular community, which are accessible to community members. Community narratives are identified through consistent themes present in the personal stories expressed by individual community members. The presence of community narratives is thought to be indicative of shared experiences and shared community identity.[1]

The narratives were analysed to identify common topics reflective of the aforementioned shared experiences and shared identities. Each story introduced themes and sub-themes, several of them overlapping with one another. The most reoccurring themes, community, race and identity, work, poverty and class, and their various sub-themes will be explored in this chapter. I will also explore some of what I saw to be obvious omissions or silences within the narratives.

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[1] Mark S. Salzer, "Narrative Approach to Assessing Interactions Between Society, Community and Person," *Journal of Community Psychology* 26 no. 6 (1998): 569-580.

Theme 1 – Community

Thematic categories related to community proved to be the most frequently occurring in the narratives, alluding to an extremely close group of people coming together to create a home for themselves and maintaining the ties of family, religion and shared identity. By relating stories of the community helping tradition or mutual aid as well as the more obvious kinship and the broader modes of coming together such as church and school, the Buxton narratives express a dominant community narrative of solidarity.

Sub-theme – Kinship, fictive and otherwise.

In the same ways as they would attempt to describe or place individuals in terms of phenotypic markers (light or dark complexioned, "fair," as having "good" or "bad" hair etc.), many of the respondents spent much of the time during interviews attempting to determine connections, locating individuals within the geographies of the community and of the family. For example, several of the respondents lived on the 10th concession. In their narratives, each would mention friends, relatives and neighbours in their discussion of life in the community,

> Garrison Shadd: From the 10th concession on, there was the Parkers, Frank and Isabel Parker, Jule and Johnny Smith, Mrs. Parker was a sister to the Smiths. They used the farmland, the east farmland on the 10th concession. I used to get a ride with them on the way to work with the horses…

In addition, in conversation Buxtonites would often take a statement such as "Mrs. Parker was a sister to the Smiths" and work at finding out that person's exact lineage or place

within the collective. Whom did she marry? Where did this person live, on what concession, and so on. At 93, Marion Shadd had outlived all her siblings from her father's first marriage and mentions this during her interview, pointing out her sadness at this fact. She then spends much of the interview trying to make genealogical connections for individuals from the community, for example,

> Interviewer: What was she?
> Marion Shadd: She was one of Mary's grandchild. Mary, her first grandchild. Yea, Mimi Anderson.
> Interviewer: Did she live out on the plains there somewhere?
> Marion Shadd: She lived in Chatham, she was, she knew Anderson and Morris Anderson she was…
> Interviewer: She was the mother of them or sister of them or something?
> Marion Shadd: No. The name Mary, Mary, Aunt Mary Cooper had a girl, that's right…and it seemed like Mimi Anderson was a Cooper, Aunt Mary Cooper's girl.

In their narratives, both William and Charles Shadd also point to the importance and presence of familial and other ties as they make mention of the comings and goings of family members to and from the farm on a daily basis, as well as taking time out to mention illnesses and deaths of friends and relatives. Frank Morris also dedicates a great deal of his narrative to discussions of his family, from the role his Grandfather Hatter played in the Buxton community to that of his sister and others. He is able to provide the reader with detailed information about unrelated community members as well as those from his own family, although he had left Buxton while still a teen. Dorothy Shadd Shreve also dedicates much of her narrative to the Shadd family lineage, from the 18th century Hessian soldier Hans Schadt to her own generation, and tales of relatives from her mother's family lineage as well. The Shadd family tale represents a story told and retold within the community. While seemingly unimportant, this revisiting and

recollecting of kinship ties suggests the importance of blood and adoptive kinship within this community. For Cleata Morris, the community at Buxton *was* family. According to her,

> [In Buxton] you felt safe and secure. If you misbehaved in Buxton, people from the community would reprimand you. Strength and respect were developed and instilled here from the earlier ancestors in the community.

As a result of the slave trade, many blacks found themselves part of households or plantations where there were rarely blood relations present, as a result of families having been separated through sale or death. As a survival mechanism, many newly enslaved Africans assigned kinship status to non-blood relatives with whom they shared other things (such as being resident on the same plantation). Historian Herbert Gutman provides an in-depth historical examination of the meaning of kinship relations among African-American families. He points to the fact that the social network created through close relations with extended family including fictive kin served as the foundation of the black family.[2]

The small size of the Buxton community was perhaps instrumental in the general tendency, then and now, for community members to treat each other as extended family, something Gutman also mentioned in his work in terms of the limited social choices afforded individuals in smaller communities such as slave societies. From the inception of the Elgin Settlement, families (or households) helped each other clear the land, build

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[2] For more on extended family relations including fictive relations in black families, see H.G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, *1750-1925* (New York: Random House, 1976); William C. Hays & Charles H. Mindel, "Extended Kinship Relations in Black and White Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 35, no. 1 (Feb., 1973): 51-57; Linda M. Chatters, Robert Joseph Taylor & Rukmalie Jayakody, "Fictive Kinship Relations in Black Extended Families," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies,* 25, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 297; Maria Scannapieco and Sondra Jackson, ."Kinship Care: The African American Response to Family Preservation," *Social Work* 41 no. 2 (March 1996): 190-196.

their cabins, and do other work as much out of an imagined brotherhood as out of necessity. New arrivals to the community were often welcomed into the homes of others until such time that they were able to have their own homes.[3] The kinship relations came into existence as units of the foundation of the original community and continued into the present, ensuring community stability and resilience.

Sub-Theme – Black Community Across the Border?

On Saturday, April 23rd, 1881, William Shadd mentions in his diary entry that his brother Joe, who would have been fifteen at the time, "came up from Detroit" and that "Grandmother brought him out home from town." There are several mentions of his coming and going to and from Detroit throughout the diary. In addition, both of their parents appear to make their way to and from Michigan regularly, whether for work or other reasons, never staying more than a day or two at most. A few of the visits, we are told, are to take someone to the doctor, or "to get medicine." While this is a very reasonable assumption, given that several Buxtonites had settled in and around Detroit in the years around the Civil War, it is also plausible to assume that Joe visited or stayed with relatives or friends in Michigan, indicating continuing connections between the African-American communities in southwestern Ontario and those in United States. Other entries make mention of visits from relatives in Xenia, Ohio, as well as other parts of the United States, and their grandmother Shadd actually dies in Xenia in 1883 and has to be brought back to Canada to be buried. Also recall Samuel Lowery who was another

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[3] Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); William King, *The Autobiography of Rev. William King*," Unpublished autobiography. William King collection, Buxton Museum; Victor Ullman, *Look to the North Star: A Life of William King* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1969).

Buxtonite with connections to Xenia, having settled there after the war. Nora Faires suggests that, "in the nineteenth century, thousands of immigrants arrived in Detroit from Canada by catching a ferry across the Saint Clair or Detroit rivers or a steamer across Lake Erie or Huron."[4] From the movements of these few individuals we can determine that African-Canadians making the return journeys between Canadian and American border communities were part of these numbers.

The migration of blacks throughout the continent allowed for the movement and re-establishment of communities of friends and families in disparate regions. Perhaps the Shadds were considering such a move themselves, as William and Charles's diary speaks of their father Garrison making payments on "the jr. section of land he had purchased in Dawson Co." It is quite possible that since Isaac Riley and his family had left Buxton in March 1880[5] to settle in that state, and since the Meehans, Emmanuels[6] and perhaps others had also moved to the same area, Garrison saw this as a significant motive for the Shadds to consider such a move.

Sub-theme – Church

Hearkening back to its very beginnings, the community of Buxton has always exhibited an intimate relationship with the church, whether it was the original Presbyterian Church so strongly tied to the community's beginnings or one of the other churches built in the community not long after its settlement. In keeping with the discussion in chapter four of the importance of the church to the people of Buxton and to

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[4] Nora Faires, "Poor Women, Proximate Border: Migrants from Ontario to Detroit in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 20 No. 3, Migration and the Making of North America (2001), 88-109.

[5] A.C. Robbins, *Legacy,* 74.

blacks in the post-abolition Americas, almost half of the narrators in the oral history project spoke of their own church attendance and that of others in the community. Religion provided a sense of community solidarity and, for many, church attendance brought with it social responsibility, active membership in church and community organizations, and access to community social gatherings.[7]

For the majority of the respondents, it was their memory that everyone went to church on Sunday. Garrison Shadd's family attended the BME church and Sunday School in Buxton. He recalled that in his childhood, in the early 1900s, "we used to walk to Sunday School on Sunday mornings, used to stay for church, walk home…." Church was a place to worship, but it also served as a way to see and commune with friends and neighbours, and for many, it perhaps served as more of a social occasion.

According to Ethel Alexander, "everybody went to church, young people and all, the church would be full on Sunday night." She and husband Art both recalled the social function served by the church: "people would come and enjoy the musical part as well as the sermon, probably more so than the, the music may have been better enjoyed than the sermon." Frank Parker recalled, "Everybody had to go to church on Sundays" and "you had to go to Sunday School on Sundays," something Dorothy Shadd also stated. These, she said, were her earliest memories of the community, walking along the MCR track to Buxton for church and Sunday School.[8] As had been the case in the old community, the

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[6] These families from Buxton were all resident in Dawson County by 1880. 1880 United States Federal Census, Dawson County Museum, Lexington, NE.
[7] Hepburn, *Crossing the Border.*
[8] It was a chance for people to see their neighbours and friends during a time when a distance of three or four miles was often prohibitive since the woods were not completely cleared, there was threat of animals, and the roads were not always passable.

patterns of mutual respect and interdenominational support continued to thrive within the community.[9]

Frank Morris provided a great deal of history regarding the churches in Buxton, and the Baptist Church in particular, as his "grandfather gave the land for that church to be erected on the corner of the farm which he gave to my mother. It is the corner of the farm on which I was born." For Frank, one of the ways in which the Buxton churches distinguished themselves was in being integrated: "Of course, the Presbyterian Church in South Buxton, which is now the United Church of Canada[10] was predominantly white, but it had a certain amount of integration." The fact of the joint cemetery shared between the Baptist and Presbyterian churches was for him a proud sign of the ability of blacks and whites to work together, as Rev. King gave most of the land for the cemetery, and Grandfather Hatter the rest.

> And half the plot was showing how these people were working together, how amicably they were working together, how nicely and how in the way of integration. That was the beginning of integration in that part of the world, because all the congregations were mixed, black and white together.

It is unclear whether Frank meant the congregations of both churches were for a time integrated, or if this was another reference to the Presbyterian congregations. As for the

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[9] In his narrative Frank Morris even notes his sister being an active member in the choir in two different churches within the community, at the same time.

[10] While it might have been what Frank believed, or simply a truncated version, this information is incorrect. "The United Church was inaugurated on June 10, 1925 in Toronto, Ontario, when the Methodist Church, Canada, the Congregational Union of Canada, and 70 per cent of the Presbyterian Church in Canada entered into an organic union. Joining as well was the small General Council of Union Churches, centred largely in Western Canada. It was the first union of churches in the world to cross historical denominational lines and hence received international acclaim. Impetus for the union arose out of the concerns for serving the vast Canadian northwest and in the desire for better overseas mission. Each of the uniting churches, however, had a long history prior to 1925."The United Church of Canada, "History" http://www.united-church.ca/history/overview.

shared lot, there was still a "roadway in between the two halves" of the cemetery; Presbyterians on the east half, and Baptists on the west half, not really an indication of integration, even in death.

Sub-theme – Mutual Aid

Beyond the use of hired help or assistance from one or two members of the family, there were also several occasions when groups came together on the farm to complete particular jobs. For example, on Monday, October 8th, Will writes in the family diary,

> Clear [today], we threshed with Johnson and Dune's machine. John Brown, Robert Harden, Norman Cooper, Grandfather Poindexter, Americus Cooper, Horace Bond and John Cribbs helped us. We had 50bu of scott wheat, 40bu of buckwheat and 260 bu of oats.

According to Frank Morris, "he [William Shadd] was the only one that had that engine for many, many years and he went about from place to place…he went about threshing people's grain, beans in particular." For Francis Parker, these threshing parties were among the more memorable aspects of the work done on the farms in the area.

> Frank: I remember I used to go to the old threshings, went down to Lucas for a while.
> Interviewer: Did he have a machine too?
> Frank: Oh yeah! (inaudible) he had a good thresh machine.

Beyond the threshing parties, community members got together to assist each other with other major tasks on the farms. In his narrative, Garrison Shadd mentions the community coming together to slaughter pigs on a particular farm,

> …all the neighbours would come in, maybe 6 or 8 men, maybe a dozen, and we'd slaughter hogs all day. Maybe 30-40, tie a big rail, hang them up on it, they'd freeze, and then load them on the wagon and the next morning take them to Chatham to sell them.

These kinds of communal gatherings would take place on many other farms beyond Buxton during this period, where farmers not only made use of seasonal help as the Shadd family did, but where they also "invited friends and relations to work bees, where they would help out with some large job in return for large quantities of food and drink."[11] On a smaller scale, the Shadd diary provides examples of families helping each other by narrating times when William and Charles and sometimes their father Garrison visit either their grandparent's farm or that of their Aunt Emmaline (especially after her husband's death), and plow or bring in the harvest for them.

While the men and boys in the community provide help with the major tasks of farming, the narratives suggest a division of labour, in which the women attend to household tasks and medical care. For example, the helping relationship within the Shadd family was a reciprocal one, with grandmother and Aunt Emmaline often "returning the favour" by helping William and Charles's mother with sewing, washing, cooking, and caring for her when she is ill. According to her narrative, Cleata Morris's grandmother would leave home "in the middle of the night," to care for members of the community, providing some kind of medical care.

In her narrative, Marion Shadd Griffith talks about her grandmother, Harriet Poindexter, who had lost her farm, and as a result was forced to "jump from place to place to live." She had lived with Marion's family for some time after Marion's mother's

death, helping to care for her grandchildren. Other narratives tell of relatives and neighbours taking in others in need, or caring for them as was necessary. Another example appears in the Alexander narrative when Art, in response to the question as to how many children they had raised, stated, "[we] helped raise different family, people, unfortunate, you know."

Entertainment/Social Life

Only four of the narrators spoke of the social life in Buxton. In addition to social gatherings where friends and family members get together, I have already made reference to the social role provided by the church within the community. Garrison Shadd talked about the evening gatherings at the village store, where the farmers would "tell stories and joke and laugh." Other regular occurrences he mentioned were the house parties and dances, with their impromptu live music: "They weren't organized, we used to go from house to house and we'd get an orchestra that used to be in the area, fellows that used to play for us."

According to Art Alexander, the youth of Buxton enjoyed themselves. "They had a good time and both in sports and in fellowship, like social events, social occasions, square dancing, ball games."

The narratives above, exploring kinship, community social life, mutual aid, the role of religion and the church, and relations with transborder communities, suggest a very tightly-knit community, where neighbours exchanged labour and provided help to each other in many ways. Studies of rural communities suggest that the practice of shared

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[11] Peter Baskerville, *Ontario: Image, Identity and Power* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2002), 78.

work, helping a neighbour through hard times, and the creation of community groups geared toward ensuring the survival of its citizens are among the most cherished values.[12] Some rural dwellers have even seen this as a fundamental difference between rural and urban settings: the understanding that community is predicated on caring and sharing with one's relatives and neighbours.

Theme 2 - Race & Identity

In his exploration of race, culture and identity, Appiah troubles what he refers to as an "American concept," one that "draws on and interacts with ideas from elsewhere."[13] There is little consensus on what a person means when they make reference to race, therefore making it a difficult subject to define. However, this project is predicated on the idea that race and racism are central, endemic, permanent and a fundamental part of defining and explaining how North American society functions.[14] In spite of this, since I am aware that Canadians find research about race difficult,[15] I went into this process with little in the way of expectation in regard to narratives regarding this topic. There were no direct questions asked by the interviewers about issues of race, with the exception of my interview with Cleata Morris, during which I asked her if she remembered her parents or grandparents discussing issues of race. Yet, either directly or indirectly, eight of the eleven narrators dealt with race and identity in some way. Pedagogical theorists Celeste

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[12] For example, see Melissa Walker, "Themes in Oral Histories of Farming Folk," *Agricultural History* 74, no. 2 (2000): 340-351; Nancy Grey Osterud & Lu Ann Jones, "If I Must Say So Myself": Oral Histories of Rural Women," *The Oral History Review* 17, no. 2 (1989): 1-23.

[13] K. Anthony Appiah, *Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections,* The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Volume 17 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996), 53-136. His treatment of race and how it is and has been understood in this context provides the reader with an excellent understanding of how confusing the issue can truly be.

[14] Derrick Bell, *Faces at the bottom of the well: the permanence of racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

Brody and Carol Witherell with Ken Donald and Ruth Lundblad suggest that this finding should not be surprising, since "when given permission to use personal narratives to discover and reorganize the stories of their lives, adults will invariably explore themes of gender and culture."[16] The narratives form a part of the narrators' process of self understanding, according to narrative theory, which acknowledges that we come to a place of knowing who we are "by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives."[17]

Certain aspects of race and racism exist as "taken for granted" in some of the narratives. For example, in her narrative as she discussed her experiences at school, Marion Shadd Griffith provides an example of a personal experience of racism. In her telling, she is not responding to questions around race, but rather sharing a story about her schooling. Once she had completed her studies at Chatham Collegiate Institute, she chose to attend normal school in London, Ontario, and through her discussion of this experience we get a glimpse into issues of race at this time. She notes, "Being black we had to walk three miles across London, because we couldn't get a boarding place near the school." She said nothing beyond this about the experience and continued her narrative, acknowledging that this was simply the way life was at that time. She received her 2nd Class teaching certificate and returned to teach at the Buxton School in 1919. According to Cleata Morris, who also became a schoolteacher, "you finished teacher's college and

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[15] George J. Sefa Dei, "Why Write Back? The Role of Afrocentric Discourse in Social Change." *Canadian Journal of Education* 23 no. 2 (1998): 200-215.

[16] C. Brody and C. Witherell (with K. Donald and R.Lundblad), "Stories and Voice in the Education of Professionals," in eds., N. Noddings and C. Witherell, Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue (New York: Teachers College Press, 1991), 257-278.

[17] Margaret R. Somers, "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach," *Theory and Society* 23 no. 5 (Oct. 1994): 605-649.

came back to teach in Buxton or Shrewsbury, because you knew that at least in these places you could get a [teaching] position."

Marion's narrative also includes a story about the Parks family, a white family that had lived and worked in and near Buxton for several generations. Someone from the family had purchased a patent from William and went on to set up a business. She suggests that the member of the Parks family made a lot of money as a result of this, while this person gave William "next to nothing," clearly stating that "they cheated him on it." Whether or not she attributed this to issues of race remains unstated.

Sub-theme: Colorism[18]

One of the narratives begins with the female respondent and an unknown male discussing a particular relative:

Man: …she was, she was fair
Woman: Well, she wasn't fair, she was a light, brown-skinned one.
Man: This is the one that was…
Woman: …and she was prejudice, yes she was very prejudiced.
Man: She didn't like black.
Woman: She didn't like us fair kids. She always favoured the dark kids and us light kids didn't get (laughing), us light kids don't…

In another narrative, the respondent is asked about her schooling,

Interviewer: Can you tell us where you went to school?
Fred: I went to school at North Buxton part time and South Buxton part time.
Interviewer: And was there much difference between school things?
Fred: Well no, there wasn't very much, only that the school at South Buxton was a mixed school, they were part white, it was a mixed school. And at that time Buxton didn't have any white.

[18] Colorism is "the discriminatory treatment of individuals falling within the same 'racial' group on the basis of…skin color, hair texture, thickness of lips, eye color, nose shapes and other phenotypical

While discourses on race are part of the social milieu, within this discourse, there are the sub-texts of shade, the distribution within one's racial grouping further into fair, brown, light, half-caste, mulatto, and it continues. These labels may exist only in one's immediate circles, or they may hold value in terms of class and status, and hence can be very powerful markers. In the post-Civil War Americas, blacks of lighter colour were able to use the existing black-white stratification and gain social advantage within the black community. [19] In subsequent years, this intra-group colour consciousness became normalized in the black community and became understood as a reason for good or ill-treatment toward individuals.[20] For example, Cleata Morris pointed out that on the 10th concession, where the Morris family lived, there were a number of white families, Roman Catholic and so on, but "daddy was quite fair and that kind of made a difference to how he was treated."[21]

The same narrative in which we encountered the above discussion of discrimination around complexion also raised the issue of hair texture. Marion Shadd

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features."Cedric Herring, Verna Keith and Hayward Derrick Horton, *Skin Deep: How Race and Complexion Matter in the "Color-Blind" Era* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004) 3.

[19] Which in turn was bound to their experiences in slavery. E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States,revised and abridged edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Willard B. Gatewood Jr. "Aristocrats of Color: South and North The Black Elite, 1880-1920," *The Journal of Southern History,* 54, no. 1 (Feb. 1988): 3-20; August Meier, "Negro Class Structure and Ideology in the Age of Booker T. Washington," *Phylon,* 23 (Fall 1962): 258-66; Bettye Collier-Thomas and James Turner, "Race, Class and Color: The African American Discourse on Identity," *Journal of American Ethnic History,* 14, no. 1 (Fall, 1994): 5-31.

[20] For more on the issues related to class and colour in the black community in the period between 1870 and 1920, see: Oliver C. Cox, *Caste, Class & Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (New York, 1948); E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie: The Rise of a New Middle Class in the United States* (New York, 1962); Meier, "Negro Class Structure and Ideology;" Collier-Thomas and Turner, "Race, Class and Color;" Leonard M. Baynes, "If It's not Black and White Anymore, Why Does Darkness Cast a Longer Discriminatory Shadow than Lightness – An Investigation and Analysis of the Color Hierarchy," *Denver University Law Review,* .75, no. 1 (1997): 131-186.

[21] While I recognize the social construction of race and was able to witness its arbitrariness in the changing designation given to particular Buxtonites from the collection of one census to the next, I also agree that "color conveyed a real occupational, material, social and psychological advantage in a racist society." Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *America's First Black Town: Brooklyn, Illinois*, 1830-1915 *1915* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 67.

remembered her new step-mother having difficulty with her new parenting role, "she couldn't comb the kids hair," especially Clara's, "because Clara's hair was short and natty." The interviewer pointed out that "Mom had pretty good hair," suggesting that Clara's was not of this "good" type. For Francis Parker, hair also appeared to be an important concept. In his narrative his biggest memory of school was the fact that, on the day he started school, "my hair was way down my back," and that it would be at least ten years before he would have it cut. Cleata Morris remembered her Grandma having "long black hair" which made her "look like an Egyptian." The notion of "good hair" is another facet of colorism, where hair that is straighter, longer, and of a finer texture is preferable to hair that is defined as "kinky," "natty," "nappy," and other terms seen as derogatory.

The politics of hair parallels the politics of skin colour, both being vestiges of a cultural hegemony arising out of slavery. The less African (and more European) one's features were the greater one's social value and acceptability. The "capital" one possessed as a result of one's genetic make-up provided benefits in terms of opportunity, and could lead to greater privilege:

> The dominant white society had historically extended social and economic privileges, not available to darker blacks, to lighter-skinned blacks. Over successive generations these advantages had been cumulative so that the most successful blacks were disproportionately lighter in complexion.[22]

This structure of privilege made black society view light skin color as a desirable and superior asset. The class system of the postbellum years reflected the place one's family had held during slavery, and in a period of social Darwinism, the reality that there could

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[22] Verna M. Keith & Cedric Herring, "Skin Tone and Stratification in the Black Community," *The American Journal of Sociology,* 97, no. 3, (Nov., 1991): 761.

only be a select few at the top of this social hierarchy. In reality, little had changed with the abolition of slavery. The race-based culture remained, with its determinant of status and power being dependent on one's belonging or closeness to the Eurocentric ideal. Starting in the late 1800s, Black America developed an aristocracy that existed between the black and white worlds. African-American Jean Toomer described black Washington society in this way:

> It was, a natural aristocracy "thrown up by the…creative conditions of the post-war period" and made up of people of mixed racial strains who, "comfortably fixed financially," exhibited "personal refinement, a certain inward culture and beauty, [and] a warmth of feeling."[23]

The fact that many of the residents of the Buxton community (the offspring of inter-racial liaisons) were among the individuals inhabiting this middle ground in terms of skin colour cannot be ignored in a discussion of race and how it would have been understood in this community. In late 19th century Ontario, people in the black community would have been as aware of the stratifications and their social meanings as their counterparts south of the border. They shared the same history of racial slavery and mistreatment; read the same newspapers; and their movements back and forth across the border would have served to keep many of the discourses of racial inferiority and colorism alive. This discourse worked to shape their identities in many ways. For example, Buxtonite Arlie Robbins recalled, "I remember when our folks were against being designated as blacks in the census. We were whitewashed to think there was something wrong in being descended from a slave."[24] Obviously, the notions of race and place were being

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[23] As quoted in Gatewood Jr., "Aristocrats of Color," 7.
[24] Stanley Meisler, "Black Canada: Liberty, Bigotry," *Los Angeles Times,* Sat. September 1, 1979, p. 26.

articulated and played out within even this small community, with individuals actively accepting and rejecting identity labels they saw as inconsistent with their own understandings of self. The connections from Buxton and out into the world were vast; for example, in the Washington D.C. context and elsewhere in the United States and Canada, the Shadd family was considered one of the prestigious old families,[25] a family heritage that was certain to cross borders and serve as a reminder of the familial and other connections between blacks in Canada and those in positions of power and roles which served to shape the cultural and intellectual history of black America.

Sub-theme: Racism as America's Problem

Their connectedness to the unfolding of race relations in the United States might have made it easy for blacks in Canada to downplay their own experiences of prejudice and look instead to the troubles of their brothers and sisters in the South. It is always much easier to point to another's pain than to acknowledge one's own. For some Buxtonites, while they did choose to speak of issues of race during their narratives, they spoke of things that happened elsewhere, and celebrated the fortune of being born in Canada, where, they intimated, there were no racial problems. In the narrative shared by Fred Robbins about his experience of the colour line in the South, ("just to show you how fortunate we are here, with this race business") the tone is one of disbelief that such treatment existed, and that it could have been directed at himself and his fellow Buxtonites. It led me to wonder, was he incredulous because he did not experience this kind of prejudice from white neighbours back home? Or because he did not have many

[25] Many of these families were the ones able to trace their recent lineage to high-ranking whites. Gatewood Jr., "Aristocrats of Color"

dealings with whites, so this was a new experience? Or was his laughter indicative of his discomfort with the discussion? As the next example indicates, this might just have been something that one did not discuss.

No mention or acknowledgement of any kind is made of the fact that while there was no legislated segregation in the Canadian context, in many parts of the country, including areas of southwestern Ontario not far from Buxton, these segregationist practices were often the norm. Dorothy Shadd points to the existence of a belief in the absence of racial problems in Canada. "At the time of the troubles in the American South, Canadians were very smug, feeling it couldn't happen here." But in the same interview she points to the fact that "there was a lot of undercover prejudice," making it clear that while there were Canadians who were oblivious to the presence of racism, she was well aware of its existence.

There are several hints at the process of community identification and connectedness throughout the narratives. In working at discovering familial and other ties through dialogue, community members seek to connect themselves to the greater community that is Buxton. Into the present, individuals commonly exchange bits of information which serve to establish how they might or might not be related to a Buxton family, seeking to solidify their connectedness to community.

When asked about whether or not young people at the start of the twentieth century "bother[ed] much in those days with activities in Chatham, nine miles away?" Ethel Alexander goes on to say "they [Buxtonites] didn't mix well back in those days with Chatham." The nearby town of Chatham had a very active black community, and

many Buxtonites were related by blood to individuals living there.[26] However, Ethel went on to say, "…it seemed to be a different type of people all together, they were more, well we were closely knit I suppose. And just more at home with ourselves." This suggests that they possessed a clear sense of who the members of the Buxton community were relative to those people in Chatham. Dorothy Shadd confirms the distancing between Buxtonites and the people in Chatham by pointing out the discriminatory practices that were prevalent in the town. With their associations, mutual aid organizations, clubs, churches and other groups, there was much to keep the people of Buxton busy and together (and away from places where they found themselves "Othered"), further cementing bonds.

From the narratives we are also able to determine that Buxtonites took their kinship groups with them or followed them to other places when they chose to leave the community, for some, in much the same way their families had arrived in Canada. The Shadd brothers William and Charles speaking of relatives coming and going to and from Xenia, Ohio, and Samuel Lowery and his family settling there after the war, suggest that perhaps other Buxtonites made their way to this community as well.[27] The land Garrrison Shadd purchased in Dawson County, Nebraska was in an area where Buxtonites and close family friends had recently settled, thereby transplanting yet another community, but also maintaining their ties to their Buxton identity.

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[26] Many Buxton families had also settled in Chatham in the post-Civil War years.

[27] The fact that Wilberforce University and Oberlin College, two long-standing African-American educational institutions were located in the area also suggests that it would have been a sought-out community for blacks seeking opportunities for furthering their education, or for others to seek employment. For examples of African-Canadian ties to these institutions, see Nina Reid Maroney, "African Canadian Women and the New World Diaspora, circa 1865," *Canadian Woman Studies* 23, no. 2 (2004): 92-96.

Theme 3 – Work

For the narrators in this sample, living in an agrarian community meant farm work was a regular part of their daily lives, whether as childhood chores which were performed before and after school or as reasons they were absent from school. In terms of the general farm work done in the community, there was little detail provided by the majority of the respondents. Individuals made mention of the fact that there was farm work done and that their father or some other member of the family may have been involved, but there was little information given about the day-to-day experiences of farming. This could be because they were not asked to provide details of everyday farm work, as this would have been something pretty much taken for granted in an agrarian community. The interviewers sought stories specific to the narrators as opposed to exploring generalities of Buxton life.

While there was very little said by the other respondents, Garrison Shadd was helpful here, in terms of painting a general picture of Buxton farming:

> One man and his family would work about fifty acres, farm about 50 acres, and if he was a really up and going man, he'd put on a little extra, he'd maybe farm a hundred. There used to be quite an argument whether a man was capable of farming fifty or a hundred acres. All the time it was done with horses; about the first tractor we had was in about 1918. We used to put three horses on a disc, sometimes four horses, a four horse team…

William and Charles Shadd also painted more detailed pictures of farming, as the farm and the work they did on it was the main theme of their diary. As described in their narrative, their duties on the farm included clearing and plowing of fields, ditching, and

threshing, harvesting crops, going to market to sell the family's produce, the slaughter and sale of pigs, and the upkeep of machinery. In addition, they write about the similar work they do on the farms of family and friends where they sometimes provided assistance.

The narrative from William and Charles also tells us that their family did much more in terms of work than simply farm. They supplement their income from the sale of forestry products, something that other Buxton families did as well. Their father Garrison purchased the county right to the steam washing machine, allowing for their own commercial enterprise. They did paid work for the provincial census and the elections, as well as for the local school, bringing in additional income. Buxtonites also found work with the Canada Southern Railway, all this painting a picture of a community of individuals doing what they could to survive in a context in which employment was often scarce in general and because blacks found it difficult to gain employment.

Sub-Theme: Child Labour

In the pre-industrial period, before the introduction of machinery that made certain tasks more simple, work on the farm required as many hands as could be made available, and that included the work of children.[28] Some were able to complete their chores before and after school, Phillip Livingston Shadd recalls.

> I started milking. I don't know just what time I started milking, but I started milking when I was under seven years old. This was before I went to school. And milking was my job, I had to do that before I went to school.

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[28] John Bullen, "Hidden Workers: Child Labour and the Family Economy in Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Ontario," *Labour/Le Travail* 18(Fall 1986): 163-187. Bullen quotes Canniff Haight from 1885,

For others, like Garrison Shadd, their extra hands were needed on the farm for more than simple chores. For these children, the obligations of the farm often interfered with their desire to remain in school. There were expectations on the part of their families that they would assist in the major jobs being done on the farm, such as in the planting season, helping in "putting in the farm," and in a time and place where having sufficient labour could have meant the difference between having enough to share amongst the entire family and not being able to provide food for everyone, they were obliged to work.

Grace Shreve spoke the most about her experiences as a child working on the farm. She paints a picture of a difficult childhood in which work took primacy above all else, including schooling for her as well, and tells her interviewer that later generations of children did not understand work in the way children of her time had. As Grace states in her narrative, "I had to work!"

Sub-Theme: Seeking Work Elsewhere

The permeability of the American-Canadian border in the 19th century meant that many individuals were able to come and go across the border in search of work.[29] Some of the Buxton narrators spoke about this phenomenon, making reference to the way in which they and/or family members were able to find other means of improving their financial situations during hard times by travel to the US. According to Garrison Shadd, his father Flavius Garrison Shadd and other men from his family "left and went over to Michigan and worked there for several years." According to his son's narrative, Flavius "worked on a farm over there" in Michigan, and saved money so he could return to

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pointing out the importance of all family members, children included, partaking in the work on the farm to ensure the success of the household economy.

Buxton, get married, and start a family. Frank Morris's father moved their entire family to Detroit, Michigan in order to seek better opportunities. According to his son, "he felt that he could do better economically." In the case of Cleata Morris, two generations before hers ended up crossing the border into Michigan to seek financial improvement or access into certain levels of society in the nineteenth century. Her grandparents "moved to Ann Arbor for work. She [Grandma Robbins) would iron and cook, it was a university town." Her grandfather was a gardener, and he worked there as such. The couple lived in Ann Arbor for more than thirty years. Their son as well as other family members often went there from Buxton in search of work. According to Dorothy Shadd, jobs (in Canada) were scarce, and blacks could only find menial tasks. It was the same in the US, but blacks went there in spite of this as "you got menial jobs, but for more money." As in the post-emancipation years, the opportunities afforded Buxtonites south of the border made travel from the community a viable option to ensure the survival of their families without having to move too far away.

Theme 4 – Poverty & Class/Social Status

Although there were those who had some amount of capital on their initial arrival in Buxton and others were able to improve their financial circumstances over the years, the status of blacks in North America in the 19th century, and the overall economic context of the period, meant that for the majority of those living in the community, their financial or economic circumstances were dire at best. In this section I will explore the different ways in which the absence or presence of financial resources affected the narrators.

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[29] Bruno Ramírez and Yves Otis *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States,*

In her narrative, Marion Shadd Griffith offered a lot of information about her experiences at school. Among the things she shared was the reality that for some families, hers included, the cost of schooling was often prohibitive. In spite of the fact that she describes herself as "not a smart child – slow," she was one of the lucky children from the community who was able to secure a spot in high school, something she attributed to the arrival of a teacher who put an end to a series of inefficient teachers coming and going from the Shadd School. Once she had completed her schooling at S.S. No. 4, travel from Buxton to Chatham for school was not a simple undertaking. Marion describes walking two miles along the M.C.R. track to get to Fletcher, where she would get the 8AM train to Charing Cross, from which she took the trolley into Chatham. She must have found the travel difficult; she describes the trips in the early morning and late evening along the tracks as filled with fear for her. Emphasizing the importance access to an education held for this family, there were days when Marion made this trip although she had nothing to take with her for lunch. She goes on to discuss other costs:

> Clothes, we had one dress we cleaned and pressed, long underwear, black stockings, high shoes. This cleaning process went on week after week all season. This one dress lasted all season; sometimes it needed patching under the arms. Some of the city kids could do better, but most of us country kids were in the same boat – poor.

From Marion's perspective, this last statement suggests that she and the majority of her rural counterparts shared a similar social status, but she appears to have believed some of the city children to have a higher social standing. She was not able to complete high school, presumably due to cost. Cleata Morris also pointed out the needs she and her

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1900-1930 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

siblings had for clothing for their school years, and how much they looked forward to the arrival of Michigan relatives who would bring care packages including wool stockings, and dresses for school. These relatives helped the family because they "wanted all of us to get an education, that was their goal."

The majority of the narrators indicated poverty or financial need as a theme in their experience. For Garrison Shadd, his father's inability to afford a better (I assume him to have meant better in terms of its quality for cultivation) piece of land in the township made farming more difficult for him. Garrison and Marion Shadd's grandmother Poindexter lost her land as a result of mismanagement and overspending (or so it is claimed), and she was forced to live with relatives for the rest of her life as financially she could not afford better. In addition to her description of the ways their poverty affected her as a child at school, Marion Shadd also recalled her family "charged [our] groceries all winter and in the spring he was paid the bill."

According to Art and Ethel Alexander, poverty was a way of life in the village. The main sources of income came from labouring and railroading, and for Art, his salary as a teacher meant he had to supplement his income by learning to farm so he could hire himself out on the local farms during the summer months. However, Ethel, when asked about the wealth of the farming community, pointed out that while there indeed were several wealthy farmers in the community, and while there were poor community members, she believed, "the poorest people were, oh, the white people who came to this community."

Some families, while they may have seen themselves as poor, were still able to hire help, not just for farm work, but in the form of housekeepers who looked after their

children and maintained the homes. Ethel Alexander suggested this was as a result of how little one had to pay a housekeeper in those days. However, the fact that the individuals who mention the presence of housekeepers were herself and members of the Shadd family would suggest that status may have also played a part. The schoolteacher and the storekeeper/post master were both well-respected members of the community, and while they may have not have been wealthy, they probably had more than many of their neighbours around them. Marion Shadd's narrative points out clearly that the family was not wealthy, but there appear to be times in father William Shadd's life when he was doing somewhat well financially, well enough that he was able to hire help to care for the children after his first wife died, and continue to do so even later. It is impossible to know for certain how he "paid" the hired help (whether in exchange for room or board or in goods, etc.). This is raised in the journal kept by Elbert Dyke, as there are several entries in which he notes clearly accepting the exchange of work for goods from his store. For example, in July 1888, there are entries under the heading "Prince Chase," beginning on July 10th. There are entries on the 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 23rd, 24th and 25th which read, "Credit for **** days work   ***." At the end of this page, the entry reads, "due Chase twelve dollars 12.00."

Some of the narratives corroborate Ethel Alexander's suggestion that there were several wealthy farmers in the community, and provide clues as to the high social and financial standing of particular residents of the Buxton community. For example, it is clear from Frank Morris's narrative that his grandfather George Hatter was a man of high social standing and substantial financial means. Hatter owned hundreds of acres of farm land over his years in the township, some rented out to other Buxtonites. In addition to

his occupation as a "yeoman," or gentleman farmer, George was a blacksmith. According to Frank, his grandfather "…arrived in Buxton in 1850. He heard about Buxton and heard about the Buxton Settlement and he came…. My grandfather gave the land for that church to be erected on the corner of the farm which he gave to my mother." He goes on to discuss the "great team" that his grandfather and Reverend King made, touting the fact that "they operated along lines that would bring about advancement of the people of the community from an economic standpoint and from a religious standpoint." Hatter was indeed a wealthy and well-respected member of the Buxton community, and a community leader, something which is made even more obvious when Frank's narrative indicates George played host to John Brown on his visit to the community. This is a story shared with Frank by his mother, and in all likelihood a story that was often repeated in family circles.

> [John Brown] made a trip to Chatham, Ontario, and while in Chatham, made a trip to Buxton and was a guest of my grandfather in South Buxton and dangled my mother on his knee at that time when she was only about five or six year of age. She remembers that experience and she related it many times and got quite a thrill…

George Hatter was not the only man of means in the community. Buxton began in 1849 with a central plan of the settlers being self-sufficient land owners. Renting was rarely allowed or expected in the early days of the community. As time passed and circumstances changed, so did the practice of only owners living on the land. Properties exchanged hands as individuals moved away, or as fortunes were lost and made. For

example, Garrison Shadd, in his discussion of farming in the community, pointed out that there were several individuals who bought up a lot of land in Buxton.

> There used to be two big land owners that got a hold of the property and they owned a lot of the property. They abandoned the houses and leave these old houses open. John Houston was one of them, he had about four to five hundred acres of land. They got a hold of people's property, get a mortgage on it, sell it and turn the land in to pastures and turn cattle on it. Then the Brady's had a lot of land like that up in the South Buxton area where we were to school. Then there was the Johnstons…

Theme 5: Silences or Omissions in the Narratives

An interesting omission on the part of almost all the narratives is any discussion of what the children in Buxton learned, or how they were taught. We have a very clear picture of the rurality of the various schools, we have a sense of there having been a number of different teachers employed through the years, as well as a few special individuals who were mainstays at their particular schools, but their curricula and the pedagogical practices of the classroom teacher are not represented in the narratives, leaving room for an exploration of the practice of teaching in the Buxton schools. Marion Griffith's narrative provides some insight into the answers to some of these questions, at least at her particular school. She recalls that "[they] always had Bible reading and the Lord's prayer before classes." In her description of Miss Bagnell, she states "Her tools were a long hickory pointer and a thick strap which she only used when necessary." The presence of the strap is a reminder that corporal punishment would have been the norm at

this time, and would have been seen as an acceptable treatment for misbehaviour. However, that is all we have, clues and conjecture. Who the teachers were, where they were from, as well as their experience and training, would determine the classroom curricula. In Marion's experience,

> Reading, writing and arithmetic were the main subjects. Also grammar (English), literature, geography, history, drawing (art), much were taught the same as today. I think hygiene was called physiology and was more about the make-up of the body than health.

Where the narrators spoke about their teachers, race was absent. In none of the descriptions did any of the students mention the race of the individual described. Minnie Bagnell's detailed description is devoid of race or ethnicity. Even Frank Parker's very vivid description of Jessie Heel "tak[ing] down her hair" leaves us to guess at this woman's physical appearance. Why, when they would take the time to describe whether or not someone was "fair" or "dark," would they not acknowledge the race of their teacher? Perhaps it was taken for granted that the interviewer knew who the particular individual was, or perhaps it was to be assumed that the teacher belonged to a particular racial group?

Also interesting is how, other than two respondents, none talked about their friendships or the things they did socially at school. Having read the transcripts, I found myself often wondering what school was really like for these children. Who were their friends, what were the memorable fights, who were first loves, who was the school bully? Answers to these seemed glaringly absent from the narratives. As Marion Shadd stated:

> We did want to learn, but that wasn't so important. We played anti, anti over; the prisoner's goal; and with rag balls and homemade bats, we played softball. Friday from three to four we often had spelling matches, geography matches.

The children wanted to learn, but they were children before anything else, so their games and activities should inform discussions around their schooling. When asked by his interviewer, Frank Parker also provided a look at some of the social life of the Buxton youth, saying, "oh we played ball, in the winter time we played hockey in the sand and we called it shinny."

Something else I looked for when exploring these narratives and was surprised to find in very few of them was what sociologist Laura Adams terms "a trope of subordinate identity."[30] It is present in Francis Parker's tale of discrimination at the restaurant in the South, where even though he and his friends were told they would not be served at the local restaurant because of the colour of their skin, because he spoke French, he managed to charm the waitress into serving them, thus diffusing what would have otherwise been an ugly situation. Tropes of subordinate identity are group narratives which show the marginalized outsmarting or otherwise getting one over on the dominant group. "They are a way a group can control the objectification of their culture by self-objectification and project themselves as social equals of the dominant group without having to address actual inequalities between the groups."[31] My surprise regarding the absence of this trope in the narratives rests in the fact of its presence in the other stories which get told and retold in the community, such as how the villagers "took care of" Larwill in the first

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[30] Laura L. Adams, "Techniques for Measuring Identity in Ethnographic Research," in eds. Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott *Measuring Identity: A Guide for Social Scientists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 324.
[31] Ibid.

generation by ensuring he was removed from office, one of the first stories I was told on visits to Buxton. The most simple explanation is that the small number of narratives was not enough to account for all the possibilities in terms of reaction and response. Perhaps the time of the interviews is a factor here, the fact that it was the 1960s and issues of race were playing themselves out in ways they had never before, with the Civil Rights movement making headway in terms of African Americans gaining the empowerment to demand their inclusion. The most expected or most often seen reactions to situations of marginalization might have absented themselves from the discourse for reasons I could not discern. The fact that the narrators were essentially silent on issues to do with race, beyond the working through of identity and standing within the group, is a clear omission that needs to be examined.

In the next chapter I will revisit the narrative themes to show how the themes expressed in the Buxton narratives in addition to the other data collected in this project bring a better understanding of and answers to the questions guiding the study.

Chapter 7: This Tract of Land

> I had opportunities to go other places, but I couldn't see any advantage and so here I am yet.[1]

The town of North Buxton exists today as a small, rural, farming community of perhaps one hundred families, a combination of descendants from the original Elgin Settlement with families who have made this community home in the many years since. To the unknowing eye, nothing distinguishes this community from any other in southwestern Ontario, and it is only the rich legacy held tightly to the hearts of some of its residents and seen in the special places such as the old pear tree under which the first Homecoming was held, the cemetery with its Civil War gravestones, the renovated one-room schoolhouse, SS #13 North Buxton, and the tiny Buxton Historic Site and Museum that can truly speak to the pieces of Canadian and American history that have unfolded here.

In this chapter, I will discuss my findings and analyses, examining the core social institutions within the community and how their presence affected the lives of individuals of African descent living in the village of North Buxton. I will discuss how the experiences of racism and marginalization affected the community, and how that shaped the way community members dealt with the world around them. Who are the people of Buxton, what have we come to learn from an exploration of their lives during this period and how can or does it inform our understanding of community history and memory in the Canadian context? In the next section, however, I begin with a brief look at how my

research journey unfolded, in light of some of the difficulties I encountered during the initial data collection process.

A Bit of My Research Journey

As I set out on my research journey, I wondered what had kept the people of this community close-knit and made it persist years beyond the lifespan of so many other Negro communities formed under similar circumstances, both in Canada and the United States. This project began as an exploration of the social history of the community during the period from the end of the American Civil War to the start of World War I. Librarians, archivists, and even members of the Buxton community warned me that the dearth of research and writing on my period of interest could be indicative of the absence of archival material, and that I might find myself not having enough material to use for my dissertation.

I spent my first six to eight months searching through newspaper microfilm, more often than not in vain, since there was little written about Buxton after the Elgin Association disbanded in 1873. Buxton did not have its own newspaper; therefore I was limited to any mention of the community I was able to find in the papers in neighbouring Chatham or the larger centres like Detroit or Toronto. Newspaper coverage of blacks in general was limited, and that of the Buxton community, essentially non-existent. Other than the occasional mention of the names and activities of specific members of the community as they participated in clubs and organizations in other locales (e.g. club memberships in Chatham), little of Buxton appeared in the newspapers I followed for the study.

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[1] Arthur Alexander, (nd:np)

My search for other pieces of community history was also to prove challenging. The historic knowledge that was immediately accessible to the community and being passed around, the stories that were being passed down, told and re-told, were the settlement stories. The questions I had pertaining to the later years had been explored by very few outside researchers or Buxtonites. Whenever I would ask, "What was North Buxton like in the early years?" I was met with silence. People said they never really asked their families about it. They said they had not given it much thought. I posed my question to community historian Bryan Prince and he responded,

> I spent a lot of time in the 1980's interviewing every grey haired person I could find to ask them about their recollections of parents, grandparents etc., conversations about their family background. I was repeatedly told that no one ever spoke about those days.[2]

There was a dearth of information to be found about the years after a large part of the community had disappeared and settled elsewhere. In the time since the start of my research, Hepburn has published the book based on her dissertation, in which she expands on the timeline.[3] However, even with this, what little scholarship there was seemed to focus more on the American story – the Buxtonites who had returned to the US and "made good." The only material that gave me hope and convinced me this project was not an impossibility was the Charles and William Shadd diary housed in the community museum and archives. While only providing snippets of the life of the community outside of the Shadd farm, and focused mainly on the boys' lives, it was still

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[2] Bryan Prince, email to author, August 14, 2008.
[3] Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, *Crossing the Border: A Free Black Community in Canada* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

a window into black rural life in the 1880s. I used this as a way to begin to see the community as it was in this period.

The "official" history held in tax and census records, birth, marriage and death records, organization minutes and school records outline the structures of the community, but documents like diaries and letters tell of the ways people experienced and adapted to the particular contexts. The entries in the Shadd diary are matter-of-fact, and in many ways abstract and devoid of emotion, but they provide their reader with a sense of the day-to-day flow of community life, and community. Charles and William had managed to make 1880s Buxton "real" for me. From there I turned to the oral history recordings, which I listened to several times and painstakingly transcribed. I determined which I could use for narratives in the dissertation, and looked to all of them for answers to the major research questions. The Dyke diary was the final document added to my collection of data. It proved useful in terms of corroborating the names of people living in North Buxton in the 1880s, as well as providing a record of certain transactions in Elbert Dyke's store. Like the Shadd diary, it was more a record of work, in this case more of a ledger for Dyke's business transactions. It therefore provided few insights into his thoughts or experiences. It did, however, also provide a sense of the cost of items during this period, and indicated that many individuals traded work for goods from the community store.

In keeping with Lincoln's imperative of ensuring that the voices of the often silenced, the subjects of the research, are heard, throughout the research process I shared my plans, findings and interpretations with members of the Buxton community, and through email exchanges and many conversations over the years, we worked through the

histories.[4] As I initially discussed the project with members of the community, there was a suggestion that I should broaden my timeline in order to come to a better understanding of the people and the history. It had been my initial intention to begin my research at the time of the incorporation of the village in 1874, but the suggestion was to start at the 1861 census and collectors' rolls from the 1860s to get a sense of the earlier community. Perhaps in reading the documents that were available I could find clues to where else to look for information about the later years, especially in terms of finding and being able to use information about where people from the community had gone on their migration out of Buxton. As well, if I did not have a sense of what the community looked like in the 1860s, how could I discuss how it had or had not changed in the later years?[5]

I read Arlie Robinson's *Legacy to Buxton,* which I have come to believe over the course of my over five years in the community, has been read and practically committed to memory by everyone resident there.[6] Stewardson also points out his concern that the publication of *Legacy to Buxton* in the 1960s, around the time of the recording of the oral histories, had served as a bit of a refresher course, had indeed created a new set of "memories." He discusses how some of his respondents appeared to have not just read (and sometimes even memorized) the book, but appeared sometimes to conflate their own memories with what they had read.[7] Having talked with several community members over the last few years, I have witnessed this same "*Legacy* effect," and recognize that it has indeed shaped people's understanding and "memory" of that place. I initially thought of this as a limitation of the study, but have now come to recognize that this is part and

[4] Yvonna Lincoln, "I and thou: Method, voice and role in research with the silenced," in eds. D. McLaughlin and W. Tierney, *Naming Silenced Lives* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
[5] Bryan Prince, conversation with author, February 8, 2007.
[6] A.C. Robbins, *Legacy to Buxton* (Chatham, ON: n.p., 1983).

parcel of the sense-making and discursive process of the creation of a community's identity. The reading and re-reading of the book, the sharing of the stories, and the re-enactments of past community events that I have seen at the community's Homecoming celebrations all serve this same purpose. These acts all speak to Halbwach's notion of collective memory as a social, group-mediated process through which individuals are able to make sense of their identities in terms of their place of belonging within their particular groups. The identity is understood on the basis of participation in various discursive acts, and where the individual is subsequently positioned within them. Constant references to shared traditions, rituals, and events and so on, hence reinforce our understandings of belongingness or connectedness to our group over time and space.[8]

I spent several months transcribing the Shadd family diary from the original, and as I worked, I was able to direct any questions I had to community members volunteering and working at the Museum, some of whom were related to Charles and William and had intimate knowledge of the familial connections and of particular incidents mentioned in the entries. This was also the case when I later had questions related to the transcribed interviews. People were able to fill in the blanks by providing their own narratives. It is only in the describing of this process that I have come to realize that these dialogues during which we talked about my research was also a sharing of community narratives, and, in fact, a very important part of the research process. It allowed members of the community to participate in acts of remembering, often leading to the sharing of other stories, and a "working through" of kinship and community connections in much the

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[7] Richard G. Stewardson, "Hattie Rhue Hatchett (1863-1958): An Interdisciplinary Study of Her Life and Music in North Buxton, Ontario." (M.A. Thesis, York University, Canada, 1994).
[8] Ron Eyerman, "The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory," *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 159-169. See also, Halbwach's concept of collective memory as a living imagination

same manner as the narrators had done in their interviews. Each story brought with it other rememberings, and over time I began to recognize names and to make connections. Using this process as well as accessing whatever documentation there was – church and school records, organization minutes, census documents, tax assessment rolls, newspapers, the interviews, a few letters, and the few dissertations exploring Ontario black history, I have been able to come away with and to present the reader with a greater sense of life in North Buxton after the American Civil War.

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shaped and reshaped in a social milieu *On Collective Memory*, by Maurice Halbwachs, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1-34.

Answering the Research Questions

I began this process asking broadly, what factors contributed to the evolution of North Buxton from 1873 to 1914, to make it a successful community. I also wondered how ideas of identity and citizenship developed in the community, and if the educational and other sustaining systems developed in the community served to pull the young people in, or to push them out into the world. The prevalent themes stemming from analysis of the narratives suggest that Buxton was able to persist as a community mainly because of the strong bonds among the various groups making up the community. These bonds arose out of strong traditions that were put down through the early establishment of social institutions within the community, institutions which served to pull the community together through the establishment of shared expectations and understandings.

The Core Social Institutions, Forging Identity and Community

From the early settlement days, the community members had begun a process of shaping identity and forming community. In many ways they brought vestiges of their old lives with them (in terms of re-building churches and organizations similar to those they had known in the south) and these, along with the rules and expectations of King and the Elgin Association, created a particular kind of community. During the first few years, Buxtonites built their core social institutions, the church, family and the schools. They established their own governance structure and rules of conduct. This first generation weathered many storms, starting with the initial opposition of Larwill and his supporters, and ending with the final decisions regarding whether to stay or to go after the Civil War.

After almost a generation in Canada, they were able successfully to pass a community with social institutions already in place on to their progeny.

By 1873, Buxton had four schools, three churches and their attendant societies and clubs, a men's lodge and its sister organization, and a temperance society, among other groups. These organizations served as unifying forces in the community, socializing its youth, and providing the moral, educational and religious foundations that King foresaw when he first approached the Presbyterian Synod with the idea of creating the community. While King's role was that of a protector and leader, the community was always self-governed, and members shared in the social responsibilities that came with community life. The social institutions in Buxton passed on the importance of an ethic of hard work and the importance of good moral character.

For the people of Buxton, the core social institution at the centre of their existence was the church. The various denominations provided their members with the necessary religious and social supports, and the importance of religion to the people of the community can be inferred from the number of families and individuals with active membership in the community churches as well as from the fact that more than half of the narrators spoke of the importance of church to them and to their families. The forms of African-American Christianity prevalent in the South were reproduced by the refugees in Canada, and by the 1881 census there had been a noticeable shift of black residents away from the Presbyterian Church. By then, only 22 families or individuals were recorded as being Presbyterian. There appeared to have been a considerable shift toward Methodism inside Buxton, with memberships in both the AME (African Methodist Episcopalian) and BME (British Methodist Episcopalian) churches. The AME church had gained ground in

Canada in the early 1800s, with a break-away contingent of members in the middle of the decade seeking to break ranks with the American-based AME to form the Canadian BME, as the violence in the post-emancipation years made trips into the US for church events dangerous for members.[9]

The line "everybody went to church" was present in almost all the interviews. For their members, the churches also played a large role in terms of their social life, with their regular Sunday Schools, meetings of the ladies' auxiliaries, Sunday services, and the social events the churches regularly sponsored. Some may question the fact that a community of at most just under 2,000 inhabitants would have as many as four churches at any given time, but the churches represented denominational differences, and also represented something the members of this new generation and their parents did not have in the South – freedom of choice in worship. The people of Buxton were able to express their preferences in many things within the community, and among them, a choice of how and where to worship.

In much the same way as in the first generation, the members of the various denominations attended events at or put on by the different churches in the community. As mentioned in the narratives, there were Buxtonites with memberships in organizations across denominations. Frank L. Morris spoke of his sister participating in the choir at two

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[9] The detailed history of this struggle within the church leadership is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, since the Ontario congregations were instrumental in the struggle for the assertion of the rights of the BME church, and remained holdouts in the maintenance of this denomination, it is important to note. Much of this history involved members of the Buxton community and its friends, with members of church leadership being holders of property in the Township. For more information on the history of the role of black churches in Canada, see David Este, "Black Churches in Canada: Vehicles for Fostering Community Development in African-Canadian Communities – A Historical Analysis," in John Coates, John R. Graham, and Barbara Swartzentruber (eds.) *Spirituality and Social Work: Select Canadian Readings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press Inc., 2007); J.S.G. Walker, "African Canadians" in P. Magocsi (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Canada's People* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999): 139-176; Gwendolyn Robinson and John Robinson, *Seek the Truth: A Story of Chatham's Black Community* (Chatham, Ontario:n.p., 1989)

different churches, perhaps out of nothing more than a love of music and singing or just providing her with more than one social outlet.

Within denominations, the shortage of ministers at various times, or perhaps the brotherhood between churches (it is difficult to ascertain the actual cause) meant that the same ministers would often preach in neighbouring Chatham or Windsor, providing an excuse for individuals to travel and commune with other nearby communities or for members from other communities to visit Buxton. For example, on Sunday, July 9th, 1882, William Shadd writes in his diary, "Mother and I went to Chatham to the baptizing. Elder S.D.W. Smith baptized 19 persons." In another example, teacher Nina Mae Alexander, resident in nearby Shrewsberry, and sister of Buxton teacher Art Alexander, wrote, in her 1907 diary, "He [her friend Glen] wants me to go to Buxton with him some Sunday next month to attend either the Baptist or Methodist Children's Day services."[10] This entry provides an example of the fluidity of interdenominational social excursions, and both diary entries show the practice of members of the various southwestern black communities of visiting each other on varying occasions. For many of these individuals, a visit to a neighbouring black church often meant an opportunity to visit with family and friends, thus maintaining important ties. It is an insight into a maintenance of religious and spiritual contact between Diaspora communities, their shared Christian values, and support for each other, and challenges critiques in terms of the black churches in Canada failing to create social cohesion and community among blacks in Canada in the same way it had in the United States.[11]

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[10] Nina Mae Alexander, personal diary entry, Friday, May 24th, 1907,

[11] Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

Explorations focused on the black church uncover an ongoing paradox – the question as to whether the role of the church has been one of oppressive force, or a social institution binding groups of people together under the umbrella of shared oppression, and offering multiple forms of resistance. Critiques of the black church centre around its role as a colonizer and as a form of social control, maintaining blacks in a marginal position. Taken as a whole, European Christianity has been accused of always having had a role in the perpetuation of racism and racist ideologies, and creation of a system which guaranteed the right of one set of people to take a position of exploiter, oppressor and ruler of all "others." Within the pervasive, racist, hegemonic culture that was America, black churches and their congregations often opted for a theology of acceptance, a belief in the existence of a divine plan in which there would be redemption in the afterlife. This meant a certain degree of resignation and a refusal to fight against "god's plan." However, a counter-perspective to this is that of the black church standing as a site of resistance, a force in opposition to the dominant white community and its treatment and relegation of blacks to a second-class status. Inside the black church poor, oppressed blacks could find a place where they were able to freely express their humanity. While not without its faults, such as the maintenance of patriarchal oppressions, a focus on the oppressive structures of the Christian church fails to take into consideration the role of the black church in providing agency, a site of resistance against tyranny and hatred, and a centre for black life. The culture of resistance created in this context served as a taking of an oppressive institution and making it their own, using it as a tool to fight against those same oppressions it represented. In the church, black men could step away from

the emasculation of white society, the black family could be celebrated, and the community could come together to be healed.[12]

The family was the other core institution that served to pull the people of Buxton close together and maintain a community within which people wished to remain. For decades after the end of the Civil War, blacks continued seeking out "lost" relatives and friends who had been displaced throughout the diaspora. In this small place, kinship bonds were strong. From the beginning individuals and families cared for one another. Through communal practices they had been able to build their houses, clear and till their land, and care for their children. Even with the break-up of friends and families in the years after the Civil War, Buxtonites maintained their community ties.

Hepburn reported extended family and kinship ties being prevalent in the first generation, and this continued to be seen in the second, with many households containing several family members as well as individuals not obviously related. In the decade after the end of the Civil War, there were a number of households in which children under 10 years of age could be found residing with families other than their own, suggesting perhaps parents who had left the settlement for work or other reasons such as finding family and seeking better opportunities in the South after the war.[13]

Transborder movement and contact through kin and community networks constituted the major channels through which community members maintained their connectedness. Many of those who moved south settled in the cities, seeking

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[12] For more on the black church as a site of emancipatory strength and healing, see M. Ani, *Let the Circle be Unbroken – The Implications of African Spirituality in the Diaspora* (New York: Nkonimfo Publications, 1997); Patricia Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

[13] Census of Canada, Raleigh Township, 1871.

opportunities not available in a small agrarian community. For the younger people, the draw of black society and all its clubs and associations was more than that of Buxton, but, as in the case of one young woman writing home to her Brother Willie, family served as the only force drawing her back to the community.[14] Not only did the people of Buxton write to each other, but they appeared to visit often, bringing care packages for relatives and friends, and likely news of life to the south. At those gatherings, I am sure, as in all family/community get-togethers, memories, stories, and jokes were shared, working to re-inscribe the family and community histories through discourse practices. It is through these gatherings and re-memberings that families and communities preserved some kind of continuity with the past. This maintenance of kinship ties and community solidarity through contact and shared re-memberings would also have served to draw people back into the community or make them want to remain with their loved ones. Of course, these reunions and shared times could have also fostered the desire to leave the community in order to be closer to those who had left, and so there were always individuals leaving the community on extended visits, or to stay with family elsewhere.

The school was another of Buxton's core social institutions. Within five months of King's arrival in Buxton the Mission School had opened. As mentioned throughout the dissertation, in terms of the availability of educational opportunities, the young people of Buxton were among the "lucky" children in general and black children in particular, as the Buxton School was the only school of its kind in North America, offering a classical education to black students, preparing them for college entry. It was this preparation which allowed so many Buxtonites to leave the community at the start of the Civil War,

[14] Esther to Brother Willie, letter dated May 6, 1888, Chicago, Mary Ann Shadd Cary papers, Series B "Cary-Shreve Correspondence, 1858-1889. Black Studies Project, University of Western Ontario Archives.

and probably allowed others the opportunity after that as well, until the school ceased providing an exclusive curriculum. As with the presence of several churches in the community, there were four schools in Buxton. One may question this as well, in terms of whether or not there would really have been a need for this many schools in such a small community. Did, for example, the Shadd family and the Shreve family need to have separate schools just a few Concessions away from each other? Was this evidence of some divisiveness in the community? Perhaps, but not very likely. One of these schools was a school for girls, where the curriculum included sewing. The Buxton School was at the south end of the community, and the other schools were built at the north end. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the main reason behind having a number of schools was simple geography and ease of access. The settlement and its surrounding area was not a geographically small one, and in this time of horse and buggies, people had to travel by foot.

There was no high school in Buxton, but since King was instrumental in the establishment of the Chatham Collegiate Institute, for those who could afford the trip, this was where they went to school. Shielded in many ways from the racism of the bigger communities, the Buxton children who attended high school in Chatham would have had a very different experience. The Chatham newspapers consistently addressed issues of race in relation to schooling, with black parents complaining about the conditions under which their children were taught, as well as arguing for their children to be allowed to attend school with the white children of the community. While Dorothy Shadd, who was one of the Buxton children who attended high school, made mention of people from Buxton knowing they were not welcome in certain restaurants in Chatham, there was no

mention of the children's experiences of schooling in Chatham. Outside of the protective enclave the indictment of Pease and Pease held some credence – perhaps Buxton did shelter its members from the "real" world and not prepare them for life outside of the community.[15] Perhaps this explains the lack of discussion about race and racism on the part of the people in the community – they lived in a place where they did not have to deal with it in the same way as the rest of the black community did.

In terms of the things the narrators did not talk about in their interviews, Norquay points out that what individuals choose to keep silent about or to forget is part and parcel of their identity, and may serve to give the teller the agency they might not have in other aspects of their lives. By not talking about her experiences in the integrated school, or about her experiences in Chatham beyond saying she knew they were not welcome, Dorothy Shadd does not allow discussion of experiences where she was relegated to a second-class status. She has fond memories of Buxton, where her father owned a store, and her sister can make her new clothes. She provides detailed descriptions of her classroom, and her teacher, but makes no mention of the later schooling experiences. This suggests an active forgetting of things which might be too difficult to face. Perhaps this is the reality for the other narrators as well. It is easier to "forget" the experiences of racism and marginalization and to speak instead of the fond memories from the past. Whether the silence is a result of cultural or psychological trauma, a forced forgetting, a cultural silence related to what is simply not talked about, a defiant show of agency, or a reflection of something else remains open to conjecture, and is something I was unable to uncover in my explorations. The marginalized status of the narrators and the fact that

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[15] William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Opposition to the Founding of the Elgin Settlement," *Canadian Historical Review* 38 no. 3 (Sept. 1957).

they belong to a group of people who suffered what Litwack referred to as "the mechanics of repression, the ritualized and institutionalized subordination," that "exacted a psychological and physical toll, shaping day-to-day black life and demeanor to an extraordinary degree," tells us that in all likelihood, what we have is no simple omission, but a vestige of a not too distant past.[16]

In Buxton the members of the community did not face the discriminations they would have faced elsewhere. From the beginning they had the opportunity and ability to own land. Even when individuals fell on hard times and lost their land, some were able to rely on community mutual aid until they were able to help themselves. The records show the sale and re-purchase of the same land lots by the same individuals, leaving me to speculate that this could have been the situation. The land-owning Buxtonites who relocated south all appeared to have been able to use the monies from sale or rental of their land to purchase homes elsewhere. In this way Buxton provided its residents with another set of opportunities that existed in few places in the latter part of the 19th century or even well into the 20th century. The majority of blacks in the South struggled under Jim Crow laws. Communities similar to Buxton found themselves socially and economically isolated as a result of Reconstruction and most black farmers faced lives in which sharecropping and employment discrimination forced them into abject poverty. Of course, a job or land ownership did not necessarily indicate financial security, since those Buxton men who worked, worked at the lowest paying jobs, many of which were seasonal. However, many Buxton families managed to eke out a living by supplementing

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[16] Leon F. Litwack, *How Free is Free? The Long Death of Jim Crow* (Cambridge MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2009), 17. For more on cultural trauma and history and memory in African American history, see Ron Eyerman, "The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory," *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 2 (2004): 159-169.

their work on the farm with work elsewhere, working on the railroad, on other farms, and clearing ditches, amongst other tasks, as well as relying on the work of as many members of the family who were able.

So did education and availability of sustaining systems push young people out of the community, or pull them in? This is a difficult question to answer because they did both. Schooling allowed them opportunities to move elsewhere for work and completely different lifestyles than they might have had in Buxton. On the other hand, the lack of schooling within the community beyond the eighth grade meant that many could not go further in school simply because their families did not possess the necessary funds, resulting in their having to remain in the community. For those who did stay behind, they could learn the trades of their parents and grandparents, how to care for the land and the animals and tend to the family until they too married and had their own. Beyond farming, general labour and the few skilled trades such as blacksmithing, there were few opportunities for work within the community, and as a result of this many were forced to relocate in order to find work, or they picked up odd jobs, working seasonally as needed.

Wherever in the Americas people of African descent settled in the years after emancipation, there were major challenges they faced. In most contexts they had neither the capital to own land nor the political status giving them the right to do so even if they could afford it. They faced open discrimination and often violence. They were vulnerable to the stereotypes and hatreds that drove public sentiment, attitudes that often restricted their movement, such as the restrictions on immigration imposed in Canada. When they were able to find work, they were relegated to marginal jobs, for which they were paid low wages and suffered from unfair practices and working conditions. They worked in

the schools and homes of the affluent in order to provide opportunities for their own children. Of course, it is important to recognize that, albeit small, Buxton was not a homogeneous community. We need to acknowledge the reality that people's experiences were affected by the various social categories they inhabited. Therefore, the post-emancipation experiences I have described were not the experiences of everyone. Some families were able to afford their child(ren) an education beyond the Buxton school, and hence, give them more of a future than those children who had to stay on the farms. For some individuals, the colour of their skin was their capital, and it ensured that they were treated well. For the individuals and families who chose to remain in Buxton, why they opted to remain continues to be open to conjecture. Regardless of the choice they made, there were inherent dangers and discomforts in their future. Coming from legacies of resistance, they would continue to resist in the best way they could, and that was by enduring.

What Buxton offered was a place away from the struggles of everyday life. Within the small enclave, one could escape the marginalization and racism of the white world and come together as a community. Living in a small village away from everyday hatred and racism might have provided some with enough reason to remain there. They had most of what they needed to sustain them, they mostly worked the land, they had their churches, their post office, a community store, and anything else was in nearby Chatham, where they could simply go into town, complete their business, and return to the comfort and safety of their homes. Of course, as with any other community, relations were not idyllic, but the shared histories of racial oppression, of slavery, of migration would all contribute to feelings of connectedness. Although the people of the community

originated from different places, they were able to develop a shared identity based on their isolated living conditions; the inferior status accorded them by the dominant group, and the policies and practices which served to separate them within the Canadian context. Without choosing it, a regional black identity was established. The community embraced the new civil liberties accorded them and actively took part in local politics at all levels. Whilst remaining second-class citizens within an unwavering hegemony, Buxtonites continued asserting their rights by making use of the civil liberties accorded them as citizens. The leaders in this community were all former abolitionists or the children of abolitionists, and as such, they embodied a sense of social justice and equity and a thirst for freedom which moved from the fight to end slavery to a fight to assert their rightful place in the nation. In the years following the Civil War, there were many opportunities for movement from the community, either for a return to the US, settlement in Africa, or in another part of the diaspora. Instead, these individuals chose to remain in southwestern Ontario. Similar to Whitfield's description of the development of the Black Refugee identity in Nova Scotia decades earlier, the people of Buxton had several shared experiences bringing them together to form a cohesive community. They had the knowledge of a "double dispersal" from Africa and the US, attachment to their ancestral homeland of Africa, struggle with slavery and freedom, memories of slavery, promotion of abolitionism, resistance to hostile whites, and claims for citizenship within their new political home. "This emerging identity rested on struggles for freedom, political inclusion, shared experience, and location [in a young Canada, slowly defining its own identity and hence, a good place to forge a new identity of one' own.]"[17] Whilst

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[17] Harvey Amani Whitfield, "The Development of Black Refugee Identity in Nova Scotia, 1813-1850," *Left History* 10, no. 2 (2005), 19.

acknowledging and celebrating the freedoms of blacks throughout the diaspora, the people of Buxton also actively sought out and celebrated their new citizenship. As mentioned in his narrative, Arthur Alexander pointed out the fact that, in the early years of the community it had been the celebration of May 24th that was "special." According to him, "they were mostly patriotic, and they'd have a 24th of May celebration…we were very loyal to Queen Victoria." Taken with the bonds of community already discussed, this provided a strong foundation for community persistence and evolution. Afterall, their institutions, whilst continuing to closely resemble those of their past, were taking on an identity of their own, becoming distinctly theirs, especially with the establishment of Canadian versions of the American institutions.

Conclusion

In exploring the roots of the community of Buxton, one cannot fail to acknowledge its connectedness to the greater picture of the experiences and lives of people of African descent in the Americas and beyond. The community came into being as a terminus of the Underground Railroad. People choosing to leave slavery and racial oppression behind sought out this place. Regardless of the specific reason behind the arrival of each individual or family, they came together to escape the realities of racism, and it was the hard work and resilience of the settlers that created the community. Quite a few of the settlers were people with strong abolitionist ties, something that was also true of neighbouring communities like Dresden's Dawn community, and the black community in Chatham. Buxton's commitment to freedom announced itself loudly in the peals of the

freedom bell, sent as a gift to the people of Buxton by an African American community in Pittsburgh, in recognition of what Buxton meant to them.

In exploring Canada's grand narrative, people of African descent and other non-Europeans are not considered active participants in the unfolding history. Although blacks have been resident in Canada since the 1600s and have proud histories as full citizens, they are forever relegated to being visitors; they were always to be the racialized "Other." The discourses throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries made clear the contradiction that was Canada; continuing its myth-building project – the nation that welcomed refugees with open arms, whilst obscuring a culture of racism and hegemonic whiteness.[18]

The prevailing Canadian grand narratives have been able to discount or even erase the histories of those groups not within the dominant discourse. They mention only the Euro-Canadian version of our history, oftentimes failing to acknowledge any other group in the nation's founding myth. This is the site of the contestation and the struggle over which version of Canadian history is the "right" version. The grand narrative told without the marginalized or excluded groups provides us with clues as to who have been the winners in the battle over this contested terrain. As each group puts forth its own version of the past as they understand it, the arising tension leads to the reshaping of the narrative.

The act of reshaping is a discursive practice, involving contestation and negotiation between what Bodnar refers to as "vernacular culture" and national political leaders who "guard" the official discourse. Vernacular culture here refers to the

[18] Abigail B. Bakan, "Reconsidering the Underground Railroad: Slavery and Racialization in the Making of the Canadian State" *Social Studies* 4 no., 1 (Spring 2008): 3-29.

marginalized or excluded groups, the different interest groups and stakeholders, such as religious groups, ethnic groups, schools, villages etc. who strive to have the memories related to their special interests retained and celebrated.[19] Bodnar goes on to explain that this negotiation and contestation forms the basis of a political debate about the existence of that society. He states:

> Public memory is a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future. It is fashioned ideally in a public sphere in which various parts of the social structure exchange views."[20]

What emerges from this debate is what we celebrate as public memory, or the grand narrative. So while public memory is the result of ongoing negotiation and contestation in everyday discourse, not all aspects of society have equal opportunity to speak, or to be heard. Not everyone has access to these "public" spaces, and hence, not everyone has access to the discourses which shape who we are. The fact that there are differential readings of the discourses is also something which must be taken into consideration when thinking about how groups arrive at a past on which they agree. Therefore, taking all this into consideration, the accepted narratives offer "preferred readings of texts, in that they structure possible telling and impose interpretation."[21] This relationship is impermanent as it is under constant negotiation, as the non-dominant social groups continue to put forward their version of reality, especially in light of what they see as omissions in the

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[19] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-20.
[20] Bodnar, 15.
[21] Eyerman, "The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory," 162

telling. In the case of communities like Buxton, omitted from the discourse, they shared their own stories and their own re-memberings, creating their own counter-memories.

Foucault sees the counter memory as something that "ruptures" the taken-for-granted public memory.[22] In other words, counter memories argue for what is missing or subsumed under the overarching public memory, and work to expose and correct this. As the various social groups work to form and maintain their own collective counter memories, aspects of these seep into the nationalized public memory through the negotiation and cultural mediation processes.

In his look at the construction of ethnic memory, Bodnar shows how the competing dominant and vernacular discourses in the American context have managed to unfold for particular ethnic groups.[23] He outlines the evolution of the relationship between vernacular memory and public memory, emphasizing how class and political interests have worked to create a context in which both types of memories coexist, but where public memory is privileged, in much the same way as has been discussed above. Put more specifically, Bodnar points out that "ethnic memory was continually generated from the tension that existed between vernacular and official culture and between those with divergent amounts of social and political power.[24]" A distinction is made with regard to the different spheres in which the competing discourses meet and how the resultant memory and its commemoration may differ.

In the years Arlie Robinson described as "silent," when the community focused inward, places within the community took on meanings connecting them physically to

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[22] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, genealogy, history," in *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1984), 76-97.
[23] Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 41-77.
[24] Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 76.

their new home, the cemeteries with the rustic grave markers, including the ones commemorating those who fought in the Civil War; the previously mentioned pear tree, which I believe someone points out every time I visit. The freedom bell which the people in South Buxton refuse to give to North Buxton as it has come to hold meaning for them as well, has been replicated, and now sits in a place of honour in front of the community museum. SS#13 has been restored and is used for special events. These are a few of Buxton's "sites of memory" or *lieux de memoire*,[25] which serve to counter their absence from the Canadian grand narrative. They are concrete, geographical sites which belie the tales of a post-Civil War exodus.

While white Canada continued the exercise to deny access to certain realms in the early years of the 20th century, the people of Buxton worked to uphold their memories and assert their rights as citizens. Where they believed they were being treated unfairly, they wrote letters to the newspapers and to their political leaders. They continued watching and listening to the discourses south of the border, and they upheld the silent struggles. As the generations before them had, they continued to be active politically, with several Buxtonites being active in the struggles for equity and human rights.

Was Buxton a diasporic community? It arose out of a forced migration of people escaping slavery and racial discrimination. However, within a generation the original reasons for their departure were no longer in place. One could argue, however that while slavery in America had been abolished, it had been replaced by an even more insidious system of legislated segregation, a set of oppressive structures based solely on race and place from which few were able to escape. The choice to return to America was there,

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[25] For more on *lieu de memoire,* see Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History*: les lieux de me´moire*, *Representations* 26 (198): 7–25.

and many took this up. On either side of the border they ascribed to the notions of self-help, racial uplift through education and work, and black solidarity as a means to survive, hence maintaining the diaspora community connections. The Buxton community never lost its relationship to its American homeland. When war broke out, they rallied south; in the post-Civil War years, several from that community served in leadership roles in the United States. In Canada, Buxtonites were active in religious roles, many worked as teachers, and most importantly, the community continued to be an active political force.

I began this study wondering what happened to the community of Buxton in the years after the Civil War, as well as asking what social structures were created that enabled the community to persist into the twenty-first century. What happened is that Buxton endured. People went there from vastly different places, bringing with them very different skill sets and abilities to face the systems of oppression and institutionalized racism. As King had hoped, the community insulated them from a world unable to accept the equality of blacks. I am certain there were the occasional family feuds and disagreements as in any community, but at this point they remained within the community. As Bryan Prince pointed out,

> They still all came together for social events, school baseball games, social organizations, intermarried with each other, helped work together on each other's farms and on the railroad, grieved with each other at funerals, celebrated the birth of each other's children…as the black population of the entire settlement began to shrink after the Civil War, [yet] the remaining blacks chose to stay congregated together as a shrinking circle that eventually had North Buxton at the centre.[26]

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[26] Bryan Prince, email to author, September 27, 2010.

It is why, once every year, the community, old and new, is able to come together in that old space, and celebrate the forgotten tales and a community that was and continues to live on. For the people of Buxton, this village represents more than just the physical landscape. It is a place that gives them "a coherent identity, a [counter] narrative, a place in the world."[27]

This study has allowed me to take an interdisciplinary look at the community of Buxton, Ontario. By making use of the tools of historical inquiry, I have managed to come to a better understanding of a particular time and place. In the years since I began this journey, the people of the community have uncovered more archival data on the period in question, and are perhaps in a better position to answer some of the questions I posed during my process. Much remains to be done. It is my hope however, that this project will serve as a starting point for explorations into the contemporary history of the Buxton community. The limited presence of this and similar material in the curriculum at the elementary and secondary levels means that educators who have not previously studied the history of black Canada, would be ill-prepared to teach the materials themselves, thus maintaining the *status quo.* This document provides an opportunity for educators to begin their own learning process, or to access some of the data when talking to students about the contributions of blacks to the history of Canada. For example, they may wish to explore the process by which blacks were allowed to enlist on a large scale in the Canadian military prior to the First World War, or the role African-American refugees to Canada played in the American Civil War once they were allowed to enlist. There is a great deal of curricular material which can be accessed thorough communities

[27] Edward Said, "Invention, Memory , and Place," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 175-192.

such as North Buxton, and this dissertation has worked at pinpointing some of this material. In addition to the chronological and other aspect of the community's history, taken singly, or as a collection, the narratives shared in the chapter "Buxton Tales" would provide a rich resource for lessons relating to the period from 1873 to 1914. The process of restorying also points to one way of showing students how one can make use of personal historical documents. As well, this dissertation adds to the growing literature on the African Diaspora, by adding a Canadian perspective on the black town movement.

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Appendix I: Family Trees of the Narrators

The following pages contain the family trees of the individuals profiled in this study in order to provide the reader with a better sense of where people "fit" within their families and within the community.

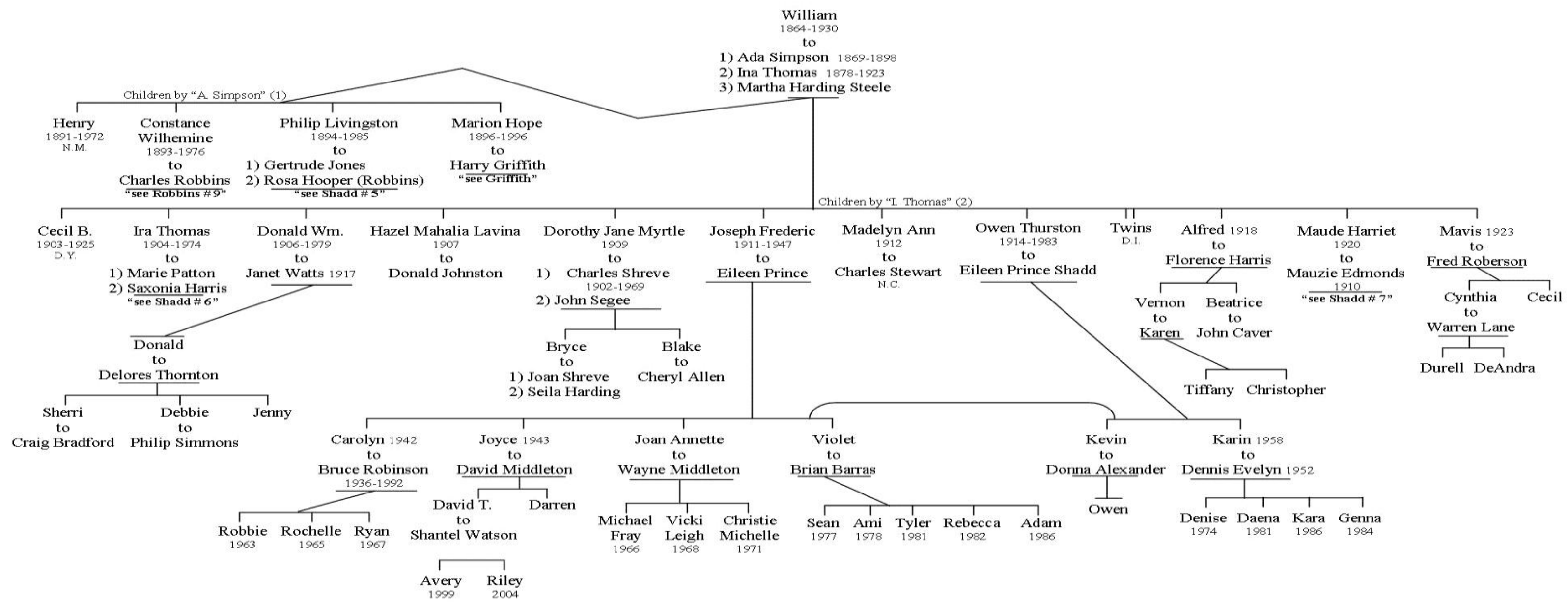

Figure 1: Shadd family tree indicating parentage and offspring of Marion, Philip and Dorothy Shadd

Shadd # 4

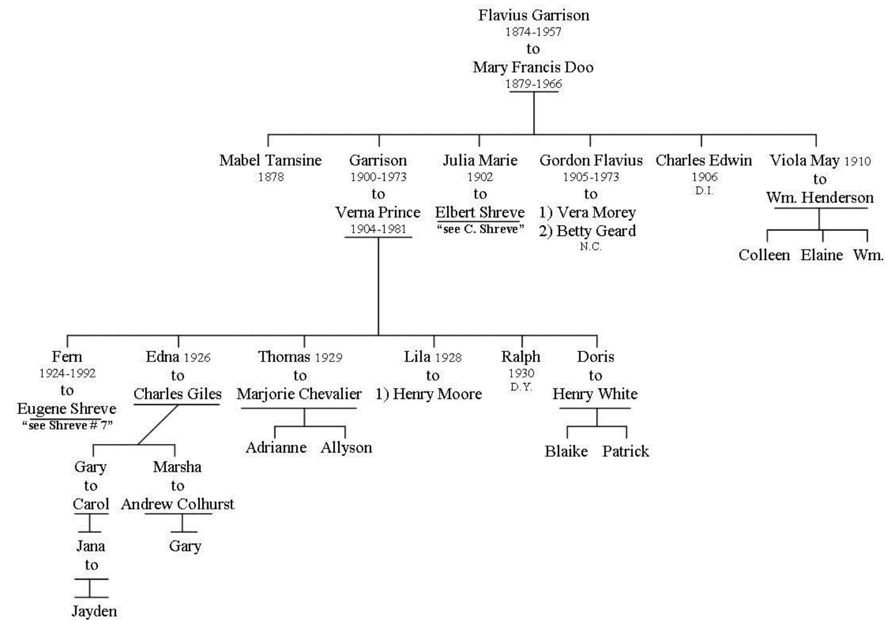

Figure 2: Family tree indicating parentage and offspring of Garrison Shadd

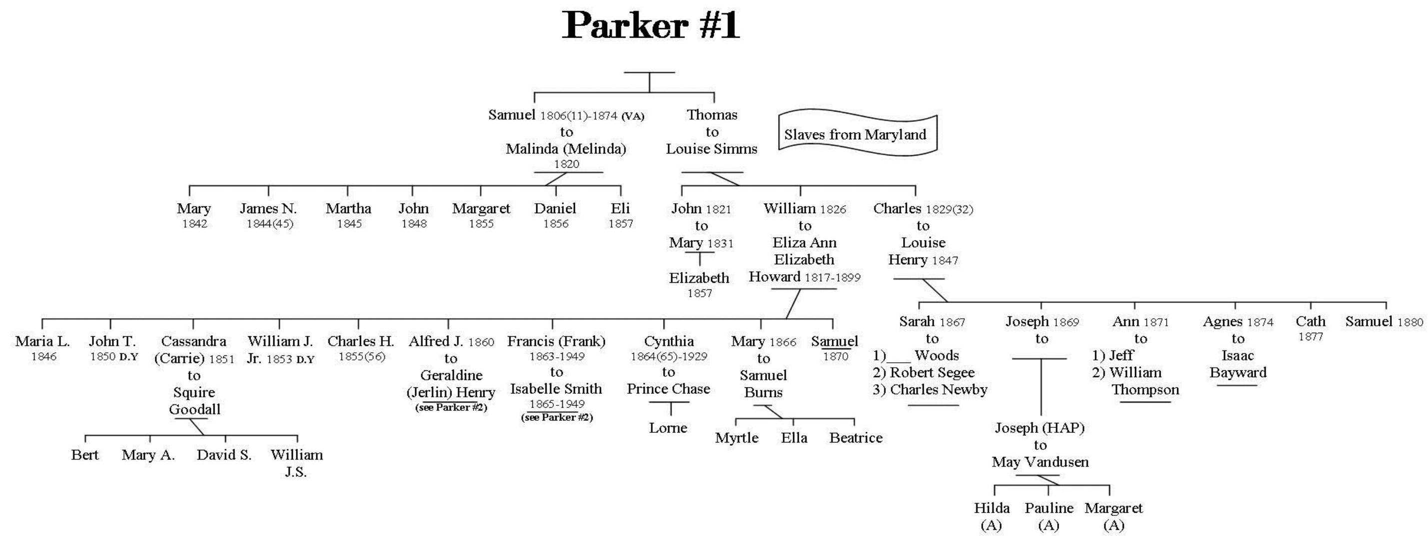

Figure 3: Family tree indicating lineage of Francis Henry Parker

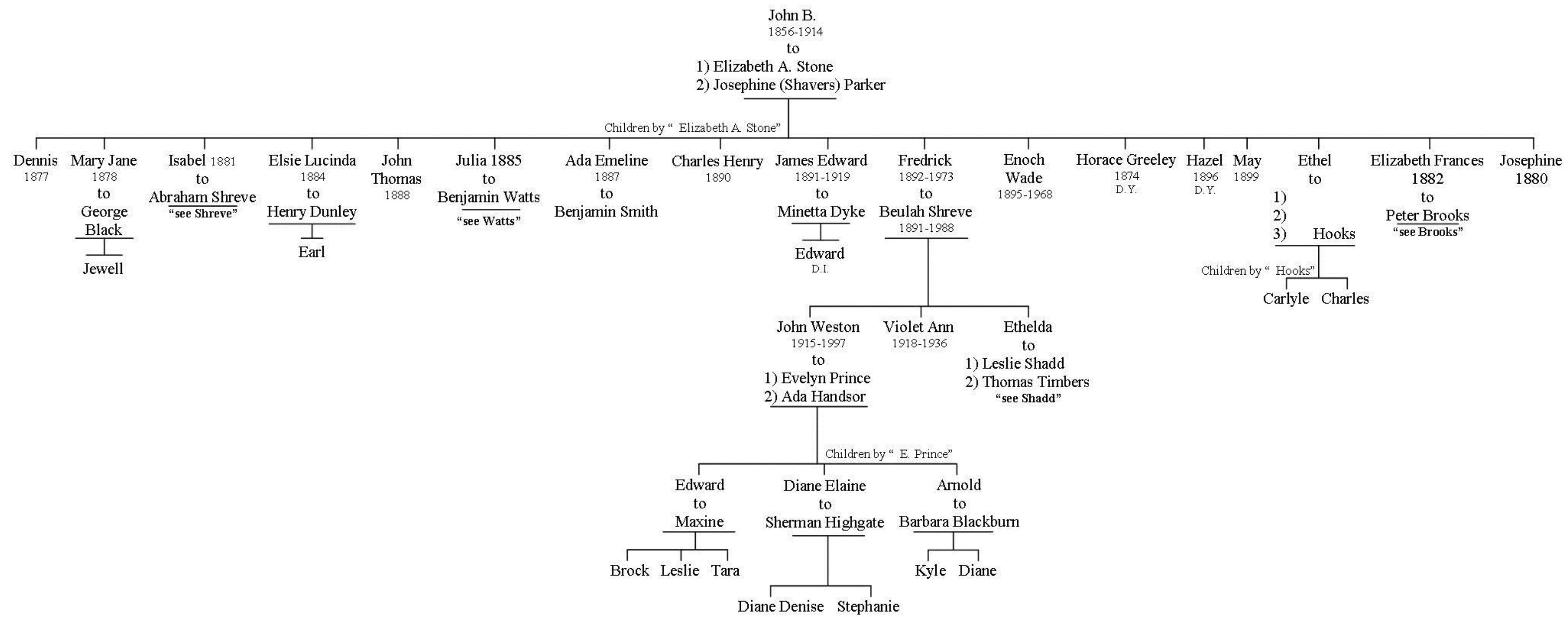

Figure 4: Robbins family tree showing the lineage of Fred Robbins

Morris # 2

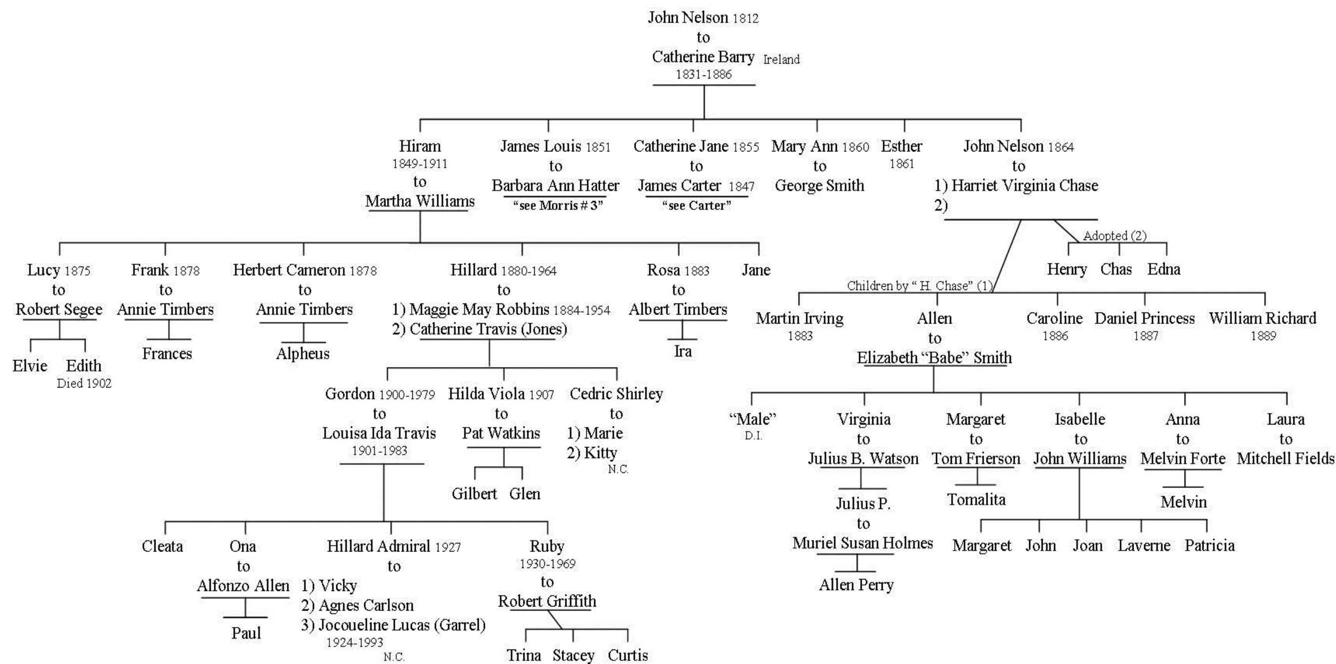

Figure 5: Morris family tree indicating up to Frank's parents – he does not appear on this version.

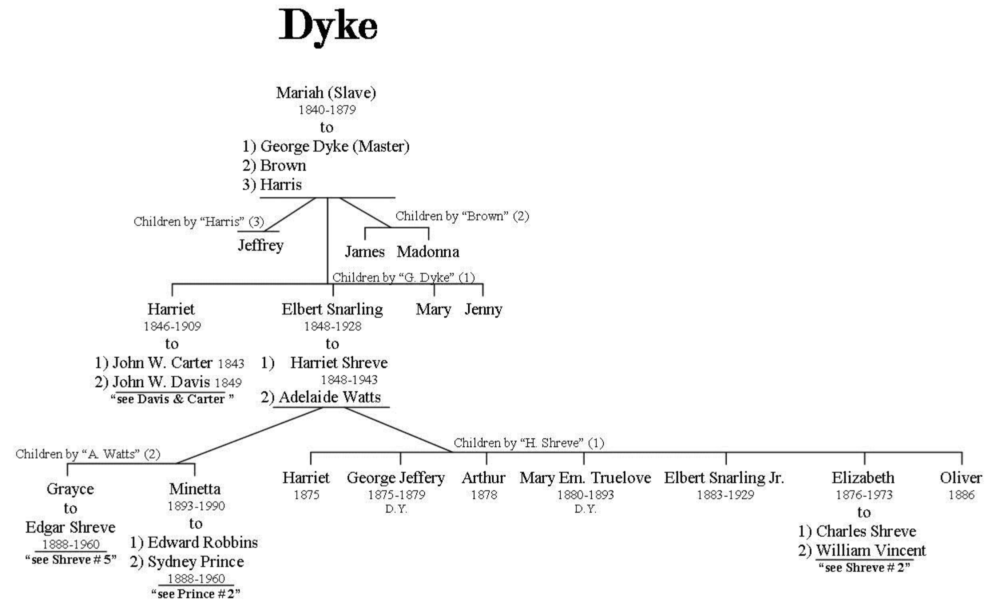

Figure 6: Dyke family tree indicating Grace (spelled Grayce here) Dyke, later Grace Shreve.

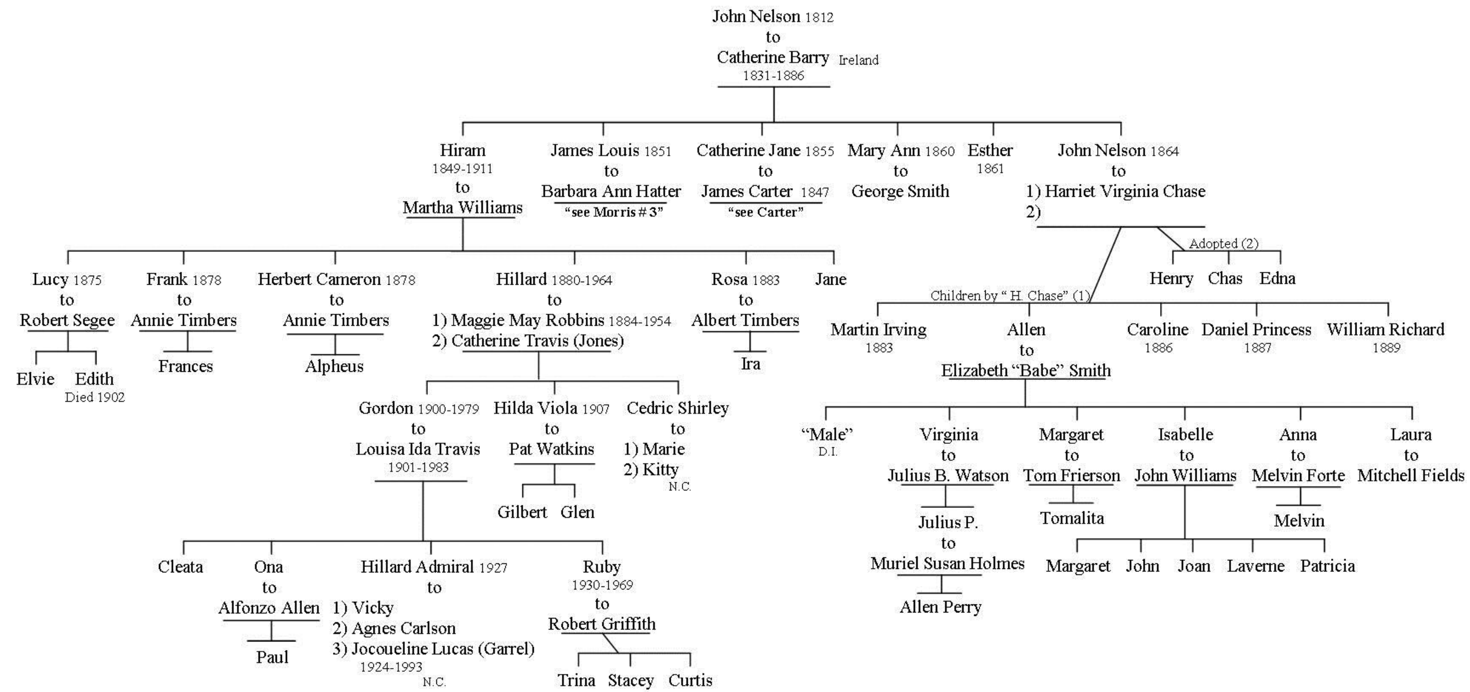

Figure 7: Morris family lineage indicating Cleata Morris.

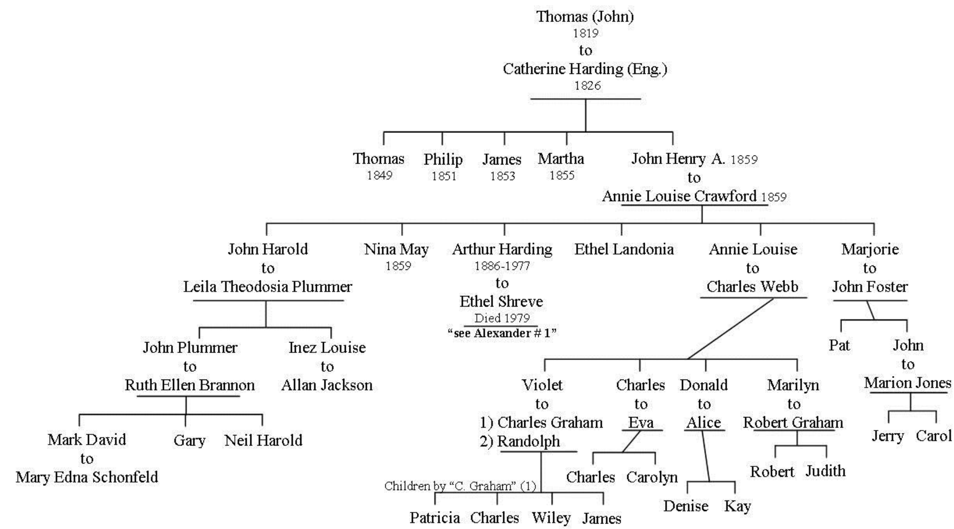

Figure 8: Family tree of Arthur Harding Alexander.

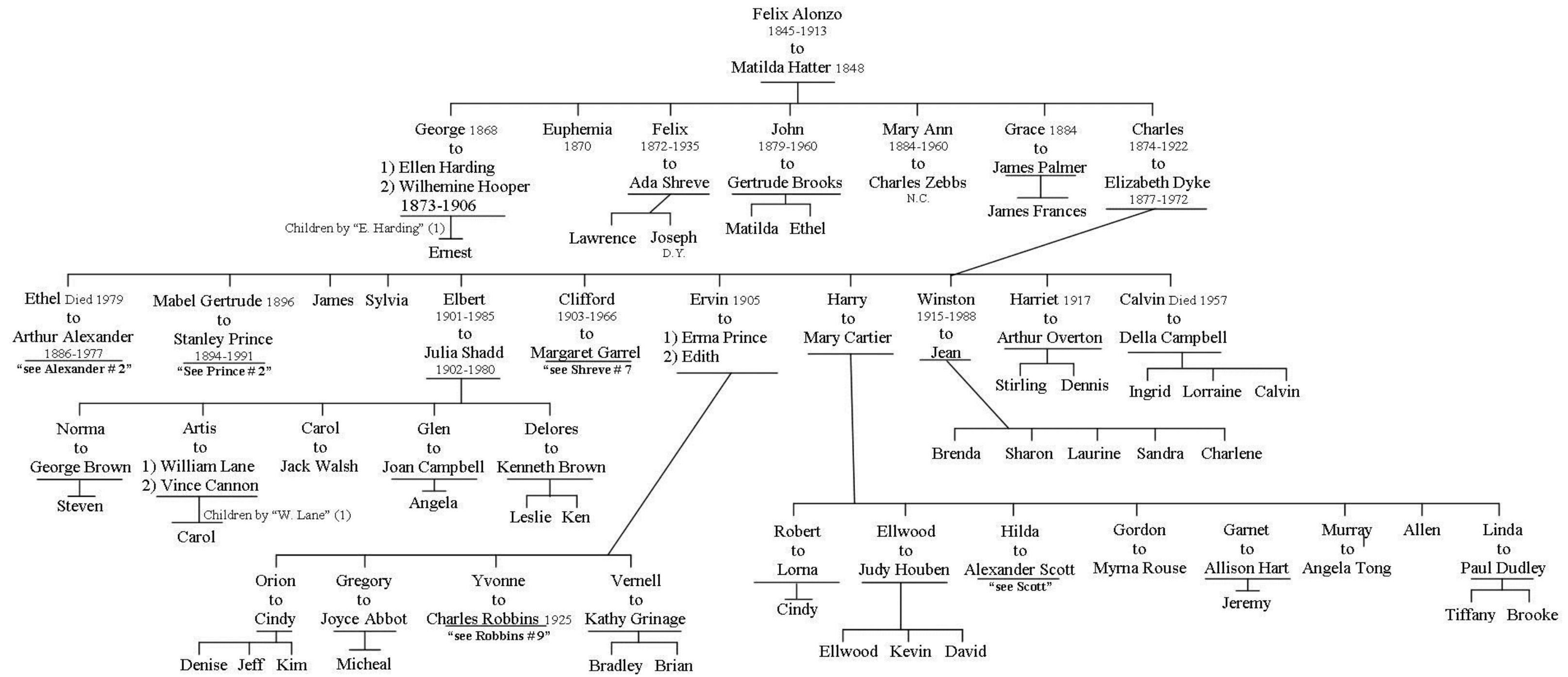

Figure 9: Family tree of Ethel Shreve.

Appendix II: Ethical Approval for Research

Review Number:	0612-2
Applicant:	Claudine Bonner
Supervisor:	Rebecca Coulter
Title:	*(Re)constructing settlement histories: Buxton, Ontario 1873-1914.*
Expiry Date:	December 31, 2007
Type:	PhD Thesis
Ethics Approval Date:	March 26, 2007
Revision #:	
Documents Reviewed & Approved:	UWO Protocol, Letter of Information & Consent, Advertisement

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

No deviations from, or changes to, the research project as described in this protocol may be initiated without prior written approval, except for minor administrative aspects. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information and consent documentation, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

Dr. Alan Edmunds (Chair)

Claudine Bonner **Curriculum Vitae, October 2010**
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2010-2012 Huron University Postdoctoral History Fellowship
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2007-2008 Western Graduate Thesis Research Award – one-year research award
Summer 2007 CIDA/AUCC 3-month internship at the National University of Rwanda
2006-2007 Western Graduate Thesis Research Award – one-year research award
2006-2007 Western Research Forum Oral Presentation Competition – 3rd prize recipient
2006-2007 Western Graduate Research Scholarship ($8000) – one-year tuition award
2005-2006 Short-listed by the UWO President's Office for the Trudeau National Fellowship Award
2005-2006 Western Graduate Research Scholarship ($8000) – one-year tuition award
2004-2005 Western Graduate Research Scholarship ($8000) – one-year tuition award

SCHOLARLY AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Refereed Scholarly Contributions:

Bonner, C. (May 2010). *What Do I Do When My Thesis Keeps Shifting? Issues of Purpose, Audience, and Form.* Paper presented at the biannual and international Narrative Matters Conference, Fredericton, NB.

Bonner, C. (in press). *A Daughter of Promise – Diary of a Female African-Canadian Teacher in Rondeau, 1907*. In de B'beri, B. (Guest Editor). Promised Land Project: Historical
and Theoretical Perspectives. African Diaspora Cultural Series, University of Ottawa Press

Bonner, C. (May 2009). *Why use narrative in writing the social history of a community?* Stories novice researchers tell: Diverse approaches to narrative research by five doctoral candidates in a faculty of education.. Paper presented at the Canadian Society for Studies in Education annual conference, Ottawa, Ontario.

Bonner, C. (May 2009). *Buxton Tales: Narratives from the Community of North Buxton Ontario, 1873-1914.* Paper presented at the Canadian Society for Studies in Education annual conference, Ottawa, Ontario.

Bonner, C. (April 2009). *Teaching in the Promise Land: A Young Black Woman Teaches in Ontario, Canada in 1907.* Paper presented at the American Education Research Association Annual Conference, San Diego, CA.

Bonner, C. (April 2008). *Exploring Gender and Gender Studies at the National University in Rwanda.* Poster presented at the University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Education Research Day.

Bonner, C. (March 2008). *Through Our Eyes: Two Female Canadian Graduate Students Explore Their Internship Experiences in Rwanda.* Paper presented at the Institute for Women in Leadership and The Circle Women's Centre 1st Annual conference, “Women Making Change,” Brescia University College, University of Western Ontario.

Bonner, C. (February 2008). *A Daughter of Promise: Mae’s Summer in Rondeau, 1907.* Paper presented at the College of the Bahamas conference, Nassau, Bahamas.

Bonner, C. (October 2007). *Beyond the UGRR – A new era in African-Canadian history.* Paper presented at the Assoc. for the Study of World African Diaspora conference, Barbados.

Bonner, C. (May 2007). *Discourse on blackness,* paper presented at the Western Research Forum. University of Western Ontario.

Bonner, C. (May 2007). *Blackness in black and white: Media depictions of race in Southwestern Ontario, 1860-1900,* paper presented at the 7th Annual Critical Race Studies Conference. Toronto, Ontario.

Bonner, C. (May 2006). *Searching for Minority Narratives in our History Curriculum*, paper presented at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) Annual Conference.
Toronto, Ontario.

Bonner, C. (April 2006). *(Re)constructing an African-Canadian Settlement’s History: Epistemological & Methodological Issues in Historical Research*, paper presented at the International Conference on “Theorizing Africa/Black Diaspora: History and Memory,” The Center for Black Diaspora, DePaul University, Chicago.

Bonner, C. (April 2006). *Remembering the Struggles – The Absence of Minority Histories in Our School Curricula*. Paper presented at the 8th Annual Graduate Student Research Conference of the Department of Sociology & Equity Studies in Education,

OISE/UT, "Making culture messy: Problematizing culture and cultural discourses in the New Imperialism, Toronto, Ontario.

Bonner, C. (2005). *(Re)Constructing Settlement Histories: Epistemological & Methodological Issues in Historical Research*, Assoc. for the Study of World African Diaspora conference – Diasporic Encounters & Collaborations, Rio de Janiero, October 2005 (accepted for oral presentation).

Bonner, C. (2005). *Unsettled: A look at the migration and settlement of Canada West by fugitive slaves and free people of colour, 1815-1870*, Transatlantic Studies Association, University of Nottingham, UK, July 2005 (accepted for oral presentation).

Workshops/Invited presentations

Black Settlement in Southwestern Ontario. Guest presenter, celebrating Black History Month, part of the 175 Anniversary lecture series. Eldon House, Museum London, February 2010.

Follow the Drinking Gourd: Exploring the Underground Railroad. One day workshop series presented at the Thames Valley Regional Historica Fair, April 2009.

Envisioning a counter-narrative: The black woman's journey in Canada from the 17th to the 21st century. Two day workshop series presented at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, January 2009.

Sankofa: Using Our Past to Envision Our Tomorrows. Keynote speech at the award dinner for the Congress of Black Women, London Chapter dinner. London, Ontario, June, 2008.

Revisiting London, Ontario's Black History. Black History Month Presentation Series. London, Ontario, February, 2008.